

Parents call for new secondary school on Bayview Avenue



By Brock Weir

As east Aurora grows, more and more teens are having to make their way from northeast Aurora to Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School to hit the books ? but for local parents, a new secondary school on Bayview Avenue north of Wellington Street is not only the right decision, but the ?Smart? decision.

Parents living in Aurora's northeast quadrant are calling on the York Region District School Board to take action on a plot of land earmarked for a new high school on the northeast corner of Bayview Avenue and Borealis Avenue, across from Tim Hortons, and have launched an online petition urging others to join the fight.

?We are petitioning for a secondary school to be built in the northern part of Aurora at Bayview north of Wellington,? says parent Molly Robinson. ?The plot of land was purchased by the school board in 2007. It is currently sitting there vacant and what we are trying to do is get them to build the school a little bit sooner than they intended.?

According to fellow parent Amanda Gilchrist, students having to travel from Aurora's northeast corner to Dr. G.W. Williams on Dunning Avenue, presents families with many challenges, both practical and financial. Students are reliant on York Region Transit, they say, with student bus passes running up to nearly \$1,000 a year. The alternative? Walking nearly an hour from many locations in Aurora's 2B and 2C neighbourhoods.

?They are expecting kids to walk, or bike, or transit from as far as Leslie Street and St. John's Sideroad,? says Ms. Gilchrist. ?We are trying to promote the benefits of a local high school: healthy living, active lifestyle, and building a sense of community because you know where your kids are going and everybody is watching out for them.

?Aurora is trying to be the healthiest, most active town in all of Canada by 2020. A good percentage of your teenage population is taking the bus, getting a ride in the car, and you're not going to be achieving that. It is also a safety thing. You have kids crossing railroad tracks, it gets dark at 4.30 in the winter and they are staying out until 5 or 6 p.m. [with programming]. We are just trying to get this process sped up.?

Organizers of the campaign dub it Local School Smart Decision and they were out collecting names for their petition and raising awareness this past Sunday at the annual Aurora

Street Festival. For more information on Local School Smart Decision, including opportunities to sign the petition and write letters

to decision-makers at the School Board and Municipal levels, visit localschoolsmartdecision.wordpress.com.