

TDSB Trustees must **FREEZE SCHOOL CLOSINGS NOW!**

Our School Trustees were elected to protect our public education system and must act immediately to freeze the planned closing of dozens of Toronto schools.

Across the city, parents, students and community members are signing a petition which demands that School Trustees freeze school closings now! The petition lists four reasons why a freeze on school closings is needed now. These four reasons are listed below.

TDSB Trustees must FREEZE SCHOOL CLOSINGS NOW, because...

1 The TDSB's "consultation" meetings about school closings (ARCs and PARTs*) do not provide a full and fair discussion of the issues.

The ARC and PART* meetings are manipulative and are designed to limit parent and community participation. They do not provide a democratic forum for discussion of the issues or an opportunity to discuss alternatives. Instead of meaningful consultation, the ARC and PART meetings push an aggressive agenda to close schools.

At the ARC and PART meetings, TDSB facilitators often make vague promises about making improvements with the money "saved" by closing schools. They talk about adding facilities and programs but are closing schools that have much to offer. In some cases, they have talked about the possibility of putting domes on school playing fields!

The fact is that if any money is saved, it must go into the TDSB's general fund and cannot be set aside for local improvements. There are many demands on the general fund, including a \$750 million backlog of school maintenance.

Parents have noted that, once their school is included in an ARC or PART, the process moves far too quickly for effective community engagement. Parents have also been shocked to learn that schools that are included in ARC or PART processes are excluded from the province's new all-day kindergarten.

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2 School closings are not good for students.

When students are moved to a distant school, they face longer walks. It is harder for them to participate in after school programs and harder to make friends. Many regular program elementary students are already being bused to school!

The role of parents in the school is undermined because it is harder for parents to visit the school.

Small schools are being targeted for closure. Many students will be moved to mega schools — despite decades of positive experience with smaller schools.

In smaller schools, staff and principals get to know each student. This makes the school safer and creates a better environment for learning.

Parents of Special Education students are particularly concerned about the impact of school closure on their children.

Middle schools (various combinations of grades 6 - 9) are also being targeted for closure. Many middle schools were custom built for middle school students — with music rooms, art rooms and industrial shops.

While the TDSB claims that closing schools will free up money to create "schools of excellence" in the future, it is in the process of shutting down excellent schools which already exist!

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3 School closings are not good for communities.

School gyms, playing fields, pools and meeting rooms are used by a wide range of community groups. Many schools provide child care, parenting centres and ESL classes. Seniors count on neighbourhood schools for lifelong learning. Communities benefit from schools' green space.

The Minister of Education has repeatedly endorsed schools as "community hubs", providing a wider range of services and programs. This would help to keep schools open. But the Minister has not provided the time, the tools or the funding for developing schools as community hubs.

Many of the communities which are targeted for school closings are already struggling with poverty and systemic barriers to success. School closings are a particularly unjust setback for these communities.

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4 The funding formula for education is under review by the provincial government this year.

The funding formula review was promised years ago and is long overdue. Why the rush to close schools before the funding formula review is complete?

The funding formula does not recognize the importance of protecting neighbourhood schools. We need neighbourhood schools now and will need them in the future when the urban population becomes more dense. Schools which are closed and sold are lost forever.

The TDSB's budget problems are caused by underfunding, not by low enrolment. Ontario's education spending per pupil stands at a disgraceful #46 in North America!

While the funding formula is under review, TDSB Trustees must freeze school closings and speak out for a funding formula that keeps our neighbourhood schools OPEN!

Here's what YOU can do to save our schools:

- 1** Circulate the Petition to Save Our Schools. Ask for a Save Our Schools lawn sign.

For a copy of the PETITION TO SAVE OUR SCHOOLS and/or a lawn sign, please email sos@campaignforpubliceducation.ca or phone 416-906-1866.

- 2** Form a Save our Schools committee in your neighbourhood.
- 3** Attend ARC and PART meetings and demand a freeze on school closings.
- 4** Contact the Campaign for Public Education to link up with others who are fighting school closings: sos@campaignforpubliceducation.ca or phone 416-906-1866.
- 5** Call your School Trustee to demand a freeze (For a listing of school trustees, visit campaignforpubliceducation.ca then click on elections, the city, TDSB trustees.)
- 6** Visit www.campaignforpubliceducation.ca for campaign updates. And join the "Save Our Schools Toronto" Facebook group.