



Potential Lease Opportunity at 240 Eglinton Avenue East to Address Accommodation Pressures at Eglinton Junior Public School

To: Planning and Priorities Committee

Date: 23 June, 2021

Report No.: 06-21-4132

Strategic Directions

- Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students
- Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs

Recommendation

It is recommended that the potential lease opportunity at 240 Eglinton Avenue East not be executed.

Context

In April 2021 the Toronto Lands Corporation (TLC) presented an opportunity to the Board of Trustees to lease a commercial building located at 240 Eglinton Avenue East. The intent of the lease would be to provide an interim solution to address existing and projected accommodation pressures at Eglinton Junior Public School. This school is situated on a small, constrained site of 1.6 acres within a provincially designated Urban Growth Centre and does not have space to accommodate projected enrolment growth.

The long-term solution to accommodation pressures in the Yonge-Eglinton area is a new elementary school, as identified in the Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy. TDSB and TLC staff continue to work with the City of Toronto and the development community to identify a suitable location for this future school.

To manage growth at Eglinton Jr. PS until a new school is provided, an interim solution has been put in place involving the redirection of residential developments to schools

outside of the area. Students residing in 14 new residential developments are bussed to two schools: Whitney Jr. PS and Rippleton PS. These schools are located 3 kilometres and 7 kilometres from Eglinton Jr. PS respectively. This interim solution is expected to be implemented for 22 other developments within the attendance area until a new school can be secured in the Yonge-Eglinton area.

The commercial building at 240 Eglinton Avenue East provides an opportunity to implement an alternative interim solution whereby all currently redirected students would be accommodated locally and not bussed to other schools outside of the area. The ability to provide all students with access to a neighbourhood school aligns with the guiding principles of the Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy and would reduce annual transportation costs.

Similar to the existing interim solution, the lease of 240 Eglinton Avenue East would be required until a new school is secured in the area. This is estimated to be between 10 and 15 years.

240 Eglinton Avenue East is being offered to the TDSB for lease for ten years plus two five-year renewal options.

Description of 240 Eglinton Avenue East

The commercial building at 240 Eglinton Avenue East is situated directly across the street from Eglinton Jr. PS and provides an opportunity to function as a satellite of the school starting in 2022-23. The principal of Eglinton Jr PS would create a school organization that uses the rooms in Eglinton Jr PS and the satellite space to accommodate all the classes.

The building is five stories and is currently vacant. The capacity of the satellite at 240 Eglinton Avenue would be 299 pupil places, consisting of 13 classrooms, a withdrawal room and a general-purpose room. The ground floor of the building is currently used as a parking garage. The preliminary design study suggests that this space could be converted into a secure assembly area for the students, along with the school administrative functions such as an office. The total capacity across the Eglinton Jr PS building (548 pupil places) and the satellite (299 pupil places) would be 847 pupil places.

A greenspace behind the site would be created to provide the satellite with some degree of access to outdoor play area. The future greenspace would have an area of approximately 5,000 square feet and would be fenced for student safety. It is accessible directly from a rear exit door on the ground floor of the building. The timeline to have this greenspace available is planned for one year after the satellite opens.

The building owner is intending to redevelop a property that abuts the northern edge of 240 Eglinton Avenue East in the future. This property, located at 808 Mount Pleasant Road (the current Roehampton Inn) may be developed into a 44-storey condominium building.

Educational Experience

Central staff and the administration for Eglinton Jr. PS have had an opportunity to tour the building and to discuss how the space could be used as a satellite for Eglinton Jr. PS. From an accommodation perspective, the building is of a sufficient size to provide the classroom spaces necessary to accommodate all existing and redirected Eglinton Jr. PS students across the two buildings.

However, the building is qualitatively different from the Eglinton Jr. PS building, which may offer some students a lesser educational experience than others. For example, the satellite building will not have a proper gymnasium or library, nor will it have a proper outdoor play area. Recess at the satellite building would need to be held indoors until the adjacent parcel of land is converted into an outdoor play area. Once the outdoor space is made available, recess would need to be delivered in shifts due to the small size.

Students accommodated in the satellite building would have less access to physical activity and be held indoors for most of the day. Some classrooms would not have access to a sufficient level of natural light, which could negatively impact mental health and wellbeing.

Further, this arrangement would require students to move from their current holding schools into the satellite building. This represents a significant change from the learning environment at the holding schools. It is likely that the adjacent parcel of land, 808 Mount Pleasant Road, will be under construction during the term of the lease, with the possibility of a 44-storey condominium being built on the site. This means students would move from a traditional school setting into an active construction zone which could impact future outdoor play space.

From a logistical perspective the students accommodated in the satellite building would need to cross Eglinton Avenue to access Eglinton Jr. PS when required for assemblies or other special events. Prep teachers would also need to cross the street throughout the day and consider how they would move with their teaching supplies.

Conclusion

Although the lease opportunity at 240 Eglinton Avenue East could provide local accommodation for students until a new school is achieved, there are numerous operational, logistical and physical challenges that may result in a lesser educational

experience for students compared to their current setting. For the reasons outlined within this report, staff is recommending that this potential lease opportunity not be executed.

Action Plan and Associated Timeline

The TLC will notify the owner of the property of the decision made by the Board of Trustees by July 5, 2021.

Resource Implications

As part of the analysis, staff looked at the financial impact of leasing the site. While costs were not considered as a significant factor in making the recommendation, there would have been increased costs to the operating and capital budgets by executing the lease.

The annual cost of the lease for the satellite is outlined in the report provided by the TLC. Staff of the Ministry of Education have advised that they cannot guarantee that the cost of the lease will be fully funded by the Ministry. Lease costs are funded by the Temporary Accommodation Grant, which is a formulaic allocation to school boards made through the Grants for Student Needs (GSN). The Ministry has a cap on the total funding allocated to school boards through this grant, which is lower than the total expenditures made by school boards. As a result, the grant covers only a portion of annual lease expenses and school boards need to have another funding source to make up the difference, the operating budget. Based on last year's funding for temporary accommodation, the TDSB would receive 61% of the cost of this lease. This means the operating budget would be used to pay for the unfunded lease amount.

Because the satellite is separated from Eglinton Jr. PS by a major, highly active street that is not quickly crossed, the current administrative and support staff will not be able to provide supervision and support to it. Additional staff would need to be hired, estimated to be a vice principal, an office administrator, a caretaker, and three lunchroom supervisors. The estimated cost of these staff and the lease costs would have an impact on the operating budget of approximately \$650,000 per year for the next ten years. In addition, Eglinton Jr. PS does not have sufficient furniture and equipment to outfit the satellite. A one-time purchase of these materials would be required which would be funded through the operating budget.

The space will require significant renovation to function as an operating school. This one-time cost, estimated at between \$2 million and \$2.5 million, would need to be funded through Proceeds of Disposition.

However, the existing interim solution of residential development redirections to schools outside of the area must continue to prevent overcrowding at Eglinton Jr. PS. To continue these redirections, transportation costs will continue to be incurred each year.

Communications Considerations

Not applicable.

Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)

Not applicable.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Map – Location of 240 Eglinton Avenue East

From

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Location of 240 Eglinton Avenue East

