

Accommodation in Ward 1 and 2 1988- 2010
Judith Bishop October 2010

As trustee for Ward 1 and 2 for many years I have worked to keep open those schools in good condition, and where school closures were inevitable because of declining enrolment, secured better accommodation elsewhere.

For example, the closure of Stinson Street and old Queen Victoria schools has replaced these unsatisfactory buildings --- the learning resource room at Stinson was in the former coal storage room in the basement---- with a new school at Queen Victoria. This has a double gym, kitchen, meeting rooms, and Parent and Family Literacy Centre, all completely wired for Internet access. It also has a purpose built area for autistic students. Stinson street school is being converted into lofts.

Sanford Avenue and Tweedsmuir, both old and decrepit schools with basement classrooms, have been replaced by the new Dr. J.Edgar Davey school. This is another state of the art school with natural light, double gyms, smart boards in every classroom, an attached community centre and a new play ground. This replaces a school which had few windows, portables, a small gym and open concept classrooms which are noisy and provide little storage space. Tweedmuir has been demolished and the land has become part of a park.

Bennetto school (once called Centennial) has had a whole new wing built on to it, and the old open concept rooms on the second floor removed. It also has a Parent and Family Literacy Centre. The former Bennetto school was closed, as enrolment has been falling in this part of the City, and a new community health centre is arising on its site.

Central school has had substantial renovations made to it in the last three years, which have placed those students within the main school who were once housed in portables. Now there are a proper library, upstairs washrooms, new classrooms and an elevator. The heritage aspects of this oldest elementary school in Hamilton have also been repaired .

Sir John A Macdonald high school has had the gym floors replaced with wood so that they are now great facilities, the roof fixed, and the ventilation system repaired.

The closure of Allenby school led to large renovations to nearby Earl Kitchener school, which now has bathrooms on several floors, an elevator, a new boiler and ventilation system , and new windows. Allenby school has become lofts.

Strathcona, newly rebuilt in 1985, would have been closed many years ago if I had not worked to obtain an alternative program there, the SAGE program, which now provides about half the pupil enrolment .

Although more work is still needed, Westdale High school has had updates to its mechanical systems, roof, new windows, and improvement to its elevator.

There are currently about 2000 vacant seats in Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board's high schools and 6000 projected in 5 years time. This unused space must be heated, maintained and cleaned, and this causes, and will cause unnecessary expenditures, within what are tight education budgets. So the School Board is embarking on an Accommodation Review process of its secondary schools. There will be an Accommodation Review Committee convened in January 2011 to look at Westdale, Highland, Parkside and Ancaster high schools accommodation, and another to look at Sir John A Macdonald and all the other high schools in the lower city. These will be undertaken according to our policy which is on the web site www.hwdsb.on.ca (Accommodation Review). Program, community and

building issues will be considered with community input. This involves two parent representatives from each school, open meetings and four meetings to hear delegations from the public. As Westdale is currently one of the few HWDSB schools that is at capacity, I am not expecting great changes to Westdale, or that the school may be closed coming out of this exercise. But it may address further building renovations needed such as updates to washrooms. For Sir John A Macdonald the process may be able to secure further interesting programs for the school. The Accommodation Review process in the past has been positive for Ward 1 and 2 schools, and this new process, which has a greater emphasis on providing adequate student programs within the context of a vision for Secondary Schools for the Future, should provide more opportunities for our students.

In 2008 the Board approved a motion about Dalewood and Prince Philip schools, that depending on Provincial Prohibitive to Repair funding being available, these schools be replaced by one new kindergarten to grade 8 school. Both schools had been declared Prohibitive to Repair by the Province, just as the City has declared the Dalewood recreation centre as PTR, built at the same time as Dalewood school. The City has recently announced that it will be rebuilding this recreation centre. This provides an opportunity for the City and the Board to work together, and perhaps achieve some cost efficiencies. This may lead to a change in HWDSB's Capital Plan coming to the Board for approval in January in a modification to the current recommendation. Then an Accommodation Review process will be put in place for Dalewood and Prince Philip, again with community input.

In this next term it would be good to see a new school built in the west end with the same amenities as the new schools at Queen Victoria and Dr Davey. Solutions need to be found for Hess Street school which is rather over crowded, has a small gym and playground, and open concept classrooms on the second floor. George R Allan has had new windows installed and repairs made to its mechanical systems, but it still needs an elevator and new washrooms including some on the second and third floors. Westdale still requires some renovations also.

However, our schools in Ward 1 and 2 are now better maintained and with more amenities than when I first became a trustee in 1988.