

July 21, 2014

Joy Bowen-Eyre, Chair  
Board of Trustees  
Calgary Board of Education

Dear Trustee Bowen-Eyre:

**Proposed Francophone School – Scenic Acres**

The Scenic Acres Community Association is disappointed with your letter of July 16<sup>th</sup> stating the CBE's position on perceived delays associated with school construction that would result with community transparency and engagement. We would like to outline our concerns with statements that were made.

First, we support the selection and development of school sites on municipal and school reserves, through the auspices of the Joint Use Agreement (JUA) under the premise that it is in the best interests of Calgary and local public school authorities. Indeed, the CBE in best interest of its stakeholders chose to locate the local Scenic Acres public school in its current location within the Community and opted not to develop on Scenic Acres Park.

We do not believe the best interests of Calgary are served to locate a regional school centrally within a mature community and that the established procedures of the JUA are being misapplied and/or not being fully considered in context of this land situation.

1. The right selection involves locations readily accessible to major road infrastructure providing access/egress required for vehicular traffic with minimal intrusion into established residential areas.
2. The logical prioritization is properties in growth areas where school demand is most acute and where the demographic and character of the community is still evolving.
3. The right assessment includes site selection based on recreational asset usage intensity, promoting optimization of the site. By building a regional school on Scenic Acres Park where usage is well known to be high, recreational functionality is compromised.

If these key criteria were used to assess existing options, we believe Scenic Acres Park would not have been chosen. As comparison, if the decision involved developing a high school that is regional in nature, Scenic Acres Park would not have been selected. Robert Thirsk High School recently opened in the Northwest serving the young people of Scenic Acres is in a location separate from mature residential housing (Arbour Lake) and accessible to major road infrastructure (Nose Hill & John Laurie).

For the Francophone school, we were advised that other sites would satisfy these regional requirements. We contend that Conseil Scolaire FrancoSud Board has given cursory consideration to locate on a more appropriate site and attention focussed on perceived delays to school completion. The extensive construction plans already completed for Scenic Acres Park bear this out. If there had been transparency and engagement when this regional school decision had originally been made, there would be no delays today. The CBE's position that engagement would delay projects is based on a reactive planning approach – front end engagement would prevent future potential delays and enhance capital

planning. We object to the CBE suggestion that "high level meetings" are appropriate while suggesting that meeting with concerned taxpayers may lead the Minister to pursue outcomes not beneficial to all citizens of Calgary, including "more community consultation". This exhibits arrogance, a lack of faith in the Minister's office, a disregard for citizen's democratic rights and disrespect for residents' awareness of their own communities.

There are excellent techniques and tools associated with urban and life cycle planning in today's world so suggesting growth unpredictability as rationale to not engage communities on school construction plans seems at best a weak argument. Both intra and inter community changes over time may impact the need for a property to be used for its original purpose. A refreshed, regular review procedure including community input makes good business sense – any organization with real estate holdings regularly assesses their portfolio and must decide whether to invest, divest, swap, etc. based on changing dynamics. Retaining properties not developed over many years without a definitive plan in a mature community by any government is a disservice to its citizens. Indeed the Scenic Acres Park site should have been designated a park reserve years ago.

Scenic Acres residents who have lived in the community for decades are not only aware of school site designations but also are aware of changing dynamics and needs. To assume the Community is uninformed about this matter again demonstrates CBE's lack of awareness and further need for consultation. Scenic Acres is a community of 3000 homes and overwhelmingly our residents have expressed support to preserve our park which has been well utilized for nearly 30 years. At time of writing, we have over 3000 signatures (and growing) on a petition that opposes any development in Scenic Acres Park; proposes a logical site selection for a regional school; suggests a re-position of the regional school location. We have worked as a Community not just to oppose park development but to engage collaboratively with our elected officials and associated administrations to find a suitable alternative.

Second, the Honourable Sandra Jansen has advocated preservation of the Park and requested a halt of the proposed development until the viability of suggested alternate sites is examined. Councillor Ward Sutherland has pushed for a solution and offered to ensure that the permitting process will meet FrancoSud's timeline. City Planning has engaged with the Scenic Acres Community and provided viable alternatives. Scenic Acres shares the CBE's appeal for sound technical planning but that rationale would lead to a more appropriate site selection decision for a regional school other than Scenic Acres Park.

In summary, we support the need for schools to be developed as quickly as possible to meet the needs of our growing province. We support the Francophone School being built without undue delay. However, desperately needing schools does not mean we move forward with sub-optimal solutions. Community engagement to the planning process is only an impediment if it is not done proactively. Parks are needed to meet the growing needs of our Province too and the youth in this situation are the common denominator. We ask that the CBE support preserving Scenic Acres Park in order to optimize this joint use site and support more appropriate positioning of the regional Francophone school. We further ask that the CBE take the lead to facilitate collaborative methods to promote proactive planning augmented by community engagement with the JUCC to streamline the school construction process.



Best Regards,



Dean Erickson  
President Scenic Acres Community Association



Jim Palmer  
Vice-President SA Community Association

cc. Honourable Wayne Drysdale, Minister of Infrastructure  
Honourable Greg Weadick, Minister of Municipal Affairs  
Honourable Sandra Jansen, MLA, Calgary-North West  
Mayor Naheed Nenshi, City of Calgary  
Ward Sutherland, Councillor, Ward 1  
Anne-Marie Boucher, Chair, Francophone Education Region  
Mary Martin, Chair, Calgary Catholic School District  
Serafino Scarpino, Trustee, Calgary Catholic School District  
Scott Lockwood, City of Calgary, City Planning  
Keath Parker, City of Calgary, City Planning  
Kyle Ripley, City of Calgary, City Planning  
Ruth Sorrentino, General Manager, Scenic Acres Community Association  
Save Our Park Steering Committee