

Halton board gives go-ahead to study feasibility of JK

The Halton District School Board will explore the feasibility of junior kindergarten (JK), but a trustee warned it has not made the grade yet.

The board unanimously approved a cost/benefit analysis for JK at last Wednesday's meeting. However, at least one trustee said, while he'd examine the possibility, he'd need some convincing.

The board is considering implementing JK to reduce a capacity surplus of more than 6,000 pupil spaces. The surplus must be eliminated by year's end for the board to receive new school funding.

Burlington Trustee David Bird warned against using JK as a band-aid for other problems.

"Education between ages one-five provides the most information," he said. "But we don't want this deemed as a trick to keep schools open. We want a wholehearted effort to keep it going."

The former NDP provincial government mandated JK be started in 1994. For one year, the board operated 13 classes of JK, which children usually start at age four.

But when the Progressive Conservatives took power, the board dropped its program. "The new government made it optional and drastically reduced the funding," recalled education director Dusty Papke.

Burlington Trustee Sheila Flook, who served on the board then, said the pilot classes did fill up.

"But there were concerns about the cost and what the people of Halton wanted at that time," she said. "I can't remember there being a huge outcry to save JK."

Milton Trustee Erica Andrew said she has been called by parents asking if the board offers junior kindergarten. "There are very strong reasons why JK is a good program. The earlier we get them (students) the better it is," she noted.

(Junior kindergarten is currently offered by Halton's Catholic school board).

Like their kindergarten counterparts, JK students would only count for half pupil spaces because they would attend school part-time. The board has a surplus of more than 2,000 spaces in its elementary school program.

Early learning grants provided to the board may be lost if JK is implemented, Papke noted in an earlier interview.

He said other major factors to be considered include finding space at more crowded schools, how widely the program would be implemented and what the start-up costs would be.

—By Dennis Smith, special

Police blotter

Impaired driving charge laid

A 27-year-old Georgetown man was charged with impaired driving as a result of a spot check police were conducting in Norval early Sunday morning. Charged with impaired driving and having over 80 mg of alcohol in 100 ml of blood is William King of Guelph St. He is to be in court on December 7.

Local man faces drug charge

A Georgetown man was charged with possession of a controlled substance Saturday night after he was stopped for a traffic violation at Rexway Dr. and Prince Charles Dr. Police found hashish and marijuana in the car. Charged is Mark Molls, 26, of Mountainview Rd. He is to be in court on December 14.

Driver faces impaired charge

At about 3 a.m. Saturday Halton Police stopped a driver in the Trafalgar Rd. Hwy. 7 area. The driver was arrested and transported to the police station to give a breath sample, but refused. Police charged Lindsay Millar, 37, of Moore Park Cr., Georgetown with refusing to provide a breath sample and impaired driving. He is to appear in court Nov. 30.

Man sought after truck damaged

Halton Police are looking for a man in connection with an incident that occurred at Georgetown Marketplace parking lot Thursday night. Police say the owner of 1998 Dodge Ram saw a man push a shopping cart into the box of his truck causing \$300 damage. The man is described as white, mid-to-late 30s, 5'10", 190 pounds with short, dirty blonde hair.

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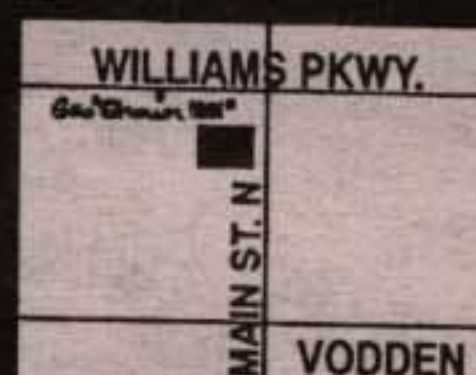
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