



George Harvey CI and York Memorial CI – Pupil Accommodation Review

York Memorial CI Alumni Meeting

Thursday, April 29, 2021

6:30 pm – 8:00pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom Webinar

Presenters	<p>Audrey Amo, Former Superintendent of York (Facilitator) Chris Tonks, Trustee of Ward 6 Kwame Lennon, Superintendent of Learning Network 03 Andrew Gowdy, System Planning Officer, TDSB Planning Department Safiyyah Omar-Saleh, Educational Planning Officer, TDSB Planning Department Vicky Branco, Former Superintendent of Learning Network 03</p>
Other Staff & Trustee in Attendance	<p>Dan MacLean (Trustee, Ward 2) Donna Drummond (Principal, York Memorial CI) Lorraine Linton (Superintendent of Secondary Schools) Uton Robinson (Executive Superintendent, Learning Centre 1) Wilmar Kortleever, Shared Services Liaison, Trustee Services (Meeting Notes)</p>

<i>Item / Presenter</i>	<i>Discussion</i>	<i>Attachments / Actions / Results</i>
Objective of Meeting:	<p>Receive feedback from York Memorial CI Alumni on the George Harvey CI and York Memorial CI – Pupil Accommodation Review</p>	
Presentation:	<p>Meeting facilitator Audrey Amo opened the meeting with the Land Acknowledgement, Agenda, Attendees, Meeting Norms, and Participation options.</p> <p>Welcoming and opening remarks from Superintendent Kwame Lennon.</p> <p>Andrew Gowdy and Safiyyah Omar-Saleh from the TDSB Planning Department presented the slide presentation that was pre-shared.</p> <p>Welcoming and opening remarks from Trustee Chris Tonks. Trustee Tonks states that a key change compared to earlier meetings is that Staff will recommend that the York Memorial name will continue for the new school to be built on the York Memo site. Trustee Tonks acknowledged the number of active people in the community that were advocating for this, and he is in total support. The decision is up to the Board of Trustees in June 2021.</p>	

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<p>Comments/Questions:</p> <p>Speaker 1</p> <p>Andrew Gowdy</p> <p>Speaker 2</p> <p>Andrew Gowdy</p> <p>Speaker 3</p> <p>Andrew Gowdy</p> <p>Trustee Tonks</p>	<p>1. What type of permits does the TDSB have to ask for, in order to do a complete amalgamation of George Harvey and York Memorial? What permissions do you need from Toronto Heritage to make alterations to school?</p> <p>From the program perspective, it is a decision for the Board of Trustees, who will decide after staff makes recommendations in its final Staff Report.</p> <p>Separately, we have to work through municipal approvals, including a site plan approval and building permits. We need Ministry approval because it is a school, and to ensure that the gross floor area fits within their design parameters. The site also has a heritage designation, there is an additional set of approvals needed, and staff has worked with Toronto Heritage Preservation Services since the fire happened to understand the bylaw and what to do during reconstruction.</p> <p>2. Are we simply weighing the cost of heritage versus student accommodation?</p> <p>The heritage bylaw is going to require us to do certain things and that will be reflected in our costing. We have not gone into the details of design yet, we are still at the exploratory stage. We have done a fit test and we have looked at where we would accommodate additional classrooms if we were to have 1300 students. Architects have done preliminary investigations and they have determined that it is possible to put additional pupil places on the site. We have shared those ideas with Toronto Heritage Preservation Services to see how it fits in with the heritage bylaw. There will be additional costs because of the nature of the building, and the need to restore features of the building that have heritage value like the facade.</p> <p>3. What happened with the insurance money for the fire?</p> <p>Our funding source will be composed of 2 parts: an insurance settlement that would allow us to restore York Memorial to the previous size that it was, accommodating about 900 students. In addition, if the consolidation gets approved to 1300 people places, we intend to expand the building by applying to the Ministry of Education for funding.</p> <p>The cost to restore the historical aspects of the building will be reflected within our cost estimate.</p> <p>The insurance will reimburse the cost of bringing York Memorial back to the heritage standard of the old building.</p>	

