

Toxic mould isn't playing havoc with all schools

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By Josh Brown

Some boards in GTA desperate for space with loss of portables

STAFF REPORTER

Mouldy portables at schools across the Greater Toronto Area mean many students will go back to class in gymnasiums, libraries and on auditorium stages.

But not all school boards are scrambling to find space for their pupils, with the first day of school less than two weeks away.

While boards like Halton and Peel have spent the summer inspecting demolishing and repairing hundreds of portables, Toronto's two boards found only 11 of their combined 889 portables needed extensive repairs.

'It hasn't been a problem,' said Jeff Sprang of the Toronto District School Board. 'We don't have the numbers that Peel and Halton have.'

A 'fluctuating school population' means not all portables get used

Schools in York Region are also on track to accommodate all their students. Mould has been detected in several portables, but all have either been fixed or will be looked at before school starts Sept. 8.

Officials at the Durham District School Board said any mould problems in their 538 portables have been fixed. With 45 more portables ordered, finding room for students hasn't been a big problem.

Walter Yewchyn of the Durham Catholic District School Board wishes he could say the same. Its schools are creating classrooms on auditorium stages and in libraries. 'The only things we aren't using right now are hallways and washrooms.'

No area has been hit worse by the mould - called *stachybotrys atra* - than Halton and Peel regions.

'There will certainly be some situations this fall where there will not be enough space at some schools,' said Brian Woodland of the Peel District School Board.

Of the board's 782 portables, 214 were found to contain mould. Forty have been demolished and 37 repaired with the rest scheduled for repair or demolition.

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board is fighting a similar battle. It found mould in 126 of its 734 portables this year. It cost the board \$1.5 million to rebuild them, but it's still short of space.

The Halton District School Board isn't doing much better. Some students are being bused to classrooms across town. Others will learn in places like gymnasiums.

Prolonged exposure to the mould has been linked to migraines, nosebleeds, lung problems, diarrhea, shortness of breath, coughs, muscle pain, fever, rashes and sore eyes.

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