

Ease load on teachers

Cut pupil-teacher ratio in elementary schools

By Bob Burt

About 27 teachers will be added to the elementary school system in Halton. That action comes about as a change in the teacher-pupil ratio which has a direct bearing on class size. The move was made by Halton Board of Education to ease an ever-increasing load on the teaching staff.

While members supported a resolution by vice-chairman Judy Alexander to reduce the ratio at the elementary level, a similar motion sponsored by chairman Bill Priestner applying to the secondary school level (high schools) was defeated on a 10-7 vote.

The issue has been a controversial one in Halton and generally throughout Ontario. In her recommendation Mrs. Alexander noted the reduction of the ratio from 25.1 to one down to 24.5 to one would ease some of the very basic problems in elementary schools of all sizes.

Greater expectations

She explained teachers were being asked to fulfill greater expectations now with regard to individualization, co-operative planning, team teaching and other innovations.

Mrs. Alexander noted the median class size in elementary schools had climbed from 28.7 in 1970 to 29.7 in 1974.

The resolution has the effect of hiring an additional 27 teachers at the elementary level at an estimated cost of \$270,000 or an additional nine dollars per pupil per year.

Mrs. Alexander noted the extra staff would provide a little more flexibility for principals to meet the special needs in the school. She noted the choice of where to apply the additional help will be up to principals.

"One school might reduce class size in the primary division, another might obtain remedial help or a full time librarian," she suggested.

In advancing his argument for cutting the ratio at the secondary level, Priestner said the cost would be less than \$7 per pupil or less than .05 mills. "The effect on staff morale would be significant at little increase in cost."

Guidelines established

The Halton Board has used as a guideline ratios of 18.5 to

one in the conventional high schools and 13.5 to one in the special education classes.

That averages out to 18.01 to one. Priestner was asking that average be dropped to 17.75 to one.

While the guideline in Halton's policy sets the current ratio at 18.01 to one, the actual ratio in practice now is 17.93.

In simple terms that means the class size in Halton schools is less than what policy calls for right now. This has occurred through misjudgement of enrolment and subsequent over-staffing. As a result of the board action, class sizes will go up this year if enrolment predictions are accurate.

Commenting on the issue, members of Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation expressed disappointment at the board's rejection of the suggestion.

One representative noted the suggestion had come to the board without any teacher pressure. While it wasn't directly stated, there were indications from some trustees that the subject will be reintroduced at a later date. The vote went 10-7 with two trustees absent.

Opposition seeks value

Opposition to the Priestner motion centred around the idea that it was politically motivated and the educational value had not been outlined. Trustees expressed doubts about how much staff morale would be boosted if the motion passed.

In both resolutions staff morale was rated as a motivating factor. There have been suggestions from inside and outside that teacher morale isn't as high as it should be.



THE PIGEON POPULATION in Milton is concentrated in the downtown core area and flocks of the birds can be spotted daily on the roof of the town hall (above) and post office. Proximity of the local feed mill may have something to do with their presence.

Campbellville Kernals enjoy lasagna meal

Eleven members of the Campbellville Kernals 4-H club met March 12 at the Masonic Hall. Pamphlets on cooking with cereals were distributed.

Mrs. Mahon lead the discussion on different breads and the types of flour used. Apple coffee cake and bran muffins were made and enjoyed at the end of the meeting.

The meeting of March 26 was a dinner meeting with the girls making lasagna. Mrs. Inglis and Mrs. Mahon led the preparation of the lasagna and Susan Ranger, Susan Howard and Cathy Howard made peanut crispie cookies. Special guest for the meeting was Mrs. Walfsey.

Achievement Day will be held at Ontario School for the Deaf on May 4. An exhibit, Three Ways with Rice, will be set up by the group.

After a discussion on pasta by Mrs. Inglis everyone

enjoyed the dinner. Fresh rolls and a salad as well as jello were supplied by the leaders to make the meal complete.

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Ottawa Report

by Terry O'Connor

"Our computer knows only Swahili."
"Unripe mangoes cause upset tummies."

"The new sleeping sickness—but, O tse-tse fly, where is thy sting?"

Ottawa's year-round 12 inches of snow has finally gotten to me, you say. Not so. (I don't think). And no, these are not punchlines from the latest round of jokes on the Ottawa cocktail circuit. They are but three of dozens of sub-chapter headings in the recently tabled Third Annual Report of the Commissioner of Official Languages. No kidding.

