

Looks like new school funding on the way at last



BARRIE ERSKINE / SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

SIGH OF RELIEF: From left, Halton District School Board's Superintendent of Business Steven Parfeniuk, Director of Education Wayne Joudrie and board Chair Paul Tate have reason to smile as they discuss Ministry of Education funding at a press conference held at the J.W. Singleton Education Centre last week.

By Tim Whitnell
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Debt financing related to schools already built and a couple under construction, plus funds for future schools within the Halton District School Board, are expected to be given the okay by the provincial government.

That was the message reiterated with even more confidence by some high-ranking members of the Halton board after they had some time to digest detailed funding information released by the Ministry of Education June 12.

Education Director Wayne Joudrie, Business Superintendent Steve Parfeniuk and board of trustees Chair

Paul Tate held a brief press conference at the board offices in Burlington last week to express their satisfaction with the recent Ministry of Education announcement.

"We're now in a position to not only finance schools that are not only already built, but to go forward with new projects," said Joudrie.

Parfeniuk said that includes the multi-million dollar cost of two elementary schools whose construction has been delayed but that will open in the fall of 2006.

"We are confident that Alexander's Public School (Burlington) and Bruce Trail (Milton) will be fully funded," he said. "We believe we clearly meet the criteria and we should not have any concerns with respect to receiving funding over 25 years for those two schools," Parfeniuk told *The Champion* the next day.

Including Alexander's and Bruce Trail, the board has seven building projects on the books in the near future with schools slated for south Georgetown, Milton, Oakville and northeast Burlington (Alton community).

At the press briefing, Tate said determining exactly where new schools need to be built and how to pay for them under a provincial funding formula has been a long 24-month process that included repeated discussions with area MPPs and two different education ministers.

"Clearly we were in serious trouble with board growth. (Now) we are really getting into a position where we can (meet) our long-term needs. We have a huge boom here," board Chair Tate said of Halton, noting the fastest growing area of the region at present.

The new funding formula for new school construction — it can include major projects like additions and integrated portable classrooms called porta-paks — adds a growth-related concept consisting of three components, said Parfeniuk.

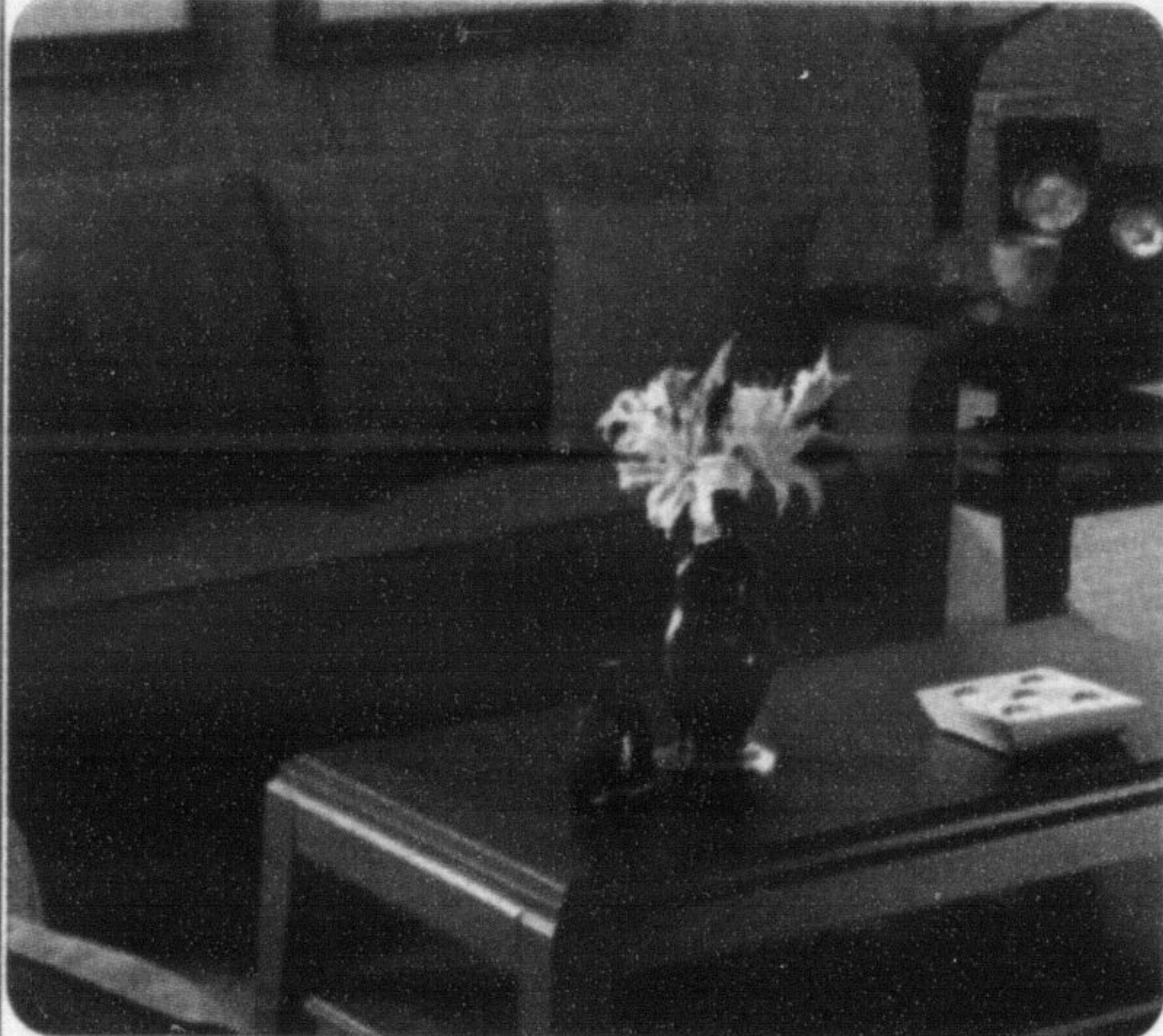
The criteria pertain to the existence of a school board educational development charge bylaw, specified enrolment requirements within a growth review area and a minimum 10-year sustained enrolment expectation for the area.

