

Nepean This Week

WEEKENDER



Community rallies to demand new high school

NTW STAFF

A new public high school is needed in Barrhaven and needed soon, according to parents who signed a petition at Berrigan Elementary School last Thursday (Nov. 23).

School board trustee for zone 5 (Knoxdale-Merivale and Barrhaven) Alex Getty has been pushing for the board to proceed with the new school when it comes for approval in

February.

"It's important to provide that opportunity to public school students in this area. We have been losing students to the separate board," Getty says.

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has plans to build a Grade 7 to 12 high school at the corner of Berrigan and Longfields drives in Barrhaven, next to the current Berrigan Elementary School.

However, cost estimates for the school have increased to \$45 million from original \$34 million as the costs of materials goes up.

The board has also approved in principle design elements such as adding a fourth gymnasium and an auditorium that has increased the estimate by \$7 million.

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Community comes together over need for secondary school

**SCHOOL,
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Building the school will exhaust the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board's reserves, which has some trustees leaning away from approving the final design of the school.

"We're pretty well emptying the bank to do it," Getty says. Although he notes that selling the recently closed J.S. Woodsworth and Laurentian high schools will help, as well as the OCDSB's share of the province's recently announced \$1 billion commitment to build new schools in Ontario.

However, Getty says building the school with an auditorium should be a priority.

"I'm hoping we can work out something with the city to build [the auditorium] together," Getty says. "We're spending all the capital funds we have, but I think we have to."

The \$45 million estimate could still drop, Getty says, once staff figure out the details.

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**•Alex Getty,
school board trustee**

"If we're going to do it, we need to do it right," he says. "Our students need a first-class facility for the next 50 years or more." The petition requests that the board approve the school, which is on a tight schedule to be open by September 2008.

"We certainly need another high school. Students deserve a high school closer than Merivale High School. It really excommunicates kids from where they live," says

Barrhaven Coun. Jan Harder. "We need a place where people can live, work and play."

Currently, students attending public elementary schools in the south-east portion of Barrhaven are bussed to Merivale High School in Nepean. Barrhaven has three high schools currently, the public John McCrae Secondary School and two

Catholic high schools, St. Joseph and Mother Teresa.

Getty wants to remain mindful what happens to Merivale High School when the new school opens and many of its students are diverted.

"I want to make sure it stays dynamic. I'm quite certain we can make it work," Getty says.