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Timing must be right: director

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He said the timing would allow the required three months for school closure committee work, then a final decision June 20 on potential closure of Fairfield.

Delaying closure until fall means the board couldn't borrow money in time to build a new school in 2001, said Mr. Papke.

"Money lenders want to see that the board is willing to deal with its surplus space," he said.

Halton's board has about 5,000 excess school spaces which must be eliminated to obtain provincial funding for new schools. Regardless of the plan involved, schools must be closed if the surplus is to be reduced, said Mr. Papke.

He noted Ms Flook's April 5 motion would push the Fairfield closure decision to July 5. This could be done, but trustees would have to make the summertime meeting date, he said.

Burlington trustee David Abbott favoured staying with the March 22 date.

"We've been talking about Fairfield for the last two, three or four years," noted Burlington trustee David Abbott. "The parents at the school know the procedures, know the process and know what they're fighting for."

Here are the other timelines approved, based on the board adopting the capital plan on March 22:

March 23 -- A school closure study committee for Fairfield is established and other applicable capital plan resolutions adopted;

March 29 -- The board meets with all school council chairs regarding the plan;

June 1 -- School closure committees are established for Martin Street, Champlain, Mountain Gardens and Pauline Johnson elementary schools, plus Central and General Brock high schools;

June 20 -- The board makes a final decision concerning potential closure of Fairfield for June 2001;

Sept. 6 -- Final decisions are made by the board about construction of a new elementary school (River Oaks is the suggested site) and starting a retrofit of Charles Best elementary school for junior kindergarten;

Nov. 15 -- The board will make final decisions concerning potential closure of Martin Street, Champlain, Mountain Gardens and Pauline Johnson elementary schools, plus Central and Brock high schools.

Milton gets three new officers

Halton Regional Police welcomed 17 new officers to the service during a swearing-in ceremony February 18.

Among them were David Constantini, Paul Kapshey and Cole Repta, who have been assigned to uniformed patrol in Milton.

The ceremony, presided over by Justice William Phillips, took place at the Regional Council Chambers in Oakville.

Family, friends, police and civilian members of the service witnessed the event.

Halton District School Board

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS about the

STRATEGIC CAPITAL PLAN ("CN Watson Report")

- Q.** What is a Strategic Capital Plan? Why does the Board need one?
A. A strategic capital plan is a long-range look at student accommodation needs throughout the entire region of Halton. The Ministry of Education requires all District School Boards to file a capital plan by October 2000.
- Q.** How was the CN Watson Strategic Capital Plan developed?
A. CN Watson and Associates Ltd. reviewed the accommodation needs throughout the entire region of Halton. Demographic trends, future growth and developments, sustainable student enrolment levels during the next 20 years, projected enrolment, and the Board's "surplus space" were considered in the development of the plan. In developing recommendations for the next twenty years, (including school closures and new school construction), CN Watson also considered criteria such as distribution of buildings within each review area, age of facility, date of recent major upgrades, and amount of excess space in each area.
- Q.** Do we need new schools?
A. Yes. The CN Watson plan says approximately 75,000 new dwelling units will be built within the Halton region during the next twenty years. This breaks down to 43% in Oakville, 25% in Milton, 22% in Burlington and 10% in Halton Hills. Projected enrolment in the elementary panel forecasts an increase of 78%, and a 59% increase in the secondary panel. This means during the next 20 years, the Board will see a region-wide increase to approximately 48,894 elementary students (from 26,105 students) and 23,732 secondary students (from 14,958), almost doubling the existing student population. The plan suggests the construction of 42 new schools (34 elementary and 8 secondary) during the next 20 years to deal with "catch-up" needs as well as "growth-related" accommodation needs. Approximately 18% of the cost of the plan, or \$72 million, relates to the Board's "catch-up" needs to alleviate crowding in existing schools.
- Q.** Why are school closures being considered?
A. The Ministry of Education's "Ministry Rated Capacity" formula states that region-wide, the Board presently has too many spaces for the number of students in its system. Overall, there are 1761 surplus spaces in the elementary panel, and 3588 surplus spaces in the secondary panel. While there is a region-wide surplus, some schools are presently at or exceeding their capacity, while other schools are under-utilized. Under the Ministry's funding formula, there are two key points to note. The Board has a specific amount of money to only operate spaces for the students it has. If the Board pays for more spaces than required (ie: if a school is operating under-capacity), this takes away from the funding available for those other schools which may be fully utilized. The second point to note is the Ministry's method of generating funding for new schools. The Ministry will only provide pupil accommodation grants (PAGs) to Boards to build new schools when a Board's enrolment exceeds the amount of space it has. In order for Halton to address its "catch-up" needs as well as prepare for new growth, closures are necessary. The CN Watson plan suggests the closure of 14 schools (11 elementary and 4 secondary) as well as the disposal of 9 vacant surplus properties during the next 20 years. This will generate funds necessary to build new schools.
- Q.** What else is addressed in the report?
A. The report recommends a Junior Kindergarten program. Increased enrolment due to JK would generate more than \$53.5 million in grants for new pupil spaces.
- Q.** When will trustees vote on the report? Will school closures be dealt with separately?
A. Trustees have approved a timeline which will see the CN Watson report come to the Board for decision on March 22nd. This vote will only be on the plan itself, as an indication of intent of the Board's direction in dealing with accommodation issues. The Board has designated March 8th to hear registered delegations, regarding the CN Watson report. A complete list of dates can be found on the Board's website at: www1.haltonbe.on.ca School closures, as outlined in the plan, will be voted on separately. According to Board Policy 7000-21: School Accommodation, a "School Closure Study Committee" will be established for each school designated for closure. Each of these Study Committees will be involved in an extensive consultation process with staff, students, parents and community in order to best address student needs, and should a transition to another school be necessary, to do so with the least possible disruption to students.
- Q.** How can I find out more information?
A. Contact your local trustee, or attend any public session of the Board and/or Committee meetings, held at the JW Singleton Centre, Burlington. Trustee and meeting information are on the Halton District School Board website at: www1.haltonbe.on.ca

J.W. Singleton Education Centre, 2050 Guelph Line, Burlington ON L7R 3Z2
(905) 335-3663 (905) 842-3014 (905) 878-8451 FAX: (905) 335-9802

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