

Aurora High portables are temporary solution: Board

By Brock Weir

A growing enrolment at Aurora High School has left school officials looking for temporary accommodations ahead of the start of the 2017-2018 school year.

This according to the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) responding to alarm bells raised by neighbours near Aurora High School concerned with a lack of community consultation on placing portables within metres of their property lines.

“Aurora High School is experiencing enrolment growth and requires additional temporary accommodation,” says Christina Choo-Hum of the YRDSB's Corporate Communications Department. “Planning staff will meet with the Aurora High School community to review future enrolment and propose accommodation changes. Time will be required for community consultation and for the Board of Trustees to approve changes. Therefore, portables will be required at Aurora High School for the short to mid-term time frame. They are not intended to be a long-term accommodation solution for the school.”

According to Ms. Choo-Hum, the YRDSB's Planning Department meets each year to determine school locations that will require portables for the year ahead. Their Plant Department determines the best location for each school based on municipal requirements “including required setbacks” as well as topography and on-site infrastructure such as catch basins.

“The placement of the portables at Aurora High School was reviewed with the Town of Aurora to ensure that all municipal requirements were met,” says Ms. Choo-Hum. “According to the Planning Act, if the school was in existence prior to January 1, 2007, school boards do not require an amendment to the site plan to add portables, and thus, we were not required to circulate the placement of the portables to neighboring properties. This follows the same process as if a neighbour were to obtain approval from the Town to put a pool in their backyard. However, a building permit is required from the Town and was issued prior to portables being delivered, and is posted on the front door of the school. In discussion with the administration at the school and our Plant Department, it was determined the most advantageous location was to place the portables on the west side of the school building.

“A portable classroom provides flexibility for a school to accommodate enrolment growth compared to the built capacity. When enrolments fluctuate, portables can ensure students are accommodated at their local school. It is a priority of the York Region District School Board to accommodate students in their own community wherever possible. Once school enrolment declines, portables can be easily removed and relocated to other schools in the Board, where required.”