

Kingsbury says high school focus is on Burlington

By **TIM WHITNELL**
Special to The Champion

Elementary schools have already come under close scrutiny in Halton, with two of them due to close in 1998, and now public school board officials will turn their attention to high schools.

Trustees decided at last week's board meeting to look into the cost of preparing a report about an in-depth review of secondary school facilities throughout the region.

Exactly which schools should be examined was the focus of debate. Burlington Trustee Diane Leblovic introduced the original motion with an eye to all 17 high schools in Halton being looked at in terms of their student capacity, enrolment, program viability and the physical condition of each.

Ms Leblovic's rationale for the review was the realization that the fifth year of high school will be discontinued in the near future and the full impact of other impending secondary school reforms from the provincial government is not known.

Milton Trustee Tim Kingsbury disagreed with the direction of the secondary school review, stating it should focus on Burlington only. He said, at about 70 per cent capacity, some high schools should be closed in 1998.

Otherwise, he said, he believes the Mike Harris government will penalize the board for operating under student capacity by taking away more of its education funding.

Oakville Trustee Penny Siebert concurred.

"We can dance all around the issue but the fact is you have about 3,000 too many pupil places in Burlington. That's where the problem is," said Ms Siebert, who has suggested in the past the viability of Aldershot High School in the city's west end be re-evaluated.

Burlington Trustee Sandy Van Harten didn't like the idea of a study with such a narrow focus. "I don't think it's fair to target Burlington," she said, noting demographics change over years.

Ms Van Harten said there are "pockets" in north and east Halton, outside Burlington, where changes could be made to high schools. "Let's examine everybody's navel at the same time," she said.

To which a laughing Oakville Trustee Linda Lane said, "But you'll find the lint is in Burlington."

Oakville Trustee and vice-chair Debbie Marklew didn't agree with the emphasis on Burlington. "I won't support this motion for one very big reason — White Oaks Secondary School. My school has 15 portables. We've needed a renovation for 12 years. This motion doesn't solve my problem."

The Burlington-only secondary school review lost an 8-7 vote. An amended motion that removed the Burlington focus, leaving it as a general overview of all secondary schools in Halton, was eventually passed. No time frame was attached to the call for a high school study.

Halton District School Board



Tim Kingsbury

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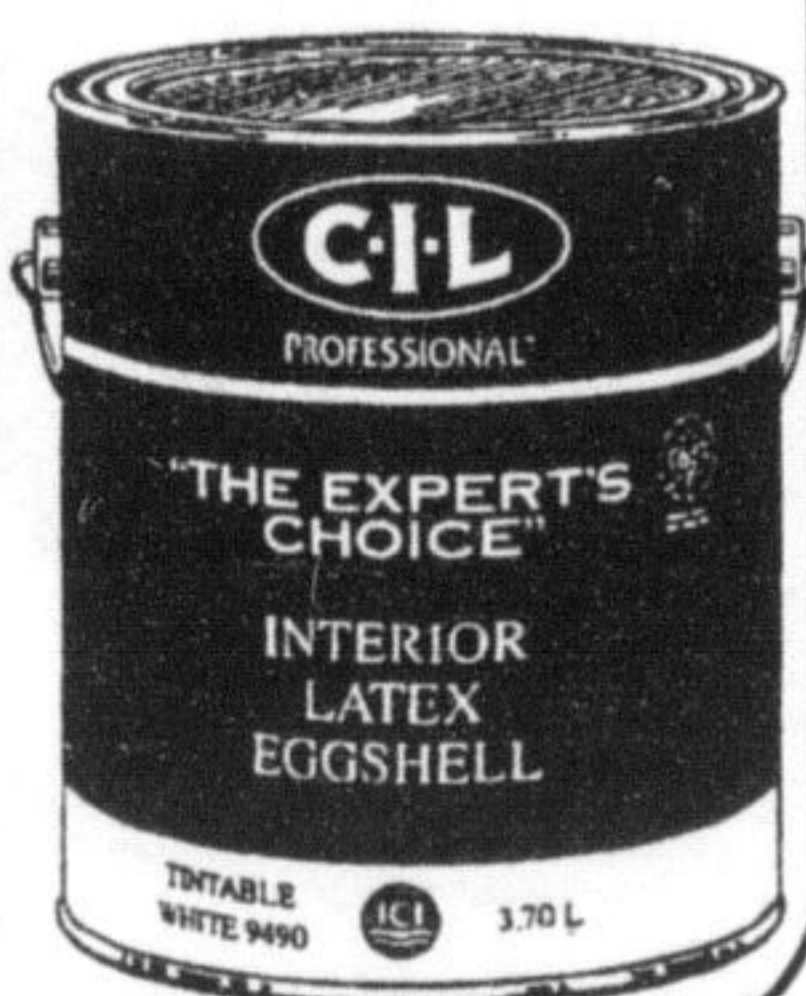
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