



A Reform Jewish Day School

June 17 2011

Dear Leo Baeck Parents,

It is with great excitement that we announce the future home of The Leo Baeck Day School, South Campus – Arlington Middle School!

The Arlington site is nothing short of magnificent and Leo Baeck has coveted the school for years, not only because of its proximity to our current catchment area, but also because of the beautiful Cedarvale Park which is literally the school's backyard. Cedarvale Park offers acres of green space, as well as the Phil White Arena (which will soon be enhanced with an outdoor rink), a softball diamond, a soccer field, four tennis courts (in the process of being completely rebuilt), a Children's Garden, and countless opportunities to enhance our students' educational experience with outdoor activities. The building itself is also well designed with all the facilities to meet our campus needs together with opportunity for future growth and expansion. It is also a property we will own outright rather than continuing our existence as a tenant, and the cost is considerably less than the joint renewal project with Holy Blossom.

Our plan is to renovate this outstanding school starting in September with a view to having it ready to welcome our children in the Fall of 2012. The school, its setting and surrounding amenities are nothing short of spectacular and we are bursting with excitement!

We appreciate this news comes as a surprise to many of our parents and children who for some time have anticipated the commencement and completion of the joint renewal project with Holy Blossom Temple. However, the School's relocation to Arlington Middle School is an unprecedented opportunity, recently brought to the School, and has the blessing and support of the Temple. Rest assured, Leo Baeck's move will mark the physical separation only of our two organizations. The Temple and School continue to have the greatest of respect and admiration for each other and will work together closely for many years to come.

**So, let us explain how we've come to this wonderful opportunity.**

As you know, for 19 years Holy Blossom and Leo Baeck have worked together serving Toronto's Reform Jewish Community. The synergy created by Temple and School has been undeniable, and both organizations have thrived in one home. So, when it came time to 'renew' the Temple and School's South Campus, it was natural for the two organizations to collaborate in terms of timing, design, cost and fundraising. Everyone involved was excited about the prospect of a new, state-of-the art building that would enable our organizations to better serve their separate, yet often overlapping, communities. Despite some delay, it was hoped construction would begin in the Fall of 2012.

## **Enter, Arlington Middle School**

One of Toronto's most sought after schools; Arlington Middle School backs onto the west side of Cedarvale Park (Ravine), south of Eglinton Avenue and west of Bathurst Street. A Toronto District School Board ("TDSB") Middle School since it was built in 1971, Arlington has always been renowned for its thriving Athletics and Arts programs.

In 1998 the City of Toronto amalgamated its five district school boards into one, the TDSB. At the same time, the TDSB began reviewing different models for delivering elementary and middle school. The current TDSB view is that the ideal model for primary education is a complete K-8 environment with roughly 450 students in a school. A decision was therefore made to close Arlington school effective June 2012, and to modify four surrounding schools so they could expand their programs to accommodate K-8.

When Leo Baeck first heard Arlington might become available some time ago, the School's Board of Directors discussed the possibility of leasing the school as temporary space during the joint renewal project with Holy Blossom. As mentioned, Arlington is within our current catchment area and literally overflowing with amenities and opportunities for our children.

However, at the time we expressed our interest, and up until this past month, the response from the TDSB and representatives of the City was that Arlington was highly sought after by a number of school boards and government bodies and not likely to be made available 'to the public' in the foreseeable future, if at all. Specifically, we were advised, pursuant to applicable legislation, other school boards, government and quasi-government bodies were entitled to have "first crack" at surplus school properties; and four entities had already expressed interest in Arlington, including one that became a successful bidder.

## **Fast Forward to the Spring of 2011**

Unbeknownst to Leo Baeck, the successful bidder revised its plans and decided to release Arlington back to the TDSB. The other public entities as well indicated they had made other arrangements and were no longer interested in the site.

Then, a few weeks ago, word made its way to Leo Baeck and the Temple that Arlington had recently become available, not as a short term solution, but as a potential permanent home for the School. With the knowledge and support of the Temple, Leo Baeck vigorously pursued this opportunity; and the rest, as they say, is history. Arlington will soon become The Leo Baeck Day School, South Campus!

