

Twining controversy

Limehouse, Speyside

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 stration recommendations so twinning won't be viewed as the "death knell" of a school.
 Boich told the board the principal will be expected to divide his time in both schools and parents will have access to both the principal and vice-principal. He warned parents can't expect instantaneous response to their calls since the principal will be teaching 50 per cent of the time and the vice-principal 75 per cent of the time.
 This was fine, Trustee Florence Meares said, since the board wants its staff teaching and not answering telephone calls unless it's an emergency.
 Hinton noted the Director of

Education decides where the vice-principal goes and could place both the principal and vice-principal in the bigger school and leave a senior teacher in charge of the smaller school. He said the policy was too open-ended, leaving everything to the director to decide. He urged a definite policy be set.
 According to Trustee Ivan Armstrong, Campbellville school, which is twinned, has never worked so well and it doesn't have a vice-principal in the school.
 The board needs to decide if it wants to set policies or regulations, Director of Education Em Lavender said. Policy means there is flexibility for the administra-

tion but regulation means there are only rules to be followed he explained.
 "If you want regulations you don't need us because you don't need the judgment factor, just order takers," Lavender declared. "You should put some kind of trust in the people you hire."
 If enrolment dropped at Limehouse and Speyside to the level where they should be closed that was one thing but twinning is entirely different, Shepherd said.
 "Twinning isn't attractive financially because you need a vice-principal and secretary. A lowest paid principal is the only way to go," Shepherd stated.

Limehouse parents vow battle with trustees

Halton trustees could be in for a battle with North Halton parents, the likes of which hasn't been since they closed Norval school in 1974.

Thursday, following Halton Board of Education's decision to twin Limehouse and Jos. h Gibbons schools, parents of children attending the Limehouse school, between Acton and Georgetown, vowed to "haunt the board."
 Spokesman David Mullins said parents, about 50 of whom were at the meetings, were "disgusted" with the board's action but not too surprised.

He said parents couldn't quite believe the way trustees acted. Mullins noted board members are supposed to represent the public and yet despite a clear indication from parents that they didn't want twinning, the board went ahead and ignored their wishes.

Parents repeatedly vowed, following the meeting, to keep after the board to reverse its decision. Two actions already being considered are: (1) taking their case to the Minister of Education Tom Wells and (2) Ontario Ombudsman Arthur Maloney.

Despite administration claims to the contrary, Limehouse parents firmly believe twinning is the first step towards closing of their rural school.

Mullins noted parents throughout the region have received questionnaires from

the board asking how they feel about middle schools, grades six, seven and eight. He predicted the majority will say they are happy with middle schools and that will be a signal to the board to remove grade six from Limehouse and put pupils in a middle school. This would further reduce Limehouse's enrolment. Parents also fear removal of Kindergarten won't be far behind the loss of grade six.

These actions would leave the school with no new inflow of students and as the pupils progressed through to the end of grade five the enrolment will shrink. The school will suffer a slow, quiet death.

Mullins said he and other parents felt the board didn't want to give the Limehouse twinning issue a fair hearing, pointing out trustees ignored Acton-Esqueing member Bert Hinton's plea to give the subject more thought.

"They have no concern for our community," he declared. "Just costs."

Parents note when the board closes their school they will have much higher costs than now because busing will have to be increased substantially.
 Mullins said "you can bet your life" they will fight the board just like Norval parents did.

The group has sought the advice of Halton-Burlington MPP Julian Reed who led the fight to keep Norval's school open before he entered

provincial politics.

Norval parents fought long and vigorously. Many observers believe considering changes in the board over the past few years that if the Norval question came up today the community would likely win with the same type of campaign they ran in 1974. Besides hounding the board, parents also took their cause to Queen's Park.

Mullins said parents will keep fighting because it would be "stupid" to let the board move closer to closing the school.

"We will haunt these people. We won't let them forget us," he announced.

Parents praised the support they received from Hinton and Georgetown Trustee Barry Shepherd but believe many southern trustees had their minds made up before they debated the issue. "Half of them had closed minds."

The cost saving with twinning isn't very much, they noted, stating they are being "nickled and dimed" by a board that sits in plush, expensive chambers.

Many parents fear twinning and possible closing because their children will be tied in and possibly end up going to Joseph Gibbons school which is operated under the open concept system. They like apprehensive of open concept.

Some say they will never allow their children to be placed in an open concept school.

Speyside parents accept twinning

Unlike Limehouse parents, those in Speyside have decided to adopt a wait and see stance following Halton Board of Education's decision Thursday to twin their rural school with Robert Little in Acton.

Limehouse parents says they will keep fighting the board decision but Speyside parents are going to give the new system of school administration a chance.

Under twinning, the principal of Speyside school will be the principal of Robert Little. Speyside will have a vice-principal teaching 75 per cent of the time and befed up secretarial service.

Spokesman for the parents who tried to persuade trustees not to twin their school, Janet Armstrong, said she wasn't surprised board members backed the administration twinning plan. She said parents accept the board's decision.

