

Markdale

to get new school

**Ministry of Education
approves funding for
school; community hub
also part of project**

DON CROSBY
SUN TIMES CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Education has approved funding to replace Beavercrest Community School in Markdale.

A total of \$6.4 million has been approved to build a new school that will accommodate 236 student spaces from kindergarten to Grade 8 to meet current and future enrolment needs in the Markdale area.

Another \$1.05 million has been approved for two child care rooms and two EarlyON rooms at the new school. EarlyON is a former early years program that has been rebranded by the province. It provides spaces where parents can

bring their preschool children to play in a social structure. A similar project was included in East Ridge Community School.

"It shows that when you persevere things work well for our community," said Grey Highlands Mayor Paul McQueen. "If we work hard we can make great things happen in our community."

Last April, an accommodation review decision by Bluewater District School Board trustees called for the board to work with

community partners to find solutions for an operational deficit and capital upkeep for Beavercrest.

The board applied for funding to replace Beavercrest Community School and Hillcrest school in Owen Sound. The board was successful with Beavercrest, but the application for Hillcrest was turned down by the ministry.

"It's always exciting to get a new school and see some renewal," said Rob Cummings, superintendent of business services for

the Bluewater board.

"The Beavercrest school is exciting because of the community hub around it, which was probably a big part of the selling piece of that application; having the child care interest, having the community interested . . . and the commitment from the community as well as the municipality of Grey Highlands and Chapman's all made for a very successful application," he said.

See **SCHOOL** | A3

Chapman remains committed to project

SCHOOL from A1

"We are thrilled by the news of a replacement facility for Beavercrest Community School, which will ensure a sustainable future and strengthened educational experience for students and families in the Markdale area. After a long and tenacious process, this outcome can be attributed to the valiant and collaborative efforts of many committed parents, municipal and business partners, staff, trustees, and other citizens," said Jim Dawson, trustee for Southgate and Grey Highlands, in a news release.

"After a long and tenacious process, this outcome can be attributed to the valiant and collaborative efforts of many committed parents, municipal and business partners, staff, trustees, and other citizens."

Parents of children attending Beavercrest Community School were elated by the news of the funding for a new school.

"I can't stop grinning; my teeth hurt," said Michelle Patey. "I was able to run up and down the hallways of the school and high five parents and teachers that were left at the school today." Patey is a parent and strong supporter of the new school who teaches part-time at Beavercrest.

"I think it's fantastic that we're able to keep our children close to us...our community is so invested in this school emotionally. The fact that this quality of school is still going to be available to our children is worth its weight in gold," said Patey.

Chris Wren, a member of the accommodation review committee, described the funding announcement as fantastic news for the community.

"A lot of people worked really hard to keep the school open and it all seems to have come to fruition," he said.

Wren said while his daughter is too young to grasp the significance of Wednesday's funding announcement, he noted that the older students at the school were very pleased.

"They were quite apprehensive when the potential for the closure of the school was hanging over their heads. So that will be a huge relief to everyone," he said.

Cummings said further discussions are ongoing with regard to the shape of the community hub.

"There are discussions on and off with the municipality and Chapman's in terms of what that community looks like. We continue to have those discussions as we go forward and look to design the new school and the new school site," he said.

Cummings noted that part of the application for funding including a number of commitments from the community.

"There were a number of organizations and individuals that had a community hub interest going forward; there have been some discussion and certainly we'll carry on with those discussions," said Cummings who noted that the community hub will either be a part of the school or on the school site.

Ashley Chapman said his commitment to the community hub remains strong and he looks forward to working closely with the board and community partners.

Cummings said he expects it will take about two years before the new school is constructed.

Thanks
Heal

Pg 2
of
2