

Province's teacher testing creating more uncertainty in profession, say unions

BY TIM WHITNELL

Special to The Champion

Parent and student input on teacher performance and a new qualifying test for incoming instructors are creating even more anxiety and uncertainty in the profession, say the heads of some teacher unions in Halton.

Last week the Ontario government introduced new measures for the performance appraisal of teachers. There will be more intensive involvement of parents and students in the overall evaluation of a teacher's ability. There will be also a mandatory teacher qualifying test for those who have just completed teachers' college.

Halton's public elementary teachers federation president, Kathy Clarke, is concerned about what form both new endeavors will take and the impact they'll have on teachers and their ability to work.

"It's a political thing," she said, implying the Ontario government is trying to influence the electorate. "Let's vote for the Conservatives because they are giving us the right to evaluate teachers. I think the majority of parents are satisfied with their teacher and what happens within the boundary of the classroom.

"We advise teachers that you have to meet with parents (occasionally or when necessary). You can't teach in isolation. I'm not denying a parent's right into having input, but you can't have parents filling out an evaluation form. You might have a wonderful teacher and one kid who might not like him or her and that could leave a black mark that could stay on their record or even lead to their dismissal."

Halton public secondary school teachers union head Joe Harwood has concerns similar to those of Ms Clarke.

"Do they want an evaluation of every teacher by every kid in the classroom? What weight will it carry? It makes it more like a popularity contest. We want a qualified person (doing the evaluation) oth-

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KATHY CLARKE

erwise it becomes a perception game," said Mr. Harwood, noting teachers respond to parental concerns on an ongoing basis.

The Ministry of Education says parents of students in all grades and students in Grade 11, 12 and OAC will have input in teacher appraisal in areas like teacher/parent and teacher/student communication and a teacher's ability to promote learning.

Just how the evaluation will be done and what weight it will carry in a teacher's overall job appraisal isn't known. The ministry is still working out the details.

"It will not be a mark system so to speak," said Rob Savage, spokesperson for the Education Ministry. "It (framework) is currently being developed. It'll basically be a survey provided to parents and (senior) students."

Mr. Savage said the student/parent teacher performance appraisal will start with the next school year and likely occur every two to three years. He wasn't sure how or when the forms would be distributed.

"It is important to remember this is just one component of teacher evaluation — principals and vice-principals are involved as well," said Mr. Savage.

Halton's teacher union chiefs emphasize that teachers, vice-principals and principals have always received ongoing constructive criticism of their work.

"Your supervisor needs to evaluate how you do your job — that's what the principals do," Ms Clarke

said of teacher performance.

She noted there's already in place province-wide a two-part expectation relating to the appraisals of teachers, vice-principals and principals.

There's annual co-op supervision where a principal meets during the year with each teacher in his or her school. They have a one-on-one at the start of the school year to discuss goal setting and meet throughout the year, as needed, to assess and re-evaluate progress or the lack of it.

The formal evaluation process occurs every three years, said Ms Clarke. The Province requires new teachers and those who have moved to another board to be appraised twice in each of the first two years.

Ms Clarke said the evaluation process is like a professional audit entailing the presence of the principal in a teacher's class several times during the school year. The analysis of what they observe is kept on file for later review.

Those teachers who need guidance or help to improve their skills are offered it by the principal themselves or through professional development opportunities. Ms Clarke admitted some can't adapt. "We don't support incompetent teachers. We support a process (to make them better). (Some) teachers are terminated, even if the public doesn't believe it."

As for new teachers coming out of teachers' college, Ms Clarke said the new qualifying test seems redundant and a waste of taxpayer money and a new teacher's time.

"They have final exams in the college. We spent all this time training them on these things and now we're telling them we don't know if they're ready (to be a teacher)."

The Ministry of Education now requires those coming out of teachers' college to write a four-hour test. The first one is slated for April 27.

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Chudleigh says Eves is the man to lead Ontario

Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh was pleased to see Ernie Eves win the Ontario Conservative Party's leadership race Saturday.

"I like his style," said Mr. Chudleigh. "He's got the experience and political maturity."

Mr. Eves was chosen as the party's new leader and the province's new premier in a second ballot victory, defeating rival Jim Flaherty with 54.6 per cent of the votes cast to 37.8 per cent. Other candidates were Tony Clement,

Elizabeth Witmer and Chris Stockwell. "He was the leader right from the start. I don't think anyone really seriously challenged him," said Mr. Chudleigh.

Mr. Eves' win over Mr. Flaherty shows a move toward more centralist conservative politics, said Mr. Chudleigh.

Under Mr. Eves, Mr. Chudleigh believes there will be more consultative with the province's transfer parties on the issues.