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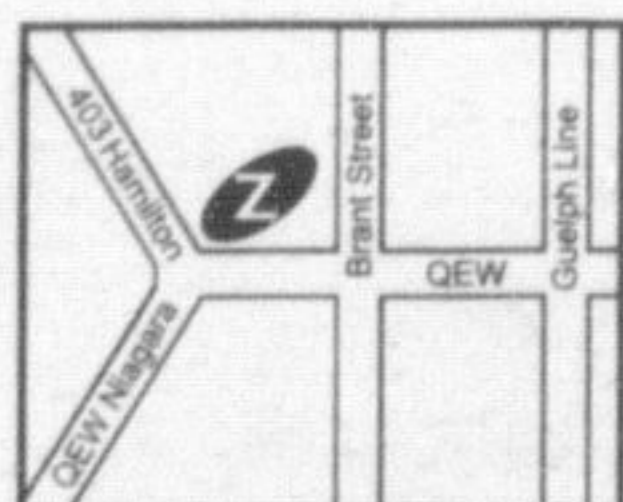


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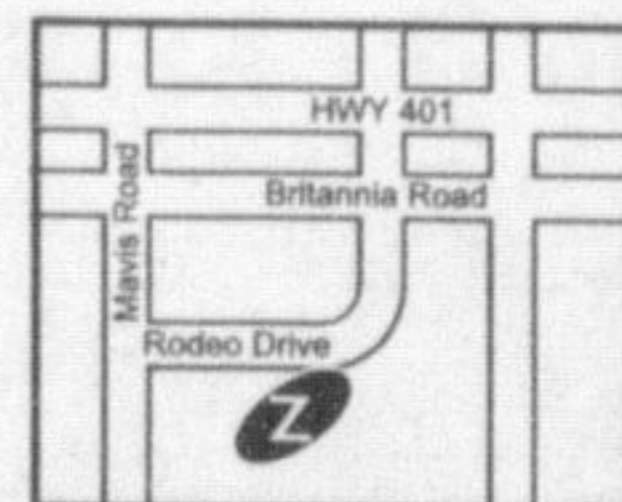
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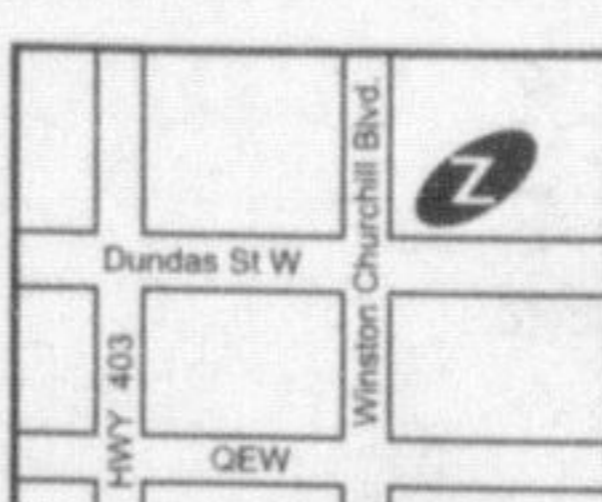
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