

Un parent s'indigne contre la décision d'une école primaire et du CSDCEO

# Pétition pro-vie dans les sacs d'école

CAROLINE BARRIÈRE

cbarriere@ledroit.com

La direction de l'école élémentaire catholique Sainte-Félicité de Clarence Creek, dans l'Est ontarien, a autorisé qu'une pétition contre l'avortement soit distribuée au sein de l'établissement et remise aux parents par l'entremise de leurs enfants.

Un parent outré a communiqué avec *LeDroit*, afin de signifier son indignation face au document qui réclame le retrait du droit à l'avortement et qui prie «le Par-

lement d'adopter une loi pour la protection de la vie humaine depuis le moment de la conception (fécondation) jusqu'à la mort naturelle».

Selon lui, l'école et le Conseil scolaire de district catholique de l'Est ontarien (CSDCEO) ont outrepassé leur mandat en agissant de la sorte.

Le parent estime que même s'il s'agit d'un conseil catholique, la question de l'avortement est plutôt une affaire d'Église qui n'a rien à voir avec une école primaire.

Il s'est dit inquiet face au désir de certains groupes pro-vie de retirer le droit à l'avortement après des années de lutte pour de nombreuses femmes. Il a également dénoncé le fait que toute cette affaire pouvait signifier que le Conseil et son personnel appuyaient ce mouvement anti-avortement.

## Accord du conseil

La directrice de l'école, Nadine Goulet, a expliqué qu'un parent lui avait demandé s'il était possible de distribuer le document.

Elle a donc fait une demande auprès du Conseil qui a accepté à condition que la pétition, originellement en anglais, soit traduite en français, ce qui a été fait.

La directrice y a ajouté une note explicative qui se lisait comme suit: «À la demande d'un parent de notre communauté, et avec la permission du conseil scolaire, nous vous partageons cette pétition. Bien entendu, vous n'êtes pas tenu d'y participer et nous ne demandons pas aux élèves de la signer.»

Nadine Goulet a toutefois refusé

que les élèves signent le document comme le lui demandait le parent. «Nous ne voulions pas mêler les enfants à ça. Ils ne sont pas majeurs. Ce n'était donc pas approprié d'obtenir leur signature. C'est une décision qui doit être prise par la famille. Les gens sont libres d'y participer ou pas. L'école et les enseignants ne font pas la promotion de ça», a-t-elle dit.

## Pas encore d'exemplaires signés

Selon la directrice, le fait d'accepter que la pétition circule dans l'école et auprès des parents ne constitue pas nécessairement un appui à la cause contre l'avortement. «Cela n'indique pas ma position personnelle ni celle de l'école», a précisé Nadine Goulet.

La pétition a été distribuée la semaine dernière et l'école doit recueillir les signatures d'ici deux semaines. Elles seront alors remises à la Campaign Life Coalition à Toronto. Aucun exemplaire n'a encore été retourné à la directrice. Cette dernière a indiqué ne pas avoir reçu de plaintes de la part de parents.

De son côté, le CSDCEO n'a pas rappelé *LeDroit* à ce sujet.

**Facile à faire**



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## Le Canada recommande de reporter les voyages au Mexique



Photo: Alain Roberge, La Presse

La Presse Canadienne  
Ottawa

L'Agence de la santé publique du Canada émet un avis de restriction des voyages vers le Mexique, affirmant que tout déplacement non-urgent vers ce pays particulièrement affecté par la grippe porcine devrait être remis à plus tard, jusqu'à nouvel ordre.

Au cours des derniers jours, 152 décès au Mexique ont été imputés à la grippe porcine, qui aurait aussi infesté plus de 1600 autres personnes. Les États-Unis ont relevé 50 cas, comparativement à deux à l'Écosse et à un en Espagne. Le Canada compte toujours six cas déclarés, soit quatre en Nouvelle-Ecosse et deux en Colombie-Britannique.

Pour sa part, l'Organisation mondiale de la Santé (OMS) est passée, lundi, au niveau d'alerte 4 concernant la grippe porcine. Cette phase signifie une augmentation significative du risque de pandémie.