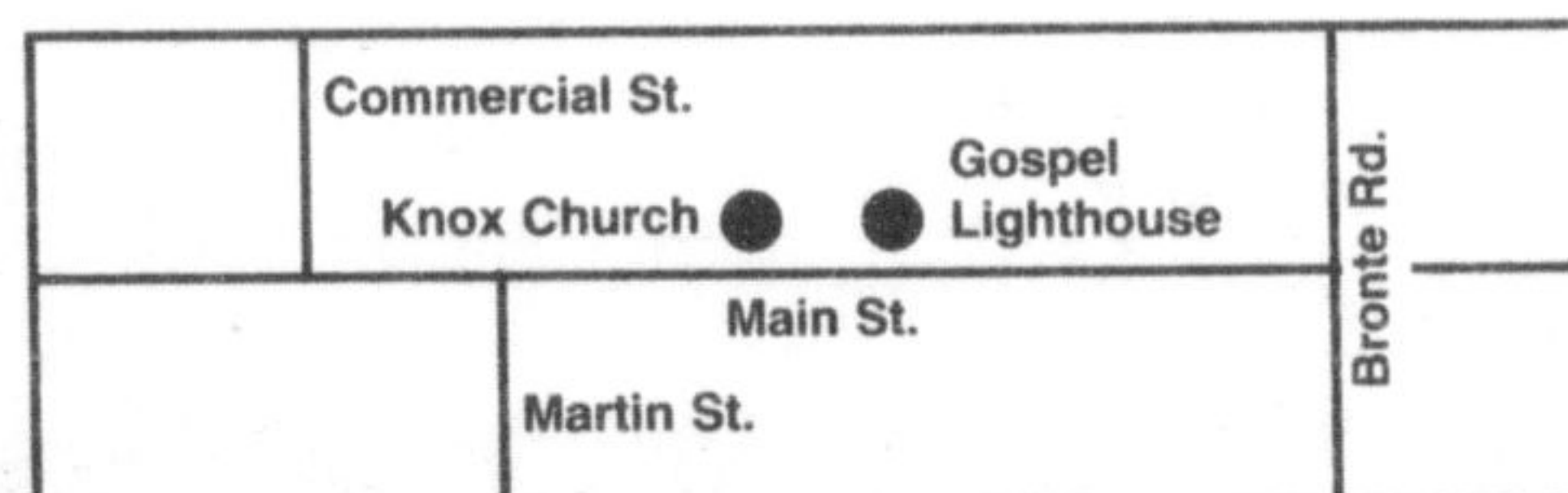
The Gospel Lighthouse



Milton Gospel Lighthouse, situated at 164 Main Street (beside Knox Church) has been in operation now for 14 months. Our historic downtown location is awaiting the completion of "The Main Event" transformation, being chronicled in the Canadian Champion newspaper.

Since placing our advertisement in this newspaper, we have been very busy with an increased number of customers coming to the store. Our sales reflect this increase also!

Please drop in and visit us. We would be pleased to see you. Our friendly staff would be glad to assist you in your needs here. We look forward to seeing you, and to meeting our Milton newcomers! Ruth, Marilyn, Ruth and Wendy!



Hours:
Mon - Thurs. 9:30 - 5:30
Fri. 9:30 - 6:30
Sat. 9 - 5
Closed Sunday. (Of Course!)

164 Main Street East, Milton
905 875-1683

Colorectal Cancer: What You Need to Know

A free public education seminar presented by Halton Healthcare as part of their "Living Healthy" series.

Individuals interested in colorectal cancer are invited to attend a free health seminar entitled "Colorectal Cancer: What You Need to Know" to take place on Tuesday, April 2 at 7:00 p.m. at the Milton District Hospital Classroom. The seminar is being presented in partnership with Halton Healthcare Services - Milton District Hospital site and the Canadian Cancer Society. It is made possible due to a non-restricted educational grant from Roche Oncology with appreciation to Milton District Hospital Foundation. ASL interpretive services are available for the hearing impaired through sponsorship of Siemens Hearing Instruments.

Colorectal Cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among men and women in Canada. More than 17,000 new cases are diagnosed each year. Despite its high incidence, colorectal cancer is one of the most detectable, and, if found early, most treatable forms of cancer. Advancing age, diet, personal history of polyps and bowel disease, hereditary factors

and family history are some of the risk factors for developing colorectal cancer.

Colorectal cancer, like other cancers, responds best to treatment when it is found and treated as early as possible. Treatment is most effective before the disease spreads outside of the colon. Colorectal cancer screening is advised and part of routine medical care when there are no symptoms present. The Canadian Cancer Society recommends that all men and women talk with their doctors about colorectal screening.

Drs. Gulshan Sawhney (Internist) and Jeff Kolbasnik (General Surgeon) at the Milton District Hospital will provide information on the prevalence, early detection, diagnosis, and treatment of colorectal cancer. In addition there will be lots of time for participants to have their questions answered.

This free seminar will be held on Tuesday, April 2nd at the Milton District Hospital, which is located at 30 Derry Road east. Displays and light refreshments will be available from

6:30 p.m. and the seminar will commence at 7:00 p.m. To reserve a seat, please call 905-338-4379 or send an e-mail to Irohnm@haltonhealthcare.on.ca. Seats are limited, so call today. Those requiring interpreter services please fax 905-878-0498 or email cpopp@haltonhealthcare.on.ca by **March 29**.

If you are unable to attend this event and would like more information on this topic speak to your physician, call the Cancer Information Line at 1-888-939-3333, Cancer Connection at 1-800-263-6750 or the Colorectal Cancer Association of Canada at 1-888-318-9442. Relevant websites to visit are: www.cancer.ca, www.ccac-acc.ca and www.well-spring.ca.

For more information, contact Cindy Popp, Health Promotion Coordinator, Halton Healthcare Services - Milton District Hospital site @ 905-876-7045 or cpopp@haltonhealthcare.on.ca