The report is a thick (1,068 pages) red-jacketed tome prepared, in both official languages naturally, by our Official Languages Commissioner, Keith Spicer. "Pursuant to section 34 (1) of the Official Languages Act."

Foot in mouth
It is a highly personalized, extremely well and humorously written account of the country's progress, or sometimes lack of it, toward implementation of the Official Languages Act. Mr. Spicer certainly is not your ordinary garden-variety Ottawa bureaucrat. He has a flair for putting his foot in his mouth, e.g. his "Westmount Rhodesians" remark and for very frankly speaking his mind and doing his job the way he, and no one else, thinks it should be done. Whereas the annual reports of most government departments and agencies are brief, boring ef-

forts written by the same folks who bring you our Income Tax Act, Spicer's report makes genuinely interesting reading.

He describes his function as Commissioner as one of "constructive meddling". His is a role of monitoring the various federal government departments, agencies, boards, etc. across the country and of assessing their efforts to provide services to each member of the public in the official language of his or her choice.

He details with a great deal of sensitivity the pressures on civil servants to acquire second language training and how these pressures result in fears for job security. He outlines numerous public complaints of both English and French speaking members of the public about unfair or discriminatory treatment of their language rights—everything from a complaint about a National Arts Centre opera program printed in French only, to the long-time French speaking civil servant in Quebec City who was refused advancement because he lacked sufficient English.

Smooth way
Most important, of course, are his recommendations for smoothing the way, fairly and equitably to both civil servant and public, toward effective operation of the principles of bilingualism.

Given the emotional and controversial nature of the concept of bilingualism, this is no mean feat. But Spicer's

investigation of complaints and proposed solutions as well as departmental programs for implementation, inevitably display a cool, compromising, old-fashioned horse-sense approach.

I don't believe, as some people fear, that anyone is trying to cram French or English down anyone else's throat. We are a bilingual country, officially so, as of 1969. We should sincerely work together toward protecting the language and cultural rights of each other.

Keith Spicer is one civil servant, in a tough job, admirably performing a service for all of us. I recommend his report. Anyone wanting a copy, please contact me.

If you have a problem, idea, comment, criticism or simply wish to get in touch with me, please stop by my riding office at 347 Kerr Street, Oakville, or in Acton telephone Gail Maltby, 853-0768. In Georgetown call Fran Baines at 877-6475.

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Board pressed to cut budget

Halton County Board of Education's Finance Committee remains under pressure from some trustees to affect reductions in the proposed budget of \$52,166,693. The budget as it stands represents an increase of 11.56 per cent or \$5,406,787.

Finance chairman Tom Watson of Acton told the board at a meeting Thursday that the general legislative grant structure for the year had not been announced and has caused a delay in the final presentation of the budget. He said he hoped to present a budget for final approval at the board's meeting April 11.

Watson said his committee met last week. He noted this was the first year the board had not set aside a sum towards the reserve fund.

He said the committee had deferred cuts until the grant structure was known. He indicated cuts might be made by curtailing maintenance, delaying selective capital projects, cutting back on some academic programs and transferring funds from the capital reserve fund.

Final presentation

Burlington trustee Tony Goodyear said he'd await final presentation before presenting amendments. He had earlier called for cuts of five per cent.

Oakville trustee Dick Goodin claimed he had found over 50 places where the budget could and should be cut.

Grant easement for town park

The Town of Milton has been granted an easement over lands owned at Brookville School by Halton Board of Education.

The Board agreed to grant the easement subject to the town relocating hydro poles, covering a ditch and establishing a road to the other property, and provided the school could use the town land as a playground during school hours.

The town requested the easement in order to get to town-leas lands behind Brookville School which the town wants to develop into a park.

The town has shown interest in a lease with Brookville Farms Ltd. and possibly the eventual purchase of the property for a park.

Woman is principal

Barbara Rennick of Georgetown has been appointed as a principal within the Halton Board of Education system.

Mrs. Rennick taught in Stewarttown and Pineview schools in Esquesing before being named vice-principal at Robert Little School in Acton last year.

She has been in Halton County since 1968 and has been involved in a wide variety of committees and study groups.

Sponsors courses

Leadership courses will be supported to the extent of \$4,800 by Halton Board of Education, the board agreed during its regular meeting Thursday.

The funds will go towards special speakers for teachers' groups, a leadership workshop and study group which will probe into several topics of interest in the education field.

