

NCDSB Boundary Review Public Comments

(through email and website feedback form)

1. Billie:

Could the following information be clarified for the meeting on Monday:

1) How does the school board determine the capacity of a school? I'm just wondering where the numbers came from.

2) Does the capacity take into consideration that the kindergarten program "room capacity" numbers have increase? JK/SK rooms are no longer capped at 20 and now can be 30 (+)

3) Looking at capacity for next year - How many grade 8 students will be leaving ECCS and St. Pat's next year, and what would be the "prediction" for JK numbers for next year (it might help to look at the number of JK students that started this year at both schools).

4) Is the cost of bussing a real issue since there is already a bus going to New Liskeard. Is the school board being charged the \$449.35 to bus students? - Just wondering where that number came from too.

5)At the meeting on Wednesday night it was mentioned that public could address the trustees at the Board Meeting on Oct. 30, but 2 weeks notice was required. Since the meeting in Cobalt is less than 2 weeks from the board meeting would this policy still apply?

6) Are we able to receive "hard copies" of the public feed back? - It is easier to reference back to information if you have a hard copy.

This information would assist me with getting clearer picture of the situation.

2. Annette:

Please feel free to read my letter, delivered to the Board in may 2012, regarding my views on changing Temagami's boundary so that children from Temagami go to St. Patrick's school.

In addition, attached are the numbers that was publicly requested at the Review Committee's consultation meeting on October 16 2013 in Temagami and open to the public.

If you have any further questions, feel free to contact me on my cell.

(please see attachments 1 for May 2013 letter @ 2 for stats made reference to)

3. Michelle:

Good Morning, I attended the meeting last evening in Temagami because my 11 year old son goes to ECCS. Other people commented on the effect of switching children from school to school so I felt it would tie the meeting up to speak and say the same thing about my son. I just wanted to make it clear though that I agree with their comments because my son is also settled and happy at ECCS and changing him would be detrimental. I can understand that St. Pats is closer and believe me that would be nice because my boys (my oldest graduated from ECCS last year and went on to high school) are on the bus from 7:00 am and don't get home until 4:45 in good weather which is a very long day. However, until our house sells which is not very likely and we can move to New Liskeard this is the situation for my family to get superior schooling that is faith based. So, in a nutshell, we would very much appreciate it if the Board could consider allowing the children already attending ECCS to remain until they graduate. It would be a solution that takes into account the emotional well-being of the students and creates a continuity for the families involved in this issue. Thank you very much for allowing me to voice my concerns.

4. Mairead:

I have reviewed the documentation concerning the BRC and I would like to comment on my concerns.

Unfortunately for some families who are at risk from a socio-economic perspective, frequent moving of residences is a necessary part of their lifestyle. We have experienced families at English Catholic Central School who are forced to move frequently due to unforeseen economic concerns, the inability to manage money, being placed in care through Northeastern Ontario Family and Children's Services, residing at the Pavilion Family Resource Centre due to domestic violence and other reasons often associated with the at risk socio-economic population.

Research has shown that frequent moving can lead to poor performance in school and more inappropriate behaviours. It also is a contributing factor in mental health challenges for children as it affects their psychological well being. Moves are much more difficult on children when they are accompanied by other significant life changes such as divorce or loss of family income which often occur in families that are socio-economically at risk.

School becomes a stabilizer for these children. It is the security that they have learned to count on. When children are forced to move schools because of the socio-economic status of their family, children become more at risk. It sometimes can be seen that

children will move from New Liskeard to Cobalt and then to Haileybury in the course of a couple of years. Since English Catholic Central School is the central location for access to bussing from all of the above noted locations, I believe that children should not be required to move schools because their home address has changed. I believe that it is important that we continue to provide a supportive familiar learning environment when the rest of their world is in a state of change.

It is my hope that children may be able to count on the stability of their school family when their home family is going through a difficult time.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my concerns with the BRC.

Should you require information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

5. Patrick:

I am in receipt of the letter advising us of the boundary review process that is currently underway. I have three children at English Catholic Central School, Landon, Quintin and Cecilia. I must admit that I was concerned when I received the letter but wanted to clarify something that I heard. My understanding is that students currently attending ECCS will be grandfathered and only new students next year would have to attend St Patrick's in Cobalt. Please confirm if this is true.

6. John:

I've had a chance to review the documentation on the board website concerning the BRC affecting families in Temagami.

Unfortunately, due to Parish commitments, I am unable to attend the meeting on October 16th. However, I do wish to add my comments to the public consultation and hope that they will be shared at the open public meetings next week and entered into the public record.