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Pro-Tamouls

## Des manifs de 900 000 \$



Les manifestants veulent que le Canada en fasse davantage pour forcer le gouvernement srilankais à mettre fin à son offensive contre le dernier bastion des Tigres Tamouls.

Photo: PC



**François Pierre Dufault**  
Le Droit

Les manifestations pro-Tamouls des dernières semaines ont coûté 900 000 \$ à la police d'Ottawa et la Ville souhaite obtenir un dédommagement du gouvernement fédéral.

Hier soir, la Commission des services policiers d'Ottawa (CSPO) a mandaté son président, Eli El-Chantry, d'aller cogner à la porte du Parlement pour exiger une compensation au-delà des deux millions de dollars déjà promis par Ottawa.

Cette somme avait été annoncée l'an dernier par le ministre responsable de la région, John Baird, pour couvrir les frais encourus par la municipalité lors d'événements en lien avec son statut de capitale nationale. « C'est

méprisant qu'on demande à nos citoyens de payer cette facture », a déclaré la conseillère Maria McRae, qui siège à la CSPO.

De son côté, le chef Vernon White a reconnu que cette dépense « sans précédent » risquait de refaire basculer les finances de la police dans le rouge. Une gestion serrée a permis à la police d'Ottawa de boucler son budget 2008 avec un surplus de 200 000 \$.

Par ailleurs, des représentants de la communauté tamoule ont adressé, hier, leurs remerciements à la police d'Ottawa.

## Finis les voyages, place aux réunions virtuelles

Agence France-Presse

28 avril 2009 | 07 h 35

**Plutôt que de prendre un avion pour se rendre à l'autre bout de la France, pourquoi ne pas organiser une réunion virtuelle depuis son bureau ou même de chez soi? Appelées à innover face à la crise, les entreprises optent de plus en plus pour la visioconférence et le télétravail.**

«Un déplacement implique un coût, du temps et de la pollution», résume Antoine Henocq, vice-président des ventes chez Genesys. Un argument de choc pour convaincre les sociétés, avides d'économies en ces temps difficiles et sensibles à la dimension écolo, de recourir à ses services de visioconférence.

Le groupe a observé une «augmentation très forte du trafic, de l'ordre de 25 à 30%» sur les derniers mois. Même constat dans l'équipement (écrans, caméras...), dont le marché mondial est attendu en hausse de près de 15% en 2009, selon les prévisions du cabinet Frost & Sullivan.

«Toutes les entreprises, quelle que soit leur taille, pas seulement celles du CAC 40, ont des réflexions sur le sujet», note Philippe Billet qui dirige Polycom France, un des leaders du secteur.

D'autant plus que les «innovations technologiques» récentes permettent, selon lui, «de se voir dans un bon contexte, avec des capacités de réseau suffisamment rapides pour ne pas avoir de décalage entre l'image et le son ou d'image déformée».

En lieu et place des traditionnelles salles dédiées, des petits systèmes de visioconférence font également leur apparition sur le bureau des cadres supérieurs, permettant d'organiser en quelques secondes une réunion à distance.

L'investissement «se rentabilise quasiment instantanément», assure M. Billet: «dans une vie antérieure, j'aurais pris l'avion au moins une fois par mois, en 18 mois je l'ai pris seulement deux fois».

Reste à faire entrer dans les moeurs une technologie qui peut rebuter, en particulier dans «une culture latine où les gens ont tendance à vouloir se côtoyer».

L'arrivée aux commandes de la génération internet pourrait toutefois changer la donne. Les jeunes salariés «ont l'habitude d'utiliser les outils de communication à la maison» et souhaitent faire de même dans leur entreprise, relève Alexander Michael, analyste chez Frost & Sullivan.

Il n'est donc pas difficile de les convertir aux meetings virtuels ou de les inciter à échanger avec leurs collègues via les messageries instantanées, de type Windows Live, plutôt que de passer un coup de fil.

