




**Mike Morgan,**  
B.A.  
Broker.  
905-878-7777  
mike@mikemorgan.ca

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Graham Paine/Metroland

Halton District School Board chair Margo Shuttleworth (left) and Milton trustee Donna Danielli say the province's approval process has caused delays of new school openings, like at Elsie MacGill Secondary School.

## 'BUREAUCRATIC PROCESSES ARE GETTING IN THE WAY'

### PROVINCE'S APPROVALS PROCESS DELAYING NEW SCHOOLS, SAY HDSB TRUSTEES

**KATHY YANCHUS**  
kyanchus@metroland.com

Trustees of the Halton District School Board are calling on the province to review its "onerous" capital projects approval process.

The complex and lengthy timeline — trustees say — causes

construction delays for fully funded schools, leading to severe enrollment pressures in high-growth areas such as Milton and north Oakville and escalating costs which surpass Ministry of Education funding.

In four years, construction capital costs have risen approximately 42 per cent, and the min-

istry is asking the HDSB to "conform to building new schools with 90 per cent of the benchmark funding," according to trustees who shared their growing frustration in a recent letter to Education Minister Stephen Lecce.

Milton's newest high school (Elsie MacGill), currently under construction, exceeded ministry

funding by \$3M, a difference covered by the board.

"This is not sustainable or equitable as it impacts other areas, including our ability to upgrade aging schools adequately and in a timely way," the letter states.

The ministry requires four approvals at various pre-construction stages, which can add a year to a project, at which time "con-

See LOCAL, page 6

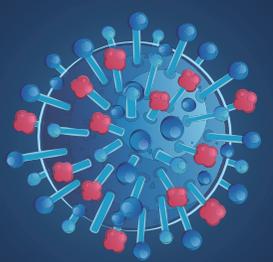


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**Dear Pets:** This is my reminder about the perils of Christmas. Don't eat tinsel, ribbons or tin foil, as ingestion can make you very sick. Don't bite on the Christmas lights because you will get a bad shock and burn your mouth. Don't eat chocolate, even if offered by humans, as you can become very ill. Don't steal or eat the turkey as you could get the "runs" or the bones could hurt your insides. Humans always over indulge at Christmas, but you don't have to my Darling. Have fun, keep well and keep safe. Happy Christmas. Signed - Paddy

"Paddy" Hawkins

IF ONLY PETS COULD SPEAK

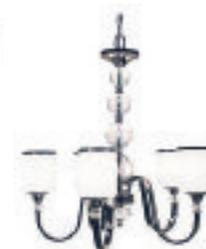
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# LOCAL SCHOOLS FACING ENROLLMENT PRESSURES

Continued from page 1

struction costs have risen above the proposed budget."

"Ministry benchmarks are very difficult to achieve with the board's new projects," said Ian Gaudet, HDSB's executive officer of facility services.

Rapid growth in Milton and north Oakville has led to holding schools that are bursting at the seams and

**"Ministry benchmarks are very difficult to achieve with the board's new projects."**

- Ian Gaudet, HDSB executive officer of facility services

portables dotting school properties. Delays in the construction of two additional elementary schools have exacerbated the situa-

tion in Milton.

In April of last year, Milton's Viola Desmond Public School was forced to close registration and reroute new students to five other elementary schools. The construction of two other much-needed Milton elementary schools has been delayed.

Most recently, hundreds of secondary students from new developments north of Dundas Street in Oakville have been told they will be temporarily bused to Thomas A. Blakelock High School, south of the QEW, to alleviate pressure at White Oaks



Graham Paine/Metroland

Elsie MacGill Secondary School in Milton has seen ongoing construction delays and missed its planned September opening.

Secondary School until the new Oakville NE #1 high school is built. Ministry funding for the new school was approved in July of 2020 with an uncertain opening scheduled for the 2024/2025 school year.

Trustees' concerns with the "deficiencies" in the process for accessing capital needs, which means the board is continually playing catch-up in high-growth communities, have been discussed at the board

many times.

It's the students who suffer, said Milton trustee Heather Gerrits, at the announced delay of Milton SW #1 earlier this year, scheduled to have opened in January of 2022.

"We've had a number of examples over the last few years where the bureaucratic or political processes have gotten in the way of us having approval done in a timely manner," commented Oakville trustee

Joanna Oliver.

"I think it's imperative that the ministry and the premier are well aware of how the bureaucratic processes are getting in the way of getting things done and doing that efficiently and cost-effectively."

Capital requests currently occur at the whim of the government, commented Milton resident Kim Graves.

"Two years can go by without the government entertaining the idea of building new schools. For a high-growth area like Milton or north Oakville, two years is too late to keep up with the new housing builds. The capital request process should have a consistent timeline."

*STORY BEHIND THE STORY: With the capacity of many local schools being pushed to the limit, we wanted to take a closer look at the process that trustees say is delaying new schools from being built in the community.*

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