One *caveat*: As is standard with this type of transaction, we have a specific amount of time (in this case, ending on August 5) to complete our due diligence. We will therefore be extremely busy over the summer, ensuring the property is safe, sound and secure for our children. We have already commenced our due diligence and are reasonably confident we will not learn anything to cause us to change our minds. However, we want you to know we do have the option of not completing the

purchase if a serious issue becomes evident between now and August 5. We know that's what you expect of us, and we expect no less of ourselves. That said, assuming the deal proceeds as anticipated we expect to close on August 24, 2011. Then the exciting work begins! Should, for whatever reason, the deal not proceed as planned, we continue to have an excellent relationship with Holy Blossom and will work with the Temple to ensure our children have a safe and appropriate school environment.

### **What's So Wonderful About Arlington?**

A lot!

Those of you who know Arlington are already aware of all it has to offer our children. For those of you not yet familiar with the school, we hope we've whet your appetites in the opening paragraphs of this letter. If you're still hungry for details consider the following exciting facts:

- Our current school is roughly 24,000 square feet, built in 1954. Its internal systems are old and failing and not able to meet the needs of our children in the foreseeable future. On the other hand, Arlington is almost four times the size, at 90,000 square feet, and built in 1971. The school is in excellent shape requiring primarily cosmetic and other relatively minor renovations which we will undertake to ensure our children's experience is first-rate.
- The additional space provided at Arlington gives our School considerable room to grow and build upon and enhance the type and breadth of programming we provide for our children. Specifically, our new school will include:
  - A large computer lab adjacent to a complete resource centre
  - A large science lab
  - Multiple seminar rooms for differentiated learning (enrichment and remedial) and small group learning and meetings
  - Six dedicated rooms for performing arts, including: one large drama room, one large music and four practice rooms (could become recording studio, radio station, *etc.*)
  - A high school sized double gymnasium with a brand new state-of-the-art floor, plus change-rooms
  - A new, multi-purpose Chapel designed as an auditorium as well, with lighting and sound for staging
  - A large art studio with a kiln and plenty of light

If that isn't enough, our new home will include brand new, state-of-the-art outdoor play spaces for the pre-school and junior years, and is immediately adjacent to the following amenities each of which will be incorporated into the School's programming:

- The splendour of Cedarvale Park

- Four, soon-to-be-built, brand new tennis courts
- A variety of playing fields
- Indoor and outdoor skating rinks for physical education and co-curricular sports
- Trails for cross-country running, biking, hiking and education programming related to nature and our environment
- Cedarvale's Children's Community Garden and Wetland Reclamation Project

### **What's next?**

First, we thank you for your patience and support while we worked our way through years of planning and re-planning. A decision like this is critically important to our children and we are, and have always been, committed to getting this right. We are now confident we've done that. We also know as time passed and we weren't able to provide to our parents a concrete plan for the future, some parents became frustrated. We apologize for that, but assure you we have always been, and still are, focused on the best interests of our children.

Second, we once again ask for your patience while we plan and execute the renovation and preparation of our new school. Should you drive by the school today, the current facade may not impress you (although the location and surrounding amenities surely will!). However, give us a year and we will amaze you!

Finally, we want to thank Holy Blossom Temple for its support of this exciting new stage of our school's development, as well as for the many years of partnership the Temple has provided us.

### **Want to know more?**

We anticipate you will have many questions we cannot anticipate or answer fully in this letter. We've schedule a meeting for Monday June 27, 2011 at 7:00 pm in the Philip Smith Hall at Holy Blossom Temple. Please join us to discuss our exciting new venture. You are also welcome to contact our South Campus Renewal Committee Co-chairs, Ronna Rubin and Nolan Grubert at [sctransformation@leobaeck.ca](mailto:sctransformation@leobaeck.ca).

Are we excited? We very much are! Are your children going to thrive in this amazing environment? We know they will!

Sincerely,



Laurie Davis  
President, Board of Directors



Eric Petersiel  
Head of School