

The IndependentNEWS

MacLeod determined to make high school addition happen

By BEV McRAE

Nepean-Carleton MPP Lisa MacLeod is trying to make sure Barrhaven's Longfields-Davidson Heights Secondary School gets a desperately needed expansion.

The school is bursting at the seams and is expected to reach 140 per cent of its capacity in September, 2012.

MacLeod, the Tory education critic, is asking residents to sign a petition urging the Ottawa Carleton District School Board to build a \$5 million expansion as its top priority.

"The residents whose kids go to Longfields-Davidson Heights are paying taxes to the province and have a right to expect there will be a local school for their children."

Currently, LDHSS,

which opened in 2009, has more than 1,400 students and ten portables. By September 2013, 1920 students are projected to be enrolled – a utilization rate of 141 per cent – who would need to be accommodated in 40 portables, although the maximum allowed is 24.

"On February 9, the principal of Longfield-Davidson Heights Patsy Agard, the co-chairs of the School Council and I will be holding an event at the school from 6:30 – 7 p.m. to launch the petition," said MacLeod.

On Sat., Feb. 18 MacLeod will have the petition at Ross' Independent Grocer in Barrhaven asking people to sign.

"It's a great way to get the community engaged," she said.

Packing students into portables isn't the only

problem, said MacLeod. With the school already exceeding its theoretical capacity, students are sharing lockers, losing outdoor space, and suffering from a lack of washrooms, specialty shops and gym facilities.

LDHSS was built two years ago as a Grades 7 – 12 school, opening with Grades 7 – 9 and increasing by one grade per year, with Grade 12 to be added in 2012-13.

A presentation by the LDHSS School Council at a special public school board meeting on December 5 pointed out that the high school was already too small when it was built.

"During the 2005 planning process/working committee of LDHSS, it was made evident that LDHSS would need between 20-30 portables due to overutil-

ization," said School Council co-chairs Taz Mawji and Lauralee Comeau.

As part of the accommodation review for the new Chapman Mills school in Barrhaven, the board set the expansion of LDHSS as a priority and approved funds for preliminary design and site work.

"This was one of the most contentious issues in the review," said Barrhaven/Knoxdale-Merivale public school trustee Donna Blackburn, "but I lobbied my colleagues to recognize that the need is pressing and to make it a priority."

The Ministry of Education announced in March 2011 that \$600 million in funding would be earmarked for major capital projects to be undertaken in the next three years – purchasing schools, build-

ing additions or undertaking major retrofits to existing schools – focusing on projects that address population pressures.

But an expansion of LDHSS isn't the only work that needs to be done in Ottawa schools, said Blackburn,

"We have a lot of pressures in Kanata and downtown, and we have schools that are 100 years old that need work," said Blackburn. "I will try every chance I get to have the Longfields-Davidson Heights expansion approved, but as a trustee, I have an obligation to the school district as a whole."

The business services committee will meet in March, said Blackburn, to review the list of capital priorities, including the LDHSS expansion.

MacLeod warned that postponing construction

of a new wing on LDHSS would set up a competition between school boards for students.

"Parents will be looking to enrol their kids in a school that has room for them, whether that be the French high school or the English Catholic school board," said MacLeod.

School boards are paid per student by the province, so a loss of enrolment would mean a loss of revenue, she added.

MacLeod suggested that the school board needs a new system for planning new schools in high growth suburban areas like Barrhaven and Riverside South.

"We are building schools that are already past capacity," she said. "We need a system to build schools when the community is being planned."

Walter Baker Centre to host grand re-opening celebration Feb. 17

The Walter Baker Centre is opening its doors to the community for a grand re-opening celebration Fri., Feb. 17.

Built in 1980, the Walter Baker Sports Centre was designed to meet the recreational needs of the Barrhaven community. With five squash courts, three meeting halls, three pools and two arenas, the 189,250 square foot building was the 'Shangri-La' of recreation centres. Since that time, the Walter Baker Sports Centre has undergone several more renovations. The last of the improvements for the fitness facility was in 1996 - until now that is... From Nov. 14 until Dec. 2, the 2,583 sq. ft. upper gym was closed for repairs and renovations. Members and new clients were welcomed back on Sat., Dec. 3 to brand new state-of-the-art resistance machines, new benches for free weight users, state-of-the-art barbells, fresh paint, improved quality lighting and more space to move around.

The Aquatic Centre also underwent several restorative projects and was closed for 7 weeks at the end of 2011. During the closure, work was completed to repair fixtures and tiling in the

shower rooms of all three change rooms. Cleaning and painting freshened up the natatorium space, pool classroom and mushroom fountain, while the waterslide was also re-conditioned and waxed to prepare for another year of sliding. All pools were drained, cleaned thoroughly and equipment checked. The installation of ultra violet filters will be taking place in early 2012, and plumbing was set up to prepare for the UV filters coming on line.

To celebrate these improvements, the Walter Baker Sports Centre has organized a grand re-opening for Fri., Feb. 17 from 9

– 4 p.m., where potential members can schedule tours of the facility, receive one-on-one reviews of his/her fitness goals and objectives and receive a complimentary pass upon the purchase of a membership. All members who hold either an All-Inclusive Membership or Weight and Cardio Membership are also entitled to receive a free introductory fitness program designed by one of our personal trainers, a free follow up consultation and will also receive a courtesy call after one month's time to ensure that the client is satisfied with his/her program and services.

On Friday February 17 from 9-4 p.m. join them in their celebrations and enjoy: FREE access to our weight and cardio upper gym as well as demonstrations on how to use our state-of-the-art resistance machines; complimentary coffee and tea offered until 12 noon from Sachi's

café; FREE use of the pool from 1-2:30 pm.; aquatic sport demonstrations for spring board diving, synchronized swimming, snorkelling and scuba diving; FREE swimming level assessment for children and adults; receive Swim to Survive training—learn what to do should you fall

into water unexpectedly; more games and fun activities taking place during the swim (from 1 – 2:30PM).

The Walter Baker Sports Centre is located at 100 Malvern Drive, off Greenbank Road. Contact Kristy Kilcup, Fitness Coordinator at 613-580-2424 x 30326 for more details.

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