De même, «il est tout à fait normal maintenant que des employés travaillent de chez eux», autre méthode envisagée par les sociétés «pour répondre aux défis de la récession», souligne M. Michael.

Illustration de cette tendance, deux sociétés de centres d'appels (Webhelp et Teleperformance) ont récemment converti une partie de leurs salariés au télétravail. L'américain Dell songe lui aussi à étendre son dispositif à travers le monde pour «faire des économies d'immobilier».

**Vous avez une nouvelle à nous communiquer ou encore une idée pour un reportage? Écrivez-nous à [technaute@cyberpresse.ca](mailto:technaute@cyberpresse.ca)**

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# Let students learn from their failures

THE OTTAWA CITIZEN APRIL 28, 2009

As someone who has, for 30 years, taught all types of students, and who has always regarded the ministry of education as part of the problem, rather than part of the solution, its latest directives on passing and failing provide further proof.

Teachers and principals have never taken the failure of a student lightly. There were always year-end conferences, at which the student's whole performance was carefully assessed before that decision was reached, and recent performance always counted more than past.

In every school in which I have taught, the system always erred on the side of the student. Most schools had a policy that teachers could not record a final mark between 46 and 49 per cent, and most of these eventually became 50 per cent if the student had any case at all.

Even this was not enough for the ministry, which now directs teachers to pass students whether or not they attend tests or hand in assignments, or even if they cheat. Of what value to society are such "graduates?" This solves the problem of failure by removing or concealing the symptoms, rather than addressing the cause.

In most cases, the cause is immaturity, inability or unwillingness on the part of the student to understand the relevance of education to life. For some, no amount of telling will convince how hard life without a diploma will be. It must be experienced.

Students should be helped in every legitimate way to pass. Those who cannot pass with normal help should be allowed to fail, and to leave school if there is no immediate chance of success.

Our priority should be not to keep students in school against their will, but to encourage failed students to re-enter education, once ready after real-life experience to behave responsibly.

Some of this is already done, but not enough. It is more fruitful than creating passes which aren't.

William D. Grant,

Ottawa

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# Online petition shows student leniency 'missed mark': teacher

## 1,100 note opposition to provincial policy

BY BRENDAN KENNEDY, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN    APRIL 27, 2009

OTTAWA — When Caroline Orchard launched her online petition Friday afternoon to oppose a provincial policy that gives students numerous chances to make up for missed deadlines and academic dishonesty, she had no idea what kind of response she would receive.

With more than 1,100 signatures in barely two days,

Orchard quickly found she

wasn't alone in her opposition.

"The fact that you got 1,100 signatures ... really goes to the heart of the fact that this policy has just missed its mark," she said Sunday evening.

Orchard, a math teacher at Sir Robert Borden High School for the past 34 years, was one of a group of educators who expressed concerns to the Citizen last week about a provincial assessment and evaluation policy they say pressures teachers to ensure students pass.

Under the policy, aimed at improving student success, students who fail to hand in assignments or engage in plagiarizing or cheating are no longer awarded a mark of zero and must be offered one or more chances to recover their endangered credit.

Orchard opposes the policy because she believes it prevents teachers from teaching life skills such as time management and meeting deadlines, and eliminates the consequences of cheating and plagiarizing.

She decided to launch the petition because she believes the province will only re-evaluate the policy if there is significant public concern.

"The only way something's going to happen is if somebody starts rattling cages," she said.

