

# Two Oakville parents plug French Immersion line

Two young Oakville parents landed in Acton Monday to drum up support for a French immersion program in Halton County schools, as the result of a decision by the Halton County Board of Education to reconsider an earlier decision to drop the program.

The French Immersion program would provide a voluntary totally French language program in the first two primary grades, and the gradual phasing in of English. Object of the program is to create an opportunity for those who wish to become fluent in both French and English.

"For any child growing up in Canada it is more than desirable," Pat Webster told the Free Press. In some cases she believes it could become a necessity.

Some opposition Mrs. Webster, acknowledging there was some opposition to the program, said there were many practical reasons for their endorsement, including the federal and provincial governments' policies on bilingualism. She says that students who wish to con-

tinued into professions such as diplomacy or businessmen will be hampered in the future unless they have a working knowledge of French, especially in our highly mobile society.

Their reasons for being in North Halton—and Acton? Isn't this purely a southern Halton concern?

By no means, said the other young Oakville parent, Marilyn Young.

She said they were aware of support from the north but had never been able to pinpoint it. Support in the south end of the county was not wanting but they felt the trustees on the board from the north could not support the program if it is offered only in Oakville and Burlington.

"We would like the Board to

adopt a resolution so the program can be offered in any school where the demand warrants it," Mrs. Webster explained.

Some success The efforts of three Oakville parents have already produced 120 names—up 70 from the earlier survey by the board which showed only 50 parents interested in their children taking the course.

Mrs. Webster admitted the name for the course was unwieldy and turned people off. French Immersion, some people may even confuse with the Buffalo Sabres French Connection line, so they were in the North to explain it to anyone who would listen.

Yes, they had already talked to school trustee Tom Watson. He had not blessed their efforts. They suggested it took \$14,500 to educate a child in French.

Why not educate them when they are young and learn so much easier? they ask. They pointed to similar programs in London, Ottawa, Toronto, North York and Samia and said it was now under consideration in Wellington County.

Those who are plugging the French Immersion program feel strongly about it, they told the Free Press, and are sometimes amazed at parochial attitudes displayed by those who don't feel the other language could be used in Halton County. They point to other compulsory school subjects which are never used after school days, either as an answer to that complaint.

They don't know how much support they will gather in Acton and district but supporters of the program can phone them at 1-416-845-8015 and 845-0939—and reverse the charges.

Program outline Early grades in the French immersion program are conducted by a teacher whose mother tongue is French; she uses only that language, but children are not pressured to speak French back to her. They spend the kindergarten year speaking English to each other and to the teacher, but nevertheless by the end of kindergarten are expected to understand a great deal of French.

In Grade One the children are supposed to spontaneously begin to speak French to the teacher

and to each other. Progress is considered rapid from that point. By the end of Grade 4 they are considered bilingual. By the end of Grade 6 they are considered permanently bilingual.

Won't the child's English suffer? Orally no, say the experts of French Immersion, since he will be speaking English at home and at play, but his Grade 2 reading skills will not be as good as those of counterparts in all English system. However, Ottawa educators have discovered that by the end of Grade 4 the French Immersion student is not only as good in English reading as his counterpart, but in some cases better.

At a meeting Monday night with members of the group and three board members from North Halton, advocates of the program received little support.

Two of the three trustees said they would vote against the program while a third reserved a decision. The advocates, known as the Oakville Parents for Bilingual Children felt they have their strongest support in Oakville but growing support in Burlington.

Mrs. Webster indicated after the Monday meeting that some of the trustees have some doubt about how educationally sound the program is, even though administration says it is sound.

At a recent board meeting the board rescinded the earlier motion defeating the program and agreed to consider the matter at the meeting tomorrow (Thursday) in Burlington.

The matter is expected to be a controversial issue.



Cartoonist contributes to Free Press

This week the Free Press is introducing a new feature—cartoons by Dave Waddell.

Dave has had previous experience as a cartoonist on the Ontario, the University of Guelph student newspaper. Recently he moved to Acton where he's employed at the Building Products plant on Main St. N. He has agreed to periodically supply the Free Press with cartoons on pertinent issues as he sees them in the local news.

Dave's first drawing, a lampoon of the steam train proposal through Esquesing is on the editorial page.



DAVE WADDELL

## Submit final brief on region

Halton County Council submitted what councillors hope to be the county's final brief on regional government last week. Councillors discussed and heard presentations from the seven municipalities last month and finalized their own submission Friday.

The brief outlines the areas of responsibility the council feels should be handled at each level of authority.

They suggest planning be a split function with overall planning at the regional and subdivision agreements done locally. Water and sewer service is recommended to be handled at the regional level.

Public transit Public transit should be handled locally and provision made for regional takeover at some point in the future, the brief says.

