

OPINION

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Phone: 905-873-0301
Fax: 905-873-0398

Catholic board has nothing to fear

We don't understand how a proposed joint administrative building— to be shared by Halton's two publicly-funded school boards, Halton Region staff and the Halton Regional Police Service— could possibly threaten Catholic education.

The proposed joint "supercentre" is a 540,000-square-foot multi-use campus capable of accommodating more than 1,900 staff from the four organizations.

The campus would cost about \$127 million to build, while saving taxpayers an estimated \$20 million over the cost of each partner building its own facility.

For the Catholic school board, the shared administrative building is the answer to an accommodation problem it has been facing for several years.

The board's administrative staff is currently spread across four locations in Burlington and Oakville on sites that are in need of either repairs or upgrades.

According to Giacomo Corbacio, superintendent of facilities, the proposed shared facility would save the Catholic board about \$6.2 million compared to building its own administrative headquarters.

Despite assurances from their own senior administrators, some Catholic board trustees— particularly Burlington's Bob Van de Vrande— have voiced concern that such a shared facility might somehow cause irreparable harm to Catholic education.

With all due respect, until Van de Vrande can show us how this innovative, cost-saving initiative is inherently harmful to Catholic education, we find it difficult to take his remarks as anything more than unfounded fear.

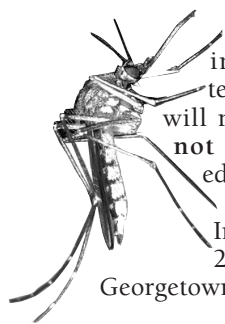
The Catholic school board is not exactly going into this shared arrangement blind.

Corbacio assured trustees that all concerns about the Catholic school board retaining its autonomy, identity and Catholicity would be addressed in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) all parties need to sign before the project moves forward.

Quoting a former U.S. president, we think Van de Vrande and the Catholic school board have "nothing to fear but fear itself."

Something bugging you?

Send us a letter!



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Mail or drop off:

Independent & Free Press,
280 Guelph St., Unit 29,
Georgetown, ON., L7G 4B1

E-mail:

jmcghie@independentfreepress.com

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Steve Nease



STAFF DIRECTORY

Publisher

Ken Nugent

Advertising director

Steve Foreman

(sforeman@independentfreepress.com)

Retail advertising manager

Cindi Campbell

(ccampbell@independentfreepress.com)

Managing editor

John McGhie

(jmcghie@independentfreepress.com)

Business manager

Carol Young

(cyoung@independentfreepress.com)

Distribution manager

Nancy Geissler

(distribution@independentfreepress.com)

ADVERTISING

Retail Sales:

Jennifer Spencer (jspencer@independentfreepress.com)

Adam Spinney (aspinney@independentfreepress.com)

Brendan Louth (blouth@independentfreepress.com)

Andrew Key (akey@independentfreepress.com)

Michelle Wan (features@independentfreepress.com)

Real estate:

Sue Spizziri (realestate@independentfreepress.com)

Classifieds:

Kristie Pells (classified@independentfreepress.com)

ACCOUNTING

Rose Marie Gauthier, Jennifer Christie, Michelle Wimmer

EDITORIAL

Cynthia Gamble: News editor

(cgamble@independentfreepress.com)

Ted Brown: Photography

(tbrown@independentfreepress.com)

Lisa Tallyn: Staff writer

(ltallyn@independentfreepress.com)

Eamonn Maher: Staff writer/sports

(emaher@independentfreepress.com)

PRODUCTION:

Mary Lou Foreman, Kevin Powell,

Shelli Harrison, Dolores Black, Debbie MacDougall

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ontario health minister rebuts MPP's column

Dear editor:

I was surprised to read Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh's recent column which appeared in your newspaper on June 14.

It's particularly odd to hear this Conservative MPP's take on our government's wait time strategy, when the government in which he served did not release any information at all on wait times. In fact, the previous government didn't even take the trouble to compile this vital information.

We are of the view that Ontarians deserve accurate, timely information on wait times. And we've taken steps to make this possible through our wait times website, which can be found at www.ontariowaittimes.com. This website— which recently registered its 1,000,000th hit— provides information on wait times broken down by hospital, by procedure and by Local Health Integration Network.

It's a vital tool for doctors, for patients and for their families.

Those who consult our website will find that it also breaks down wait time using average waits, median waits, AND "90% completed within" times.

Further, it provides information on actual, scientifically-based, common national benchmarks, as well as Ontario's more aggressive wait time targets.

The data on our website, collected from hospitals across the province, is also tremendously valuable for those of us who are working to improve health care in Ontario. When problems or

bottlenecks or identified, it allows us to take quick action to correct them — which is exactly what we're doing.

All in all, the results of our wait times strategy are tremendously encouraging. Wait times are down, for every procedure, in virtually every part of the province. In total, more than 3.3 million days of waiting time have

been eliminated.

The news on wait times is good, however we are not declaring victory. This government will continue to work hard to build on these results to the benefit of all Ontarians.

George Smitherman
Minister of Health and
Long-Term Care

New trade pact means bleaker future

Dear editor,

Letters to the editor provide the public a forum in which to express their personal opinions about a variety of topics and issues.

Rebutting with words like "fear-mongering" is an emotional reaction to an opinion. The problem with Canadians in general is their acceptance of the government's direction without accountability.

The government's (Brooke Grantham, spokesman for International Trade Canada) official response to the free trade agreement concerns is "any agreement signed between Canada and Korea will enhance the country's economic prosperity, not harm it." No details, no explanation, no specifics— just a statement. Is that a reason to look the other way and remain blissfully unaware of the long-term consequences?

The removal of the auto pact and the signing of two trade agreements (Canada and the U.S. and NAFTA) triggered the Canadian automotive industry's deterioration and the ongoing closing of Canadian assembly

plants (Chrysler/Windsor, GM/Oshawa, etc).

No one can deny the automotive industry's influence on Ontario's economic well-being. The auto industry is not the only industry at risk. The government's "level playing field" agenda does not translate into raising the standard of living of the less fortunate but the erosion of the Canada's middle class. As a result of global competition, concessions have become the norm. Our future is becoming bleaker with each new employment contract.

Cammie Peirce's (May 31) letter recognizes imminent danger to our safe cocoon called Georgetown while Darrel MacCrae's (June 7) mockery paints an unbelievable picture of a Third World nation called Canada.

Darrel, "my mind is not at rest". Canada's downward spiral is not only believable but has already begun.

I challenge Halton Hills' elected member of parliament to represent his constituents and not lead us down this dangerous path.

Mary-Lou Muck,
Georgetown