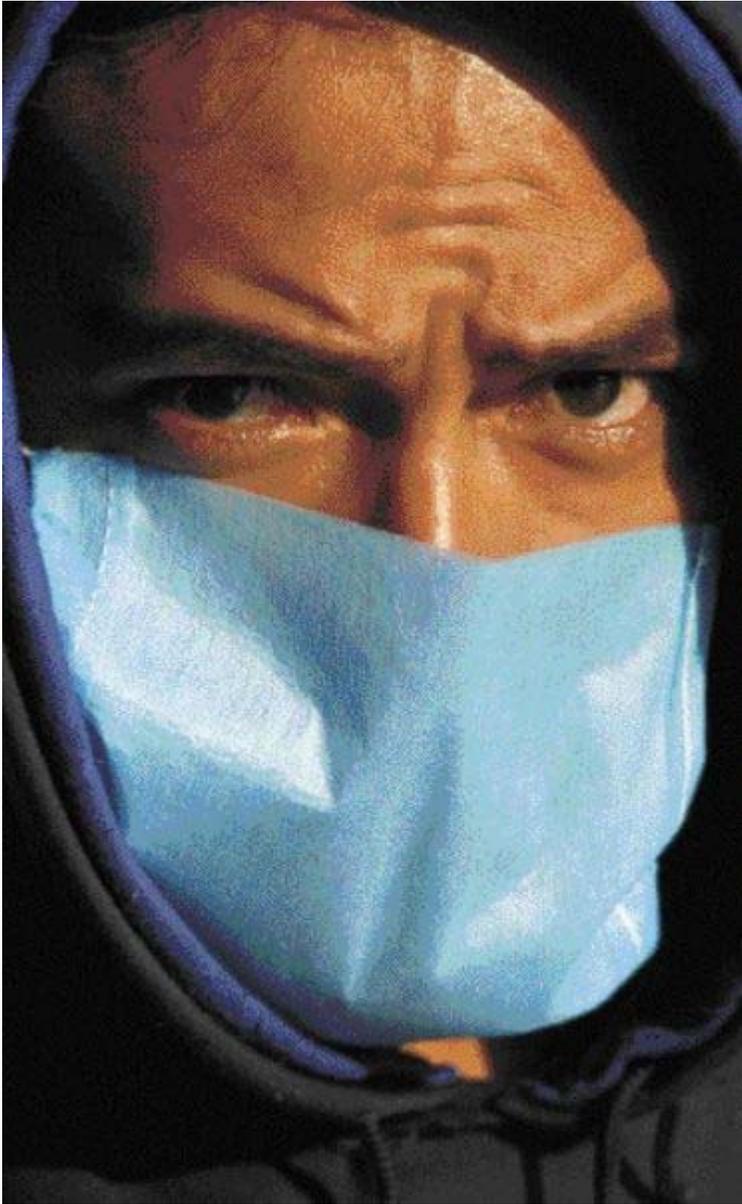
Given the petition's immediate success in Ottawa, Orchard said she plans to expand it to the Toronto area, and — potentially — to every major city in the province. She then plans to deliver it to Premier Dalton McGuinty and Education Minister Kathleen Wynne.

The petition can be signed at [www.ipetitions.com/petition/evaluation](http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/evaluation)

## Ottawa at the ready

### 5 Ottawans being monitored as WHO signals 'significant step toward pandemic'

BY MOHAMMED ADAM, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN; FILES FROM CITIZEN NEWS SERVICE APRIL 28, 2009



A man wears a surgical mask in Mexico City on Monday. Health officials in the country said the death toll from the swine flu outbreak has killed 149 people.

**Photograph by:** Eliana Aponte, Reuters, The Ottawa Citizen; files from Citizen News Service

The World Health Organization Monday warned of a heightened threat of a global pandemic, but public health officials in Ottawa say the nation's capital is in good shape to deal with any danger.

Ottawa chief medical officer of health, Dr. Isra Levy, said Monday that the city -- indeed, the country -- is as ready as it could be to face a pandemic.

He said 50 million doses of antiviral drugs had been stockpiled, more than enough for every Canadian. The drugs are the first line of defence.

Ottawa, he said, would be well protected.

Levy also revealed that five people in Ottawa who travelled to Mexico and came back with flu symptoms are being monitored by public health authorities. There is, however, no indication that they have contracted the deadly virus, he said.

Speaking to reporters in Ottawa, Levy said public health authorities in the city, with support from Ontario and the federal government, are very much on top of the problem.

