

## Board names 10 schools to close under new funding plan: Nyberg ...

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# Board names 10 schools to close under new funding plan

*Nyberg predicts strong emotions as list includes two secondary and eight elementary institutions slated to be shut by June of 2000*

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Nobody knows better than Gail Nyberg how people become attached to their schools.

And the chairwoman of the Toronto District School Board knows there will be some disappointed teachers, parents and students out there today after a list of 10 schools slated to close by June of 2000 is made public.

"You get loyalty to schools," Ms. Nyberg said yesterday. "They're the hub of activity."

A report from school board planning staff recommends closing eight elementary schools and two high schools, including the all-girls Heydon Park Secondary School on St. Anne's Road in the city's core.

"That one will become emotional," Ms. Nyberg predicted.

The school would be moved "lock, stock, and barrel" to the nearby Ursula Franklin Academy or Western Technical and Commercial School, but there's no ignoring the fact these two schools have what Heydon never did: boys.

The other schools that have been targeted are: Midland Avenue Collegiate Institute, Brookbanks Public School, Cordella Junior Public School, D. B. Hood Community School, Earlscourt Junior Public School, Givins-Shaw Junior and Senior Public Schools, Hughes Junior Public School and McNicoll Public School.

It's a vast improvement over the board's 1998 prediction that it would have to close 138 schools after the provincial government

changed its funding formula. The province added \$211-million to the school board coffers for school operations, which meant the Toronto board went from 11 million square feet of unfunded space to two million square feet.

The province doles out money based on a fixed amount of square footage per student as well as each school's capacity — the total number of students it can accommodate.

Schools that operate below 80

per cent of capacity receive no funding from the Ontario government.

Most of schools the board wants to shut down have less than 55 per cent capacity. For instance, Hughes Junior Public School had only 173 students last September compared with the 345 students the Ontario government says it can handle.

The closings in June of 2000 represent only the first part of the school board's three-year plan to close as many as 30 schools, Ms. Nyberg said. The amalgamation of

six school boards into one that accompanied the creation of the megacity — particularly those on the borders between the old municipalities of Scarborough, Etobicoke, York, North York, East York and Toronto — made some schools superfluous.

Ms. Nyberg said she wanted to ensure the closings meant no elementary-school student will have to take a bus to classes and that communities wouldn't lose what she called a "neighbourhood presence" if a school was closed.