

# Centennial overcrowding studied

## Will Eramosa Public School remain viable?

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK  
The Rockwood Miller

Overcrowding problems at Rockwood Centennial P.S. may be eased by the results of an attendance area study underway at the Wellington Board of Education.

Rockwood already has nine portable classrooms with capacity for three more – too many for worried parents and both the local school trustee and councillor.

All students from Kindergarten to Grade 8 who live south of Hwy. 24 in Eramosa Township attend Rockwood Centennial.

Students who live north of the highway go to Eramosa Public School from Kindergarten to Grade 6 and then to Rockwood for Grade 7 and 8.

Wellington Board of Education planner Dennis Cuomo said the overcrowding is partly the result of problems with the boundaries that determine where Eramosa students go for Grade 9.

"This is where it has been, quite frankly, a mess for many years," Cuomo said on Wednesday.

Currently students living south of Hwy. 24 in Rockwood Centennial's catchment area go to John F. Ross high school in Guelph. Those living north of Hwy. 24, but south of County Road 22, have the option of going to Guelph or to Centre Wellington District High in Fergus, along with all those who live north of County Road 22.

"This Centre Wellington study will potentially have an impact on Eramosa Public and Rockwood Centennial as we try to clean up the boundary areas for schools feeding into Central Wellington," Cuomo said.

The Board wants to have all elementary students from any school's particular catchment area in Centre Wellington, attend that high school.

"We may look to either pushing the John Black, or West Garafraxa schools' catchment areas, which about the Eramosa Public School's area, south, to accommodate peo-

ple living north of County Road 22," Cuomo explained.

"The problem there is that it could reduce Eramosa Public School's enrollment so significantly that the school may not be viable," Cuomo warned.

"But, we all know that Rockwood Centennial doesn't have any excess room, so potentially this is an opportunity to shift Eramosa's boundary south and help reduce some of the pressure at Rockwood Centennial."

Cuomo admits that the boundary issue is a hot topic with many parents, who see Hwy. 24 as a "Berlin Wall."

"Some parents might not want to cross Hwy. 24 to go to Eramosa, even though it might mean less crowded conditions and maybe no portables," Cuomo said.

Although the Board has identified a school site in the Bernardi subdivision in Rockwood, Cuomo said it is years off and its development will be partly determined by the housing market.

Until developers register the lots, the Board can't apply for provincial funding for a second Rockwood school.

Development of another school will come none too soon for Eramosa Councillor Cathy McIntyre, who had asked that Council be kept up to speed on the Board's study.

"The Board said that there is room for more portables at Rock-

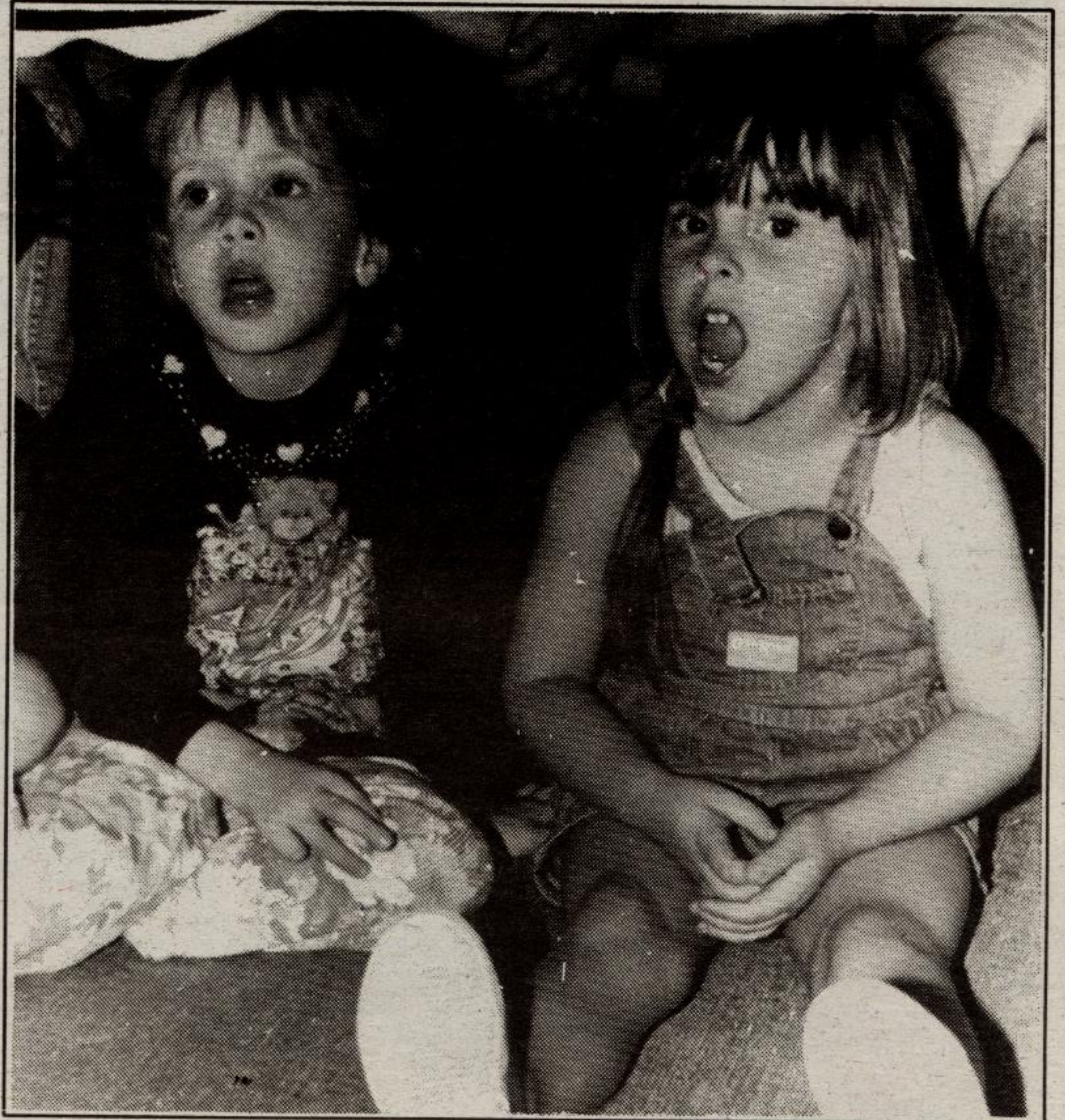
wood, but you can't put any more in there because they are losing their playground," McIntyre said on Wednesday.