"The country, the province, the city has been preparing for a pandemic quite aggressively now for several years and the experience that Canada and Ontario had during the SARS epidemic really gave us a lot of lessons," Levy said.

"We do know things that we didn't know before. The response you've seen within the last week -- the enhanced surveillance response and the very rapid laboratory investigation -- is quite promising. We're better prepared."

Senator Colin Kenny, long a critic of Canada's poor emergency readiness, agreed. Kenny's Senate committee on national security and defence wrote a scathing report in 2004 about Canada's lack of readiness, but he now acknowledges things have improved significantly.

"I can say with confidence that we have moved miles beyond where we were when SARS was arriving," Kenny said.

"We have in place a more effective system of tracking diseases and getting the information out there more quickly to allow public health experts to arrive at decisions faster and more accurately."

As the swine flu in Mexico continues on its path, with the death toll rising to 149, the WHO raised its flu pandemic alert level to four -- up from three -- signalling "a significant step toward pandemic influenza." Level 3 indicates sporadic cases of flu or clusters of cases in people, but no person-to-person transmission except in specific cases. Level 6 is a full-blown pandemic.

About the same time the WHO upped the ante, U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano said whatever the WHO decides, "we are proceeding as if we are preparatory to a full pandemic." And on the same day, the number of infections in the U.S. passed 40, the Centers for Disease Control released 25 per cent of a federal stockpile of antiviral drugs -- about 11 million doses -- to the states.

President Barack Obama warned against tourist travel to Mexico and U.S. officials said they would begin screening visitors from infected areas in Mexico.

Canada has not asked people to avoid Mexico, but a Public Health Agency of Canada spokesman said screening of travellers from Mexico has begun at Canadian airports.

While Ontario has so far had no reported cases of swine flu, Ottawa-area hospitals have screened a number of individuals who have recently travelled to Mexico and who appear to have mild symptoms associated with the outbreak, said Thomas Hayes, who chairs a committee of emergency planners from area hospitals, nursing homes and other health-care providers.

"There are a number of individuals of interest, certainly in Ottawa and around the province, that from a public health perspective we continue to monitor to stay on top of things," Levy said.

For the past five years, he said, Ottawa's public health department has been working with the city and community agencies to develop a comprehensive plan, setting out strategies and clear responsibilities in the event of a pandemic.

In a massive and virulent outbreak, hospitals and clinics could be overwhelmed and doctors, nurses, health workers and other emergency responders would find it hard to cope.

"There's always the potential for running out of sustainability," Kenny said.

The plan lays out what to expect, what various departments and individuals have to do, who is responsible for what equipment, and details a command structure that is clear and unambiguous. Also, learning from the 9/11 experience, clear lines of communication have been established to ensure information flows freely.

The first line of defence during a flu pandemic is antiviral drugs that can be stored in large quantities, unlike vaccines, which can only be produced once the particular flu strain is known.

The antiviral drugs stop the virus from reproducing inside a body, arresting the growth of the disease and buying essential time for the appropriate vaccine to be produced. The city plan sets out who gets the drugs and vaccines first -- health professionals such as doctors, nurses, pharmacists, ambulance crews and lab technicians. They would be followed by other first responders, such as police officers, firefighters and funeral home employees.

The city plan acknowledges problems and pressures that might arise and makes alternative arrangements to use schools, community halls, churches, mosques and synagogues as makeshift hospitals or shelters. Other plans include how to deal with mass deaths and mass burials, grim realities in a pandemic. With hospital morgues likely to be filled to overflowing, refrigerator trucks could be used to temporarily store corpses. If the pandemic is really bad, trucks may not be enough to store the dead

and community arenas and ice rinks could be pressed into service.

The worst-case scenario will likely never happen, but Kenny says the country has to "plan for the worst and hope for the best."

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#### On Alert

The World Health Organization -- WHO -- has a six-scale alert system that it uses to determine the severity of pandemics and help countries plan.

Level 1: No viruses circulating among animals have been reported to cause infections in humans.

Level 2: An animal flu virus circulating among animals is known to have caused infection in people and therefore poses a potential pandemic threat.

