



Gardener's delight

Barb Kawasoe of Georgetown perused some of the many flowers and hanging planters available at Arnold's Greenhouses, in Norval on the weekend. The May 24 holiday weekend has traditionally been the weekend that gardeners plant their flower beds and gardens.

Photo by Yves Desjardins

Georgetown squadron takes first in national debating competition

Georgetown's 756 Wild Goose Squadron captured first place in the 2005 Canadian Air Cadet Debating Competition held recently at the Innovation Centre of Mohawk College.

Each year the Air Cadet League of Canada holds a debating competition for air cadets ages 12-18.

The local Georgetown squadron, comprised of Flight Sergeant Melanie Bechard (Christ the King), Sergeant, Imre Gams (Christ the King) and Aircraftsman Alexis Gough (Centennial Public School) topped 38 competitors from seven squadrons.

In the competition, teams of three Cadet competitors speak before a panel of expert judges. Air cadet competitive debating follows British parliamentary procedure and Oxford University debating rules.

Teams act as government and opposition sides, debating over prescribed topics assigned to them. During the initial round of debate, the topic was given in advance to allow for thorough preparation. The subject of the second round of debate is given to teams after the first round of the competi-



Flight Sergeant Melanie Bechard (Christ the King), Sergeant Imre Gams (Christ the King) and Aircraftsman Alexis Gough (Centennial Public School) of Georgetown's 756 Wild Goose Squadron topped 38 competitors from seven squadrons to win the Air Cadet League of Canada's debating competition.

The second round of debate is all the more dependent upon the research skills of team members.

Town to consider ways to increase parking enforcement

Town staff will review different options with the aim to increase parking enforcement in Halton Hills. Acton/rural Regional Councillor Clark Somerville motioned for the directive, supported by council members, at a recent meeting.

"It's been at 20 hours a week for the past six years," Somerville said.

"We do get people asking why we put up no parking signs when we don't enforce them."

He wondered if fines could offset the extra staffing.

"Yes, we do not have enough staff to do the service that we would like to provide," said Henry Tse, Director of Building, Zoning and Enforcement.

Local schools pegged for major repair work

Continued from pg. 1

- Pineview Public School— replacement of boiler oil supply system, stack and breaching of a boiler and study heating piping and cabling systems
- Robert Little Public School— replacment of window and roofing
- Stewarttown Middle School— replacement of windows, roofing and study cabling

Halton Hills Trustee Ethel Gardiner praised board staff for ensuring every school got something.

"I do think it's a start," said Gardiner. "There's a whole lot more to do. It's been the result of years and years of neglect because of the funding formula."

The first round of local repairs should be completed by around October.

The Ministry of Education in February announced funding of \$280 million for school boards to leverage \$4 billion in loans to repair, expand and build new schools.

The Halton public board has been

initially earmarked \$1.46 million to finance around \$20 million worth of work on schools that are expected to be open for at least 10 years.

Trustees approved the long list of projects— more than 200— at a recent board meeting.

Gerry Cullen, the board's superintendent of facility services, said the sheer number of projects slated for the next few months— the majority to be finished by September— would be intense. About 12 years ago, the board underwent \$20 million worth of repairs but over a two-year period.

"That's the cost of a new secondary school," he said.

He said next year the second phase of funding should be completed, with the anticipation the board will get another \$20 million for additional repairs.

The issue of spending money on schools that might be tagged for future closures was brought up at the meet-



ETHEL GARDINER

ing. Cullen said the board currently receives \$6 million a year for renewal to spruce up older buildings. That money, he said, would be pegged at the appropriate time when a school might be tapped for closure, thus ensuring the urgent repair money goes where it's supposed to go.

What the latest funding announcement speaks to is the fact the \$6 million annual renewal grant— the amount

the board has been receiving since the late 90s - is woefully inadequate, Cullen said in an interview. He said in the case of the Halton public board, taking into account its building inventory, it should be spending roughly \$20 million a year on repairs. That would mean the board has been short tens of millions of dollars over the years to properly fix aging buildings. The board has a total of 90 buildings— 17 of them high schools and the rest elementary schools

"Six million dollars has barely been

enough to keep things going forward," Cullen said. "You get this backlog you haven't caught up on."

