

Acton students ace literacy test

By Frances Niblock

The Grade 10 students at Acton High School enrolled in Academic English courses who wrote the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test in March showed the greatest overall improvement in the Halton board, with 93 per cent passing on their first attempt, compared to 86 per cent last year.

"We've been working hard at literacy and it shows," said a clearly pleased Acton High School principal Bert O'Hearn last Thursday as he reviewed the results of the mandatory Education Quality and Accountability Office (EAQO) test.

The test gauges reading comprehension and writing skills.

Ninety per cent of Halton students passed the test on their first attempt. The provincial average is 84 per cent.

Unlike the results at many Ontario school boards, the boys' scores at Acton High School do not lag behind the girls.

O'Hearn said a number of programs, including D.E.A.R. – drop everything and read – have helped.

"We've been working hard at getting some materials that boys would actually read – that's always the trick

– and that is part of the success," he said, adding the school also saw a big jump in test scores for students in the applied program – 79 per cent this time, up from 63 per cent last year.

Asked to explain the success, O'Hearn said the entire school, not just teachers in the English department, takes responsibility for literacy.

"We've intensified the focus on skills building in English courses and we have a reading assessment program that we're using in Grade 9 so we can have a look at how they are doing and tailor our classroom activities to try to address those things," O'Hearn said.

The school also staged a

literacy skills camp for students identified as needing additional help.

O'Hearn said they are not going to rest on their laurels. Work still needs to be done, including with kids who did not pass on their first attempt or did not take the test at all.

"Our scores are still kind of low in those areas."

"Sometimes there are attendance issues and if they are not here, all the strategies in the world aren't going to help them."

O'Hearn said for the new school year, they will introduce a new English literacy course and will expand the focus of skill-based instruction in Grade 9 and 10 English, moving away from the study of various pieces

of literature to do some intensive skills work.

Staff at Acton High are now going through the detailed test results to determine where more work is needed.

While the results are a snapshot of how last year's crop of Grade 10 students performed, O'Hearn said it is just one assessment of literacy skills.

Passing the test is a prerequisite for graduation in Ontario. Students who don't pass may rewrite the test or take a Grade 12 literacy course as an alternative way to show they have the literacy skills necessary to earn a diploma.

At the Halton Catholic District School Board, 89

per cent of first-time eligible students passed, a three per cent decrease from last year's results – the first time the Board's results have dropped since testing began in 2003.

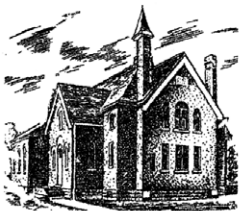
Board officials said they will address the issues with more intensive preparation for students in applied courses and a review of staffing to support students, among other things.

At Christ the King Secondary School in Georgetown, home to many Acton high school students, 88 per cent passed the literacy test on their first attempt.

For the first time, the EQAO has made the compete test – and the answers – available to the public at www.eqao.com

Knox Presbyterian Church

44 Main St. N P.O. Box 342
Acton, Ontario L7J 2M4
(519) 853-2360



In a world of change, come and worship the unchanging God.

Sunday 10:30 a.m.

July 1: CANADIAN, EH? (Luke 10:25-37)

July 8: DEAL OR NO DEAL: CONTRACTS AND COVENANTS (Psalm 132)

July 15: Rev. Joe Grey

July 22: Rev. Joe Grey

July 29: Rev. Joe Grey

Opposition to Heritage Register

Property rights and heritage preservation clashed at Town Council on Monday night as the owner of a historic property protested Council's approval of a Heritage Register listing properties to be protected.

McGibbon Hotel owner

George Markou is one of five property owners who rejected the Town's attempt to include them on the Register – the others are the Olde Hide House, MacKinnon Funeral Home, St. Stephen's Church in Hornby and the William P. Brown House in Banrockburn.

Marcoux said they purchased the 145-year-old hotel because of its beautiful façade and brick work and will continue to faithfully maintain and restore it, but will not accept anyone telling them what to do with their property.

He said the property owners opposed to the Heritage Registry don't think the amount of risk or exposure is worth any minimal benefit.

"Inclusion in the Register could affect the commercial uses of our own properties and tie the property own-

ers up in costly and inane wrangling with committees that have no vested interest in our properties," Markou said, criticizing the Town's public relations efforts on the Heritage Registry, warning that some property owners are "becoming more and more distrustful of the heritage process."

Markou said it is not fair that they must use their own money and resources if they want to oppose any heritage listing or designation, noting that "a criminal with a gun who committed heinous crime would be entitled to more resources and legal assistance..."

Bob MacKinnon, who operates MacKinnon Family Funeral Home in the former historic Sunderland Villa on Mill Street – built in 1869 – refuses to be on the Heritage Register because it could impact on his livelihood.

He said Heritage Halton Hills is more than welcome to put a plaque on the building, but he won't agree to any encumbrances on title resulting from any listing or designation.

"Everyone knows this is an historic building – I just don't want it encumbered and I just don't want the negative parts that come with being part of a historic property," MacKinnon said on Monday, adding that includes delays of up to one year in approvals for changes or additions to the building.

He and wife Margaret earned the Civic Pride Award from the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce this year for their loving care and restoration of the building, originally constructed as a convalescence home for WWI veterans.

"No one, bar no one has done as much to restore that building as we have, but it is my home, it is my business and I'm not coming on bended knee to anyone to ask if I can make alterations to my business," MacKinnon said.

Proponents of the Registry, with 20 properties designed under the Ontario Heritage Act, and 26 others non-designated properties with heritage value or interest, is a significant first step to recognizing that the heritage of Halton Hills is important to its citizens.

In an earlier presentation to Council, Heritage Halton Hills chair Mark Rowe suggested that owners of properties on the Heritage Registry been seen as "caretakers."

A Message From

Michael Chong, M.P.
Wellington-Halton Hills

On July 1st, 1867, Canada became a nation. Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald and Georges Etienne Cartier united the three colonies of Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to form a new nation called the "Dominion of Canada".

This July 1st celebrate the 140th birthday of this wonderful country we all call home.

Happy Canada Day!  Happy Dominion Day!
1-866-878-5556



Acton BIA presents...

CANADA DAY

CONCERTS IN THE PARK

5PM SUNDAY JULY 1
AT PROSPECT PARK ACTON

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE
ROTARY CLUB BAND SHELL

EVERYBODY DANCE CLUB - Robert Little School

CAIN & ABEL - local teen band

THE BLUESERS - 5 pce. blues band from Halton Hills area

Canada Day Cake
compliments of Acton Sobeys

AMAZING FIREWORKS DISPLAY AT DUSK

Acton Firefighters Association

BRING A LAWN CHAIR & ENJOY THE CONCERT

ROTARY FISHING DERBY - 7:00 A.M. TO 1:00 P.M.
REGISTRATION AT THE BOAT HOUSE IN PROSPECT PARK
STARTING AT 7:00 A.M. FREE TO YOUTH FROM 17 AND UNDER