

Board to repurpose current Williams site for further programs

In 2026, a new home for Dr. G.W. Williams is set to open on Spring Farm Road at Bayview Avenue, but that won't be the end of the line for the school's current site on Dunning Avenue.

On Thursday, as the Province, Town, and York Region District School Board (YRDSB) celebrated the next phase in the new school's construction, Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy noted the existing site, which opened its doors to students 71 years ago, will see the YRDSB "consolidate existing nearby Regional education centres" within the Dunning Building.

Since the move of Dr. G.W. Williams was put in motion six years ago, questions have surrounded the future of the site.

With the future of the building now solidified, questions remain on how the grounds left behind by students will be used in the years ahead.

In the previous term of Council, local lawmakers approved a motion to facilitate discussions with the YRDSB for, among other purposes, the use of sports fields, which are in a perennial deficit in Aurora.

"We still have some operational decisions to make on what that's going to look like for us right now," said YRDSB Director of Education Bill Cober last week. "Depending on our continuing education program, administrative service space, we have operational decisions still to make in that regard."

At Thursday's announcement, however, Mayor Tom Mrakas reiterated Council's position that opportunities are still worth pursuing.

"We're always interested in pursuing any lands within our community that we could utilize in providing more, whether its sports fields or programming new facilities, whatever it is we can look at because land is very scarce in our Town when it comes to looking at what's available," he said. "It's absolutely something we're going to continue to look at. We have constantly been kind of throwing out little hints to the school board from that initial motion that said, 'Let's have that initial conversation with them,' but there was no need from the school board perspective to have those conversations at that time, so now with this announcement things will probably start to ramp up. I am hoping we can be part of that discussion with the school board and see what we can do to increase some opportunities for our community."

"We have already approved \$2.4 million to build an artificial turf field, similar to the agreement and partnership we have with St. Max. It's the exact same agreement, the exact same type of partnership where it is used by the community at large, and during school hours it is used by the school."

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