Level 3: Animal or human-animal flu virus causing sporadic cases or clusters of cases in people, but no large-scale human-to-human transmission.

Level 4: (The current level) Sustained human-to-human transmission that raises real threat of pandemic.

Level 5: Widespread human infection signalling that a pandemic is imminent.

Level 6: Onset of a new pandemic with sustained human-to-human transmission over many countries.

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#### Around the World

Austria: Secures capacity for enough vaccines to treat entire population

Britain: Confirms first two cases of swine flu

South Korea: Steps up quarantine and safety checks

Germany: Advises against non-vital travel to Mexico

Japan: Narita airport ramps up temperature checks for passengers from Mexico

U.S.: Officials declare public health emergency

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Read breaking news on the swine flu outbreak

View a photo gallery as the world responds

[ottawacitizen.com](http://ottawacitizen.com)

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Autos Careers Classifieds Homes



## School rules out prom

Festivities limited to daytime ceremony

By TERRI SAUNDERS, SUN MEDIA

Last Updated: 28th April 2009, 3:45am



**Kimberley Lorente and her daughter Caitlin are upset her school has said no to a prom. Caitlin, whose dress hangs in the background, had been planning for the big event for months and vows there will be a prom even if the school is not involved. errol McGihon/Sun Media**

Kimberley Lorente is pretty busy these days.

Whether it's helping her daughter Caitlin figure out which hairstyle suits her the best, what makeup might work best with her eyes or which colourful gown makes her look most like a princess, Lorente doesn't have much free time as she prepares her 18-year-old for one of the most significant rites of a passage -- her high school prom.

But there's just one problem. There is no prom to go to. Not yet, anyway.

### SAFETY CONCERNS

Late last week, Caitlin went to a meeting of the graduation committee at her high school, the Ottawa Technical Learning Centre, and asked a simple question -- what about the prom? She was told there wasn't going to be one. Or at least, not one organized by the school.

"I came home to find my daughter in tears," said Lorente. "I couldn't believe what she was telling me. There wasn't going to be a prom? She's been waiting for this for months."

Lorente said she immediately called school officials who told her the school, which caters to students with learning disabilities and other special needs, wasn't going to be planning anything more than a commencement ceremony followed by an hour of "mingling."

Principal Barry Armstrong said school-sanctioned prom activities such as dinners and dances bring with them concerns about student safety and liability related to things such as alcohol consumption.

"The decision was made last year to move the commencement to 10 a.m. from one later in the day," said Armstrong, explaining why dinner celebrations held in the past have evolved into a luncheon to be held in the school cafeteria.

"In previous years, the dinner was not well attended so the decision was made to try something different, at no cost to the students, which more people could attend."

Although discussions have been held over the past couple of months among school officials as to what sort of event to hold, Armstrong confirmed most students and parents probably didn't find out until within the past two weeks. Lorente said that's just not good enough.

"We should have been told long before this," she said. "Now we have to scramble."

Whatever happens, the students will have a party.

### CLUBS LINED UP

"Oh, we're going to have a prom," said Caitlin. "I've been planning it with one of my friends and we've got two potential clubs lined up and we have a band that's offered to play for free. We're going to have a prom."

Meanwhile, Caitlin, an honours student who is enrolled in college-level English courses online and who wants to attend film and business school, just wants to celebrate.

"There are only two times a girl can really get dressed up in her life -- her prom and her wedding," said Caitlin.

"I just know it's going to be fun. We're OTLC students. We know how to party."

TERRI.SAUNDERS@SUNMEDIA.CA

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# Schools to alter hours as boards cut buses

## Some schools face 45-minute changes to start, end times

BY KRISTEN SHANE, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN    APRIL 28, 2009 6:36 AM

OTTAWA — Trustees at Ottawa's English-language Catholic and public school boards will meet tonight to decide on proposed changes that could shift start and finish times by as much as 45 minutes at more than 30 schools, starting in September.