Overall I have no concern about the proposed boundary changes affecting **new** families who wish to enroll in one of our Catholic Schools. It would seem to make sense that they be assigned to St. Patrick's School as it is closer geographically than ECCS.

My concern about the proposed boundary changes concerns **existing students and families** who are already attending ECCS.

Since the board has already permitted students from Temagami to be enrolled at ECCS I do not believe that it would be fair or just that they not be allowed to continue their studies at ECCS. These students have already established friendships with fellow

students and relationships with staff and it would be fundamentally unfair that they would be “uprooted” from this school family and be transferred to St. Patrick’s School and have to begin again. If the board decides to move forward with the boundary change, these students should be guaranteed that they will not be affected by the changes. There should be a “grandfather” for any existing students.

Additionally, I believe that this “grandfather” clause should not only be guaranteed for existing students but also **extended to any upcoming siblings in their family**. Given the great distances that these students must travel as well as the social impact on them away from their family and community, families should not be separated if the proposed boundary change is accepted by the board. Families, for a variety of reasons, need to be kept intact.

If these two issues can be dealt with I have no difficulty in moving forward with the proposed changes.

I appreciate the opportunity to share these concerns with the BRC and I look forward to following your deliberations.

Should you require any further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

7. Louis:

The Northeastern Catholic District School Board has entered into a Boundary Review Process in the Temagami area, potentially affecting students currently attending both English Catholic Central School in New Liskeard and St. Patrick Catholic School in Cobalt. How will this boundary change affect students attending ECCS and St. Patrick?

Attachment 1

Friday, June 8, 2012

Northeastern Catholic District School Board

Timmins Board Office
101 Spruce St. North
Timmins, Ontario
P4N 6M9
Phone: 1 877 422 9322
Fax: 1 705 267 3590

Attention:

Director of Education – Glenn Sheculski

Chair Person of the NCSB - Rick Brassard

Directors of the NCDSB – Marin Drainville, Fred Salvador Jr., Peter Delguidice, Elizabeth King, Denis Lincez, Colleen Landers, Steve Malciw, Ron McInnis,

Early Summer Greetings!

I am writing to you as a parent whose children attend English Central Catholic School (ECCS) and who reside in Temagami. You will notice I use the term Temagami students, Temagami household, Temagami parents and Temagami families throughout this letter. The purpose of this is 2-fold:

- 1) to underscore the fact that we, as a group, are unique in our experience as member of the Northeastern Catholic School Board (NCDSB) and,
- 2) to emphasize the fact that a Temagami student within the NCDSB is not an isolated entity but a child who belongs to caregivers (parents, home) in a context with needs that can only be met through the child's admission to ECCS.

Over the past 5 years there has been a noticeable increase of students from Temagami transferring to ECCS. At present, there are 16 elementary school children (of a population of approximately 50 elementary school aged children) who are bused to ECCS. That is 32 percent of our school aged population - a statistically significant voice for students and parents of the Northeastern Catholic School Board. It appears that this increase and has stirred some debate for advocates of St. Patrick's School, as the Catholic school for Temagami students. My concern is your understanding and consideration of the experience and perspectives of NCDSB students and their parents who live in the Municipality of Temag1111111111ami.

At present the "Admission of Students Policy" (Policy F3, Article 3.0) states: "The residential address of the parent or legal guardian of the student will determine the designated community school." In addition, there was an approved change to the policy on February 29, 2012 at first reading and March 21 at second and third reading. I do not have any access to reports, proposals or letters, on the website, submitted to and accepted by the Board, that reflect the logic behind the possible transfer of Temagami students to St. Patrick's. Your advice regarding how I can access the previously mentioned information would be much appreciated. My purpose is simple: to be an informed advocate for the needs of Temagami students and parents.

Upon further review of the Board's website, I have discovered a lack of consultation and visibility for Temagami families of NCDSB. There are 5 evidences that led me to this conclusion.

1. It appears there is no agenda to discuss with Temagami parents and students, the admission of students to St. Patrick's (instead of ECCS) or the transfer of current Temagami students at ECCS.
2. Temagami as a Municipality is not on the information page of the Board of Trustees.
3. Temagami is not mentioned as a catchment in the board trustee list. I assume that would be the New Liskeard, Haileybury and Cobalt region.
4. The map on the website which gives directions about how to get to the Board's office in Timmins does not include Temagami in the NCDSB's description of its catchment.
5. Temagami is not mentioned anywhere on the Board's website.