Themes suggested for this year's study group will include organization and structure of Halton, role of the board, differentiated staffing, integrated programs, early childhood education and individualization of instruction.

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243 Main St. N., Acton 853-0320

Name road Pitfield

Milton's Planning and Development Committee has recommended naming a road Pitfield Rd.

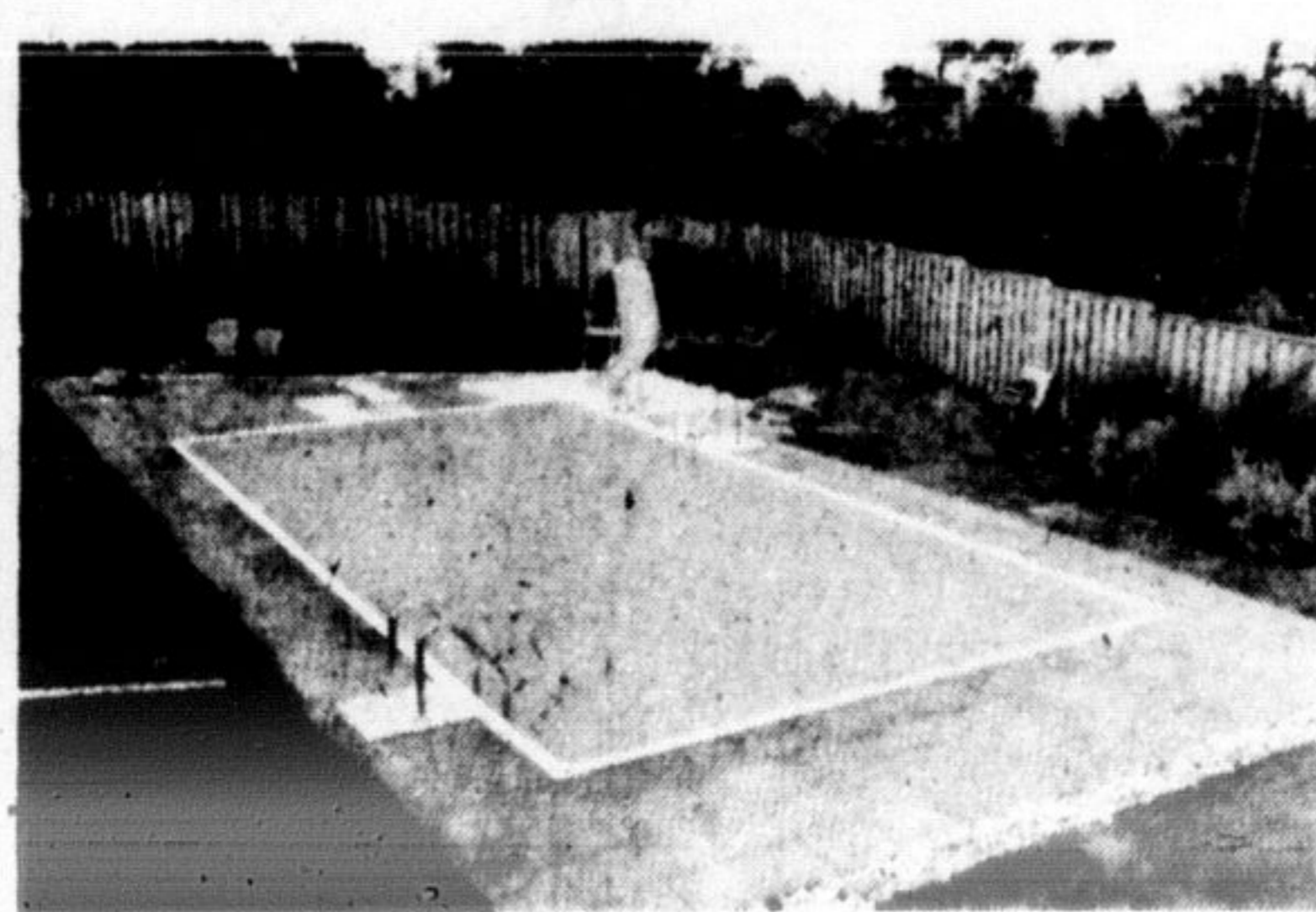
The road is a short road leading to a condominium development on Ontario St. The development is being constructed by a firm with the same name.

Newcomers Club

Please disregard last week's Welcome Wagon Newcomers Club ad.

Watch for further notices of future Newcomers Club meetings.

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