

# Also up for photo honour Independent & Free Press in running for OCNA award



Former *Independent & Free Press* staffer Herb Garbutt's photo of a Georgetown Rebels swimmer has been named a finalist for the Best Sports Photo of the Year Award by the Ontario Community Newspapers Association.

Airport Renaissance Hotel. Former *Independent & Free Press* staff member Herb Garbutt was also named a finalist in the Best Sports Photo category for his shot of a Georgetown Rebels swimmer. Other finalists are from the Port Perry Star and Niagara This Week newspapers. Last month the *Independent & Free Press' Sideroads of Halton Hills* section won the best Special Section award in its class at the Suburban Newspapers of America competition.

The *Independent & Free Press* has been named a finalist in the general excellence category for the Ontario Community Newspaper Association's 2005 Better Newspapers Awards. The *Independent & Free, Clarington This Week* and *North Humberland News* were named the three finalists in class 5 (12,500-24,999 circulation) earlier this week by the OCNA. The winners will be announced April 1 at the awards gala at the Toronto

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# Parents urge board to deal with over-crowding

The chair of the parent council at Silver Creek Public School implored the Halton District School Board to keep the interests of students top of mind as the board gathers feedback on its draft plan to build schools over the next four years.

McGeachy—who has two girls, in Senior Kindergarten and Grade 3 at Silver Creek—also urged the board to ensure a new elementary school is built in Georgetown next year, as has been stated before, as well as to review school boundaries to see if that might help rebalance the student population.



GERARD KENNEDY

With around two-dozen parents in attendance, Robert McGeachy stressed to trustees at Wednesday night's board meeting in Burlington that overcrowding has been an ongoing concern in Georgetown as the municipality has grown—in some cases faster than other parts of the region.

Parents, for example, support the addition to Georgetown District High School as long as the work is done properly and enhances the learning environment, McGeachy said.

"Accommodation boundaries are challenging to solve, we recognize that," he said. "We do expect elected representatives to make the tough decisions and do what's in the best interest of Georgetown."

"It has to be more than a paint job," he told trustees. "It's a significant capital investment needed for that high school."

McGeachy was responding to a draft capital plan the board put before trustees last month. Staff have been holding information meetings, asking the public to comment on the plan as it moves to finalize it by June.

The Ontario Ministry of Education has asked boards to submit their capital plans, based on the best information available to them like enrolment projections and renewal plans for existing buildings, that will outline how students will be accommodated.

The Halton board, which needs to address a growing student population but faces financial constraints at the same time, approved, in principle, a plan that would see \$104 million worth of construction by 2010.

After the meeting McGeachy said the "key issue is overcrowding". Silver Creek is over-capacity by more than 300 kids. Part of the overcrowding issue could be addressed by reevaluating school boundaries.

Part of the plan states the elimination of a high school in south Georgetown and instead includes building a multi-million-dollar addition to Georgetown District High School.

"It's not popular to move people around, we recognize that."

It also doesn't include the construction of a portapak to Silver Creek—which parents would like to see built—that would connect to the school as an addition rather than the stand-alone portables that currently exist on site.

The dilemma facing the board is the lack of a new impending funding formula that clearly outlines how new schools will be paid for. The province uses the formula to divvy up money for new school construction.

In February 2005 the province announced that boards no longer had to close schools to free up pupil spaces to qualify for new-school funding.

"The development of the proposed capital plan has been without the benefit of ministry guidance on school consolidation/closures and the development of a new student accommodation funding formula," stated a 21-page Halton public board staff report submitted to trustees last month. "When this information is made available it will influence the proposed capital plan."

Education Director Wayne Joudrie has said the education ministry is well aware of Halton's growing student population.

While it's not clear when a funding formula will be unveiled, he said the board hopes that Education Minister Gerard Kennedy can provide a short-term solution so Halton can address its accommodation pressures.

—By Jason Misner, special to the *Independent & Free Press*

# Fire victims wish to buy 40-ft. trailer

The McKenzie family who lost their home and most of their possessions in a fire in Glen Williams Sunday night is looking for a 40 ft., three-bedroom trailer to purchase.

The family's Mountainview Rd. home and belongings were fully insured and they would like to buy a trailer to put on their lot while their home is being rebuilt.

Anyone interested in selling their trailer is asked to call neighbours of the McKenzies, the Simpsons, at 905-877-7731.

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