



Monday February 22, 2021

Letter to Council of Commissioners

Regarding: Letter of support following concerns received from parents at St John Fisher

Dear Members of the Council of Commissioners,

SNAC was recently approached by parents at St John Fisher concerning a sudden change of scheduled school start time and have been asked to write a letter of support in their asking that the Council of Commissioners table any decisions to a late start at St. John Fisher Jr and Sr schools until after the LBPSB conducts a complete consultation process where some of the concerns regarding students with special needs students (and all students) and the effects of a late start are researched and addressed.

SNAC was told that parents of St John Fisher Jr and Sr schools were advised of this change on Feb 10th, 2021 through a special meeting request by David Meloche. The presentation has been shared with SNAC. The presentation was presented to parents less than a week after registration for the 2021-2022 school year concluded, that their children would no longer be starting their school days at 8am, but a full hour later, at 9am, come next school year (September 2021).

This sudden announcement has surprised parents and provoked several concerns among the parent community, but especially the special needs parent community of these schools. SNAC has been informed by Sarah Campeau, a St. John Fisher Sr Governing board member and the Region 3 Parent Committee Member, that Ms. Deborah Shizgal, Principal, has indicated that the **St John Fisher Sr school will have between 80-90 I.E.P.s in the school of 300 students. That is 26.6%- 30% population of students with special needs in one school.** Sarah reported to SNAC that the Jr school will have approximately 20 students on I.E.P.s in the 2021-2022 academic year.

SNAC feels that it is important for the council to consider how this change of schedule may impact the students with special needs education and their families.

Some families have expressed concern that extra time in daycare (or suddenly requiring day care for the first time) will prove to be too taxing for their children with special needs and may affect their ability to be receptive to learning and to meet classroom expectations. Likely, students and teachers would be affected if students with special needs arrived at their first classes already feeling unable to learn after having spent 2 hours in daycare before the 9am morning bell.

Other repercussions could include managing employee expectations (requiring more daycare staff, support staff), having students learn to adjust to a different routine, less critical time for transitions to after school therapies or activities. Families may also encounter difficulties with their employers, as most jobs require their staff to be present by 9am, thus requiring them to use the daycare services at an additional cost they may not have in their family budget.

SNAC understands that the school board has to weigh and evaluate several factors in coming to decisions that involve logistics, budget, transportation, safety, staffing etc. We are persuaded however, that a sudden change without consultation with the parent population and future LBPSB parents, could impact many children and their families. Especially during such trying times, we feel that a decision regarding such a matter deserves time and effort to properly assess various solutions, their pros and cons, with the usual transparency we have come to expect from Lester B Pearson School Board.

As the Special Needs Advisory Committee, we are not taking a position on whether or not the change in start time in any school is justified. However, we do feel comfortable supporting the St John Fisher Sr Parent Committee Rep's written request to SNAC in support of asking Council to table any decisions to a late start at St. John Fisher Jr and Sr schools until after the LBPSB conducts a complete and transparent consultation process, allowing for information sharing and gathering, and the consideration of various perspectives. We also feel, in earnest, that these parents have the wellbeing of the entire community at heart and that their request for more time and consideration is warranted.

Sincerely,

Jennifer DiMarco - Chair
Special Needs Advisory Committee 2020-2021
snac@lbpearson.ca

Cc: Sarah Campeau St John Fisher Sr. PC rep, Region 3 parent committee rep