



John W. MacLeod, Fleming Tower
School Advisory Council

STATEMENT ON CONCERNS AROUND INCREASED ENROLLMENT September 14, 2018

The following is to outline the position of the current JWM/FT School Advisory Council (SAC) regarding the concerns around increased enrollment and school capacity.

Prior to being raised most recently in January of this year, the concerns and issues around the impact of increased enrollment numbers at JWM/FT are part of a longer history that echo similar concerns that have been raised with the HRSB (now the Halifax Regional Centre of Education (HRCE) as far back as 2011.

This statement follows our May 16, 2018 regular SAC meeting, where HRCE School Administration Supervisor for the J.L. Illsley Family of Schools, Mr. Harvey Beaton, attended to hear and address the SAC's concerns. During that meeting, the SAC learned the details of a short-term plan for addressing the immediate enrollment challenges had been finalized, and is summarized as follows:

- The addition of a second portable classroom.
- Dividing an second floor classroom into two with the installation of a wall.
- Approval for two additional teachers.

The result of these planned changes for the 2018/19 school year are that the school will have all its 21 classes (14 French Immersion, and 7 English) under the size caps.

Despite these short-term measures, through discussion in its final meetings of the school year (held on June 7 and 12, 2018, respectively), the SAC unanimously agreed to support immediate action to assess and plan for a long-term solution to the over-capacity issue at the school. The evidence shows that the school has been over-capacity for over ten years, and with continuing residential development in the catchment areas, the expectation is that without immediate action the problem will only continue to worsen.

The following are the potential solutions the SAC supports examining:

- Requesting a Boundary Review – If approved by the HRCE, the main objective of a boundary review is to examine the current catchment boundaries for the schools in the entire J.L. Illsley Family of Schools to decide on if, and how, the boundaries could be redrawn to mitigate imbalances of catchment areas relative to capacity of respective assigned schools.

- A Grade Re-allocation – This refers to the re-organization of respective grades taught at each school i.e., P-6, 7-9, 10-12, etc.
- Program Changes – while we haven't clarified the precise process, generally, this refers to the possible changes to the programs offered at specific schools i.e., the addition of French Immersion at a school not previously offering it.

Communication Plan

The HRCE has indicated their preference for addressing enrollment/ capacity issues is through the SAC. With the urgency of this circumstances in mind, the SAC is committed to improving its communication with parents, staff, and community members for the 2018/19 school year. To facilitate this objective, information regarding SAC business and activities, including efforts to address the above-mentioned concerns will be communicated through its webpage on the JWM/FT official school website. The SAC identified this approach as the most feasible locale for a centralized source of news and information for the school community.

The 2018/19 School Year

From the outset of this school year, the SAC intends to diligently follow-up with the HRCE on its indication that an update on their plans to address the enrolment growth in our school is forthcoming in the Fall, as well as the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, where necessary. The SAC will also be gathering general information on the potential solutions to provide the school community with an understanding of the process for each.

Questions or concerns regarding this statement, should be directed to the SAC through its Chair, Dave Moorhouse at dave.moorhouse@gmail.com.