

**Kirk Dopson <kdopson@isys.ca>
on Tuesday, August 19, 2008 at 10:09 AM -0500 wrote:**

ARC Report Draft comments

Some general comments on the report:

The report states that "The current building is in an advanced state of disrepair and money spent on further repairs will not halt the process." I, and other members of the public, disagree strongly with this statement. The building's state of repair is a result of NOT keeping up with the repairs. The cost to fix the itemized list of repairs (as determined by the Ministry report), which supposedly will fix all of Wembley's current woes, has already been proven to be considerably less than what the Ministry proposes. If we fix all the items, have we not put Wembley back in a state of good repair? Or is the ARC suggesting that there are further repairs that have not been brought to light? Arguing that an older building is not worth repairing is, quite frankly, laughable – unless there are serious structural issues.

I must say, the main issue that continues to puzzle me is the cost of Wembley's repairs and the response of the ARC. My understanding is this review process started because of the physical state of Wembley. If in fact all the repairs (or the bulk of them) can be done for significantly less than what is projected in the Ministry report (enough so Wembley is no longer PTR), why would we not be actively investigating that option? Maybe I'm missing something, but if Wembley realistically is not PTR, then the whole point of the Accomodation Review process is moot.

I guess what I'm trying to say is, it seems like we are choosing to close Wembley not ultimately because of repair issues (the continued main thrust presented at all 4 public meetings), but because we cannot afford to keep 40+ schools open. Even if we can afford the repairs, it appears we don't want to go down that road because consolidation is a bigger concern. That in itself wouldn't bother me, but the overriding issue of consolidation WASN'T the thrust of the review process.

If we are arguing that we can do nothing about the numbers provided by the Ministry's review, then that is a cop-out. I cannot believe that the Ministry is prepared to accept grossly inflated repair costs when it has been proven that with a little creative thinking significant cost savings can be had without having to sacrifice any repairs (see the presentation notes provided by John Hamalainen).

And, if the Ministry funding is so cock-eyed that it accepts grossly inflated repair costs, then the Ministry MUST be held accountable. As ALL of us are taxpayers, we have a responsibility to speak up if we feel the government is overspending/using faulty data. If we accept that the data is faulty and do nothing about it, then shame on all of us.

Specific Comments:

Has the ARC taken into account the necessary site revisions for Princess Anne beyond the bricks and mortar construction of the addition? I.e. there will be additional revisions and costs to accommodate a bussing drop-off zone, a larger general parking area, potentially a 2nd emergency access, etc. Has anyone spoken with the various City of Greater Sudbury departments to determine what revisions are even necessary and what additional costs would be associated with these revisions?

The report specifically indicates under “value to the students” that Princess Anne offers a larger play area. Does this take into account the large area of the property that is currently covered by a large rock outcropping (which coincidentally is off-limits to the students)? If so, does the board intend to remove some or all of this rock to expand the play area, and if so have the costs for this rock removal been figured into the overall costs for this option? I suspect rock removal will be required to expand/move the play area to accommodate the issues (bussing, etc) noted above.

Under “Value to Students”

- Offers larger play area – again, what impact does the rock outcrop have on this option?
- Provides a wide variety of extra-curricular activities – so does Wembley currently
- Enhances program at Princess Anne from JK-6 to JK-8 – Wembley ALREADY offers this – how does this provide any additional value to WEMBLEY students given this is a WEMBLEY accommodation review?

Under “Value to the School Board”

- Reduces operating costs with a new green facility – are there any facts/figures to back up this claim? How much on average does it cost to keep Wembley and Princess Anne operating on a yearly basis? What are your projected annual operating costs for the revised Princess Anne site?
- Addresses the bus loading concerns – quite frankly the public has yet to hear how this is going to be addressed. Do you now have specific information on how the loading issue will be addressed at the Princess Anne site – is so, what is

it?

- Maximizes the use of financial resources – again, I think my comments submitted on previous occasions to the ARC are clear, but to quickly summarize I don't agree that using an obviously skewed Ministry review for Wembley is fair to the tax paying public. Nor do I agree that spending triple (or, as I suspect significantly more) the amount of money to repair Wembley on an addition to Princess Anne is the best use of tax payers money.
- Recognizes that Princess Anne has property to accommodate an addition – again, how does the rock outcrop on the current site come into play with regard to expansion of the play area?

The sections entitled “Value to the Community” and “Value to the Local Economy” are far too generic to be considered a supporting argument for the Princess Anne site – or any site for that matter. All the examples listed could apply to practically ANY school in the Rainbow Board. Other than the before/after school program, what concrete examples can be provided (ie. a hub of events – name some).

