

Questions and Answers – Ancaster High Information Session

How has HWDSB communicated with parents about the roof leaking and other potential concerns? communicated.

Letters were sent home with students and posted on the school's website on January 24, two days after the roof started leaking. We also sent and posted additional letters on February 2 and February 24. The school also sent out Synrevoice (phone call) messages to all parents, about this issue.

People have mentioned that his roof has been leaking for 5-7 years. Why wasn't this fixed earlier?

Unfortunately, we do not receive the necessary funding from the Ministry of Education to cover all the repairs needs across our schools. We receive approximately \$40 million each year and that must cover repairs at all 104 of our schools. In this instance, we are talking about receiving about \$400,000 for repairs at Ancaster High and the roof alone will cost over \$1 million.

How old is the roof?

The roof at Ancaster High is the original roof from 1959.

I understand about financial concerns, but it always takes too long to fix things. I do not think my kids are getting the best facilities. Who do we have to go to, to make things better?

We have created a multi-year plan to address the needs in all our schools. Repairs are prioritized based on need. This is part of the reason in the last few years, we have conducted so many Accommodation Review and created our multi-year plan. We could not keep up with repairs needed from our aging infrastructure, based on the funding received from the Ministry of Education.

Why is the municipal level of government not involved?

Our funding comes from the provincial level, we don't receive any money or support from the City of Hamilton. Education is a provincial responsibility. We do however work with the City of Hamilton during new schools builds and additions. We also have many partnerships with the City of Hamilton at our schools for sharing space.

This is a health and safety, and security issue which is a municipal issue. Why should we have to advocate to the province for more funding?

Elected trustees govern school boards. Trustees advocate to the province on behalf of parents and students when there is an issue that is goes beyond the control of the school board. HWDSB is also a part of the Ontario Public School Boards Association, which is an organization made up of representatives from all Ontario school Boards. They also advocate to the provincial government on behalf of all public boards in the province.

Why aren't we maintaining our schools? If we took care and maintained our schools over time, then we wouldn't have any issues.

HWDSB has some of the oldest schools in the province and we do not have the ability to raise our own funds to cover all our maintenance costs. A percentage of tax dollars goes to the province and then is divided amongst all school boards based on their student population.

How does the funding work vs. the catholic school board? If you have a \$500M budget, where did the funds come from to build the new Education Centre, instead of going to schools?

As mentioned above, a percentage of monies received by the province from taxes is divided amongst all school boards in Ontario based on their student population.

HWDSB Education Centre was self-funded from the sale of the downtown administrative building. School Boards are not allowed to use funds provided by the province for things that they are not intended for. For example, we are not allowed to take money provided for schools and use it on administration or vice versa. Therefore, the money from the sale of the downtown administrative building was not allowed to be used on anything other than a new administrative building.

How much does the board spend on technology at Ancaster High? Why do kids have iPads and state of the art technology, when we have a roof from the 50's?

Again, things are funded differently by the province and we cannot use funds intended for classrooms on repairs to a school.

A few years ago, we had 115 schools and we were only receiving \$7 million from the province for repairs. School Boards have been advocating for more funds to cover our maintenance and repairs and the province is listening. We now are receiving approximately \$40 million for our 104 schools.

When HWDSB was preparing for science lab improvements at Ancaster High in 2014, a study was done and found friable asbestos. What was done to the asbestos prior to the renovations?

Prior to renovations, all asbestos material was fully removed and we conducted tests to ensure we were in compliance with Ministry regulations. We always conduct a study before we do any work and one will be done before we begin any work on the east wing of the school.

With the roof being patched is that taking money out of the new roof?

The funds to repair the roof and to replace the roof are from two separate accounts. Therefore, there is no impact on the roof replacement budget from the work taking place now.

Is there any new technology that can be used for the new roof so that this will not happen again?

An assessment of the roof will be completed and the design will incorporate the number of drains required.

How often is field testing going to happen for mould?

Staff are on site early each morning to do visual inspections of the school before the start of the school day. If we find an issue, it will be corrected immediately.

Did we miss the boat on building a new school, since the closure process from a few years ago? Is there an opportunity to sell some of the land here to help the roof repairs?

As part of the Secondary Accommodation Reviews that happened in 2012, we did at that time ask the province for funds to do repairs and renovations at Ancaster High.

The province declined our submission, as at the time our Facility Condition Index was considered low, which means that the school was in appropriate shape and that any repairs or maintenance should come from the school renewal funds that the province gives us.

Can we as parents lobby the provincial government? Who do we talk to about school board funding?

Your local Members of Provincial Parliament is the best person to advocate too. There is also a provincial group called Fix our Schools, who are a very mobilized group of parents that advocates for better schools in Ontario. The People for Education is also another excellent group that people can reach out to.

There is a lot of talk about funding. Does HWDSB have a reserve fund for emergencies?

We do set aside money each year during our budget process for emergencies. Ancaster High was scheduled to have its roof replaced in 2019 and because of the leaks, we have moved the roof replacement up to take place this summer instead. As the roof was not budgeted for in this year's budget, we are taking the funds from our reserve fund to cover the cost.

Are you seeing enrolment decline with new Catholic schools opening in the area? There is no comparison between the facilities.

We are not seeing any decline in student enrolment at Ancaster High. In fact, our projected enrolments show that the school is at capacity.

As we continue to invest in our schools through our multi-year plan, people in the community will see a substantial improvement in how this school looks, both on the inside and outside.