

(OCT24-06) Good evening school board trustees and members of the public. My name is Scott Towaij and I am the co-chair of the Berrigan Elementary School Council. Two years ago on November 10, 2004 I stood before this board as Berrigan Elementary School Council co-chair and advocated for a new high school to serve our community. The ACES council also presented on that same evening advocating for the same thing. Tonight I am here representing both school councils and you will also hear from a 3<sup>RD</sup> school, Farley Mowat that has now joined us in our efforts to advocate for our children.

Although we have presented survey results, statistical information, letters, reports etc. over the years we feel compelled to speak up yet again to ensure that this Board follows through on its commitment to provide us with a new grade 7 to 12 secondary school in Longfields Davidson Heights.

Ottawa is the 4<sup>TH</sup> largest city in Canada and the second largest in Ontario. There are 50,000 people living in Barrhaven, Longfields and Davidson Heights combined. South Nepean is expected to grow to 60,000 by 2006 and 100,000 by 2011. Annual housing starts in South Nepean alone are 1,120 on average and if you drive through Barrhaven and see all the new businesses and homes it is obvious to see that we are the fastest growing community in Ottawa. The birth rate in South Nepean is the highest in the country and we are a community that must be heard.

These statistics are further compounded by the fact that the old JDS Uniphase building will be home to over 600 RCMP officers and families looking to relocate in Barrhaven. At Berrigan Elementary School we already have 6 portables and there are plans for 6 more to arrive shortly. ACES has had many portables since it opened and we would anticipate that the new Farley Mowat School will be in a similar position in the near future.

Although our children are served from Kindergarten to grade 6 in Ward 3 they are bussed to Ward 9 for grades 7 to 12. Depending upon where children are picked up by bus they spend 30 to 45 minutes travelling to and from Sir Winston Churchill School for grades 7 & 8 and the same for Merivale High school for grades 9 to 12. It is a well documented fact that there has been a mass exodus from the public school system into the separate school system as of grade 7, as families wish to not only be served within their own communities but do not want an additional 1 to 1 ½ hours added on to the school day due to transportation issues as this makes for a very long day.

Why is the separate school board thriving while ours is struggling? The answer is quite simple. They studied population trends and opened schools within the growing communities in anticipation of receiving greater market share. For the record this board knows that we as a school council have never taken a stand that would result in school closures in other communities, even when small interest groups have succeeded in stalling our efforts to be served. This evening there are groups and individuals presenting in an attempt to prevent us from getting our new school despite that fact that this was already approved. This is extremely disappointing and is a clear indication to us that we now need to change our stance.

There have been many communities with businesses that once thrived and eventually the population that patronized the business began to dwindle. When this happens there are two options: either continue to operate at a loss that will continue to increase or move to a community that is thriving and has no foreseeable slow down. This is what the separate school board did, they made the unpopular decisions a long time ago that placed them in the position of serving growing communities today. Our Board is now being forced to make tougher decisions and did in fact close both JS Woodsworth and Laurentian High School which ensured the success of Merivale High School. Merivale High School has unique programs like the automotive department that are needed in a time when so many trades people are retiring. We believe that the future of Merivale High School is secure even with the removal of the Barrhaven students from the equation.

The new LDH Secondary School would be the first of it's kind in public education and this model has worked successfully in the separate school board. The fact that the property is secured next door to Berrigan Elementary School is also positive as this will open the door to a partnership between an elementary school and a high school that could allow older students to do some mentoring for younger ones.

We are asking the board to move forward on its commitment to build a new grade 7 to 12 school on Berrigan Drive to be ready for occupation on time, September 2008. We believe that if the Board does this we will not only plug the leak and see children remain within public education but we will ensure a prosperous future that will benefit children for years to come and provide a brighter future and a better tomorrow.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Scott Lewis".