

**Ottawa East
Community
Association**



Old Town Hall

March 23, 2018

Elaine McMahon, Chairperson
Ottawa Catholic School Board

[via e-mail: kathy.hodgins@ocsb.ca]

Dear Elaine McMahon:

Proposed artificial turf field at Immaculata High School

The residents of Old Ottawa East (OOE) are your neighbours; OOE is your community as well.

The Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB) is currently proposing to remove the free community access to what has long been considered the best and only full field in all of Old Ottawa East. And contrary to what I have heard from some members of your school staff, this field was not reclaimed from being a paved parking lot by the OCSB. Indeed, this field has been a sports field through the St Pat College days, the Algonquin College period as well as for Immaculata. (The original baseball diamond on the property was converted to a parking lot many years ago, but not the sports field.)

A school should not be an island that tries to ward off any contact from those that live beside it. When issues arise (as in inappropriate use by some neighbours in terms of leaving dog waste), there should be a discussion with/ alert to the community. A school should be setting an example to all of its staff and students in so many ways, including conflict resolution and how to make the best decisions.

In this case the OCSB has demonstrated a very bad example of how a publicly funded board consults. To simply announce a major change without any actual consultation with neighbours and the community at large would be indefensible were it a private entity or a municipal government. Is this an example of the "values-based" education the Catholic Board prides itself on?

The playing field is an important part of our community. I think it is really important for you to hear some positive examples of how people in Old Ottawa East have been responsibly using your facilities:

- A woman living close to the school sent me this message: "I used the track to prepare for running my first marathon at 59 years of age. I qualified and ran Boston the next year at 60 years of age. This community has allowed me to stretch my dreams."
- Another one of my neighbours, now in junior high, has been using your track for training for track and field for a number of years.

The official response thus far to our plea for public access has been to receive a note indicating that the field is currently available for rent to community groups and that this practice will continue to be the case in the future as well, at competitive artificial turf rates. Unfortunately, this response misses the point that there has been no charge for individual /family use for decades.

The OOE Community Association strongly supports an improved field at Immaculata:

- many children from the community attend Immaculata and the school is very important to us;
- BUT we do not support what is essentially the "privatization" of the field and the elimination of casual and free community use when the field is not being used by students;
- and we definitely do not support the extension of daily - and illuminated - use to 11:00 p.m. on a daily basis.

What we are asking you to consider is the following:

- a rethink would be great;
- but at a minimum, the community should be invited to a public forum / open house where the proposed plans are available and questions can be posed and answered;
- and we would like a promise from you to actually consult on how to ensure that some free public access can be provided to the field:
 - o not for people to walk their dogs,
 - o but for running, pick up sports and a chance for families to run and play with their kids,
 - o and at a minimum the ability for community members to use the track.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Phyllis Odenbach Sutton
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Via email: podenbac@storm.ca

c.c.: Kathy Ablett, Trustee, Ottawa Catholic School Board
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