



QUEENSWAY TERRACE NORTH

Community Association

March 21, 2025

Dear Trustees of the Ottawa Carleton District School Board,

The Queensway Terrace North (QTN) Community Association has a mandate that includes promoting and protecting the interests and quality of life of the residents of the Queensway Terrace North community and monitoring current or proposed legislation and government policies and practices that affect or may affect the community. Severn Ave Public School is the only school within our neighbourhood. As such, the Board of the QTN Community Association is writing to express our concern with aspects of the proposed changes to Severn Ave Public School as a result of the OCDSB Elementary Program Review. Comments are limited to areas that fall under this mandate; topics such as changes to the alternative school program fall outside of this scope.

As a community, QTN is in the middle of major redevelopment that will lead to significant population growth, both through intensification in the neighbourhood and through new developments on Queensview Drive and at Lincoln Fields. Starting with the review of the Official Plan and continuing through recent secondary planning processes, our community has repeatedly raised the impacts this intensification will have on the social infrastructure in this area. Of particular relevance to this discussion, the capacity of the local school to support the projected increase in population has been a recurring concern of QTN residents.

The City of Ottawa's Official Plan highlights the importance of 15-minute neighbourhoods, which the QTNCA Board endorses as an important component of fostering community, reducing reliance on vehicles, and supporting active means of transportation such as walking and biking. The stated objective of the Elementary Program Review - having more children attend school in their neighbourhood - is in complete alignment with the idea of 15-minute neighbourhoods. The QTNCA Board also supports the inclusion of Enhanced English at Severn, which will allow more local families to attend school in our neighbourhood.

However, the proposal to change the grade profile of Severn Ave PS to become a K-3 school, with grades 4-8 attending school at Pinecrest PS does not support this objective. Pinecrest PS is

approximately 3 km away from Severn, which means that all children will need to be bussed. Even if children want to use active transportation, despite the distance, the pedestrian/cycling infrastructure between QTN and Pinecrest PS is completely inadequate for children to walk or cycle to school. Given the lack of walkability/bikeability, an increase in bus and car traffic to Severn Ave PS would be guaranteed.

An important barrier between Severn Ave PS and Pinecrest PS is created by Highway 417, which is the major highway in Ottawa. A recent article published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* highlights the issues created by the highway. Titled "Urban highways are barriers to social ties", it quantifies a strong barrier effect created by highways across 50 cities in the study. This matches the experience of QTN, where we are well-connected to several nearby communities (Whitehaven, Britannia, and Lincoln Heights) via active transportation whereas the connections with Queensway Terrace South are more constrained. The proposed changes to Severn Ave PS's catchment area do not capitalize on the connections to Whitehaven or Britannia and in fact negate them. The immediate effect of requiring more buses in this area may mean that the already strained availability of buses through OSTA will be further stretched. This is neither an efficient use of resources, nor environmentally responsible.

QTN is an older neighbourhood with streets that were not designed for high bus and car volumes, especially near Severn Ave PS. Many nearby streets do not have sidewalks, and there are many sharp corners that create poor visibility, especially on narrowed winter roads with high snowbanks. Because these are not main streets, they are not plowed quickly by the City of Ottawa and this has already been raised by residents as a safety concern with the current volume of buses. The OCDSB "walk a block" initiative forces parents to park on these side streets as they cannot park on Severn Ave closer to the school. The QTNCA Board is aware of multiple complaints due to school-related driving and we are concerned that increasing the volume of buses and cars on these roads will be dangerous.

Under the current OCDSB proposal, Severn Ave PS's new catchment area would include any new developments on Queensview Drive. As land along that road is re-zoned for residential apartments, there are potentially thousands of new residents who will be living there in the coming years. The program review indicates that Severn PS will already be at 116% capacity in 2026, indicating that the school does not have the space to handle the potential population growth for this area over the next 10 years. Not only is this proposed student volume already a strain on a small community school, it is not setting the school up for longer-term success. This highlights a key concern of QTN residents, which is adequate investment in local schools. By investing capital funding in Severn, expanding the facilities to allow the school to accommodate EE and FI K-8 students, all local OCDSB students could be accommodated at their neighbourhood school. This will help to make the school a hub in the community, and would help to build connections throughout QTN.

Finally, the QTNCA Board is also aware of resident concerns about the potential future of the REKSAP Early Learning program at Severn. It is the only daycare centre in QTN and provides programming for children from age 2.5 through to afterschool programming up to grade 6. They also offer full-time programming in the summer, which provides an important source of childcare for local families. Given the challenges in finding high-quality childcare spaces, the uncertainty about

REKSAP's future at Severn Ave PS is creating stress for local families who are concerned about how the OCDSB program changes will impact their access to REKSAP and childcare.

In closing, the QTNCA Board would like to highlight our support for providing Enhanced English and French Immersion programming at Severn Ave Public School, and the overall goal of having children attend school in their community. We understand that program reviews are necessary and that change can be hard. However, we urge the OCDSB to consider that the goals of integrating EE and FI programming are, in practice, opposing the goal of community schools in our neighbourhood. This highlights the long-term need to invest capital funding in Severn Ave PS and other area schools to ensure they continue to meet the needs of local communities. In the short term, we encourage the OCDSB to reconsider the current proposal, given the extensive consequences of these changes. We support walkable and bikeable community-oriented schools that keep children and our neighbours safe. We hope to see these important items reflected in the final version of your program redesign.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathy Vandergrift".

Kathy Vandergrift
QTNCA President

Cc: Dr. Pino Buffone
Director of Education and Secretary to the Board of the OCDSB