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Speaker 4	<p>4. If this modified PAR is a model that the TDSB is HOPING to duplicate in future years, it would make a lot of sense to ensure that it is done properly and successfully. Having York Memorial as a school/staff/community MOVE locations 4 times during a 7-year period is unbelievable and goes against almost all of the TDSB's guiding principles.</p>	
Audrey Amo	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p>	
Speaker 5	<p>5. The slide deck mentioned the issue of timetables. What is a hybrid model, and are any current schools in the TDSB using it?</p>	
Andrew Gowdy	<p>A hybrid model allows two different types of programming to run at the same time. There is a multitude of hybrid type models in elementary schools.</p> <p>There are some high schools that will offer certain programs in a hybrid model, where some courses are offered in a semestered setting while other courses are offered as full-year courses. For example where grades 9 and 10 classes are non-semestered, and grades 11 and 12 are semestered.</p> <p>For the consolidation, if a hybrid model is to happen in the George Harvey building, that will be part of the committee work that gets done in the year before consolidation. Students, staff, and community would come together to find models that work best to meet the needs of all students.</p>	
Speaker 6	<p>6. If no hybrid model is designed, one of the student populations might loose out. York Memo has always had a year-long timetable. It will be tricky to resolve.</p>	
Audrey Amo	<p>Thank you for the comment.</p>	
Speaker 7	<p>7. My son has a question about the stained glass in the auditorium. Do you have a plan to bring something similar back? Was anything salvageable?</p>	
Andrew Gowdy	<p>We understand that the original plans for the design of the stained glass are still available. We are working with heritage consultants to understand what we can do with the stained glass.</p>	
Trustee Tonks	<p>There also was a GoFundMe (campaign). It was entrusted to my father, as a long time York Memorial alumnus. [Former Principal] Dave Drew is also a part of that. There is an intent of purchasing and assisting the school when it is rebuilt with respect to restoring those stained glass windows. There are also other organizations, veterans organizations, that Dave Drew is working with, to see what we can harness to assist in</p>	

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Speaker 8	<p>that as well. I want to emphasize that there is the commitment to rebuild it, whether it is from money that is from the insurance claim, whether it is from money that has been donated, or whether from any other sources that we can realize to make that happen. You will be surprised to learn how expensive these windows are to build today. But surprisingly, the company that built them over 100 years ago, still exists, and they have the designs for those exact stained glass windows, so we were quite pleased to hear that.</p> <p>8. How would hybridization take away from the heritage of the school? There is public outcry, which includes over 2000 alumni on a webpage. There is also a heritage committee and there are TDSB staff who are interested in preserving the heritage. What consideration are you giving to the heritage now, compared to before the school burned down? What is the goal?</p>	
Andrew Gowdy	<p>Based on the guiding principles being used for reviewing all 111 secondary schools in the TDSB, this proposed consolidation has the goal to create a strong neighborhood school that serves the needs of all students. Looking at the distribution of high schools across the city of Toronto, we have a bit of an anomaly here with George Harvey and York Memorial quite close together: 700 meters apart. They were designed that way, when the educational philosophy was to stream students to two sites based upon the programs that they would take. One had predominantly academic courses, the other predominantly technical and vocational courses.</p> <p>We are moving away from that model of education. That is not new: there are other high schools in the city that have already begun that transformation. We are looking for all to become composite schools, serving and supporting all different destinations of students. What we want to achieve here is that strong neighborhood school to serve Keele & Eglinton. We believe we can accomplish that by taking the best of George Harvey and the best of York Memorial, and create a 1300-pupil school on the York Memorial site. If this gets approved, there is a lot of transition work that has to occur, a lot of committee work. Things like what is the timetable going to be, how do we respect the histories and identities and traditions of the two schools, as we bring them together into a new composite school for the neighbourhood.</p>	
Speaker 9	<p>9. There may be great public backlash. There has been significant online chatter, we could be looking at class action, as people want that school to remain a war memorial.</p>	
Christ Tonks	<p>The vision, from my perspective, is that York Memorial will remain a war memorial. It will remain with its name intact. But it will become a school that will serve the next generations of kids for the next 50 to 75 years, based on the needs of today. We need to separate that from the historical aspects of what the schools are grounded in. Those concepts you embrace, the good aspects, the strong history.</p>	

