

To the board of trustees, I wish to thank you for your time and consideration of our proposal to expand West Lynn and close Elgin. I believe that this is the best decision not only for our students but for the community as a whole. I am sure by now the appropriate research in regards to the financial aspects of this merger has been explored. And all the students, families, faculty and staff's feelings and concerns have been considered in your decision to change your proposal in favour of keeping West Lynn open.

There are so many reasons why closing Elgin is a better option. The total cost of the repairs and renovation of the Elgin school, as well as the market value of Elgin's property in comparison to West Lynn's property, the accessibility issues in regards to creating and maintaining and the cost incurred for both, the possibility for community growth on the existing Elgin property, and keeping Simcoe students in town.

The estimated cost of repairing and expanding Elgin is phenomenally high. As West Lynn is already in good repair, the expansion of the school would be the most economically responsible decision. Seeing that the school is already accessible being a single level building, and that the possibility for expansion is to add a wing to the school as opposed to adding a second level, this will maintain the current accessibility standard within the school. Of course with the lack of required equipment to create an accessible Elgin, comes the decreased cost of maintenance throughout the year leading to a school that is less expensive to operate per student.

The property on which Elgin is located, is a very large piece of land, and not only an attractive asset for many, it is also an excellent source of income to add to the Grand Erie District School Board. The possible sale of the property would allow for many much needed and ideal upgrades to all of our local schools, helping to provide the best possible education to our students.

The Elgin property is located in a sought after area of town, and has been a point of interest for Norfolk General Hospital for many years. With the possibility of acquiring the land, the hospital may finally be able to add the much needed areas of health care that our changing population requires to maintain a healthy and happy community. The possible expansion of the hospital will also allow for an increase in jobs within the town. And with the current loss of many high paying industry in the area, the health care field would be an excellent way to bring up our town's economic situation. The town of Simcoe is in desperate need of change. I believe that opening up a large plot of land in a central location will help to breathe new life into our town.

The decision to keep West Lynn open also keeps Simcoe students in town. This allows for many opportunities for parent and student involvement within our schools. We are lucky to live in a small area, which most of our amenities are within walking distance. Also, by not busing our students to Port Dover families will have more time to be involved with non-school related extracurricular activities, such as, swimming, skating, dance, sports etc.

As I cannot say with any understanding of the French Immersion program what the best decision is for this. I do believe offering the program within to separate areas may increase the new enrollment numbers. A centrally located French Immersion Program will allow many families a more accessible option to have the education located in their community, as keeping a program at Walsh will allow rural families to also provide their children with this wonderful opportunity.

I thank you again for considering the possibility of keeping West Lynn open. This is a more viable option as a whole, and as co-chair of the West Lynn parents group, I will vow to make any transition a smooth, gentle and friendly one. We are excited to meet new families, and are working to provide the best possible learning experience for all students.

Thank you for this opportunity to help better our children's education and the community as a whole, and wish you all the best making the final decision.

Christine Oliveira