

Residents urged to voice concerns

Aging high school needs overhaul, board told

More than 50 residents stressed to Halton District School Board officials that Georgetown District High School is badly in need of renovations that will become more critical if a proposed capital plan goes into effect.

The residents let their views be known at a board public meeting on the five-year capital plan, at GDHS Thursday night. The plan calls for a 2007 addition onto GDHS to accommodate 150 more students, the cancellation of the proposed Georgetown South high school, renovations to the old Howard Wrigglesworth, now Gary Allan High School beside GDHS, and the potential opening of two Georgetown South elementary schools in 2007 and 2010 (see sidebar below).

Parent comments and suggestions included closing Georgetown high school and building the new high school instead, loss of students to the newer Christ the King Catholic high school, return of the students if GDHS is upgraded or a new school is built, the constantly changing enrolment projections, financial pros and cons of renovating a century-old GDHS compared to building a new school, the number of portables currently on school sites, and the possibility of leasing of a developer-built school.



Gerry Cullen, superintendent of facilities services for the Halton District School Board, addresses the audience at Thursday's meeting held to outline the board's five-year capital plan.

Photo by Sabrina Byrnes

Nancy Deligiannis, vice-chair of the Georgetown High School school council, read a statement to applauding parents, asking for renovations to the whole school.

"We have had numerous concerns over very many years about updating our school facility. We have major plumbing issues—it needs a major overhaul. We have classrooms that are crumbling... classrooms too small for class sizes... and outside repairs are needed," Deligiannis said.

"Halton Hills is a rapidly growing

community and our students deserve equal access to the same range of programs as our more fortunate neighbours to the south—in their own neighbourhood right here in GDHS.

"The bottom line is this school needs a major renovation," stated Deligiannis, "even if the new school is built in the future. By the time the new school is built, this school (GDHS) would be beyond repair."

The school council said an addition to GDHS is not good enough; a full renovation is essential.

The Ministry of Education pays for new schools, cautioned Gerry Cullen, superintendent of facilities services.

"Without some indication of what funding is going to be available, the last thing we want is to get people excited as to what may or may not happen."

Cullen urged all residents to comment. This plan, he said, is a starting point, and "creativity should not be limited to the plan".

"This plan is no more than a plan at this point," he said. "We can't even afford to do what's on this plan. Until we see the final details on the financing (from the province), we have no idea what we can afford to do or can't do."

Public comments should be emailed to westerhofe@hdsb.ca or call the school board's planning office, 905-842-3014, before March 9. The comments will be analyzed and included the next report presented to the public in April. The Halton Hills meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 20, 7-9 p.m. at Georgetown District High School.

A final report is expected to be presented to school trustees for a decision in June. Background documents and reports are being posted on the school board's website, www.hdsb.ca

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer

Councillor rebuked in bid to 'congratulate' Bloc Québécois

Strong language was used in Halton Hills council chambers in response to a councillor's request to offer congratulations to the Bloc Québécois party for its showing in the recent federal election.

"Hell will freeze over before I would write the Bloc Québécois congratulating on their endeavours which might split up the country," said Mayor Rick Bonnette.

Ward 3 Councillor Mike Davis had made the suggestion to make the overture to the Quebec separatist party when commenting on a staff report outlining the three major party (Conservative, Liberal and NDP) platforms on municipalities. The staff resolution called on

council to offer congratulations to these parties and to ask for consideration of municipal issues.

Davis said as it is a minority government, the BQ could hold swing power with-



MIKE O'LEARY

'I cannot support a party that I regularly refer to as 'that a bunch of traitors'.'

of Commons, and the Town should offer a victory handshake to that party as well. He added in fairness, the Town should also offer its congratulations to the one Independent candidate elected.

But the suggestion incensed many councillors around the table.

"The Bloc Québécois has already stated that they're in Parliament to do things that can only positively affect the people of Quebec. The last time I looked we live in Ontario," said Acton councillor Mike O'Leary.

"I cannot support a party that I regularly refer to as 'that a bunch of traitors'."

Rural councillor Joan Robson, who had lived in Quebec for more than 20 years, said the separatists have torn families apart including her own.

"There is no way I would be congratulating them on anything."

"I don't think you can count on them for any solid support on anything that would benefit anyone else," said Acton councillor Jon Hurst.

A chastised Davis withdrew his amendment to motion.

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer

Changes in store for students

Changes in the proposed capital plan that will affect Georgetown students:

- **Cancelled**— the Georgetown South high school, planned for 800 students to be built beside the Gellert Community Centre, in 2016. Projected enrolments show that by 2016 there will be just over 1,000 students attending GDHS and only about 500 slated for the new high school, said Elaine Westerhof, the board's manager of planning.

Westerhof added the numbers take into consideration the number of students, now attending the new Christ the King school, who would return to the public board system if a new high school was built.

The site will continue in the developer's control. The GDHS school council requested HDSB retain interest in the land to avoid its possible acquisition by the Catholic board.

- **Added**— GDHS will receive an addition in 2007 to serve 150 students. GDHS's current capacity is listed at 1,452 students. It currently has 1,436 and that is projected to grow to 1,615 by 2010.

- **Delayed**— Georgetown South elementary school, for 650 Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8 students, in

Mountainview Rd. West area to 2010. "But this is an annual review and we'll continue to look at numbers, so we can go back and revisit that," she said.

- **Unchanged**— Georgetown South elementary school for 550 Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8 students on a Mountainview East site. Opening planned for September 2007, but a final decision must be made this June.

- **Boundaries redrawn**— Students moving into the subdivision, north of Miller Dr., now under construction will not go to Silver Creek School, but will be sent to Pineview for K-5 and Stewarttown for Grade 6-8.

Students in Georgetown South now being sent to Harrison and Centennial will attend the new school opening in 2007.

If the third Georgetown South elementary school opens in 2010, a portion of the students currently directed to Silver Creek, would be redirected there.

- **Here to stay**— the old Howard Wrigglesworth School, now home to the Province's Early Child Years Centre and the board's own Gary Allan High School GAHS (an alternative high school), will be renovated in 2007 to accommodate the GAHS permanently. No details yet.

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