

Hello

I am writing to you, the trustees of our public schools, to ask you to vote against the staff recommendation to close Rideau High School.

Reasons to keep it open:

Rideau HS is perfectly located to receive significant numbers of students from major planned developments in Vanier, Wateridge Village (former Rockcliffe Base), as well as around LRT hubs at St Laurent and at Cyrville.

Families and couples moving into these communities are looking for urban, green, active, local living, that includes walking and biking to their local, inclusive school that represents many of Canada's different cultures and languages and experiences.

Rideau HS is a community hub - daycare, refugee health and language classes, Orkidstra (social development through music). It is a priority school which is able to offer free space for after-school community building activities.

Rideau HS is located in one of the most at-risk communities (Vanier-Overbrook) in the city. It is in fact, the most at-risk high school population in the city.

Studies show that small schools are more efficient and effective at serving students, especially students at-risk.

Rideau HS has developed strong links with the community surrounding to support students who are also First Nations, Inuit, Metis.

Rideau HS meets many needs of local refugee and immigrant families.

All levels of government are pledging to improve access to education for First Nations, Inuit, Metis, immigrants and refugees. They access it at Rideau, in the community in which they live.

The school and school yard are significant assets - great sports fields, home economics room, auditorium, drama room with sound and light, music room, greenhouse, gymnasium with upper level spectator stands, woodwork, daycare, etc.

Concerns if it were to close:

Closing it is short-sighted. You will need a high school located in the middle of these communities as the population is growing and will grow dramatically in the near future. Too many schools have been closed in Vanier - right before they are needed again.

You will fail these children and this community. Taking them out of a small high school where they are known and valued and putting them outside of their community support network into a large school where it will be harder for them to integrate, make sports teams, bands, drama groups, etc. In large schools, crime is increased, isolation is more prevalent and the drop-out rate is higher.

If you close Rideau over \$300,000 of additional provincial funding (UPHS grant) to support at risk students will disappear.

The students are thriving on the close connections between their school, their community and the many social organisations involved at the school. You can't maintain that outside of their community.

The OCDSB is losing families at a high rate in this area and these changes (loss of Rideau, change of boundaries) will make it even worse (families changing to French Public, English Catholic and private schools).

The boundaries you are setting are drawn along neighbourhood lines but also separate high incomes from low incomes, and one culture from another. This does not create balanced schools and is inequitable at best.

The farther it is to school, the longer it takes to travel, the less likely at-risk youth are to attend.

According to OCDSB staff, the average distance for a student from home to school is 3-6 km. Children in Vanier, and other areas of this new super-catchment area would have commutes of 9-10 km. For one of the most densely populated, urban areas of this city, that is unacceptable and certainly not any sort of local school.

Suggestions/Ideas for Rideau:

Look first at the elementary schools and develop a comprehensive plan for the schools that feed to Rideau. Consider whether cost savings can be better done by merging some elementary schools.

More and more families are opting for French Immersion, including new families moving into this last affordable urban area.

This is the French Quarter - French Immersion needs to be a local option.

The French public board is investing in our communities, offering schools that meet specific needs, alternatives, such as schools with a special focus on arts, sports, environment. The OCDSB should consider this approach as it is very successful at turning "low enrolment schools" into very popular schools e.g. Canterbury, Trille des Bois.

This school offers an alternative to large, intensely academic high schools. It is small and personal. It offers great sports, drama, music, etc. It exposes its students to new cultures and languages and experiences.

Rideau High School has a rich mix of cultures and languages and experiences. Consider it as a specialty High School - one that specializes in social justice - a great start for students wishing to pursue education and careers in law, social work, policy, diplomacy, etc.

Extra space could be used to develop an innovation hub which is a natural fit for newcomers to Canada aligns with municipal, provincial and federal goals.