

I have attended three of the four public meetings about the future of Wembley Public School and have to say I am disappointed, angry and, frankly, insulted as a result of the information provided and the way the information was provided. I cannot say if the problem lies with the Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) or the Rainbow Board of Education but what becomes clear is that the facts are not being presented accurately. Here are the concerns I have about what has been presented:

- At Meeting # 1 the ARC representative indicated early on that closing Wembley was not necessarily the main objective yet, by the end of that meeting, the attendees were left with the feeling that the closure of Wembley was a foregone conclusion because the building was labelled Prohibitive To Repair (PTR) and funding was no longer available for repairs, renovations or rebuilding. At Meeting # 3 the ARC representative provided 8 options, 6 of which involve closing Wembley (the building) permanently and relocating the students. Keeping Wembley open, option #1, was not considered to be a viable option by the Committee.

- At Meeting # 1 the ARC representative stated that Wembley did not qualify for funding from the Ministry of Education because there were other schools within an 8 km radius that had vacancies. At Meeting # 4 the ARC representative said that criteria no longer applies but the ARC still considers adding a second floor to Princess Anne Public School to be the best solution.

- At Meeting # 3 the options presented were obviously skewed. The pros heavily outweighed the cons. Topics such as finding cheaper ways to fix Wembley and learning the status of Princess Anne (cost to accommodate Wembley's students, transportation issues, opinions of Princess Anne's community, condition of the building) were not on the agenda or the details were not available for that meeting. The 3 assessments of Wembley, done since 2003, require further examination due to questionable interpretation of the data and their relevance to the the Facility Condition Index (the reason for Wembley's accommodation review, we were told).

- At Meeting # 4 it was learned that some of the concerned parents and members of the general public have had private meetings and telephone conversations with members of the Board of Education to get answers to some of the questions not addressed at the public meetings. The ARC has not voluntarily shared the details of those meetings in a public setting and, when pressed, only provided vague answers.

- Wembley's School Council should have been resource or, at the very least, a conduit for communications between parents, teachers, administrators and the community at large. It's constitution states, as it's goals: to identify current areas of concern within the school and recommend strategies and solutions; to open and enhance lines of communication and provide a forum for input into educational matters. This group, as a whole, was not consulted nor "kept in the loop."

The Wembley accommodation review process began with the statement that the public's input was desired and would be welcome. We were to be partners in deciding the fate of Wembley Public School. The lack of background information, the contradictory information provided at the public meetings and the unwillingness of the Board of Education/ARC to give the public the details necessary to make an educated, informed, decision lead me to believe the process is greatly flawed and the fate of Wembley Public School has been predetermined. No public input was actually needed but, because the Ministry of Education requires public hearings, an "open, transparent consultation" was staged. I cannot give my approval to any of the options put forth except one – leave Wembley open until a thorough and unbiased investigation of the facts is done.

Sincerely,
Kelly Soucy
parent, Wembley School Council member