

Public school board hot over tax credits for private schools

By DENNIS SMITH

Special to The Champion

Tax credits for private schools have drawn fire from the Halton District School Board.

Trustees voted recently to express their dismay with a new \$3,500 provincial tax credit for pupils attending private schools.

Milton trustee Erica Andrew proposed the board indicate its disapproval to the provincial government.

"The initiative seriously undermines public education," she noted.

Educators have estimated the move will divert \$300 million in funding from public education. Ms Andrew said the \$3,500 private school tax credit saves the Province money because it costs \$5,600 to educate the child in a public school.

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ERICA ANDREW

"This will earn the government a profit and induce parents to go to the private system," she said.

Quoting in part from an editorial, the trustee noted public education "is the rising tide that lifts all boats."

The public system offers help to any student, noted Ms Andrew.

"Public schools accept whoever arrives," she said. "Private schools do not take troublemakers, or students with special needs or low

marks."

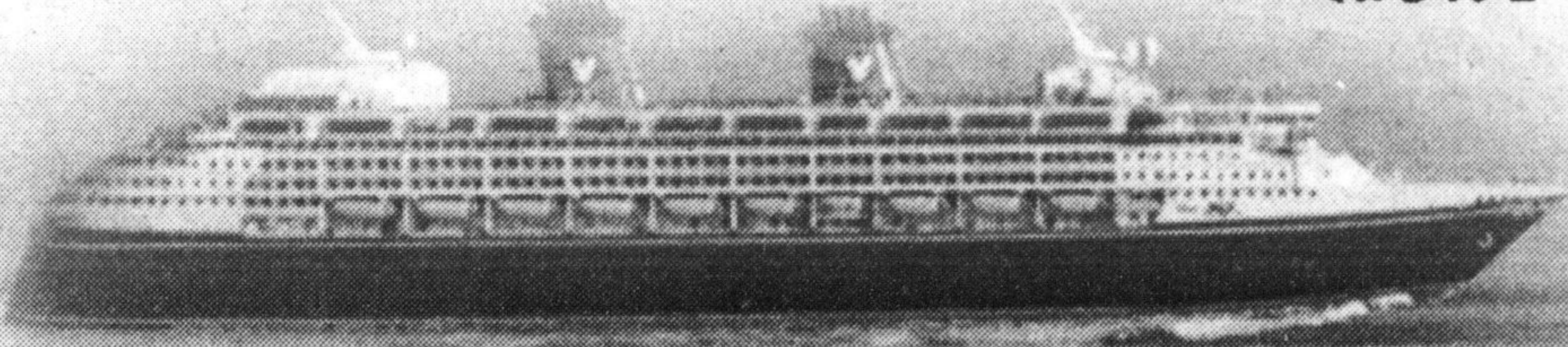
And if a student does cause trouble in a private school, they can be expelled, said Ms Andrew.

The trustee said Premier Mike Harris often refers to the quality of the workforce and quality of life in Ontario. "He is bragging about graduates of the public system produced in the years prior to his coming into power."

The provincial tax credit, for fees paid to independent schools, will be phased in over five years.

Janet Ecker said recently her education ministry has undertaken numerous public school reforms and has increased the system's funding by \$360 million for 2001/2002. "But just as we are supporting and encouraging parental involvement and choice within the public system, we also respect the choice made by those parents who choose to educate their children in an independent school."

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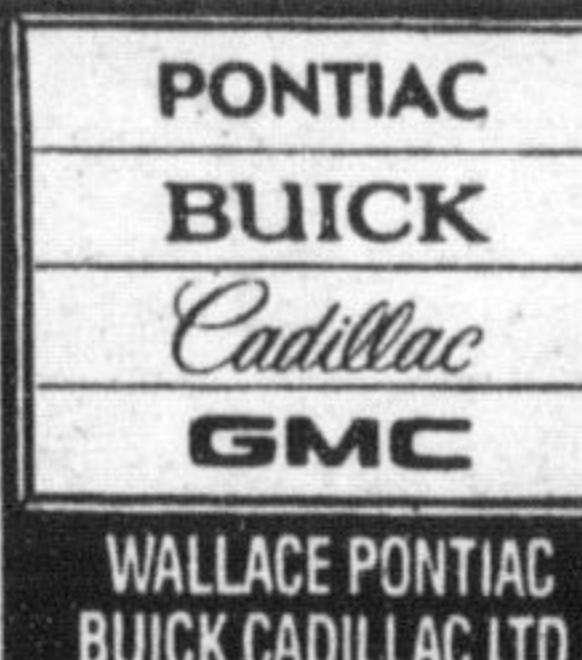
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