

School board review approved

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT
The Herald

Despite objections from two pro-French associations, Halton Board of Education trustees approved and passed a review of the policy for immersion, extended and core French.

Representatives from Canadian Parents for French, Halton chapter and the Glenview Home and School Association in Burlington were present at the board's March 21 meeting to ask that the review be deferred until an evaluation plan of French teaching could be established.

Both groups want an evaluation procedure to assess program and student performance, to see how successful French education is and how it can be improved.

"We request deferral of revisions to the French policy until the evaluation-action plan has been prepared and completed," said Alyce Boster, president of Glenview Home and School Association. "Approval of the largely minor policy changes offers no real benefit at this time and may impede progress with its false sense of accomplishment."

Jan Fowler, President of the Halton Chapter of Canadians for French, said the review "fails by omission."

"The issues that haven't been addressed in the policy are not easy, but must be included," she said. "Things like evaluation of programs, assessment and tracking of student achievement and necessary support groups are needed."

The French review is actually a review of French Policy 6000-6 which was last reviewed in 1985. A French Policy Review Committee was established in April 1990 to deal with review changes. A shortage of quality French teachers, the potential cost of program expansion and the anticipated publication of new guidelines for French teaching from the Ministry of Education, were reasons the committee gave for reaching their final decision which was "there appear to be no compelling reasons to change our present policy significantly."

The trustees, however, recommended to board administration that a review of immersion and extended French programs be implemented and assessment of student performance be included in the board's plan.

After the two pro-French associations voiced their objections and asked for a delay, Halton Hills trustee Dick Howitt addressed the board and said he believed delaying the passing of the review would postpone the beginning of three very important aspects of the review.

"I think the policy review offers three positive things. The provision of classroom space to core French teachers is one which sends a good message that we care about them. Another thing is remediation of French. We also addressed the fear of some parents who were afraid French immersion was taking over and they might lose English teaching," he said.

Evidently, many trustees agreed with Mr. Howitt since only two were opposed to the passing of the policy review at vote time.

Dean Fink, superintendent of French studies, said the issues raised by the French groups may be addressed again when the new guidelines from the Ministry of Education come out. But he couldn't predict just when the guidelines would be released.



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