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Speaker 10	<p>Through full-service programming, we will make it into a modern school that serves the kids of today going forward, because the times are very different. To be blunt, York Memorial and George Harvey, and many other schools across our system, are caught in an era, in a void in which we really have not taken a hard look at secondary programming for a long time. We are caught within those old boundaries of us versus them, in 'our programs are better than yours'. As a Board, we are getting away of kids fighting to get into programs. What full-service means is being there for the local community, which is what York Memorial was founded upon: serving the local community. Many of our high schools, not only these 2, have gotten away from that local community concept. You have people going across the city to attend programs. But make no mistake; we are not losing the history of York Memorial here. We are growing that history and making its future. York Memorial was founded upon being an academic school, and it will continue to be one. The intent is not to see the RUSH program disappear, or the AP program.</p> <p>10. Given the significant uncertainty of the effect (positive or negative) of the pandemic and LRT, have you taken that into consideration?</p>	
Andrew Gowdy	<p>The pandemic is affecting all schools, it has affected enrollment trends. We are anticipating that things will return to in-person school at some point in the next school year, and if not in the next school year, the following one.</p>	
Chris Tonks	<p>We are planning this new school to serve pre-pandemic enrollment projections, as we believe those are more reliable than the current pandemic dip. These projections also include the city 's official plan, and development applications that developers have submitted, and transit improvements. We have been following the crosstown LRT very closely, and all the development trends. Those are factored into our projections, providing the rationale for why 1300 pupil places is the right number to build for.</p> <p>I can assure you that the TDSB staff, week-in and week-out, is on the top of Covid as our safety priority. If safety may be compromised in any way, shape, or form, and it is not appropriate to do amalgamation at a certain time, we are cognizant of that. Things are fluid right now, we are going through a process. These are recommendations, and they could be subject to change. Staff will write a report based on all the feedback, and it will be based on their best information as it applies to the pandemic. If needed, if we are not in a satisfactory state when it comes to health and safety, there is always the potential of going back and saying this is not the right time., even after a decision is made.</p>	

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<p>Speaker 11</p> <p>Andrew Gowdy</p>	<p>11. What is the difference between the 4- and the 6-year construction timetable?</p> <p>The normal construction process for a high school takes 4 years: 2 for design and approvals, and 2 for construction. For the York Memorial site, we estimate it is going to take 6 years, because both the design and approvals will take longer, as will the construction. This is due to the complexities associated with the site, because of the heritage bylaws, and needing to go through additional steps of working with Toronto Heritage Preservation Service. We need to work with the insurance company and deal with a site that has debris, contamination, and stabilization needs. It also has two other buildings on site. This is a realistic estimate, as we do not want to raise expectations that it can be done in four years. There is contingency built in as well.</p>	
<p>Speaker 12</p> <p>Andrew Gowdy</p>	<p>12. Scenario 4, the campus model, has two buildings on two sites. Has a committee or outside designer done a preliminary sketch on putting two buildings on the York Memorial site and still maintain the football field and the track?</p> <p>Quite early on after the fire we determined that here was potential to rebuild and expand York Memorial Collegiate. It is otherwise really quite limited because of the configuration, including the other buildings on the site. We do not think there is sufficient acreage to do that.</p> <p>With scenario four, the idea is to use the York Memorial Collegiate site, as well as the George Harvey site which is 700 meters away. Both buildings would be used by a single school, with a single Principal, and a single timetable. That timetable would have to allow traveling time for the students to move from the York Memorial building down to the George Harvey building and vice versa. It is an interesting concept, which is why we acknowledged it in this process. The campus idea as such has been discussed by TDSB staff for quite a long time. There are definitely disadvantages to a campus model and there are real advantages with proceeding with a reconstruction of York Memorial to a larger capacity of 1300 people places.</p>	
<p>Speaker 13</p> <p>Andrew Gowdy</p>	<p>13. Is it the assessment that having similar course availability in the school would discontinue the us versus them scenarios?</p> <p>The intent is to have a single school with all students feeling that they are part of that school. The campus model may create a possible disadvantage in this respect, as some students spend more time in the one building, and therefore develop a slightly different identity. An advantage of having all students in one single building might be that it is easier to have a one single identity assumed by everyone.</p>	

