

ROBOTICS! M.Z. Bennett students, from left, John Clayton, Steven Berber and Kimberly Freeland recently did some wordworking to make a fence, while Stephanie Thompson, Brian Field and Elaine Coles made a ramp out of Lego that will move by the use of pulleys.

School caravan teaches high-tech

BY DOUG HARRISON
The Acton Tanner

The Halton Board of Education's robotics caravan is designed to get more technology in schools for those who can't afford to bring in technology on a full-time basis.

But the rewards have been far greater for M.Z. Bennett students with its presence in their school since before Christmas.

The robotics caravan — complete with four computers, Lego dacta and program module boxes — involves a writing, reading and mathematics component, not to mention its demand of problem solving skills for the Grade 4 and 5 kids at the school.

Using Lego dacta, the students are learning about gears, motors, levers and axles on simple ma-

chines, along with a design and technology component.

From there, they are given cards to read, to give them a challenge based on the use of simple machines. After that they must come up with a design. In the end, the students will construct robots and have them move — if their problem solving was accurate — by computer programming.

"They're realizing with the programming that the purpose is making the robot work. It's hands-on. It's not 'this is how it would work,'" says Grade 4-5 teacher Una Graham, who attended a workshop with colleagues James Fisher and Kevin Waitson to get background in programming before the robotics unit.

"And it enhances what they're

doing in class. It may be different from their normal study, but the unit integrates everything (reading, writing, etc.). Some who aren't as strong using problem solving another way become stars on the computer."

Stephanie Thompson, 10, likes working with a saw. "I like the cutting and hope to learn what wheels, pulleys and axles are."

Added 10-year-old Brian Field: "I like building Lego. It will be interesting to work with computers to make the robots move."

The robotics caravan will leave the school at the end of February.

Money for growth?

A Halton staff recommendation to begin spending money to allow Acton to grow to 10,000 residents is on the agenda of today's (Wednesday) Halton Planning and Public Works meeting.

It is the first recommendation to actually spend some of the estimated \$2.4 million for improvements to the Region's Third Line Wastewater Treatment Plant to ensure that development does not hurt the water quality or fish life in Fairy Lake and Black Creek.

The 1995 capital budget includes \$1.8 million for the plant upgrades, but that estimate has already risen to \$2.4 million and may not be the final cost of upgrading the plant to handle water and sewage needs of approximately 3,000 new people.

Staff's report also recommends Council endorse the Acton Water Quality Study Implementation Plan, a fish habitat study and hire a consulting engineer to begin designs for the plant improvements.

Fairy Lake concerns

An Acton businessman is worried he could lose his livelihood if development destroys Fairy Lake.

Ken White, owner of Smallwood Acres Trailer Camp on Fairy Lake, raised his concerns at a recent Halton Council meeting.

"It is the lake that brings 1,000 people to my park on a summer weekend and the lake provides a living for two families.

"I'm worried that the extra pumping of lake water for development will also drain the wetlands on the south side of Mill Street. The people who bought those new homes (the Legion subdivision) will be in for a surprise with the stinking black muck that is left when the lake dries.

"If the lake is destroyed, then what?" White wondered.

Fairy Lake Committee member and Acton councillor Norm Elliott


said there was no possibility the lake would be destroyed and invited White to a committee meeting.

To accommodate a population of 10,000 Halton Region will have to double the amount of water it pumps from its Prospect Park well, which gets one-third of its water from Fairy Lake and the balance from ground water.

Under a worst-case scenario, the lake level could drop as much as 0.6 m when the population hits 10,000 and a maximum width of 6m of lake bed would be exposed for less than one month a year.

To minimize the impact of this additional drawdown on the lake, the Region will spend \$50,000 to plant vegetation on the shoreline.

The plantings will improve the fish habitat and help prevent Canada geese from defecating in and near the lake.



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PROMOTIONAL DATES

Thursday February 23 10:00 - 8:00	Friday February 24 10:00 - 8:00	Saturday February 25 10:00 - 4:00
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