



Stephen Blais, MPP / Député

Orléans

December 11, 2024
Hon. Jill Dunlop, MPP
Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
5th Floor, 438 University Ave
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2A5

Delivered in person and by email: minister.edu@ontario.ca

Re: New Mer Bleue Catholic High School in Orléans

Dear Minister:

I would like to first take this opportunity to congratulate you on your role as Ontario's Minister of Education. I very much look forward to working with you in your new ministerial role. Like you, I am a firm believer in a strong, publicly funded education system and the role that it plays in building our future success.

I am writing on behalf of residents in the high growth area of south Orléans whose community is quickly outgrowing the existing school capacity in the area.

South Orléans, sometimes referred to as the Mer Bleue expansion area or the East Urban Community, is one of the largest and fastest growing expansion areas in the City of Ottawa.

The Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB) has recently submitted a new High School to service this growing community as one of their capital priorities. Ideally, they would like to open the school in September 2029.

This will allow the Board to relieve enormous pressures from St. Peter CHS and growing pressures on St. Matthew CHS.

The site that will contain the new Mer Bleue CHS is 19 acres in size, owned by the OCSB and located at 3024 Brian Coburn Boulevard in Orléans. This new school is a much needed addition to our growing community.

St. Peter CHS currently has an enrolment of 2102 students, which is a utilization rate of 134%, and a need for 18 portable classrooms on site. These figures are projected to increase to 2433 students, which will bring the utilization rate to 155% by 2028 and would increase the number of portables needed to 29.



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With the opening of the new Mer Bleue CHS in five years, enrolment at St. Peter CHS would be reduced significantly by 988 students to a total of 1480, bringing down the utilization rate to 89%. The OCSB will be using a repeat design of the recently funded New Fernbank CHS, which is planned to open in September 2028.

This reduction at St. Peter CHS would allow for further growth in the older, more northern points in Orléans to be better accommodated, while allowing the new Mer Bleue CHS to absorb new enrollment from the high growth areas in the south.

I am sure that we can agree that the current overcrowding experienced at both St. Peter CHS and St. Matthew CHS would be greatly alleviated with the opening of the new Mer Bleue CHS.

It is important that this new school be built as quickly as possible for our community, and I am hoping that your team can work to provide the funding necessary to allow the Board to open the new Mer Bleue CHS by September 2029, if not sooner.

I would be happy to work with your team to support this effort and to engage stakeholders. I would also welcome the opportunity to bring you to St. Peter CHS for you to see the overcrowding firsthand.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and any updates on next steps.

Yours very truly,

Stephen Blais
Member of Provincial Parliament
Orléans