The visibility of Temagami in public areas of the Board's website is a critical step in recognizing Temagami's families of NCDSB as a unique part of the Board. Each Temagami household of NCDSB has a unique experience, yet some definite commonalities, that should be considered by decision-makers. As a parent, and other Temagami parents I believe would agree, do not see Temagami children primarily "numbers" but children, with supportive households, whose experiences need to be heard.

Please be advised that choosing to send my children to ECCS was a very difficult personal, family and parental decision. There were many risks and personal contradictions to consider. My letter to you is my way to ensure that the experiences of Temagami households of NCDSB - experiences not greatly different from my household's - are not undermined to the matters of St. Patrick's school viability issues. I and my children have already lived through (and continue to) school viability issues within our own community. I have learned that the factors affecting school viability are way beyond the admission of my children to any school - it is a culmination of societal trends that are way beyond my influence or the influence of a handful of households.

Before delving into what I think are factors that are unique to Temagami students, I want to highlight to you the reasons for the transfer of my children from the public to the Catholic district. The main reasons for their transfer can be grouped into 3 categories:

1. What is inherent to a Catholic school environment

- A belief in faith-based learning and the integration of the spirituality (the whole person) at school and in the school environment.
- A desire for the children to learn more about the sacraments as a rite of passage. Note that technically, the Roman Catholic Church (St. Elizabeth's) is not in the Timmins Diocese. It is a member of the Algoma-North Bay Diocese. As a result, our family church is St. Elizabeth's but the children consider their church to be their ECCS and Rosarie Club. They LOVE it!!! :)

2. What is inherent to a large (relative to schools in this region) school population?

- Our children needed to be exposed to more opportunities outside of the classroom (field trips)
- Our children needed to be exposed to more opportunities for developing friendships with a diversity of children (students with physical and developmental needs; students of a diversity of races and ethnic backgrounds)

3. What is inherent to living in a small community with a declining population?

- Consecutive triple and quadruple classes we considered not the kind of the learning environment we wanted for our children's elementary education.
- A lack of appropriate support for teachers and students within a multiple-graded classroom made it difficult to ensure our children were receiving an equitable amount of attention to their learning needs.
- The desire for the children to be better prepared to attend the late immersion program by being in a school with such a program.

So, as I try to synthesize my experience with the families that have chosen to transfer their child(ren) to NCDSB, I come up with the following pros and cons. Evidently, I do not know all the issues from the perspective of the community of St. Patrick's School. I do not wish to under value their needs. In fact, I understand it all much too well as a resident of Temagami -- a community also suffering from the fall outs of a chronic decline of school-aged children. However, I do believe parents and students have been forgotten in this debate of numbers, logistics and in-Board tensions and communications.

KEEP THINGS AS THEY ARE - Temagami Students as ECCS Students

Pros

1. Temagami children and parents have access to subsidized childcare with the before and after school program. A much needed service as Temagami does not have any subsidized child care options.
2. Subsidized child-care actually means that children with extra-curricular, after school activities are bussed less often and travel with caregivers.
3. Temagami children LOVE being at ECCS.
4. Temagami children have access to a more diverse student population.
5. It is familiar to the community of Temagami.
6. There is less risk for our children to attend a multiple-graded class consecutively from year to year.
7. Temagami siblings stay at the same school. (Not one at St. Pat's and another at ECCS)
8. Temagami siblings travel the same bus. (Not one for St. Pat's and one for ECCS)
9. Less risk of Temagami students do not have to transfer buses, especially if they are in the late immersion program.
10. Temagami students do not have to change schools if they wish to go to the late immersion program.
11. Students and parents of Temagami are not objectified, again, as a number that will

help keep a school open in an environment of declining enrollment.

12. Siblings will not have to transfer buses.

13. The centralized location of ECCS and the before - after program is important to divorced / separated parents. (Students with 2 home addresses)

Cons

1. St. Patrick's school number of students are not increased

2. St. Patrick's school could become less viable and more at risk for an accommodation review.

3. St. Patrick's school misses out on the MOE funds per Temagami Student thus a possibility in increased staffing or support staffing or increased program funding.

ST. PATRICK'S – Temagami students transferred / hereto admissioned into St. Patrick

Pros

1. Temagami students / parents who do not require before and after-school programs may travel 20 minutes less by bus.

2. St. Patrick's school numbers increase slightly thus may increase the viability of the school and increase funding to the school.

Cons

1. Siblings may be separated by bus and by school. (Think of the scenarios: 1) one student is at the late french immersion program and the other is not, or 2) Current ECCS students are grandfathered into ECCS but prospective students go to St. Patrick's school.

