Residents urged to have say on plan to scrap new high school

Area residents are being urged by Halton District School Board Trustee Ethel Gardiner to attend a public meeting tomorrow (Thursday) evening on the board's draft capital plan that's calling for scrapping plans to build a new high school in Georgetown South and instead renovating the current Georgetown District High School.

Public meetings on the plan are being held throughout the region and the initial public meeting in Halton Hills will be held from 7-9 p.m. Thursday (Feb. 9) in the Georgetown District High School cafeteria.

The plan will be outlined and the public will have a chance to comment. The five-year plan recommends that the new high school proposed for 2016 in Georgetown South not be built, and instead, GDHS be renovated to accommodate 150 more students next year. The board is also recommending the high school utilize to a greater extent Howard Wrigglesworth School (near Guelph and Maple Ave.), and the two school properties operate as one high-school campus.

The plan recommends the Georgetown South school not be built due to lower than expected student growth from that area. By not building that school and delaying a new Milton high school a year, the Halton Board expects to save about $10 million.

The capital plan is also proposing a new elementary school in Georgetown South (east of Mountainview) Rd. be built in 2007 and some students at the packed Silver Creek Public School be accommodated at Pineview and Stewarttown schools.

"This is a draft plan to be reviewed every year and community input will help shape the content of the final plan which is to come to the board for approval in June," said Gardiner. "I hope we have hundreds of people attend this meeting. This is a plan for all of Halton, and its critical that Georgetown and area voices are heard."

Gardiner said she is "ecstatic" about the renovation plans for Georgetown High School.

She said specific details of the renovation were not included in the draft capital plan, so Gardiner has requested board staff provide further information on the scope and cost of the project.

She stressed the school is in need of a significant renovation that would allow for an additional 150 students and programs such as food preparation, horticulture and life skills. Currently, Gardiner said, students have to go out of town to take those programs.

"The facility needs so much in terms of upgrading and making it an inclusive high school for the community," said Gardiner.

When asked about the fact that Christ the King is experiencing much higher than expected growth, partly from the non-Catholic population in town, Gardiner said she believes the current century-old facility has a lot to do with that.

She said in light of the renovations planned for GDHS, she is not upset plans for the Georgetown South high school have been eliminated, because spaces for only 200 kids are required and building a new school would "not be a wise way to spend tax dollars."

She said her feelings would change, however, if the plan is only to "build another lean-to for 150 kids."

Written comments from the public on the draft capital plan will be received until March 9 and board staff will present an interim report to be presented at a second public meeting in April. The final report is to be before the school board in June.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer

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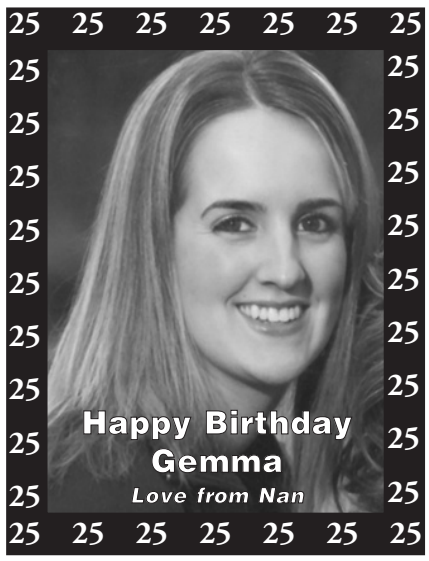

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