

Dickison, Ian.

New job as page takes precedence over skateboard

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If, once-upon-a-day, they're calling the grownup Ian Dickison prime minister, or governor-general, it's all starting now as he prepares to put away his skateboard and basketball.

He's 13--and headed for Queen's Park.

Ian is the latest in a select few of young Bellevillians chosen over the last decade to take a turn as legislature page.

The grade 8 student--son of Tom and Anne Dickison of eastend Symington Park--takes up his duties as a messenger on the floor of the provincial government chamber for six weeks, starting May 22.

There, he'll run errands for the MPPs and be at the call of the Speaker while the legislature is in session.

The appointment puts him right in the cockpit of provincial politics and Ontario's public affairs.

"It'll be a tremendous experience for him. Something he'd never learn any other way," says his father, a local realtor.

Ian agrees--and that's why he's enthusiastic about the assignment.

"It's about the only place you really learn about public affairs," says Ian, grade 8 student at Harry J. Clarke public school.

Does that mean he wants to be a politician.

"I don't know. This'll be the way to find out," he believes.

Young students are chosen regularly on a rotating basis from around the province to fill the roster of pages retained by the Speaker while the legislature is in session.

Among other qualifications, which include reliable accommodation in Toronto--Ian will be staying with relatives--are academic standings. Ian has 80s in his grades.

What he'll likely have to surrender--because of time demands of his duties--are things like basketball and skateboarding, which are among his recreations.

But, that's probably compensated for by the other benefits. It's a job he believes he'll find engrossing--plus, it pays. He gets \$7.50 a day, \$3.50 extra for night sessions.

Ian--with his parents' blessing applied for the post when it was announced last year at school.

Recently, a letter from Hugh O'Neil, MPP Quinte, confirmed he been chosen among recent appointees.

Equally pleased is school principal Don Lockyer. Two years ago, another of his school's students--Lyle Sutherland--also was chosen as a page on his standings and O'Neil's recommendation, along with a scholastic summary from Lockyer.

Lockyer sees it also as an unequalled opportunity for a young citizen to discover how his government works.

At school, Ian's favorite subject is math.

As for politics, to now "I'm not a politics addict. I follow it; I keep up with the (national) election."

But, he's not making any predictions on that latest activity of government.

And, anyway, he'll likely be too busy breaking in his new job. He starts the day Canada goes to the polls.