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MPP Ann Hoggarth makes the announcement at the SCDSB Education Centre.



Mayor Brian Smith speaks with MPP Hoggarth after the announcement.

Photos by Beach BOOSTER Media Group

January 29, 2018

Town of Wasaga Beach - Brian Smith, Mayor of the Town of Wasaga Beach, issued the following statement in reaction to the announcement by the Ministry of Education that it has approved the Simcoe County District School Board's (SCDSB) request for funding to build a new elementary school in Wasaga Beach, and confirmation from Minister Naidoo-Harris that the Ministry has also earmarked funding and requested that the SCDSB to move forward with purchasing a site for a secondary school in Wasaga Beach.

"Council welcomes the news that the Ministry has approved funding to build a fourth elementary school in Wasaga Beach and purchase land for a future high school in Wasaga Beach. This is a good day for families and students in Wasaga Beach - while it is not funding for the grade 7-12 school we have asked for, it is a huge step forward. The Ministry and the Minister have made it very clear that they have reviewed the facts and they agree, there is an urgent accommodation need in Wasaga Beach at the elementary level as well as a strong need for a high school. On behalf of Council and all concerned parents in Wasaga Beach, I want to thank the Ministry and the Minister for acknowledging the needs of our children and the efforts that we are making to develop into a more complete community. I am much more confident today, then ever before, that we will be able to find a way to work collaboratively with the Simcoe County District School Board to ensure that Wasaga Beach is next on the list for additional secondary capacity in Simcoe County. I think many parents in Wasaga Beach will be sitting around their dinner table tonight, feeling like this government understands the situation in Wasaga Beach and has made our children a priority."

The Mayor and the High School Task Force will continue to remain engaged with the Minister's Office, the Ministry and the SCDSB about moving forward to ensure that Wasaga Beach is next on the list for additional secondary capacity in Simcoe County.

Background Information

In August 2017, Mayor Brian Smith approached Premier Kathleen Wynne with concerns about the Town's difficult working relationship with the SCDSB. At this meeting, the Mayor presented the need for a high school in Wasaga Beach. The Premier recommended that the Mayor and Chair of the High School Task Force sit down with the Minister of Education and her staff to review the matter in greater detail. The Town's objective was to request the Ministry's support in bringing forward, for consideration by the SCDSB and the Ministry's Capital Branch, an innovative solution that would solve two problems at once. Specifically, the Town requested that the Ministry review, and encourage the SCDSB to consider and bring forward, the business case for a grade 7-12 school in Wasaga Beach instead of a traditional K-8 elementary school.

A grade 7-12 school would have immediately solved the problem of over-crowding in Wasaga Beach elementary schools. It would have also provided 760+ students - who are currently bused outside of Wasaga Beach each day to attend high school in smaller or similarly sized neighbouring communities - the option to go to school right here in our own community.

In addition to announcing funding today to build a fourth elementary school in Wasaga Beach, the Minister of Education has requested that the SCDSB move forward and purchase a site for a high school in Wasaga Beach, without delay. Funding for the secondary school site in Wasaga Beach will come from the Ministry of Education land funding program to support capital priorities.

Quick Facts

- Wasaga Beach is the second fastest growing community in Simcoe County.
- It is currently the largest community in Ontario without a current or planned high school.
- Approx 760+ high school students are bused out of our community each day to attend high school in smaller, or similarly sized, neighbouring communities.
- At current growth rates, Wasaga Beach (pop. 21,000) is projected to exceed Collingwood (pop. 22,000) by the next census.

- In October 2017 the SCDSB submitted a revised capital priority list to the Ministry of Education, requesting a new elementary school for Wasaga Beach.
- Wasaga Beach had requested and advocated at the SCDSB to have a 7-12 school constructed instead of a traditional elementary school, to no avail.
- Wasaga Beach approached the Premier and Minister of Education in August 2017 to express concerns in the SCDSB's ability to properly plan for our students, or work collaboratively with the Town on innovative solutions that best serve pupil accommodation needs as well as future "smart growth" in our community.
- Today the Province has announced funding to build a 4th elementary school and purchase land for a high school in Wasaga Beach.
- In a letter to the Town and the SCDSB, the Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris, Minister of Education has also advised the town and the SCDSB to take all necessary planning steps to secure a secondary school site without delay.

Stakeholder Quotes

Andy Beaudoin, Chair of the High School Task Force, Wasaga Beach:

"This is excellent news which validates all of our efforts to advocate for a high school in Wasaga Beach. Of course, we were hoping that through the Minister's office we would be able to get the business case for a 7-12 in front of the SCDSB and Capital Branch for consideration. Instead what we have is the Ministry and the Minister have made it very clear that they have reviewed the facts and they agree, there is an urgent accommodation need in Wasaga Beach at the elementary level as well as a strong need for a high school.

The High School Task Force looks forward to remaining engaged with the Ministry and working closely with the School Board so that they may, with these funds that have been set aside by the province, go ahead and purchase the required land for a high school in Wasaga Beach. Wasaga Beach needs to be added to the Board's capital priority list as the next location for a high school in Simcoe County."