

**Delegation: South East Norfolk Elementary Accommodation Review Committee
Monday September 26, 2016 - Presented by Susan Baldock - Elgin Avenue Public
School**

My name is Sue Baldock. I am a parent of a grade 8 student at Elgin Avenue Public School, and I graduated from Elgin in 1988. I am not a professional in the sense of having a degree in accounting or finance, or law or education. I consider myself first and foremost a Mom and I am a voting, tax paying citizen of Norfolk County. It is not my job to decide whether to close schools or keep them open. While not an easy job, I trust that our elected officials have the best ability to make those decisions. As our trustees, you are the professionals who have the resources to make the most informed and educated decisions possible, while putting the interests of the students ahead of everything else in the decision-making process.

The Board's initial recommendation that was put forth was to close West Lynn and renovate Elgin Avenue. This recommendation came with lots of tangible information surely based on much thought and research. Applications for funding were already made. Blueprints were available showing the renovated Elgin property on nearly 8 acres of land. Students that are currently being bussed to and from other schools would continue to take the bus, and the 99% of Elgin students would continue to walk to school as normal. A very sensible recommendation as there was plenty of space available for growth now and in the future. With ample green space and more than enough room for parking and pick-up and drop-offs, Elgin is a centrally located school with a bonus of being accessible from the East and West side of the property. This recommendation is great except for the fact that a school still has to close, with this recommendation that school being West Lynn.

A very talented, passionate, and intelligent group of parents, teachers, and students from West-Lynn did a lot of work to come up with a strategy to try to save their school. This option involved purchasing more property to acquire space to build on to the existing structure. As a result, Elgin would close, and the 217 students currently attending would be bussed to West Lynn.

The great thing about having delegations is that voices can be heard. The Trustees truly heard the voices of the representatives of West Lynn, as they adopted this very plan wherein Elgin would close and the idea would be to buy property and build on to West Lynn. Thus, here we are discussing the latest recommendation adopted by the Board.

As representatives of Elgin Avenue, we find ourselves scratching our heads wondering what happened from May to September that changed the fate of our school? We find ourselves at a loss to come up with an idea to save our school because the board has already done that for us. That was the original recommendation - applications for funding made? check, blueprints of the proposed renovations? - check, 7.9 acres of land already owned by the board? - check, an existing building that can accommodate more students? - check, and the current 217 Elgin students can still walk to school with no added transportation costs? - check
These are all things that are KNOWN.

There are a few UNKNOWNNS as of right now regarding the option to keep West Lynn open which is concerning. Is the land that the Board wishes to acquire adjacent to West Lynn actually on the market for sale right now? If so, how much will it cost? What will be the cost of rezoning that land, and how long will that take? What utilities are currently in place if any, on that land? Where are the blueprints for the proposed addition to the school? Have applications for funding been made? How much green space will be available once the addition is finished? Is there space for expansion in the future should they need it? Where will the increased traffic be filtered? How much will it cost to bus the now 217 Elgin students who currently walk, to West Lynn? Where is Simcoe's CENTRAL school?

I understand this is a process - a long tough process that we as tax paying citizens are entrusting to you, our elected professionals. A process at the end of which a decision will be made not for personal reasons, but for what is best for our kids. A decision that affects everyone regardless of age, socio-economic status, race, or religion.

The Board's initial recommendation to keep Elgin open by utilizing existing space and land seems the obvious and sensible way to go. The unknowns of the West Lynn option are concerning and it seems there would be much work to be done to determine the cost and even the feasibility of this plan.

Finally, I think that both Elgin Avenue and West Lynn are great schools. The old walls of both are made of brick and mortar. It is the staff and students on the inside of those old walls that make the schools a great community. Despite what many think of Elgin Avenue, it has been an absolute joy to be a part of such an amazing school community once as a student and now as a parent. The idea of the two schools coming together on a single parcel of land is exciting for all, wherever that might be.

Thank you for your diligence in making an informed and sensible decision all for the sake of our children.