

Do you want a theatre or auditorium at the new Bedford High School?

By Kelly Regan, MLA for Bedford-Birch Cove

Last week, the Charles P. Allen High School Wind Ensemble premiered a new musical work, “Qawwali Party” at a concert with the Acadia University Percussion Ensemble and professional musicians Mark Adam and Kinan Azmeh.

By all accounts, it was a stellar concert, and our young musicians impressed the audience and the professionals alike. Unfortunately, the concert didn’t take place in our own community, because we have no appropriate venue. It was held in Dartmouth. And when the students at CPA stage their musicals each year, they have to rig up the gym to fill in for a proper stage. Our students do their best to overcome site limitations, but my question is: should they have to?

The construction of a new high school will give us the option of having a proper facility for arts performances by students and community groups alike.

Just before the provincial election, the provincial government announced that a new high school would be built for the Charles P. Allen catchment area. The first stage of development involves site selection; the short list of three finalists has been drawn up. All three sites are in the general vicinity of the new development underway in Bedford West.

As we have seen with recent construction at Citadel High and Halifax West High, while the province has in the past built shells for “arts enhancements”, it does not equip or furnish the auditorium or theatre.

The province expects the residents of the local catchment area to complete the facility. If residents decide we want such a facility, we will have to set up a non-profit organization, and we will have to raise money -- a lot of it.

Recently, a group of concerned citizens organized a public meeting to look at some possible ways to build a performance centre. We were shown examples of what has been done elsewhere.

Another public meeting will be held within weeks to give residents more information - including potential costs, designs and how the process works. In the meantime, please check out the designs on my site, and let me know if you would like to see this kind of facility at our new high school - and (if so) how you think we should pay for it. I can be contacted via email at kelly@kellyregan.ca.

I am very happy to assist in this process, but I am determined that residents will determine the future of this project.

(From the Bedford-Sackville Weekly News, November 2009)