

# Board examining vacant classes

With school enrolment expected to decline by 6,000 pupils within five years Halton Board of Education will look at a number of ideas for using surplus space including using schools for day care and senior citizen centres, putting students in all grades in one building and expansion of adult education.

Thursday trustees began reviewing a report dealing with the enrolment crisis Halton will face which will also form part of a brief the board will submit to a special provincial commission looking at the effects of declining enrolment in Hamilton this April.

The report from Director of Education Em Lavender predicts some schools will have to be closed while others will be twinned so staff and materials can be shared.

He has suggested in some schools vacant classrooms be sealed off to save heating, lighting and cleaning costs.

Even with enrolment declining in many areas of Halton and schools being closed the board will have to build some new schools in high growth areas like Milton.

Lavender suggests vacant space in well equipped, expensive high schools could be used for things like trainable mentally handicapped units and the board might be able to use facilities like Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf in Milton which is owned by the province instead of building new high schools.

Excess school space could be rented out for community use and some would even be suitable for lease to doctors and dentists and other people needing office space, the board was told.

Before rooms are sealed off, the board should actively try to have the space used by the community, Trustee Judy Alexander said. She noted the board now responds only to community requests for use of schools but by contacting might find there is more interest in community use of schools.

Lavender agreed this could be done but warned the board must look at costs and benefits before turning space over to community groups.

He said the board would have to be careful not to allow a sizeable amount of education dollars to be eaten up by community use of schools when the board will receive little more than good will and use of municipal recreation facilities.

Alexander pointed out the board will have to find something to do with vacant space in its two vocational schools. She said with the expensive equipment in those buildings they should be used and thought the board might consider repurposing the entrance requirements at General Wolfe and Brock. She said the board should consider opening the two schools up to more than just vocational pupils.

Lavender said there isn't as much vacant space as has been thought in the past since the shops are small and noted the province is lowering the capacity figures for both schools.

Superintendent of Special Services Ron Chapman told the board a committee will be looking into special education services at high schools and possible change in education focus at Brock and Wolfe will be considered. He said the school would remain vocational but non-vocational students could be placed in vacant classrooms.

Trustee Bill Priestner said it was fine for everyone to be saying that expensive, well equipped schools should be used but reminded trustees over seven per cent of the budget goes to debt charges on buildings and some will have to be closed and sold to save money.

Lavender said some small enrolment courses and high school special education classes will have to be consolidated because of the enrolment decline but assured trustees the board will be able to continue developing high school core curriculum and special testing and evaluation.

Alexander said enrolment declines will reduce the need for special education but it won't reduce it proportionately, Lavender noted. He warned students needing remedial help could increase since teachers are shar-

pening their skills at spotting pupils requiring special education.

Trustee Florence Meares said big classes result in more remedial students so the board should study whether enrolment declines will result in smaller classes and a decrease in the number of pupils in remedial classes.

Lavender said the enrolment declines will mean the "school system must be consolidated."

Trustee Dr. Helen Howard-Lock said she wants vacant school space to be used for day care, senior citizen's centres, adult education, and by colleges and universities, if possible. She also thought study should be given to building modular schools which can be moved around Halton as population shifts and using large schools for grades kindergarten to 13 pupils.

Lavender noted a lot of "creative thinking" can go into the vacant school space question but again warned acts of good will and citizenship might end up costing a lot of education money.

Howard-Lock said she wasn't advocating a "give away" philosophy.

Problems caused by enrolment declines will be studied further by the board.



**WHAT A SMOOTHY:** Ken Melsaac checks the edge of a board he has just sanded to be sure it will meet his critical approval. He is taking part in the night school woodworking class at the high school.

# New course irks — mind-manipulation

Amateur psychology is being practised on grade seven and eight pupils at Stewarttown and Centennial schools, a Georgetown mother has charged.

Judith Goebelle, Edith Street, raised a number of questions about a new guidance program for intermediate students which was started in mid-December at Thursday's meeting of the Halton Board of Education.

In an interview later she said "I haven't asked the board to be responsible for my child's character and soul, and I don't wish them to be," Mrs. Goebelle, a critic of Halton education, declared.

She has branded the program as "mind manipulation" and asked the board if the administration has in-

structed principals to make parents aware this program was being introduced.

Superintendent of Special Services Ron Chapman said principals were expected to announce the new course through either a letter to the home or else at a program night.

Mrs. Goebelle said while a portion of the program deals with traditional guidance topics such as careers and subject choices at high school, the majority of class time is spent discussing "personal and private aspects of the child's personality."

