## Acton elementary schools removed from board's closure list

were added to the 38 others removed from the Halton District School Board's (HDSB) closure list.

Halton Hills Trustee Ethel Gardiner argued, at last week's board meeting, that both schools should be saved because their excess capacity cannot be resolved by closing either one.

The two schools have a total capacity of 1,193 spaces and year 2002 projected enrolment for the area is 975.

An announcement late last week by Premier Mike Harris concerning changes to the provincial education funding formula and its impact on school closures will have little effect on the HDSB according to HDSB director of education Dusty Papke.

"The good news for Halton is that, for the upcoming year, there will be more money for the operation of schools," said Papke. "However, the deadline for school boards to deal with surplus pupil spaces has not been changed and boards must still deal with their surplus pupil space by the original deadline of Dec. 31, 1998."

In his announcement, Harris said the province was giving school boards a year's reprieve from funding cuts and providing a 20 per cent "top-up" in operating funds for schools operating beneath 100 per capacity for one year.

"The issue of surplus pupil space is still

very real in Halton," said Gardiner. "It will now be up to the board to determine the future course of action in dealing with that surplus."

The board is also doing a cost benefit analysis to see if implementing junior kindergarten is feasible.

This would reduce excess elementary school capacity. This total has been reduced to 1,770 spaces after the long-closed schools, Speyside and Wrigglesworth, both in Halton Hills and Elizabeth Gardens in Burlington, were included in calculations. However, Martin St. or P.W. Merry School in Milton were listed for possible closure.

For secondary schools, there is still an

excess capacity of 4,000 spaces to be reduced.

School boundaries, reconfiguration and program placement will also be reviewed.

But boundary changes will likely have to come after any school closure decisions, said assistant superintendent Gary Sadler, who's overseeing the closure review process.

Public forums on the closures are scheduled for later this month. Local sessions will be held Nov. 19 at Acton High School and Nov. 30 at Milton High School. These meetings start at 7 p.m.

Those willing to make presentations as delegations are asked to call the board office beforehand at (905) 335-3663.

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