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Education restructuring options debated

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK

The Acton Tanner

The Halton Board of Education's options for possible school closures will be unveiled this week as the Board's accommodation committee releases an update report.

Trustees were briefed on the options on Monday, school principals and a member of the school council or parent representative were briefed on Tuesday and tomorrow (Thursday) the report will be on the agenda at the Board's regular meeting. The report will also be the subject of a public meeting at Georgetown High next Monday night.

Faced with a mill rate increase of 12 per cent because of declining Ministry of Education grants, the Board embarked on a restructuring program, including a look at accommodations in Halton Hills and Burlington.

A Board report indicates that there are 20 per cent more pupil places than necessary and that to have each school at 90 per cent of its capacity, eight to 12 schools will have to be closed, resulting in an operating budget savings of \$2 million per year. In explaining the need to close schools the Board also said that the sale of the excess properties will provide money to be used for renovations to existing schools or new schools where needed.

The big question is which schools could be slated for closure and in an interview last Thursday, Acton-Esquesing trustee Ethel Gardiner said none of that information is public yet.

"All of the schools in Halton Hills are being studied but I wouldn't even hazard a guess if any schools in Acton are on that list because we haven't seen the options yet," Gardiner said. "What comes to the Board on Thursday will be options to be considered and then we will go to a series of public meetings to get community input."

The Halton Hills Parents

In Quality Education (H.H.-P.Q.E.) believes that the Board's school capacity analysis is misleading because it includes the figures for two empty schools. The Group's analysis shows that if the two empty-rented schools are removed from the calculations, the Board's de-

Halton Hills questionable. Group member Helen Marschall argues that a clearer picture is obtained if the 586 pupil places at

clared capacity for elemen-

tary schools in Halton for the

year 2000 is 89 per cent, not

81 per cent, and that makes

the closure of schools in

Wrigglesworth and Speyside schools are removed.

"Leaving the two schools in doesn't meet the Board's objectives, which they don't state, that they want to make money by selling off property," Marschall said Monday. "I have a feeling that there is a second agenda there that is very carefully not being spoken of."

The H.H.P.Q.E sent its analysis to the Board last week and has not had a response. Its analysis showed McKenzie-Smith Bennett at 60 per cent of its functional rating capacity by 2000 and Robert Little at 86 per cent.

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or Thursdays at 10:45 am.

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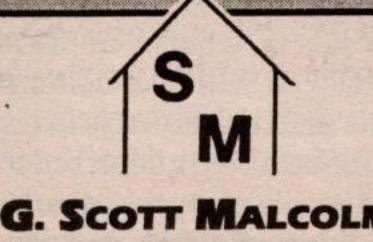
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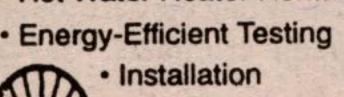
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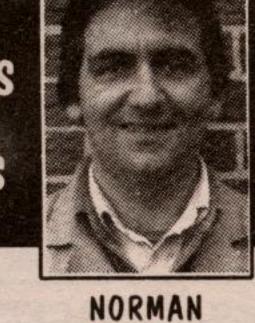
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