Chapman said parents are free to visit their school and examine both the teaching techniques used in the course and the materials used. He said in response to one of Mrs.

Goebelle's questions that not all the materials used come from the United States. Some were developed and produced in Canada.

He said teachers have received some special training for the course and will receive more.

Mrs. Goebelle said she was concerned parents of children in grades seven and eight students weren't given "explicit" notification of the introduction of this new course.

She said she was "relieved" to hear the Superintendent of Special

services say parents are welcome to study teacher's reference manual for intermediate guidance.

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# Expanded French officially dead

Expanded elementary French in Halton is officially dead.

Thursday Halton Board of Education rescinded motions passed last September which set up a mandatory 40 minutes a day French program for pupils in grades, four, five, six, seven and eight.

A few weeks ago trustees decided to scrap the program before it even got off the ground.

Board members feared generous provincial grants for the French program would be cut in a few years leaving Halton to finance an expensive course.

time devoted to core-curriculum courses like English and mathematics.

Grade six, seven and eight pupils will continue to receive 20 minutes of French instruction daily.

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# Various class sizes concern

Drastic differences in class size are the number one concern of both elementary and secondary school teachers in Halton.

A joint board and teacher committee looking into human resources allocation submitted a report Thursday to Halton Board of Education outlining various concerns of teachers, examining working conditions and time spent working.

The data filled study will be reviewed by virtually everyone involved in public education throughout the region.

One fact pointed up in the study is that elementary teachers on the average must work longer hours.

According to the report elementary teachers spend 43 hours a week at school including 25 minutes before school starts and 50 minutes after classes end. On the average they don't spend more than a half an hour on lunch each day but do over eight hours of work at home weekly.

"A conservative estimate of a normal teacher work

week would therefore be 49 hours," the study states.

The report added teachers spend approximately another 98 hours each year talking to parents, attending school activities and attending meetings.

Totalling everything up the study found "the average teacher would work 2,028 hours during the ten month school year."

Elementary school teachers also spend about 96 per cent of the time they are at school giving instruction.

High school teachers aren't at the school as long, just 39.5 hours a week but spend more time doing school related work at home—9.4 hours—for a weekly total of 46 hours.

They spend about the same amount of time eating lunch and spend more time, 108 hours, handling parent interviews, supervising sports activities and school functions and at meetings each year.

The average high school teacher works about 1,940 hours each year the report

states.

The study shows average class sizes range from 24 pupils to 35 and get progressively bigger between grades kindergarten to eight.

Nearly 60 per cent of elementary classes have between 26 and 33 students but there are some that have more than 50 pupils in them.

Halton elementary school days run anywhere between 6.5 hours and 7.8 hours daily and while the province requires only five hours of instruction each day the average in Halton is 5.5 hours.

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# Don Long loses seat

Georgetown no longer has a representative on Halton Board of Education since Trustee Don Long lost his seat after he and the board violated a little known section of the Education Act. However Long could be back on the board soon.

According to provincial legislation if a trustee misses three consecutive meetings without the board passing a resolution permitting the member's absence the trustee is considered to have vacated his seat.

Long missed board meetings on January 5, 12, 19 and February 2 for a total of four consecutive meetings missed. The freshman trustee returned to the board table on February 9 and then was absent again last Thursday. He is a self-employed investment counsellor and has been away in Calgary on business.

The board will now have to make an appointment to fill the vacancy since the Education Act doesn't provide for the calling of by-election. It is possible Long will be the appointee if he wants the post. He is still in Calgary and unavailable for comment.

The whole problem sprung up Thursday about half way through the regular board meeting at a time when the public is allowed to ask questions.

Lillian Kilpatrick of Oakville asked how many meetings a trustee is allowed to miss before action is taken by the board.

Chairman Garry Morton consulted the Education Act and discovered the regulation calling for board permission allowing a member's absence from three consecutive

meetings.

He admitted the regulation had been broken recently and promised attendance would be watched closely in the future to make sure the Act wasn't broken again.

Following the meeting, when talking to the press, he revealed the offending trustee was Long but acknowledged the Georgetown member wasn't the first person to miss three meetings in a row and the board has never passed a resolution permitting a member to be absent.

**Medals for educators**

Two Halton Educators have been honored with Queen's Silver Jubilee medals.

Halton Board of Education has had only two directors of education and both were honored with medals.

It was announced Thursday by board chairman Garry Morton that Em Lavender and Jim Singleton both were medal recipients.

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