2. Bus transferring maybe required.

3. Temagami students do not have the experience of attending a positive large school environment.

4. Temagami students / families re-live the experience of being objectified for the sake of keeping a school viable or a community viable when declining population and more dominant factors (economic trends, birth rates) affect the viability of a school.

5. Does not avoid highway risks, only shortens (negligible in my opinion) the length of time on the bus.

6. The admission of Temagami students does not take care of the school's viability needs since will not truly increase the JK registration to the school. Viability encompasses not only current student numbers but prospective students in the near future. Temagami does not have a significant number of pre-school children which would "save" St. Patrick's from the issue of viability.

7. It undermines the amazing effort parents and students go through to ensure a stable routine. We (parents of Temagami students) have considered the risks and effects on our families and children. Evidently, we have come to terms with the travel consequences of sending our kids to ECCS. It is our belief the benefits for our children attending **ECCS** outweigh the risks. Please do not undermine the integrity of our decisions as parents.

It is ethically and democratically appropriate to ensure that those affected by the change have an opportunity to speak with decision-makers in order to make a well-round and informed

debate and decision(s). However, in the event that such a meeting cannot take place I believe I have provided you an overview of what might come-up at such a meeting. Since Temagami is a small town and, I work in the education sector, I believe I can speak for many of the realities that affect the Temagami household of the NCDSB. Temagami students are not just a number for a school, s/he is a person with a family with needs that are unique yet common to one another. Re-living objectification for the sake of school viability is not a path I wish for my children and other households in Temagami as the significance of a child's attendance to a school.

If there is an opportunity for me to be further involved in the discernment process, such as a committee, Committee of the Whole, Member at Large or video conferencing at ECCS to attend Board meeting, I would be honored to participate in it. I am particularly interested in creative and flexible ways to resolve the matter of solutions, meaningful to Temagami households of the NCDSB.

I would like to sincerely thank you for listening to my points of view and trust in the grace of God that you will hear the need for holistic discernment in this tenuous matter.

Attachment 2

Data based upon anecdotal evidence regarding the number of students from Temagami attending ECCS since 1992 until the present, 2013 (a span of 11 years).

How many students, who currently reside in Temagami,....:

1. have graduated from grade 8 at ECCS?.....	7
2. have graduated from grade at ECCS and attended the French program?.....	4
3. have registered to ECCS from JK and are still attending the school?.....	2
4. have registered to ECCS at JK?.....	3
5. have registered to ECCS, at grade 5, to enter the French program?.....	3
6. currently attend ECCS?.....	17
7. are currently in the French program?.....	6
8. are currently under in grade 4 and under?.....	9
9. are likely to register in the French program?.....	9
10. are currently in JK?.....	1
11. are currently in the French program?.....	6
12. are currently in the English stream and are in grade 5 and up?.....	3
13. and attend Temagami Public School could register in the French program at grade 5 for the French program over the next 7 years.....	15
14. will be eligible for JK.....	4
15. and are eligible for JK in 2014 and will be registering at ECCS.....	0
16. and are eligible for JK in 2014 will be registering at TPS.....	4
17. and will be eligible for JK in 2015.....	0
18. and are eligible for JK in 2014 and will be registering at a French school.....	0
19. currently attend a French school?.....	3
20. currently attend the French Immersion program at NLPS.....	1
21. currently attend NLPS because they are in grade 6 to 8.....	3
22. currently attend public school from grades 5 to 8.....	5
23. are currently eligible to attend an elementary school.....	39
24. also reside in tri-town-Cobalt area due to due to parental custody.....	3
25. also registered in the before or after school childcare at ECCS.....	5
26. also have siblings attending ECCS.....	9

My conclusions (with opinions added):

1. The French program at ECCS is a big success in the tri-town-Temagami area and this has the greatest impact on the past, present and possible registrations of students living in Temagami to attend St. Patrick's school.
2. There are an equal number of students who attend the English public school and English catholic school Boards and who live in Temagami. The transfer of students to ECCS has a greater impact on the viability of Temagami Public School than it currently has or will have in the near future on St. Patrick's school.
3. In light of feedback from Temagami residence and the data listed above the following should be considered:

- a. The boundary defining ECCS as part of the Temagami district should remain.
- b. Sibling and student bonding amongst students from semi-isolated, rural communities is critical to the safe transportation of students.
- c. Student bus transfers more than once, one way, for elementary students increases the risk of physical injury.
- d. Bussing safety is an exception to the policy of changing the Temagami boundary

Sincerely,
Annette Cloutier