

Board identifies new-school priorities

South-end communities desperate for additional schools to ease overcrowding

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Staff Reporter

The public school board has released its new-school priorities - and communities in the south end of York Region top the list.

The board's capital plan calls for two new elementary schools in Richmond Hill and one in Vaughan to be completed by the 1999-2000 school year.

The projects are approved, subject to final funding coming from the Ministry of Education.

Ralph Benson, the superintendent of corporate planning, said the most pressing need is in north Richmond Hill and the west side of Thornhill, near Bathurst Street and Steeles Avenue.

850 STUDENTS

Wilshire Public School, for instance, is being used as a holding school until new facilities are built. There are currently 9 portables on site, which is home to 850 students.

The new Richmond Hill schools will be located on Coon's Road, south of Bloomington in Oak Ridges, and Frank Endean Road, north of Elgin Mills Road.

Three additional elementary schools are being planned for Richmond Hill by 2002.

Work has already begun on high schools for the Biscayne area of Georgina and Yorkland Boulevard in Richmond Hill.

Both schools are scheduled to be completed by 2000.

School board planning staff also say Aurora and Georgina will each need new elementary schools by 2000.

In Aurora, the school will be located

in the Aurora Grove community, which is located west of Bayview Avenue, north of Vandorf Road. In Georgina, the school will be located in southeast Keswick.

The board is currently using 36 portables in Keswick to accommodate students.

Although the impact of the new capital funding model is not yet known, the board believes the implementation of junior kindergarten will permit the construction of the two schools.

In fact, plans are to fast-track the projects so work can begin as soon as possible.

The new formula demands that every available student space be utilized in existing schools before approval will be given for a new school.

Benson says he is confident that despite concerns about the new funding model, the schools will be built as needed.

"If it doesn't happen, I'm not going to be a happy camper," he said.

However, residents of Summerhill

subdivision in southwest Newmarket will have to wait two more years before a school will appear in their community.

Benson says that's because the population hasn't grown to the point where a school can be justified.

"The build-out isn't there as we anticipated," he said. "We don't have the kids there yet. I don't have 400 students - that's the dilemma."

Markham will see the construction of three new elementary schools by 2002.

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New-school timetable

The region's public school board has identified its priorities for new-school construction. The following list shows what year and where the new schools are expected to be built.

1999/2000

- Aurora Grove elementary - Aurora
- Metrus Elementary - Georgina

2000/2001

- Clearmeadow Elementary - Newmarket
- Boxwood Elementary - Markham
- Lake Wilcox - Richmond Hill
- Southwest Newmarket/East Gwillimbury Secondary School
- Proposed additions to Ross Doan PS (12 classrooms) and Woodbridge College (24 classrooms)

2002

- Bayview North Elementary - Richmond Hill
- Maple Elementary - Vaughan
- Markham Secondary School
- North Markham elementary
- Orsi Elementary - Georgina
- Wycliffe Elementary - Richmond Hill (Elgin West)
- Proposed replacement school for Jersey PS - Keswick

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