

Board should get rolling on Bayview Avenue high school, says Councillor

By Brock Weir

Talks should get underway between the Town of Aurora and the York Region District School Board on a new high school on Bayview Avenue near Borealis, according to Councillor John Abel.

The Councillor has put forward a notice of motion to be discussed at Council next Tuesday night, October 25, calling on the rest of local lawmakers to voice their support for the planned construction of the new high school, the land for which has already been secured, and that talks take place between the Town and Board on how to make it happen.

A new York Region District School Board high school has been earmarked in official plans for over a decade and the land set aside on Bayview at Borealis has been vacant for more than 15 years.

Local parents have been advocating the Board to get moving on the site to accommodate not just a growing need in northeast Aurora, but also to address challenges of area students getting to Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School.

?The residents of this catchment area have been told they will have their secondary school enrollment needs met at Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School [but] this does not meet the needs of residents, nor does it comply with our Official Plan, nor does this type of commute conform with the orderly function of the Town, that students must commute an average of 6km to school through the already congested GO Transit Station area,? said Councillor Abel in his motion.

?The residents of this catchment area are approaching 60 per cent of the student body at Williams and it will only increase as this area grows and ages. There are further enrollment issues that reduce specialized programs, extracurricular activities, and the number of specialized teachers in staff.?

20 per cent of residents' property taxes ultimately goes to the YRDSB, he adds, noting if the land in question was sold to developers, it would boost the Board's coffers but not address the residents' needs.

?If the YRDSB has funding challenges, they could collaborate with the Municipality, York Region, the Ministry of Education and the Province to engage with expediency to arrive at a solution,? he said.

Parents have dubbed their campaign to secure the school ?Local School Smart Decision? and have been petitioning residents for support since the beginning of the year. For more information on their efforts, including opportunities to sign the petition and write letters to decision-makers at all levels, visit localschoolsmartdecision.wordpress.com.