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November 25, 2009

Mr. Chris Spence
Director of Education
5050 Yonge Street
Toronto, ON M2N 5N8
Chris.Spence@tdsb.on.ca

Dear Director Spence,

Re: Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) Process: "Davisville-Yonge Redevelopment Project"

I am in receipt of your letter of November 16th that was received by my office on November 18th.

I am writing to notify you that my office will not be taking part in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) process for "Davisville Junior Public School/Hodgson Senior Public School/Maurice Cody Junior Public School/Eglinton Junior Public School/Spectrum Alternative Senior School", also identified as the "Davisville-Yonge Redevelopment" project.

I object wholeheartedly to a process that does not put students first. It is clear to me that the TDSB is going beyond the intentions of the Ministry of Education's "Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines (October 31, 2006)" in order to justify selling off some prime Davisville real estate to a developer in order to generate capital cash flow to offset a capital budget deficit the TDSB is experiencing due to the broken and unfair funding agreement with the Province. In my opinion, the students of Davisville Jr. P.S. are not the TDSB's primary concern here – redevelopment is.

For instance, the Province's detailed Guidelines do not include the word "redevelopment"; concepts of redevelopment or real estate value are not included in the comprehensive "four considerations" that guide the School Valuation Framework; and not once is it suggested that a 'land deal' or 'redevelopment opportunity' be considered as a topic of discussion for an Accommodation Review Committee.

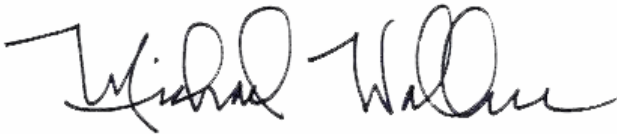
Davisville Jr. P.S. should not be the subject of an Accommodation Review Committee at all. Davisville Junior Public School is not one of the 36 schools "in jeopardy" because of the poor condition of the school building or under-enrolment due to lack of demand or systemic problems with program delivery. Davisville Jr. P.S. is a critical piece of our Davisville neighbourhood's social infrastructure which cannot be lost. Davisville Jr. P.S. is a school in good repair, built half a century ago, and is not crumbling around its students like North Toronto Collegiate Institute was when the decision was made to rebuild it. The TDSB has not identified "the problem" to be solved at Davisville Jr. P.S. and why it requires such attention. This school was not included in the eight ARCs recommended by TDSB staff. I believe that Davisville Jr. P.S. only became one of the expanded list of ten ARCs being conducted by the TDSB because of its high real estate value.

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I noticed with concern that the multiple communications to the public, including the one to me, regarding this ARC process do not include any reference to any redevelopment of this site. This is questionable since the TDSB 2009-2010 Strategic Plan identifies “redevelopment of the Davisville site in partnership with public and private partners” to be the prime reason for this ARC. Also, the Strategic Plan outlines only for Davisville Jr. P.S. that the TDSB will “maintain local school presence *if required*” – this could be the beginning of the justification of closing this school. Another concern I have is the TDSB’s communications do not highlight that ARCs are purely advisory and that there is no requirement for the TDSB to abide by ARC recommendations. This means if the ARC participants do not support a redevelopment of this site, the TDSB could ignore the outcome of this process altogether.

Let me be clear, I refuse to take part in a process so obviously flawed from the outset that it is doomed to sell students short. Davisville Jr. P.S. is the only school that is under enrolled of the five schools involved with this particular ARC. It is not under-enrolled because of lack of demand; the other four schools in the area are overwhelmingly overenrolled. To me, it seems we should be trying to discover the reason for this under-enrolment and focusing on attracting new students, that is – saving Davisville Junior Public School.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Walker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Walker".

Michael Walker
Councillor – St. Paul’s
City of Toronto

CJS

Cc// Michael Smith, Superintendent of Education, SW3 Family of Schools
Josh Matlow, Trustee, Ward 11 – St. Paul’s