General comments on the process as a whole:

I've said it before in my previous comments, and I'll say it again. This review process is clearly moving to someone's agenda, and the input of the public obviously has NO impact on the accommodation review process, even though the Board's own policy states that the ARC is responsible for “Considering community feedback on options for accommodating students in the school or group of schools.” Pg.2 . Look at the minutes from all the public meetings, look at the comments provided by the public (the ones currently posted on the Board website) and look at the summaries of each meeting provided in the ARCs draft report – there is not ONE statement from the public recorded which SUPPORTS the ARC's top 2 recommendations.

If the ARC is not bound to reflect the majority view of the public, then this should be made blatantly clear at each public meeting. I can personally state that there were many who attended the public meetings with the understanding that there would be a formal vote on the options presented by the ARC. It was only at the 4th public meeting that it became clear the public would have no say in what the ARC committee ultimately decided.

Why is it the minutes for the June 16 public meeting did NOT get published on the Board website until 2 months after the fact (Aug.15th, the original closing date for submissions to the draft report)?

Why is it the questions raised at the June 16th public meeting did NOT get publicly answered and posted on the Board website until 2 month after the fact (Aug.15th, the original closing date for submissions to the draft report)?

Why is it that general comments submitted by certain individuals have NOT been posted on the Board website yet? The public was encouraged to submit comments and questions to the ARC, yet in some cases only the questions have been posted on the Board website. The comments are just as important as the questions.

While I can understand people were likely on vacation for part of this time and have other work to do, how long does it realistically take to post information that has been submitted to the review process ELECTRONICALLY (in the case of my own submissions), or recorded by board officials (in the case of the meeting minutes)?

I've been fortunate in that I have been able to attend all the public meetings (and one ARC meeting) to date - but not everyone has that flexibility. Many people rely on the board website to receive their information, or as in my case it is a way to confirm what was supposedly said at each meeting. This is critical if anyone is to provide half-way decent feedback on the process.

Issuing the draft ARC report in late July, at a time when many people (including Board staff who answer the bulk of the questions regarding the Wembley review) are on holidays, closing submissions to said report on Aug. 15th (now extended to the 22nd) again, while many folks are still on holidays, and not posting important parts of the background information until the day submissions CLOSE (Aug.15th) is a great dis-service to the general public. If, as I believe, there is a serious push from the ARC (and ultimately the Board) to close Wembley no matter what arguments the public brings forward, all of this delay in producing information/posting edited public comments/following a terrible summer timeline, etc does nothing but enforce that belief. If anything, the overall process has a gone a long way to ensure that very few people will respond to the report.

This ARC report identifies 4 critical concerns following the June 16th public meeting –

- 1) concern about access to information
- 2) concern about the facts not being presented accurately

- 3) concern about the School Council not being a conduit for communication
- 4) concern about the lack of communication between the ARC and the public

Why have these concerns not been addressed in this report, and why have they not been addressed and the answers posted for public viewing on the board website?

The Board or ARC received conceptual drawings from Yellowega Belanger regarding the addition to accommodate all Wembley students – on what date were those drawings commissioned by the Board/ARC?

How did the PTR costs for Princess Anne go from a value of approximately \$2.6 million (the number provided by Diane Cayen-Arnold on June 3rd) to approximately \$1.1 million (the number quoted at the June 16th public meeting)?

As I've said at the public meetings and in my submitted comments, I am not opposed to closing Wembley if the facts make sense. However, to this point in time I truly believe there is a set agenda being followed by the ARC/Board - an agenda that is NOT acknowledging many of the key facts regarding financial expenditures and repairs that have been brought forward by the public. As such, I still CANNOT support the recommendations put forward in this report by the ARC.

I leave you with this thought. Here is a key phrase taken from the minutes from the first public meeting held on March 5th – “Board policy P.3.09 Pupil Accommodation Review (available on the Board’s website at rainbowschools.ca) reflects the revised guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education. There is a new approach to the accommodation review process – going to the community first for options instead of providing an option to the community for input.” If we follow this train of thought, then the ARC has not done its job by continuing to push the consolidation option with Princess Anne. The community has been nothing but clear on its preferred option – keep Wembley open.

Kirk Dopson

August 20th, 2008

Hi folks:

I submitted comments on the ARC draft report yesterday. Something has since come to my attention that I feel must be addressed.

Can someone please explain to me how Wembley, with an FCI score of 87% which makes it prohibitive, is deemed by the ARC in their draft report to be "...in an advanced state of disrepair and money spent on further repairs will not halt that process" while Princess Anne has recently (Aug.15th on the Rainbow board site) been reported to have an FCI of 119% (making it in WORSE condition than Wembley), and yet Princess Anne continues to be touted as the best option for this review process?

And why is it that the FCI score for Princess Anne is only being published now, when the public has been asking since the first public meeting on March 5th what the status of Princess Anne is?

Answers provided in a timely fashion would be appreciated.

Sincerely,

Kirk Dopson