

# School portable repairs are winding down

By DENNIS SMITH

Special to The Champion

The Halton District School Board may be turning the corner in its struggle to clean up mould from portables.

Thirty-eight school portables were to re-open last Friday (Nov. 6), education director Dusty Papke told a recent board meeting.

"This is a good thing. We're getting movement on the opening of portables," said Mr. Papke. "They'll be getting final clearance."

The board might even complete the portable cleanups, referred to as remediations, before the year's end.

After the meeting, facility services superintendent Gerry Cullen said cleanups at multiple portable sites (three or more buildings) will conclude shortly. Work should proceed more quickly at sites with just one or two portables, he noted.

Cleanups were required after the potentially toxic stachybotrys atra mould, part of the fungus family, was discovered about a year ago at Halton public school portables. It may cause or amplify allergic reactions or asthma in some children, and possibly induce flu-like symptoms like nausea and headaches.

Mr. Papke and Mr. Cullen estimated there'll be 52 portables left to clean up after the recent re-openings.

Portables were scheduled to be re-opened last week at M. M. Robinson High School and Sir Ernest MacMillan in Burlington, Sam Sherratt and W.I. Dick schools in Milton.

The board has 189 portables altogether

## Changes in procedure

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system that existed at that time.

"I'm saying the broader system failed the child," said Mr. Day. "The child fell through the cracks."

When asked if a case like the one involving the Acton child could happen again Ms Chan said "you always hope not. We have certainly strengthened the system."

In addition to procedure changes the Region has fully integrated its early childhood programs with the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program. Under that program all infants are screened at birth to see if there are any early developmental or social risk factors.

Components of the program include a single point of access to services for families and children, professional visits to the home soon after the birth, co-ordination of services for the child and family involving all professionals and the provision of long-term mentoring skills by lay home visitors.

"This program coupled with the internal procedures we have instituted, should give us much better tools to support all families and to identify a child neglect and intervene earlier," said Halton's Medical Officer of Health Robert Nosal.

Following the court case in July Halton Regional Police sought an opinion from the Halton Crown attorney's office on whether there was justification for initiating a police investigation into the CAS staff members' actions in the case. Det. Sgt. Jackie Gordon declined to comment on the status of the review but said police will notify the press of their decision whether or not they intend to "investigate the professional agencies and persons involved in the case." She couldn't say when that decision is expected.

and plans to close 57 permanently.

But the board approved a recommendation recently that no more portables be destroyed until protocol is established for demolishing contaminated portables.

Also approved were two recommendations involving the ad-hoc committee on portable moulds.

"The demolitions will simply wait and there will be fences around demolished portables.

The committee will make a presentation

to the accommodation management committee on the need for accelerated reduction of the board's portable inventory.

The mould committee will also add building department representatives from each municipality to serve as non-voting resource members.