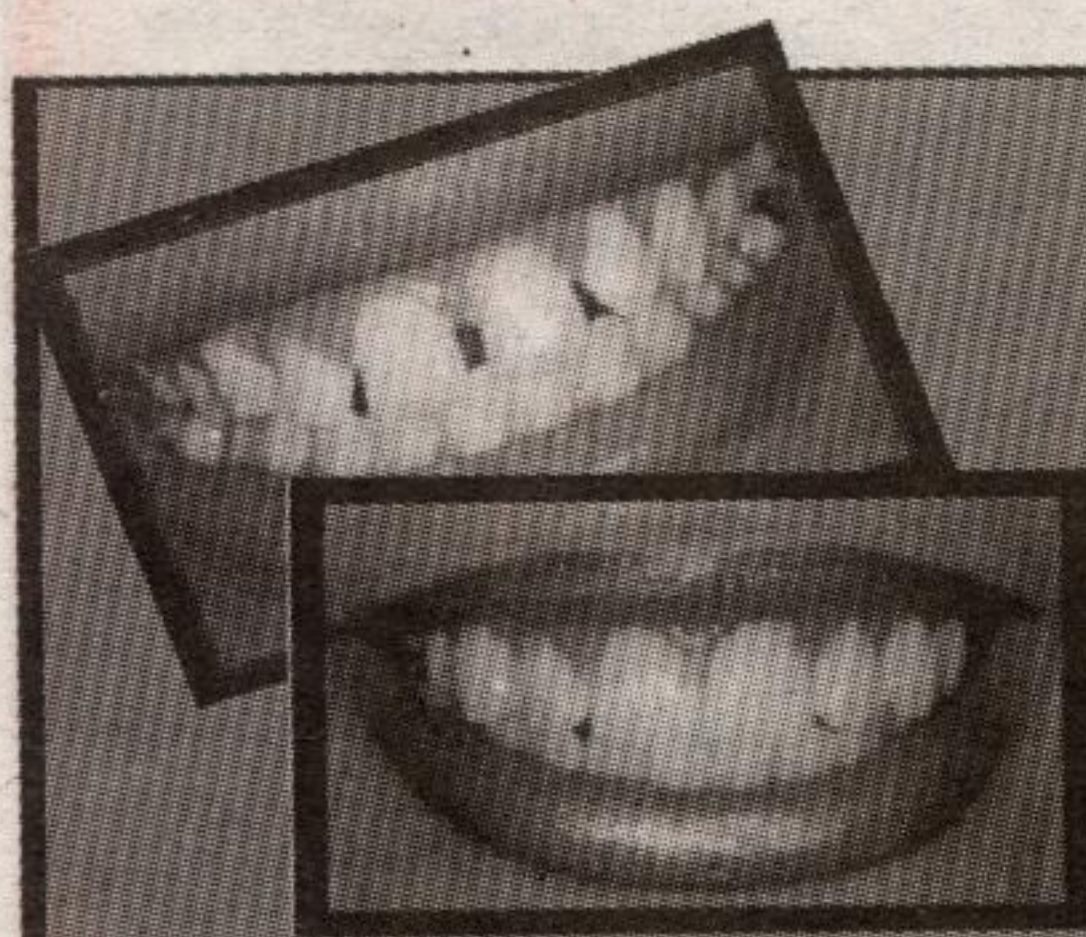
"The slippage is millions, which the province has acknowledged and they're starting to address."

Trustees applauded the move by the province to invest money into fixing up crumbling infrastructure that has needed attention for a long time.

Meanwhile, board senior staff have told trustees they are still awaiting information specifically about how provincial money will flow to build much-needed schools. The Halton plan includes the need to build 10 schools over the next five years.


The Liberals have said that Ontario boards will no longer have to close schools to free up pupil spaces to build new ones, which was a the major component of the formula introduced by the previous Conservative government.

—By Jason Misener, special with files from Lisa Tallyn, staff writer



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