

I've attended every meeting to date, and I've made comments at the meetings, but I'd like to formalize some of my thoughts on the process.

First off, I would like to thank the ARC committee for all their hard work over the last few months. They are dealing with a touchy situation, and no matter what decision is finally made there will always be people who are unhappy.

A little background - my daughter currently attends Wembley, and my son will be starting at Wembley this fall. My family actually lives outside the catchment area for Wembley, but we chose Wembley as its programming, services and location all matched our needs, plus it received rave reviews from people in the education system that we are friends with. I drive my daughter to school every day, and my wife picks her up at the end of the day.

In all honesty, I have no strong ties to Wembley. Don't get me wrong - the teachers are excellent, my daughter loves going to Wembley, and the administration has been a pleasure to work with. My wife is so impressed with the school that she joined the school council for the 2007/08 year. However, if I have to move my children to another school, then so be it. As stated above, we already transport our daughter out of our catchment area, so driving her somewhere else is a non-issue for our family. Unfortunately, not everyone who attends Wembley has the same flexibility. So, based on the info provided to date at the meetings, especially the suggested options presented by the ARC committee at tonight's meeting (May 7/08), I think it would be unfair to ask the public and ultimately the Rainbow District School board to make a decision on the options without knowing more about each option.

1) Most importantly, if we are to pursue either of the top two options (both including Princess Anne P.S.), then we need to know about the current status of Princess Anne in terms of its standing on maintenance issues, and when it is due for an accommodation review of its own. This question has yet to be addressed. It would be pointless in pursuing this school as an option if it also is coming up for review in the near future (and has significant maintenance issues of its own).

2) The cost to pursue each option MUST be addressed before anyone can vote on the options. For example, if an addition is to be built at Princess Anne, how much will that cost? While an exact cost is not likely to happen in the short term, a rough estimate based on the approximate number of square feet required to house the new students should not be difficult to obtain prior to the next meeting on June 16th. From a dollars and sense standpoint, it would not make sense to build an addition if that cost will be significantly higher than the cost to complete repairs to Wembley; unless of course the school board is looking to reduce its overall overhead by reducing the total number of schools that need to be maintained. Realistically, if the costs are equal, will the Ministry of Education fund repairs to Wembley, or do their guidelines state that they will only fund "additions"? From a public relations standpoint, if it turns out that an addition will be more costly than to complete the

repairs (and we choose the addition option), the taxpayers will likely not be happy with our choice (ie. Why gain an addition when you can keep a school open).

3) Are there still excess pupil spaces TODAY within 8 km in the surrounding schools? This was given as a reason why Ministry funding was not provided to Wembley for repairs in 2003/04, yet we have heard at the meetings that most if not all of the other schools in the Wembley catchment area are at capacity. How many excess spaces must there be before maintenance funding will not be provided to a school?

As a final comment, it seems bizarre to me that its state of repair quite clearly did not happen overnight. In 2003/04 the school was determined to be prohibitive to repair – which tells me maintenance had been going significantly downhill for many years prior to that review! Regardless of maintenance dollars allocated by the Board, was there no planning in advance for long-term maintenance issues? Surely it was expected that a building as old as Wembley would require significant repairs as it aged? Or have we been following the Jim Gordon school of thought (ie. Don't raise taxes and let the infrastructure crumble)?

Hopefully, we can all make an informed decision that serves the community as a whole in the best manner possible.

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