

Williams issue more ?complex? than letters indicate

It is clear based on the letters to the editor in the March 9th edition that the complexity of the issues surrounding the new east side high school have not been communicated effectively to the general public.

Dr. G.W. Williams is not at risk because of the potential for an east side high school.

Its biggest concern should be that the community is not using it.

Also, the issues surrounding the new high school cannot be solved simply by addressing public transportation concerns. All of your readers should know:

75% of Aurora is designated as the catchment area for Dr. G.W. Williams

Student enrollment for Dr. G.W. Williams is at 55% and has been dropping since 2010 despite a population growth of 30% in Aurora over the last 10 years

25% of Aurora is designated as the catchment area for Aurora High

Student enrollment for Aurora High is at 120%

60% of the public school kids in the G.W. Williams catchment area are leaving the public system when they enter high school to go to the Catholic Board. This number rises to 75% when only looking at the Bayview north east area. Williams is only attracting 25 - 40% of the grade 8 graduates from its catchment area

Compare this to Aurora High which attracts and keeps 80% of grade 8 graduates from their respective area

The Catholic High Schools (St. Max and Cardinal Carter) are both at 120% of their capacity.

If we want to keep Dr. G.W. Williams, we need to use the school! The statistics suggest that the families of Aurora have already voted on this issue and they are overwhelmingly choosing not to attend Williams!

Ministry of Education funding dollars are contingent on enrollment. The fewer students that attend a school the less funding that is provided to them. When enrollment broaches 50% the lack of funding begins to impact programming, extra-curricular activities, specialized teachers and staff. Even if good programming, sports teams and clubs are offered these things may not run as it is difficult, from such a small number, to get enough students to fill each of those programs. There is also a smaller pool of teachers to draw from to supervise them.

Further to the above the cost of maintaining excess space at schools that run at half capacity consumes resources that could otherwise be applied to programs and services for students.

These are just a few of the issues being discussed.

It is understandable that everyone would like a local high school.

Regardless of where the school is located or how many we have, I think what is most important is that the schools are vibrant, full of students and are supported with adequate funding. This allows for programming, extra-curricular activities, and support from staff. Students need quality education regardless of which school boundary they live in.

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