



COMMENT



THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Sounds like a plan

It's certainly heartening to hear Education Minister Elizabeth Witmer say she will consider an alternative diploma for some Ontario high school students.

A coalition of school boards, including the Halton District School Board and four of its high schools — General Brock, E.C. Drury, White Oaks and Georgetown District — are pressing the Ontario government to develop a system to help those with little chance of passing the Province's literacy test.

Many of those students are taking basic programs in vocational schools and, in some cases, are several years behind their peers in academic achievement. Some suffer from lower IQs and learning disabilities. It would be a shame for them not to get a diploma since numerous vocational students in previous years who couldn't have passed the test went on to successful careers.

The alternative diploma would provide a checklist of skills, a co-op education record and a literacy 'portfolio' for employers.

We should keep in mind that it's equally important to read a technical auto body manual as it is to be able to write prescriptions. Canada needs skilled labourers just as much as it needs lawyers, engineers and doctors.

Let's ensure everyone has an equal opportunity for success, no matter their career choice, once they get past the secondary school level.

School closure opponents are facing up-hill battle

The Halton District School Board is facing a tough decision when it votes on the fate of two elementary schools November 20.

Over the past two weeks, angry and frustrated parents have presented their cases to the board's School Closure/Consolidation Study Committee, which will ultimately make a recommendation to the board on whether to keep Martin Street and Percy W. Merry public schools open or close them.

According to board policy, consideration of closure is mandatory once a school drops below 60 per cent utilization.

That's the current situation for Percy Merry, which, with 92 students, is operating at 42 per cent utilization, and those numbers are expected to drop by 2010.

Parents argue the rural school, which serves south Milton and north Oakville, should be used as a holding facility until a new school is built in

the area in 2005/06.

Meanwhile, Martin Street is currently operating at a 82.3 per cent utilization rate — well above 60 per cent.

However, board officials say 106 of the school's 250 students are bused in from outside the catchment area — mostly for the French Immersion program — which significantly drops the utilization rate.

Parents are concerned about which school their children will attend if the schools close — and rightly so.

Many parents who have children at Percy Merry don't want to send them to an urban school setting, citing they purposely chose the school because of the rural atmosphere.

And parents of Martin Street students enjoy the fact their children are taught in a small school setting and appreciate the history of the 82-year-old school, which at one time was Milton High



OUR READERS WRITE

Reader says teaching public about dangers of unprotected sex is more productive than anti-abortion demonstrations

Dear Editor:

I'm writing to you about the recent photo of the abortion activists in The Champion.

I find it unproductive for people to have such public displays. This country allows for freedom of speech and expression and because of that most are thankful.

Just as they have been free to make the choice to demonstrate,

women are free to make the choice on abortion.

Why not spend your time more productively by educating the public on the risks of having unprotected sex, like unplanned pregnancy or AIDS and a montage of other diseases?

We see enough protests going on in the world right now with anti-war, anti-terrorism, etc. People need

to be more positive in this world we live in today.

Be positive and active with your views but do it in a way where you educate not discriminate.

Quite frankly you look foolish standing on street corners with little signs, and it sure does nothing productive for the cause.

T. Stuart
Milton

Former Milton Toastmaster members invited to anniversary

Dear Editor:

Our club will celebrate its 20th anniversary meeting October 29 at the Royal Canadian Legion at 7:30 p.m.

We would like to contact as many of our club's former members to extend an invitation to them to attend

this special event. If you were a member of our club please call Sue at (905) 876-2563 or e-mail me at Lgibson@cogeco.ca for further information.

Lorraine Gibson
Milton Toastmasters Club



Random thoughts

with FANNIE SUNSHINE

School.

Parents have told committee members they specifically chose to send their kids to Martin Street because of its French Immersion program. Two other public schools in town — Robert Baldwin and E.W. Foster — offer the program. But that's doing little to reassure parents, as they don't know as of yet where students would be placed following closure.

Parents are hoping the board will vote against closing both schools, but are having a hard time remaining optimistic.

They feel this is a done deal, that the decision to close has basically already been made and nothing can be said or done to change the minds of those in power.

One thing I've discovered about Miltonians since I began working in this town over a year-and-a-half ago is how quickly individuals come together and fight collectively for what they believe in, whether or not they think it's a lost battle.

Nobody wants to see schools close, especially in a community where the population is expected to triple in the next few years.

So wouldn't it make sense to plan for the future instead of making a decision that could unnecessarily affect many lives today?