

To:  
School District 73 Board of Trustees  
1383 9th Ave, Kamloops, BC V2C 3X7

Honourable Todd Stone  
MLA Kamloops-South Thompson  
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Honourable Jennifer Whiteside  
Minister of Education  
Room 306 Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

May 4, 2021

RE: Proposed catchment change for Juniper Ridge / Marion Schilling Elementary

I'd like to start by thanking the board for engaging in a discussion with the communities affected by the proposed catchment changes. The City of Kamloops has seen significant population growth in recent years, and the available facilities appear to have fallen behind in their ability to handle this growth, coupled with the reduction in legislated class size. I feel that the district needs to be more proactive in adjusting enrollment projections in conjunction with development plans and aligning long term strategic decisions with Kamplan. Many people I have spoken to in our community feel that the district has failed to plan for the current rate of growth, particularly with the influx of younger families with multiple children from other regions, especially from the lower mainland.

The community of Juniper Ridge is a unique neighbourhood within the city of Kamloops, in that it is physically isolated from adjoining communities - a facet that has historically made it a desirable area, as it is a short commute to other areas of town. The initial development in the 1970's saw predominantly low-density single family housing, followed with a small amount of low density multi-family and one multi family medium density development. The Juniper West development plan started around 2007 and has continued to be a primarily low-density development, with a similar percentage of low density multi-family, but has evolved to also contain a number of medium density multi family developments, as well as a planned medium density apartment complex. There are also more recent provisions in current Kamloops bylaws that permit secondary suites within single family dwellings, which many homeowners find a valuable tool to offset the increased cost of housing in the area.

The current growth of new dwellings in Juniper Ridge is moving at a steady pace. Babine Heights on the East side of Juniper Ridge is a 34 unit strata duplex complex that is approximately 20% complete. Site preparation has begun on the second phase of Stone Ridge Estates on Kicking Horse Drive (also on the East side) for another 15 single family lots expected to be available for sale within the next 2 years. 50 units of townhouses in on Qu'appelle Blvd in

the West side of Juniper is nearing 50% complete and appears on pace to be complete by the end of 2022. 52 of 58 detached building lots have been sold in the "Trail Side" subdivision south of Coldwater Drive, and judging by the pace of recent construction in the area, I would expect the majority of new homes there to be complete by 2023-2024. A development plan was approved by the City of Kamloops in April, and site preparation is starting for another 45 detached home lots west of Galore Crescent, and are assumed to be available for sale in 2022. Rose Hill Estates development south of the existing neighbourhood of Rose Hill is in progress to develop 65 large low-density single family lots. There is a proposed development application in progress for the area west of Coldwater Drive to connect development with the East portion of Rose Hill - the application has not yet been presented, but the original Juniper Ridge development plan has accounted for 110 single family lots (it is worth noting that there have been very few deviations from the original 2007 development plan). There is also a medium density multi-family zoned lot in Juniper West that is expected to have an undetermined number of walk-up apartments - the zoning allows for a maximum of 75 units on this particular parcel. Orchards Walk development is ongoing with their official community plan to support only multi-family dwellings; it is unknown how many more units are planned, but I would expect at least 150 units based on the existing density of the development.

There will be approximately 300 new homes plus potentially 75 apartment units in Juniper West/Rose Hill, 49 homes in Juniper East, and at least 150 homes in Orchards Walk within the next 10 years, and based on current progress, I feel it would be reasonable to expect approximately 145 within Juniper West / Rose Hill and 36 in Juniper East within the next 5 years assuming 75% of available lots have attained occupancy (excluding potential apartment occupancy). In 10 years it would be reasonable to expect at least 400 new dwellings in Juniper Ridge alone, with a capacity for the majority of the detached homes to have secondary suites. The district's own Long-Range Facilities Plan states that "**maximum yield rates (students per household) are found in newer, low-density single family housing**", but the enrollment projections for Juniper Ridge do not seem to reflect that statement based on the rapid progress of development in the area.

The current and recent years' enrolment numbers at JRES confirm that Juniper Ridge continues to grow as a primarily family-oriented community, and the projected enrolment numbers do not appear to align with the projected growth of this community. It is also worth mentioning, though not my focus, that the future potential growth in Orchards Walk does not seem to be reflected in the MS enrolment projections. It is paramount for the district to prioritize the planning for the new Juniper West Elementary school, including land acquisition of currently available crown land and working with the city and province to include community amenities for future use in their development plans - similar to Parkcrest Elementary - that Juniper Ridge, Rose Hill, and Valleyview would benefit from in future years, including the potential for integrated childcare spaces - which are becoming incredibly difficult for families to find space in - as identified by the Ministry of Education. Projected timelines for new elementary schools and school expansions in Surrey range from 3-5 years from date of approval - what year will the district seek approval for the future Juniper West elementary?

In the short term, I think most residents realize the lack of available space at JRES is nearing critical capacity, and some of the normally available programming has been sidelined. However,

I truly believe the proposal to divide the children in our community geographically is the wrong solution with incredibly poor timing, coming off the heels of a pandemic that has put a strain on social connections in all of our lives. Children thrive off of social connections, even more so in times like these where interactions have been so limited. Breaking early life bonds of friendship and introducing an entirely new cohort for so many kids in a new environment will be an enormous social stress.

After obtaining current grade enrolment numbers from the district office, I believe the better solution would be splitting JR and MS by K-5 similar to Logan Lake Elementary (which I attended as a child) and having RB as a 6-7 which would be less detrimental to the wellbeing of the children by allowing them the opportunity to grow together in the classroom as well as within their home community. We should embrace at an early age the ability and willingness of kids to want to walk to or from school wherever possible. The proposed geographic split would eliminate ANY possibility of nearly all kids in Juniper West walking to or from school for the entirety of their elementary (and likely high school) years; assigning a new school by older age groups would at least allow us to embrace the early opportunity to encourage healthy, active lifestyles - that, I believe is one of the primary reasons the majority of people chose to move to this neighborhood. I've carefully looked at the numbers (which I think are understated) and understand the need to re-open RB, but I strongly believe the best option would be to group children by age group rather than geographic group. I also believe this would also be a more fiscally responsible option, as grade 6-7 resources could be better diverted on a temporary basis from both MS and JR, rather than attempting to piecemeal together resources for an entirely new-to-the-system K-7 elementary school by partially extracting already limited resources from other schools. The school board has a public responsibility to exercise due diligence, and explore the option to make RBES a 6-7 split, with a published analysis of the projected enrollment numbers by grade, and present it as an alternative option to a geographic catchment change prior to making any decision on this proposal.

Thank you again for your time in engaging in this feedback opportunity. I implore you to carefully listen to and act upon the feedback of this community that has elected and entrusted you to make the best decisions for our children. As is posted on the SD73 website: ***As locally elected representatives, the Board of Education trustees represent the Kamloops-Thompson communities' particular strengths, challenges and demands. They engage with communities in building and maintaining their local school system to reflect local priorities, values and expectations.***

Sincerely,

Graham Knights