The brief recommends a regional police force take effect Jan. 1, 1974 and be governed by a police commission with a majority of the members being regional councillors.

Council deliberated at great length about store closing hours whether or not they should be common throughout the region.

The brief suggests hydro be a regional responsibility. The

province has suggested it remain local for the time being.

Assessment The brief also suggests (and was heartily endorsed by all members) that legislation be passed allowing the assessment function to be passed back to the region from the province immediately after actual market value is established.

The assessment function has been a sore point with municipal officials ever since it was taken from local control and put in the hands of the province.

The county brief along with other municipal briefs and an individual effort from Nassagaweya Councillor J. C. McIntyre have been submitted to the province for consideration.

While there appears a possibility of regional government being delayed in Hamilton-Wentworth area, it is thought Halton will go ahead in 1974 as scheduled.

FOUNDED 1965 King Calcium Products, a firm involved in the production of insecticides was founded in 1965 in Campbellville by W. O. Morse. It is now owned by Glenn Biederman. The firm still operates from Campbellville.

## Stewarttown math classes, county board target

A Georgetown teacher's complaint about the ratio of students to teachers in math classes at Stewarttown senior public school has raised the ire of the Halton County director of education Jim Singleton.

Singleton noted high school teacher J.R. Bellamy had gone to the school but hadn't visited the class in which his daughter studied math.

"I'm amazed you didn't go the

extra 100 feet. I did, and I was very favorably impressed," Singleton said. He declared the staff of the school had spent all summer organizing the special math program and commended it as "excellent."

Two to 100 Bellamy said he approached the board as a parent and ratepayer, not as a teacher, and wasn't happy with the Stewarttown experiment where several classes operate with 100 children in a class with two teachers.

He said the ratio should be reduced. "It is staggering that this arrangement should be regarded as anything but an emergency situation."

Unsatisfied with answers he got from the principal and assistant superintendent of the area, he approached the board, suggesting also that the move to a county board had moved the

decision-making process away from the people and they lacked people input as a result. He felt the board should consider establishing local advisory boards to keep in touch with the people they serve.

Game of numbers? Singleton asked Bellamy if he thought education was a game of numbers where 35 children to one teacher is good, one for 50 bad and for 100 is terrible. He pointed

## Morrow protests shuffle

Georgetown Reeve Ric Morrow protested a proposed administrative shuffle at Halton County administration offices, at a Halton County Council Wednesday.

Morrow objected to the passing of three by-laws that would see assistant clerk John Byrne appointed Deputy Clerk, James McQueen appointed Treasurer and Assistant Administrator, and Garfield Brown as Clerk Administrator and Deputy Treasurer.

Morrow argued that the proposed promotions carried considerable raises with them. When Warden Anne MacArthur

and chairman of that session Tom Hill suggested the matter would be better discussed in camera, Morrow said he wouldn't mention dollars or names. The names, however, are outlined clearly in the by-laws eventually passed that day.

Report made A confidential report from county personnel manager John Watson was available at a closed meeting of the administration committee which recommended the passing of the by-law.

Even though the report was available, Morrow tried un-

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### Obituary

**Stephen Backwell**

A glass cutter with Duplate of Canada who had 33 years service, Stephen Backwell died Wednesday, April 18, in San Diego, Calif., following a short illness. He lived at 74 Eastglen Dr., Oshawa.

Born Oct. 29, 1918 in Acton, he was the son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Peter Backwell. He went to Oshawa from Acton 40 years ago.

He was a member of St. Gertrude's Church and was the leader of the Steve Backwell Trio.

His first wife, the late Irma Marzo died Jan. 23, 1970.

He is survived by his second wife, the former Anne Nekorek Fuller; one daughter, Mrs. Frank Connors (Janet) of Oshawa; one son, Ron of Oshawa; two stepdaughters, Mrs. V. Henderson (June) of Toronto; Miss Christine Fuller of Oshawa; one stepson George Fuller of Burlington; five brothers, William and Pete of Oshawa; Jim of Kitchener; Mike of Ottawa; John of Alberta; and three grandchildren.

High Mass was celebrated in St. Gertrude's Church, Oshawa, with interment in Resurrection Cemetery.

### Stay alive in '75

Halton County Board of Education Chairman Bill Priestner practiced one-upmanship at a board meeting.

Trustee Dick Goodin, reporting on a meeting of the joint Conservation Committee, told colleagues the group was promoting planting of trees.

Goodin said the slogan this year is "Plant A Tree In '73" and for next year, "Plant more in '74". Priestner suggested the following year could be "Stay alive in '75."

Goodin noted the Oakville Tree Committee in Oakville and Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington were making trees available to schools in those two towns.

**SECOND DOCTOR**  
Dr. James Cobban, Halton's second doctor was located in an office on the banks of the Sixteen south east of Milton.

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