Parents say the changes, which would result in school opening times ranging from 8 a.m. to 9:20 a.m., would interfere with work schedules and force them to pay for more day care. As well, fewer open seats would be available for children who sometimes take buses outside their school boundaries.

But the boards, both of which are losing one per cent, or \$270,000, of their provincial transportation funding, say they need to alter school hours so they can use fewer buses. "We know that we have to make some efficiency changes," Catholic board trustee Kathy Ablett said in an interview Monday.

Ontario's Education Ministry expects school boards to cope with the reduced funding by consolidating busing wherever possible.

In a report this month, staff at the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority, which manages busing for both school boards, outlined almost \$1 million in savings by eliminating at least 14 buses from seven sets of routes.

Parallel Catholic and public routes would be combined, or the same bus would be used to drop off students at several schools. School hours would shift to accommodate students who are bused.

Barrhaven is slated for the most disruption, with 16 schools facing scheduling changes.

Lynn Ogilvie, a school council member at Berrigan Elementary School, now leaves her five-year-old son Trent with a neighbour for the half-hour gap between the time her last adult family member leaves for work or school and Trent's 8 a.m. school start time. The proposed changes would push it at least a half hour later.

"If they change the school hours, I'm going to have to try to find before-school daycare, so it's going to increase my daycare costs by \$400 to \$500 a year," said Ogilvie.

Added fellow Berrigan council member Peter Haighton: "Barrhaven is really family oriented. (It has) a high population of children. So already, today, finding daycare is a very difficult prospect. Adding this additional pressure will increase the difficulty."

Roy Wierenga, general manager of the OSTA, agreed that “whenever you change someone’s school start time, it’s significant.”

But, he added, “There’s no perfect bell time that’s going to meet everyone’s daily schedule.”

Wierenga said the OSTA has responded to concerns expressed by parents in meetings at affected schools in January and February.

It recommended scrapping potential changes at three schools in Ottawa’s west end, because two of them are undergoing a review of their viability.

It also took a second look at the Barrhaven situation and offered trustees new options that would lessen the change in school hours.

Despite these options, trustees on the public board’s business services subcommittee voted April 15 to recommend that the board delay all changes for Barrhaven schools.

Public and Catholic board trustees must reach a consensus on all the busing changes after separate board meetings tonight.

Ablett, who is also the OSTA board chair, said she will listen to parent delegations and consider any new information presented before voting.

Schools potentially affected by school bus changes

School Current start time Proposed

St. Joseph H.S. 8:15 a.m. 8 a.m.

Mother Teresa H.S. 8:55 a.m. 8:40 a.m.

Mary Honeywell P.S. 8 a.m. 8:30-8:45 a.m.

Farley Mowat P. S. 8 a.m. 8:30-8:45 a.m.

Berrigan E.S. 8 a.m. 8:30 a.m.

St. Patrick E.S. 8:40 a.m. 8:30-8:45 a.m.

Adrienne Clarkson P.S. 8:15 a.m. 8:30-8:45 a.m.

Longfields Davidson (new) N/A 9:15 a.m.

Jockvale P.S. 8:30 a.m. 8:30-9:15 a.m.

St. Andrew E.S. 9 a.m. 9:10- 9:15 a.m.

Cedarview M.S. 9:15 a.m. No change\*

Barrhaven P.S. 8:45 a.m. 9:10- 9:15 a.m.

St. Luke E.S. 9:10 a.m. 9:10- 9:15 a.m.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seaton 9:10 a.m. 9:10-9:15 a.m.

St. Emily E.S. 9 a.m. 9:10-9:15 a.m.

Monsignor Paul Baxter 9 a.m. 9:10-9:15 a.m.

Queen Mary P.S. 9 a.m. 9:10 a.m.

St. Michael E.S. 8:15 a.m. 9 a.m.

St. Elizabeth E.S. 8:15 a.m. 8:10 a.m.

W. E. Gowling P.S. 8:30 a.m. 8:20 a.m.

First Avenue P.S. 9:05 a.m. 9 a.m.

