

School board to give Harris heck over 2000 book

Trustees say \$2.2 million Province spent on 'My Ontario' millennium book could have been put to better use.

'My Ontario' has been a millennium mistake instead of a memento as far as Halton District School Board trustees are concerned.

The board voted 6-4 last week to inform Ontario Premier Mike Harris the souvenir book was an improper use of public funds.

The book, which cost \$2.2 million, features mini-essays, colourful art and open pages for journal writing.

But many people were upset when copies were issued to schools last month.

"The money could have been spent more constructively on instructional assistants or books for courses," said Burlington trustee David Abbott.

"They should have left it to school boards, schools and school communities to do millenni-

um projects."

Mr. Abbott, who proposed sending the letter, said it would serve as a "heads-up" to the provincial government.

"We're saying 'look before you leap' before spending money on someone's pet project," he said.

"Taking a brief second and passing this by student governments might have made a difference."

Issued by the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, the book was especially upsetting to secondary school students who thought it was geared mainly toward younger children.

Mike McVety thanked the board on behalf of his high school (E.C. Drury) for writing the letter.

"There have been a lot of complaints about the millennium book from the student council and students," said the student trustee.

"Hundreds of books were left in the office and thrown out. At least half the school is against it."

Oakville trustee Peter Petrusich said younger students don't like the 'My Ontario' book, either.

"My own three kids are 7, 9 and 10 and they were saying 'What is this?' and using words like useless and dumb."

He said the money should have been spent on

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DAVID ABBOTT

roads or education and he didn't mind criticizing the provincial government about it.

No trustees supported the book, but some cautioned against condemning the province over it.

David Bird noted the books were not issued by

the Ministry of Education.

"It doesn't impact education spending — it comes from the overall budget," said the Burlington trustee.

"Everyone in Ontario should say what they're thinking, not the school boards."

Sheila Flook said the Province produced the souvenir book with good intentions.

She added the board spends about \$13,000 itself doing good things for its students.

"The government's intent was to do something nice for students," said the Burlington trustee.

"We could be doing the same thing ourselves, so how can we criticize the government?"

Provincial spokesperson Rui Brum said a study showed many people wanted contributions from children to mark the millennium.

He said the book project attracted more than 100,000 submissions and an additional 15,000 copies were requested.

Asner movie to air Saturday

It's show time!

Common Ground, the movie partly filmed in Milton last year, is set to air Saturday at 8 p.m.

But it will only be available for viewing to those who have satellite television.

The movie will air on American channel Showtime.

The film features former Home

Improvement star Jonathan Taylor Thomas as well as Ed Asner (Lou Grant), Brittany Murphy (Drop Dead Gorgeous) and Steven Weber (Wings).

The movie tells the story of three generations living in a small, New England community.

There's no word on when the movie will air on Canadian cable.

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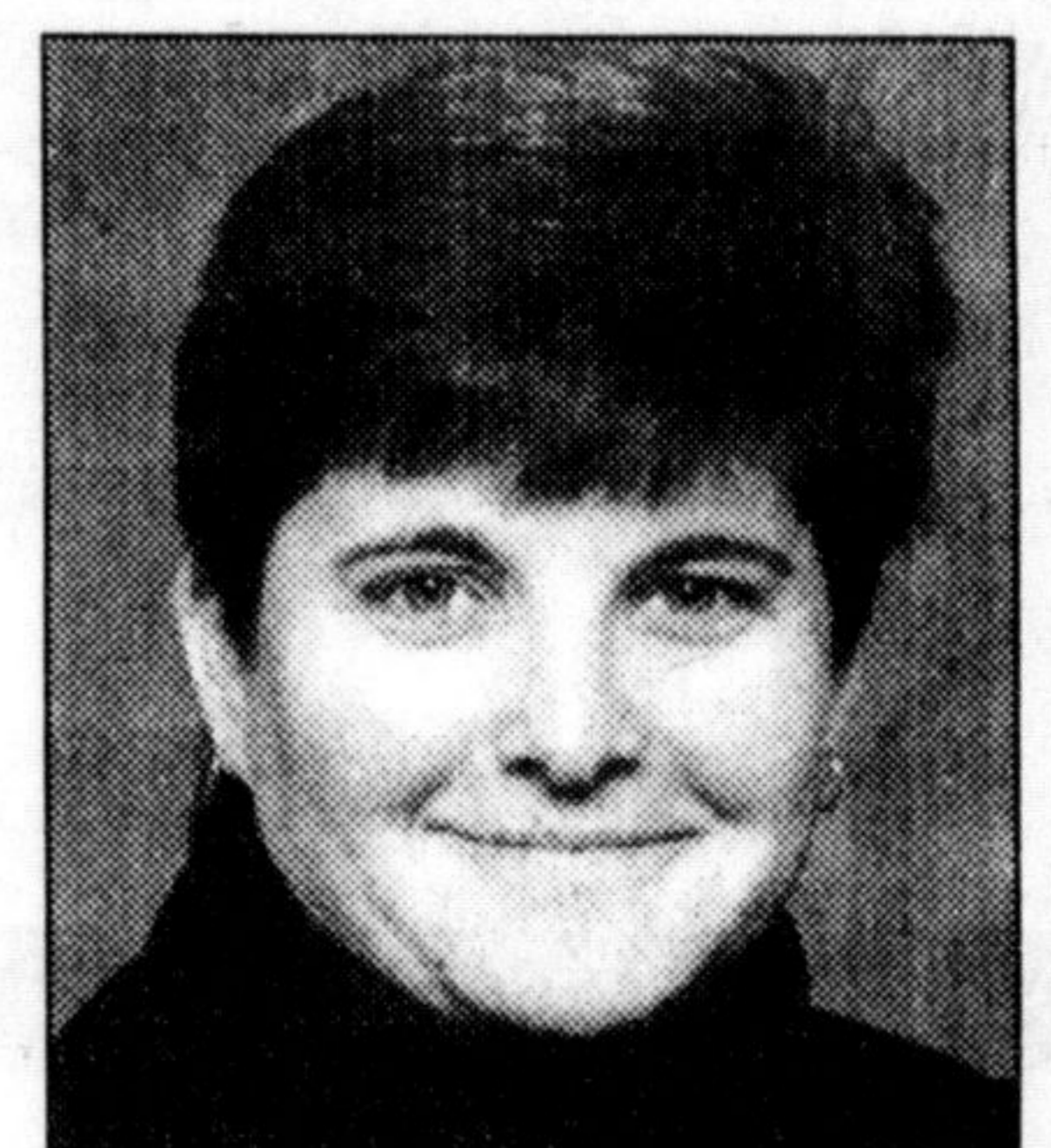
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