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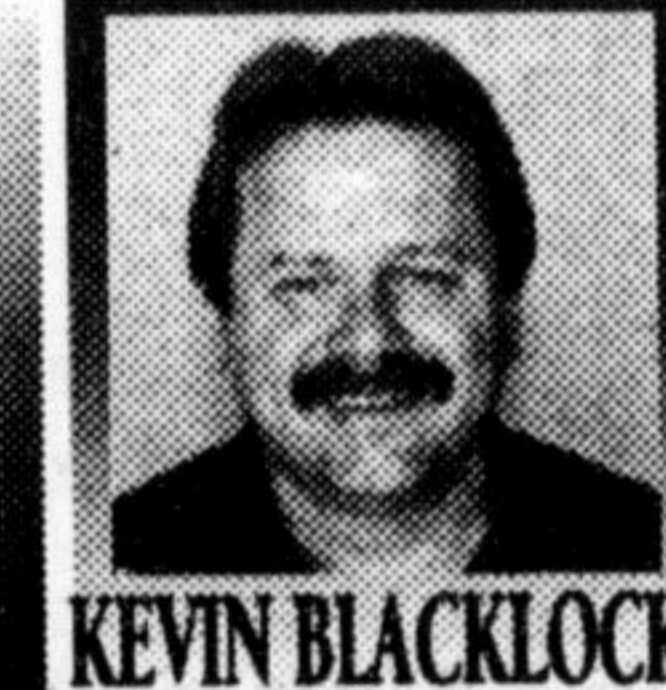
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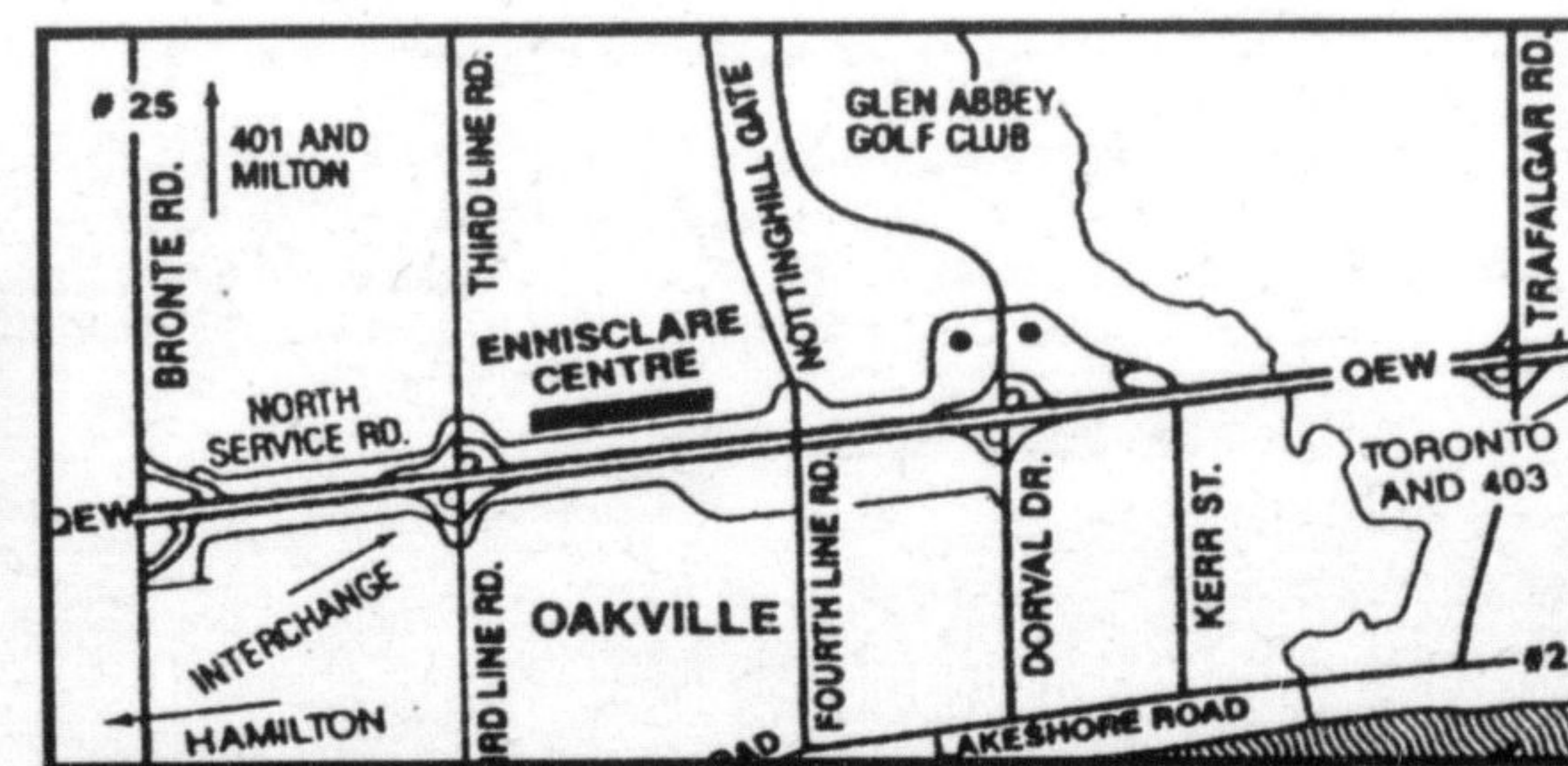
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