"I've always said that if there is room for more portables, then there is room to expand the school."

School Board trustee Wilma Tosh said the portables are "stealing" recreation space from students at Rockwood.

"They are losing their basketball courts and playground space but unless some magical hand from God comes down and gives us a grant, it will be years before Rockwood has a new school," Tosh said on Wednesday.

The Board's attendance area study, which will also look at Board re-organization, the location for the next elementary school and year-round schooling, will be ready for trustee debate early next year.

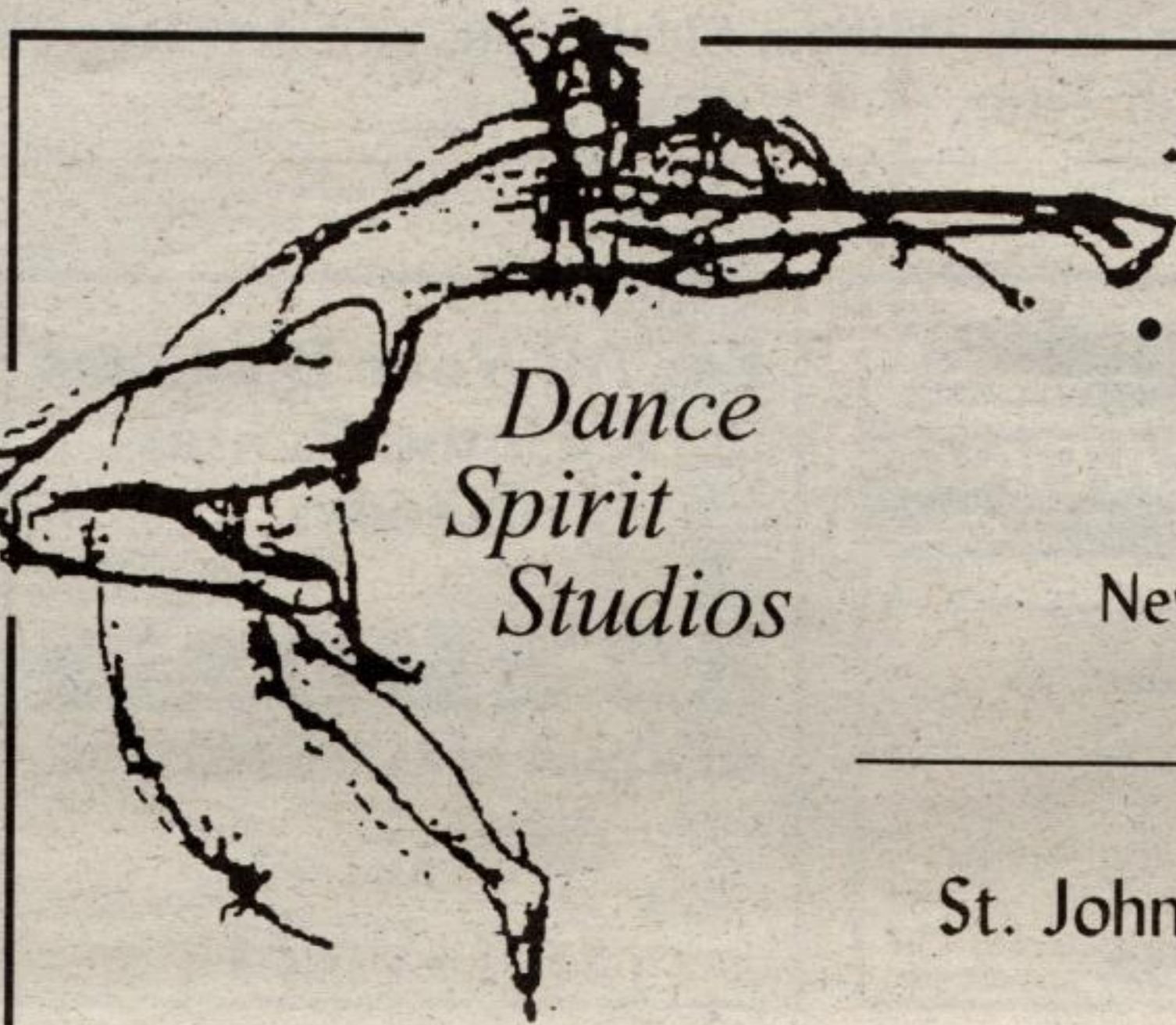


SING IT! Everton Vacation Bible School's Catherine Lewis, left, and Katie Bevan sing at Friday's wrap-up. (Doug Harrison photo)

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