

October 15, 2011

Dear Trustees,

I am writing to you as a concerned parent. I have 3 children, 2 of which currently attend Prince Philip School, and my youngest will begin Junior Kindergarten next year. It really saddens me to think that Prince Philip may not be open next year. We are so thankful for this school and for the teachers there, and I am very concerned about the proposal that the Board has put forward in wanting to close our school. I have attended all of the Public ARC Meetings for the Dalewood area, and I have been very impressed with the tireless work that the ARC Committee has put into this whole process. I wish that each of you could have attended some of our previous meetings because you would have got a real sense of the community that we have, and you would have heard the heart and passion that we all share for our 3 schools. We do not want any of our schools, G.R. Allan, Dalewood and Prince Philip to close.

I know that each of you will have the final say as you vote on the fate of our school, Prince Philip. I am asking you to vote against the Board's Proposal to close our school. I do not want to see Prince Philip close. There would no longer be a school on this side of Main Street for our children to go to, and that seems very unfair and ridiculous to me. I do not want my children to have to take a bus to school every day, to have to cross over onto the other side of Main Street to attend a school when there is a perfectly fine (and wonderful!) school that they are now attending. In all of our discussions at these meetings, I have yet to hear one good reason or justification as to why Prince Philip needs to close.

The Board wants to send our whole school community to G.R. Allan, and to be honest, I think this is a proposal that has not been well-thought-out. The traffic in that area is already busy now on King Street in the mornings, so I can't imagine how busy it would become if buses full of our children are added to the mix. There isn't even a lot of green space for the children to play on. How is G.R. Allan going to fit 2 schools onto the space that they currently have? My children would be able to take the bus, but for those children on our side of Main Street who would have to walk to school, how can it be in their best interest to expect them to cross over Main Street every morning to walk to school. That is not a safe place for them to be travelling every day. Prince Philip is tucked away between the escarpment and Whitney Avenue, and it feels very protected there. Whitney Avenue can be busy in the mornings, but nothing compared to how busy the traffic is on Main Street. It just is not a safe option for our little ones to expect them to cross over Main Street every morning and afternoon.

I love having the option of walking my children to and from school every day, and it saddens me to think that this option could be taken away from so many of us who choose to walk to school. Our schools are teaching our kids the importance of being physically active and the importance of exercise, yet the Board wants to take this option away from so many children. In a presentation made to the ARC Committee at the September 14th Working Meeting, Mr. Antonio Paez spoke on the importance of physical activity. He shared that (and I am quoting from the minutes taken at that meeting) *"... children, who are between the ages 5-11, should engage in 60 minutes per day of physical activity. When the students walk to school this provides them with 15-20 minutes of activity per day. This is beneficial for the parents as well. Statistics show that healthy children make better scholars. He stated that exercise is a simple but important piece to enhance a child's academic performance. Maintaining physical fitness and physical activity through puberty will have favourable health benefits in later years. Transportation choices during childhood may influence transportation choices in adulthood. When walking to school people have interaction with other children and adults therefore supporting community building.*

They have a feeling of connection.” I agree. I want my children to know the benefits of being physically active, and it is a pleasure to be able to walk them to school, to spend that time together before and after their day at school. I would much rather spend that time with them walking instead of driving. There is also something special about seeing other parents walking their children to school, and it saddens me to think that we may not see this anymore. Our neighbourhood would feel very different. I even wonder what it will be like for so many of our parents who don't own their own vehicles. What are they supposed to do if they get a call in the middle of the day, saying that their child is sick and that they need to be picked up. G.R. Allan is much farther away than Prince Philip, and it is not as convenient for them to go and pick their child up, if needed. If they have to rely on taking the bus, that is a longer way for them to travel, and if they have to rely on a taxi to take them, it will cost them more money. It just doesn't seem fair.

In attending the past few meetings, I haven't heard a good reason as to why Prince Philip needs to close. Even in addressing the projected enrolment numbers, these don't seem to make sense. The numbers are, at best, a guess, and are not always accurate. Again, to quote Mr. Paez at this same meeting: *I saw the [projections] presented at the start of the process and I felt a bit sceptical about the amount of projected decline in the community. Student rentals can often discourage new families from moving into the neighbourhood. The construction of new condominiums in the area should decrease the need for university student rental housing. With these students moving out of the community, the potential exists for young families to move in, especially because of the lower price point of these homes once you factor in the renovations required to convert these homes back to single family dwellings. I feel that the children population will stabilize in this neighbourhood.”*

Mr. Antonio Paez also stated, *We have discovered that the costs for repairing these three schools is not as high as previously indicated. I would like to see the actual cost of these repair needs. I do not think that the schools will fall apart in the next 3-5 years. I would like to see things stay as status quo and then look at the situation five years down the road and see if the enrolment numbers are stable.*

Please vote against closing our school. I have nothing against G.R. Allan, but I don't feel like I've received a good reason as to why our school needs to close and why our children need to be bussed to a new school in the near future. With the rising cost of fuel and the environmental implications of busing, how can this be a good option? Why should our 2 schools' populations be crammed into one school when there is a perfectly good school available in Prince Philip? I don't see a good reason as to why Prince Philip should be closed, and I hope that you feel the same way when you receive the report from the ARC Committee. Please vote against closing our beloved Prince Philip.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kristi Gringhuis