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<p>Speaker 14</p> <p>Andrew Gowdy</p>	<p>14. If the students from Memo go to Harvey in 2022 until the rebuild, will the name of George Harvey then be changed to York Memorial? Assuming that the Memo name will be approved.</p> <p>The concept is establishing one consolidated school at the earliest opportunity possible, which is for September of 2022. They are then basically in a temporary holding solution. We are returning York Memorial CI from the Scarlett Heights location to the Keele & Eglinton attendance area as it is intended to serve that area. We are returning it to the George Harvey building which is in that same area, and it is the holding solution until the new building opens in 2026 at the York Memorial Site. Because we are consolidating the schools for September of 2022, it is at that time that they become one school with one Principal and one school name and one timetable. We are recommending that if the consolidation gets approved, that the school be named York Memorial. That school name will follow that body of students and staff as they move from their holding solution into the permanent rebuilt York Memorial.</p>	
<p>Speaker 15</p>	<p>15. I have a 3-part feedback.</p> <p>Firstly, to thank the Trustee and the staff who have obviously diligently heard and responded to our concern and wish to keep the name of York Memo, this is very much appreciated. A related question is whether this will be part of the Board vote in June. Will there be some sort of written, binding vote to upholding this name, so that we can avoid any potential circumstances that arise in later years, somewhere between construction approval and when the school actually opens, when there might be renewed conversations about the name?</p> <p>The second part of my feedback is that from my personal perspective, as an alumnus, priority must be to ensure that the option is chosen that gives the best experience to current students and their families, and the incoming students and their families, as well as staff. I urge the staff and the TDSB team to really consider the experiences. Through this lens, scenario 4 means operating two campuses, in a place where you need to wear heavy winter gear for most of 6 months of the year. Is that really going to be a convenient smooth transition, even if the schools are only 700 meters apart. I am also thinking about the future intersection of Eglinton, which is already very busy. I can see students running, trying to run the red light to get to the school on time or get to their next class on time. I would really push for the team to work closely with the students and families, and staff.</p> <p>The last point I want to make is regarding the identity. I strongly feel that identity is a living thing. York Memo is a 90-year institution, and hopefully it will have another 100 years or more. But during this time, the identity of any organization or any person changes over time. I am not concerned, even as a proud Memo alum, that consolidation would so-called strip York Memo of its heritage value or identity, because identity will always morph and always evolve.</p>	

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Chris Tonks	<p>I am reminded of York Memo's motto. In English I think it says "Go forth with new strength". I think regardless of whether it's a consolidation or not, I think Memo will be able to go forth with new strength. That is something for people to keep in mind.</p>	
Speaker 16	<p>With regards to the name being a part of a board recommendation, I assume that a recommendation will be binding on the Board as it applies to the future name.</p> <p>I do want to point out that the Board is going through a process of reviewing all names of all schools, looking at the history behind them, to ensure that the naming is consistent with our current values. There are some instances in which some schools have been named after people that don't necessarily have legacies that are consistent with today's modern values. I am not saying that this is specifically tied to York Memorial, but it is on ongoing process – which may not actually be finished by the time we are finished with York Memorial.</p>	
Audrey Amo	<p>16. Thank you for reaching the recommendation to retain the York Memorial CI name of a consolidated school at 2690 Eglinton Ave. Many alumni and staff are supportive of this recommendation.</p>	
Speaker 17	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>17. Let's not confuse maintaining the historical and memorial attributes of the building, with the modernization of education moving forward. We can achieve a balance and ensure that both is achieved. Tomorrow's students should not be learning with yesterday's tools. I'm a proud Memo alumnus, and fully support preserving and celebrating the past. However, I do respect that what goes on within the rebuilt building should prepare students for tomorrow's careers.</p>	
Audrey Amo	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p>	
Speaker 18	<p>18. With regards to the stained glass windows: I have been in contact with the Canadian Legion since right after the fire, and I can report that they are quite interested to provide assistance. They really want to see the stained glass windows back in the school and we are proceeding with the discussions along those lines.</p> <p>About York Memo maintaining its memorial status, I received a letter from the Minister of Veterans Affairs, Andrew McCauley, in which he states "York Memorial Collegiate Institute is proudly included among 7500 memorials and monuments, in communities across the country, in Veterans Affairs' Canadian military memorials database".</p> <p>I think a couple of people have already commented about how pleased we are, and how important the recommendation is, to keep the name. I think if that happens, we can rest assured that York Memorial will continue to be War Memorial in the community. Keeping the name is critical.</p>	

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Audrey Amo Speaker 19	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>19. First of all, I want to salute the work that Dave Drew and Chris Tonks have done on behalf of York Memorial. I have had the privilege of being a Head of Department at George Harvey for 8 years and Principal at York Memorial for 8 years, so I have a good sense of the history. The decision to keep the name of York Memo is absolutely vital. I think Chris Tonks covered it beautifully about how the school should reflect their community. The decision on York Memorial is very, very important for the entire York Memo community. My time was back when it was York Township when I first joined the board. One little thing, just by way of decisions, I noticed in an earlier slide as you referred to the various teacher- and other unions that are involved, has any thought been given to the impact of staffing if you go to a single school? Good luck in your deliberations, and I look forward to the final decision.</p>	
Andrew Gowdy	<p>Yes, the impact on staffing is part of the analysis that we are doing.</p>	
Chris Tonks	<p>When we talk about staffing, there is obviously a unionized environment and there are going to be rules that apply with respect to the potential merger of two school Staffs.</p> <p>There is a similar situation that happened when we amalgamated Kane Middle School and Silverthorn Community School about 10 years ago. It was very similar to what is going on here, in the sense where we preserved Silverthorn, which was the legacy school going back well over 100 years. When we looked at the staffing process that occurred back then, we actually preserved both staffs that came together. The Board worked with our union partners to ensure that we were able to amalgamate the staffs very well. The union worked with us and worked on a good process. When the time comes, that we will be able to do what is really in the best interest of students that they are familiar with, the teachers that they have been with, and they continue to work with them going forward. I think that is in the best interest of everyone. I am very hopeful that we could get good things done on that piece as well.</p>	
Speaker 20	<p>20. Thank you so much for convening this meeting. As a former York Memorial student, I definitely remember being down this road before in around 2006, 2007, when talks of a potential merger or amalgamation between these 2 schools were apparent. I'm wondering if there was any look back to what the discussions were at that time and if any principles as to why you did not go forward with consolidation at that time are being considered during this process.</p>	
Andrew Gowdy	<p>Since amalgamation we have reviewed the city and clusters of schools on multiple occasions. Many ideas have been generated. Fifteen or ten years ago, we talked about the campus concept with George Harvey and York Memorial. In 2006 we looked at consolidations again. Every time that we explore these ideas there are</p>	

