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Letter to the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board Regarding Lady Evelyn Alternative School and First Avenue Public School

February 2026

I'm writing today with regard to OCDSB schools in my ward.

As the City Councillor for Capital Ward—and as having served as School Board Trustee prior to my election as councillor—I must express my concerns and hopes about the proposed changes to the programs and to enrollment, specifically at Lady Evelyn Alternative School and at First Avenue Public School. Each school serves as an important and valued institution in Old Ottawa East and the Glebe, respectively.

Significant changes to the offerings at these schools will have an impact on the students, residents and families in the neighbourhood. As an advocate for high quality public education, and for thriving, healthy communities, I'm hopeful that reasonable outcomes can be achieved here.

Lady Evelyn Alternative School

Learning that new enrollments at Lady Evelyn Alternative School have been prohibited in the short term has been quite distressing to me and to our community. Old Ottawa East is a dynamic and growing community, with major residential development projects coming to Greystone, Hawthorne Avenue and Main Street. Lady Evelyn has served this community for three decades, and it maintains the potential to be a vibrant community school. As the neighbourhood grows, it would be disheartening to see it lose this important asset.

I join with the school community in asking the Ministry of Education and the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board to review what options there may be for Lady E including converting to a local community school with French Immersion offered and with a relatively high French speaking population in Old Ottawa East. Enrolment would jump and would likely take from other boards rather than pre-existing OCDSB schools.

Finally, I need to ask, what is the Board's medium to long term intention for Lady Evelyn? This school is located in a perfect spot with excellent community support and activities in a growing area (Old Ottawa East has nearly double in population over the last 15 years).



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First Avenue Public School

As with the news about Lady Evelyn, it was concerning to learn that the Middle French Immersion (MFI) program was being phased out at First Avenue Public School. I am pleased to learn that a temporary reprieve had been granted to First Avenue, with the phase-out being extended by two years. I believe this pause gives the Ministry and the Board additional time to re-consider the future of the MFI program at First Avenue, as well as at other schools throughout the city.

The MFI program is cherished at First Avenue Public School. Many families desired to have their children in the Early French Immersion (EFI) program, but the children were not at a stage at which they were willing to enter an immersion program at grade 1. The MFI program offers flexibility, and it recognizes the varied learning needs of children.

Offering flexible entry points for EFI may suit the needs of some students, but it is not a suitable replacement for the MFI program, as many students, upon reaching Grade 4, may be prepared to move into an immersion program, but may not be prepared to be thrown into a class with students who have been in an immersion program their entire school life and the expectations that would come with such a learning context. MFI has also shown nearly identical scores to EFI in French proficiency when leaving secondary school.

Further, by offering the MFI program at a school like First Avenue, it will allow students to switch from English to MFI while remaining at the same school, with their school community and, potentially, with their siblings, thus alleviating the stress on families of having children at different schools.

As with Lady Evelyn, I must ask, what is the Board's intentions for First Avenue Public School?

With the new bridge over the canal (from Old Ottawa East and Old Ottawa South to the Glebe) new opportunities for home school enrolment have been created with much shorter walk times.



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The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board—and, prior to that, the Ottawa and Carleton Boards of Education—has been a respected institution in our city and region. Generations of parents have been able to trust the Board would provide their children with the curriculum, programs and extra-curriculars they need to prepare them for their future learning opportunities.

I am confident that thinking of growth and community in light of the recent decisions relating to Lady Evelyn Alternative School and First Avenue Public School will follow in that tradition in doing what is best for its students and, by extension, our community.

Sincerely,

Shawn Menard
City Councillor, Capital Ward