

NEWS ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MONDAY, MARCH 8, 1999

QUEENS CIVIC CONGRESS FORUM ON NEW SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL REPAIR NEEDS, MARCH 15

Contact:
Corey Bearak
(718) 343-6779

The Queens Civic Congress [QCC], a coalition of more than 90 civic and community organizations which span the borough of Queens, hosts a forum on *School Construction and Repair*, Monday, March 15, 7:30 p.m., at Ridgewood Beacon School, J.H.S. 93, 56-66 Forest Avenue (enter on Madison Street), announced President Sean M. Walsh. The forum features guest speaker, Hon. Terri Thomson, the Queens Member of the NYC Board of Education.

“It is important that Queens residents learn how the State, City and Board of Education shortchange Queens on schools seats,” stated Mr. Walsh. “The borough president's state of the borough message called for a Marshall Plan to meet the ever growing crisis in the need for school seats.”

“It has been said a society can be judged by how well we treat our children,” stated QCC Vice President *Ed Westley*, who chairs the QCC Education Committee and delivered testimony on the Board of Education Five-year Capital Plan, March 2, 1999. “If we use our Queens public schools as a measure, it can be said we are not doing very well. Overcrowding is a constant; new school construction is rare; and maintenance has been lacking.”

“The Queens Civic Congress urged the Board of Education to amend its five-year capital plan to provide school seats it shorts Queens,” said *Corey Bearak*, QCC Vice President, a former Community School Board (District 26) member, who drafted the QCC testimony. “The Board’s own statistics project a need of 53,550 seats in 2002. Regrettably, the plan only provides about 32,000 new seats. Thus, Queens faces a shortfall of some 21,000. The Board should project a shortfall of 29,000 since it based some of the seating on year round use of some schools (involving 8,800 additional seats). Year round schooling remains uncertain as a means to address capacity.”

“The QCC hopes to use the March 15 forum to draw attention to the need,” advised Mr. Walsh. “The Board’s capital budget plan must identify the true needs for school capacity and repair. This helps to galvanize the public – and public officials and policy makers – to find a solution that works. The Board must look at innovative policies, including QCC proposals to meet needs not addressed by the plan.”