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Chris Tonks	<p>things that we learn that help us for the next time. One of the things that is different this time is that we have a set of guiding principles that are being applied to the entire city and the entire secondary panel that is under review.</p> <p>To get to this point of having a vision and guiding principles was a fair amount of work. It has taken two years of consultation with students, parents, staff, working with trustees to develop this vision for the secondary program review. I think that is one of the things that is different than discussions that we have had in the past on consolidations and campus models. We have a greater system perspective, and greater system support for moving forward on this vision of the composite neighbourhood high school.</p> <p>I was a young Trustee when those previous discussions were happening. The circumstances back then are not necessarily that much different now, aside from the fire. What is consistent with a lot of secondary schools across our system is that they have become very competitive for students. They got away from their traditional neighborhood school concept and were left to their own devices to create programs to attract those students. This leads to massive fluctuations in student enrollment. I think that was sort of the basis upon which they were beginning to look at the York Memorial campus model with George Harvey back in 2006, because George Harvey was suffering from some significant decline in enrollment.</p> <p>Now the fire has forced the issue, but there have been many schools that have closed essentially due to attrition. Any teacher or Superintendent will tell you that once you reach a certain number of students, it is almost impossible to run a school. You can't timetable it. Nelson A. Boylen [CI] was a prime example of that. I vowed to never allow that to happen again, because it was totally wrong what happened with those students. They weren't able to attract students and families to that school. They had 100 kids when we had to close it down. We had no choice, and the board, for one reason or another, did not engage a secondary review at that point in time. Finally, we now have this review underway. I believe we are actually at the forefront of being the first schools that are engaging the secondary plan right now. This is a real opportunity to really harness and get back to what is important for the kids of the neighborhood within the Keele and Eglinton area, and the broader York community.</p>	
Speaker 21	<p>21. If the circumstances aside from the fire haven't changed too much, I would hope that the same result of the review at that time, which was no consolidation, would be the same result this time around.</p>	
Audrey Amo	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p>	
Speaker 22	<p>22. What is Andrew's position and involvement in this process?</p>	

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Andrew Gowdy	As system planning officer I am responsible for the board's strategy and planning departments. I work with Safiyyah, the planning officer who is assigned with this particular Review and who does all the analysis. I will be working with the other departments in the board, like Business Services and Facility Services, and our academic staff, to craft the final staff report and bring it forward to our Executive Council. From Executive Council it goes onto our Planning & Priorities Committee, which is a subcommittee of Trustees. That is where the recommendations will be heard and discussed. They will do an initial vote there, and from there it goes to the Board meeting at the end of June. I will be shepherding this report through the process.	
Next Steps:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on this review is available on the TDSB public website at www.tdsb.on.ca: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Click on Accommodation Reviews at the left side of the page; - Scroll down to Pupil Accommodation Reviews; - Select George Harvey CI and York Memorial CI • Please fill out the online feedback survey available on the webpage above. • Submit questions to the google form link on the webpage above. • You can also email your questions/comments to your Trustee at chris.tonks@tdsb.on.ca. 	
Next Meeting:	<p>Meeting with other stakeholder groups will be held in the coming weeks.</p> <p>Subsequently:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 6, 2021: Public Meeting • May 26, 2021 – Post Final Staff Report on TDSB public website • June 14, 2021 – Special Board of Trustees Committee of the Whole meeting (delegations are received at this meeting) • June 30, 2021 –Board of Trustees meeting for final decision making 	
Adjournment	Thanks everybody for participating!	