

Conservation group attempts to save school

By JANET BAINE
Staff writer

Demolition of the century old Stone School in Acton, slated for Friday, seemed to have been delayed by presence of protestors from conservation groups.

The company hired to demolish the building were reported to begin setting up fences Friday and about five members of the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (LACAC) and Heritage Acton arrived early that day with plans to stop the bulldozers. However, no one from the demolition company came at that time and the conservationists left, resolved to keep an eye on the school.

The Town of Halton Hills sold the Stone School to the Halton Board of Education for \$80,000 on February 28, with the condition that a demolition permit be issued by the town. The school board considers the building, which has been boarded up for several years, unsafe. The board also wants to make changes to the property so school buses can drop off children more safely at Robert Little School, less than 100 feet away.

LACAC and Heritage Acton want the board of education to hold off on demolition until after they have met to discuss the problem. LACAC chairman Steve Foster told this newspaper he wrote to the the Director of Education Bob Williams March 19, but has yet heard anything back.

"I can't comment on the merits of the demolition, they may be perfectly right to demolish it," Foster said. But he still wants a meeting with board officials so that he and other people concerned about the school will know all avenues for saving it have been exhausted. Heritage Acton co-chairman Ted Tyler is also frustrated by the inaction of the board. His group decided Monday to meet with the school board. But there was no room on the agenda at Thursday's school board meeting. By the next meeting, the school was expected to be down.

Acton's school trustee Dave Whiting said he's surprised the town, which issues demolition permits, never held a public meeting to



An Acton group, the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (LACAC) is attempting to meet with Halton Board of Education officials to discuss the fate of this old schoolhouse, which dates back to 1925.

inform people about the demolition.

But according to town staff, a public meeting is not part of the normal procedure. Paul Stover, the superintendent of facilities, said he contacted heritage organizations once the demolition permit had been issued "as a courtesy" in case they wanted to take photographs. Asbestos was removed from the interior of the school last week and a demolition permit was issued March 17, he said.

Acton councillor Rick Bonnette said people have had lots of time to react, because the demolition plans were on the front page of the newspaper several times, starting four months ago. He and other Acton councillors haven't heard any complaints about the demolition plans from local taxpayers.

"Not a peep from anybody. It's a real small minority (who are upset). I know a lot of people will be sad, but let's fact it...we just can't get everything," he said.

Three years ago when the Stone School was being considered as a possible site for co-operative housing, he said he probably received 25

letters, phone calls and comments from people against the proposal. When people are concerned about something, councillors hear about it, he said.

Georgetown trustee Dick Howitt said he's frustrated by the last minute concern directed at the school board, because they were up front about their plans to demolish the school right from the beginning — a demolition permit was a condition of sale.

"The town sells (the Stone School) to us, then LACAC, which is a committee of council, comes after us and says they want to save it," he said. As a committee of the town council, they should have been trying to prevent the sale if they didn't want the building demolished, he said. LACAC was formed five years ago, which gave them lots of time to declare the Stone School a heritage building, and attempt to save it, he said.

Town council briefs

Jim Lahey, on behalf of the Georgetown Horseshoe Club, asked town council to approve an interest-free loan of \$4,000 for his organization so that lights could be installed in the Fairgrounds over the horseshoe pits. He noted grants are not available, so a loan would be his best alternative. He promised that the club would pay it back within three years. Councillor Marilyn Serjeantson asked for a report on whether a loan could be guaranteed

from reserve funds, without adding to the tax bill.

Condos finally registered

To a smattering of applause Monday night, councillors finally registered Law Development's townhouses as condominiums. The Mountainview Rd./River Dr. homes were left in limbo for a few weeks because of a landscaping and fencing dispute between the developer and neighbor Myles Lawlor.

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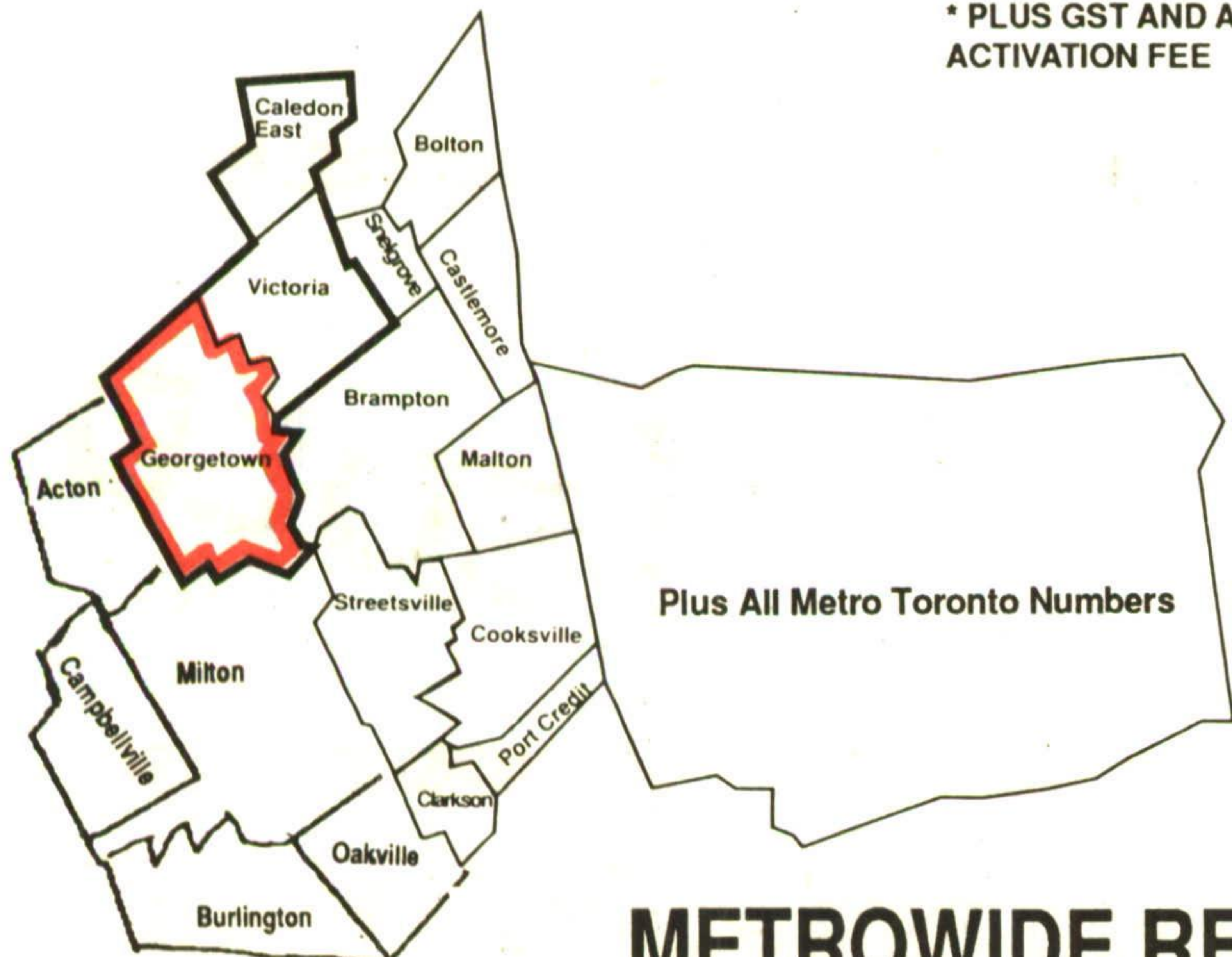
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