

Students protest portables

Unionville High School students walk out over health concerns

BY JENNIFER BROWN
Staff Writer

Renovated or not, students at Unionville High School say they're fed up with portables they feel will continue to be a health risk for themselves and their teachers.

On Friday morning, about 100 students walked out of class protesting the air quality of the portables, even though the school board has just completed more than \$300,000 worth of renovations on the 12-pack school structure.

Last August, the school board shut down the portable classrooms at the high school after mould was found just two weeks before school was set to begin.

Recently, both the health department and municipal officials approved the renovation work and the classrooms are safe, said superintendent of plant services Dave Snelgrove.

"In this case, we gutted it right back to the shell and it has a new roof, walls, ceiling and floor and electrical system," he said.

"In our mind it's as good as new." But parent Ailsa Siks said it's hard to believe a portable can be inhabitable again after mould was found in its walls.

"How do we know the mould won't be back in three months?" said Siks, a former member of the school's council.

Her children aren't currently attending class in a portable, but know of others who have complained the air quality in portables has affected their health.

"The main concern here is trust — how safe is it now when you said it was safe before?" she said.

"A lot of us feel (the school) needs expanding. This should not have been a portapak for 14 years. This is the second very expensive retrofit of these portables and the third of the air system.

There are more than 2,000 students at the school, which was originally built to handle 1,250. But the board has told parents that given population projections, the community does not need another high school or even an addition. About 360 attend class in the portapak.

Since the portables were reopened, teachers and students say the air in the buildings has had an odour to it, and rodent feces and a rats nest has been found inside the structure.

No matter how many times you rebuild something, it's still a portable," said student council representative Grant Holohan, an OAC student who participated in the walk-out Friday.

"What if it's not safe again a few years from now? I don't feel safe going into portables anymore."

Snelgrove defends the renovation,

saying the air circulation has been greatly improved compared to before.

"There are air exchange units bringing outside air in and the stale air is exhausted outside. What may be making it more stuffy is the new materials used in the renovation, such as adhesives and vinyl which may be making it stuffy," he said.

However, for some students and teachers the opening of the newly renovated portables only means they will be forced to continue teaching and learning in portables — leaving them wondering if mould could develop again.

Unionville High opened in 1985 and

the next year the portables were delivered to the school site. Since they were put in place, the heating system has been replaced twice and the structure re-conditioned three times.

But the school may be stuck with the 12-pack for a while. The life expectancy for a wood constructed portable is 15 to 20 years and longer if they are never moved.

However, the Unionville portables are steel frame and Snelgrove said they can last 20 to 30 years, if properly maintained.

And it is estimated the population of Unionville High will eventually level off

to 1,600 students, thereby reducing the use of some of the portables.

"I can understand the board's reluctance to put another school in the catchment area — they don't want to end up like Toronto with a lot of empty schools down the road," Siks said.

"They're caught between a rock and a hard place and there's only so much money to go around."

Siks pointed out the school board is caught in the same growth spurt as the rest of York Region.

"This town is booming without the infrastructure and it is not just schools it is roads too."

Dairy Queen


SAVE 10% OFF ALL REGULAR PRICED ITEMS

Only With **The Subscriber Club**

ECONOMIST & SUN
294-2200

2000'S ARE HERE!!!


2000 Maxima GXE
LEASE \$398*/month / 48 months



PURCHASE PRICE \$31,600*

- 3.0 litre • 222 hp V6 • Automatic transmission
- Air conditioning • Power windows, door locks and mirrors • AM/FM cassette audio system with 6 speakers • Power trunk and fuel filter door opener • Convenience package

2000 Altima GXE
LEASE \$298*/month*/48 months only \$1500 down




PURCHASE PRICE \$23,798*

\$400 BONUS

*Best Entry Midsize Car in Initial quality 3 out of the last 4 years - J.D. Power And Associates
• 155-HP, 2.4L engine - that's bigger and more powerful than Camry and Accord 4-cylinder models • More front and rear head room than Camry • Wood-tone trim standard • 100-watt AM/FM audio system with CD player • 4-speed automatic transmission and air conditioning • Power windows, mirrors, door locks and trunk release • Remote keyless entry system with panic alarm • Dual illuminated vanity mirrors • Cruise control • And more...


2000 Pathfinder SE
LEASE \$428*/month / 48 months



PURCHASE PRICE \$38,000*

- 170 HP, 3.3L SOHC V6 engine • Roof rack • Air conditioning • Remote keyless entry • Power windows, door locks and heated mirrors • 100-watt AM/FM/CD with cassette stereo with 6 speakers • 4-wheel ABS • Cruise control • Anti-theft system

2000 Xterra
MOTOR TREND SPORT/UTILITY OF THE YEAR



PURCHASE PRICE \$28,998*

- 3.3 litre V6 engine • Dual air bags • Front disc/rear drum brakes with four-wheel ABS • Part-time 4WD, auto-locking front hubs • Engine block heater • Limited slip differential • Side step rails • Aircraft-grade aluminum roof rack • Air conditioning • Remote keyless entry and vehicle security system • AM/FM CD audio system • Power windows, power locks • And more!

VILLAGE NISSAN

4600 Hwy. #7, Markham
www.villagenissan.com (905) 477-3337

Readers Choice Award 1998

NISSAN DRIVEN

Smart people read the fine print. And they always wear their seat belts. *48 month lease on 2000 Altima GXE (model shown with optional alloy wheels) A.L.R. 6.79% with down payment or equivalent trade of \$1500; 48 month lease on 2000 Maxima GXE (Maxima GLE model shown) available starting at \$34,900; A.L.R. 7.8% with down payment or equivalent trade of \$3,000; 48 month lease on 2000 Pathfinder SE A.L.R. 6.79% with down payment or equivalent trade of \$4,000; 1st payment and security deposit due at lease signing. Altima, Maxima and Pathfinder leases based on maximum of 96,000 kms. with excess kms. charged at \$0.08/km. All offers are O.A.C. and exclude destination and delivery (\$915/\$966/\$972) licence, insurance and taxes.

NISSAN

NEW SERVICE HOURS

Mon - Thurs. 7:11 pm, Fri. 7:5:30 pm, Sat. 8-9 pm

SHERIDAN
HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING

Call 471-4222

Furnaces From \$29.95

TOYS R US

CORRECTION NOTICE

Please note that due to a delay in shipping "Cradle with Baby" as featured in the Toys R Us Holiday Catalogue will not be available.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.