Mutchmor P.S. 9:10 a.m. 9:15 a.m.

Corpus Christi E.S. 9:05 a.m. 9:10 a.m.

Connaught P.S. 8:30 a.m. 8:20 a.m.

Elgin Street P.S. 8:30 a.m. 8:15 a.m.

Bayshore Catholic School 9 a.m. No change\*

Bayshore P.S. 8:45 a.m. 8:50 a.m.

St. Philip E.S. 9:15 a.m. 9:20 a.m.\*\*

Sir Winston Churchill P.S. 9:15 a.m. No change\*

Pope John E.S. 8:25 a.m. No change\*

St. Augustine E.S. 9:05 a.m. 9:15 a.m.

Carleton Heights P.S. 9 a.m. 8:55 a.m.

McGregor Easson P.S. 9:05 a.m. 9 a.m.

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# Obituary: Veteran school trustee was reliable and blunt-spoken

BY JOANNE LAUCIUS , THE OTTAWA CITIZEN    APRIL 27, 2009



Alex Getty

**Photograph by:** Pat McGrath, The Ottawa Citizen

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OTTAWA — A veteran public school board trustee known for his no-nonsense approach and dry sense of humour died suddenly on Sunday.

Alex Getty was an active presence in Barrhaven-Knoxdale-Merivale, attending school events from graduations to spelling bees. Getty often said at the end of the day, if it was good for students, he would vote for it. Those decisions often pitted big-picture fiscal prudence against neighbourhood issues like closing schools.

“Alex always said it like it was. He didn’t mince words,” said Carol Parker, who served with him for nine years on the former Carleton Board of Education. “He was totally reliable. If he said he was going to do something, he did it.”

A native of Glasgow, Scotland, and a graduate of the University of Strathclyde, Getty had a 31-year career with Canada Customs and Revenue before retiring. He was elected to his first term as trustee in 1991 after spending three years as an observer in the public gallery of the Carleton Board of Education.

Getty said he wanted to move beyond being a critic. “It’s time for me to put up or shut up.”

He opposed “unfettered choice” in the school system, was in favour of more rigour and argued that the

board should get out of busing to concentrate on its real job — programs in the schools.

Getty was prepared to eliminate junior kindergarten and cut special education costs, and he supported a package of changes that mean many schools will start an hour earlier or later than usual, a move calculated to save the board \$1.3 million a year.

“We went through some challenging times. He had to do the best with the money that was available,” said Lynn Scott, chairwoman of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board.

Getty’s decisions sometimes attracted the ire of parents. The greatest opposition came in 2000 after the Carleton board amalgamated with the Ottawa Board of Education. The new board was pressed by Queen’s Park to get on with the job of closing underutilized schools in the city core so new schools could be built in the suburbs.

“It’s very clear to me the minister said to get on with the job you’ve got to do,” he said. “We need to put that money into programs and the classroom.”

Some trustees held out for a last-minute reprieve, but the province’s pressure was inexorable. In November 2000, just three weeks before the election, the board voted to close six schools, bringing the total to 11 schools after three years of debate.

Getty was among the trustees to feel the heat. A group of parents at a school slated to close released a “hit list” of four trustees it urged voters to blacklist. He lost his seat to Myrna Laurenceson but returned in 2003 after winning a narrow victory against her.

More than a decade after amalgamation, tough choices are still on the agenda. Often, as the clock ticked towards midnight with a major decision still to be made, Getty would break the tension with a witticism, said trustee John Shea, who represents Cumberland-Orléans.

In 2007, as trustees debated the merits of taking money from the capital budget and putting it into the operating budget, there was a power surge and a light in the boardroom shattered.

“God himself has spoken,” Getty deadpanned. “We can’t take any money out of the capital budget.”

His straightforward manner has won the appreciation of a new generation of trustees.

“He was always focused,” said Shea, a rookie trustee. “He always made sure he spoke to his community about what his concerns were. And he voted accordingly.”

Getty is survived by his wife, Rita, son Sean and daughters Susan and Sarah.