She admitted they went into the meeting confident they might win because of the case they had made for not twinning a rural school with a town school. Mrs. Armstrong said parents had canvassed all trustees and "thought we had a good chance to win."

One trustee supported their case, she said, but voted against them for the simple reason he voted for one twinning three years ago.
 Schools which have been twinned in the past have been

smaller than Speyside, she noted.

Mrs. Armstrong said it seems unfair to expect a principal to handle two schools, Robert Little and Speyside, which will have an enrolment of over 600 next fall, especially considering the distance between the two schools.

Parents want to see if their vice-principal can teach just 50 per cent of the time instead of 75 per cent of the time.

She noted there are schools in south Halton with 600 pupils who have a principal and a half-time vice-principal.

She said a half-time teaching vice-principal would be

able to deal with parents' concerns and school problems.

"We will do our best to get the teaching load of our vice-principal reduced," Mrs. Armstrong declared.

She said parents understand and accept the administration's position on the issue and are willing to give twinning a chance.

"Maybe our fears won't be realized. We aren't angry with the administration or trustees. In fact the administration was quite helpful while we were preparing our case. Trustees Bert Hinton and Barry Shepherd were fantastic to us."

Town needs month notice of parades

Groups which hold parades and erect banners over streets advertising events annually will be contacted by the Town to see if red tape and delays surrounding approvals can be cut.

Last month the Town contacted the Region to see if Halton Hills could give approval for banners, parades and street closures on regional roads rather than have organizations going to both Town and Region for approvals.

Regional works director Bob Moore wrote Halton Hills works committee stating he doesn't have the authority to approve the parade routes, road closings or erection of banners. He suggested since it is a "delicate legal matter" possibly the town solicitor could contact the Region's solicitor.

Moore also suggested the town might consider taking over regional road on Main Street between Highway 7 and Maple Ave. in Georgetown so it could ap-

prove closure of that street for events such as downtown's Pioneer Days and sidewalk sales.

Councillor George Malby suggested since the regional engineer can't approve road closures regional council should be asked to give Halton Hills authority to handle such items.

Engineer Robert Austin said he doubted regional council would agree and suggested "they would be fools to do it." He said regional council has legal authority over regional roads such as Main, Maple and Mountainview, in Georgetown and since they won't give their own staff legal authority over them, they won't give Halton Hills authority.

Councillor Mike Armstrong suggested time could be saved if works committee recommended street closings, banner erections and parade routes involving regional roads directly to the Region without going through Halton Hills council.
 He noted the same groups make requests every year but requests come in late all the time both to the town and region.
 Austin suggested the groups need to be "educated" to send in requests early to both the town and region so approval will be quicker.

Many groups come to the town a few weeks ahead of an event and then a Halton Hills councillor must take the item to regional council and hope it gets approval before the event takes place. If the Town recommends approval to the Region it sits around for two weeks before even going to the region because committee recommendations need council approval.

Armstrong thought committee recommendations on parades, road closures and banners over regional roads shouldn't have to go to Halton Hills council before being sent to Region.
 Councillor Peter Pomeroy said all groups should be contacted and advised to give both the town and region a month's notice.
 Armstrong thought the people wouldn't need to contact both levels of govern-

ment if they give a month's notice to Halton Hills and works committee makes recommendations directly to the Region.
 The clerk's department will be asked to contact groups who regularly want to put up banners, close roads and hold parades.

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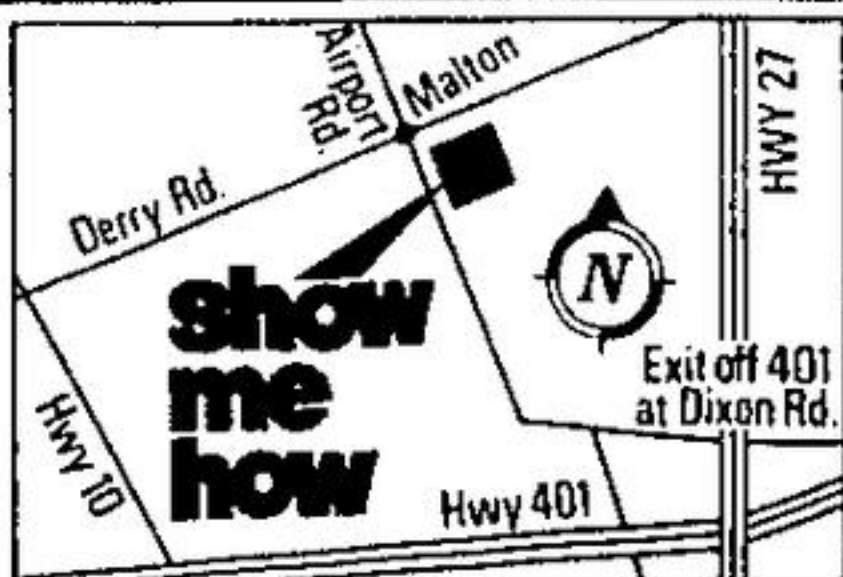
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