

Voting on St. Paul's church proposal to start tonight

A3 • MILTON CHAMPION Wednesday, April 15, 2009

By Tim Foran
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

The congregation of St. Paul's United Church will begin voting this evening on whether to pursue a proposal to demolish the historic 1890 Main Street church and build an 80-unit seniors condominium and scaled down church in its place.

Voting will continue tomorrow night and finish Sunday morning. If approved, the church will partner with a local developer to examine the feasibility of the proposal.

A previous vote in April 2008 to sell the site and build a new church elsewhere was defeated, as it only received about 60 per cent approval from the congregation, less than the two-thirds majority required.

The new vote to demolish the sanctuary, perhaps retaining some parts, and redevelop the existing site at Main and James Street only requires a simple majority approval from the 600-family congregation.

The origins of the current proposal began in September, 2006 when the church's Rev. John Benham returned from a sabbatical during which he examined thriving congregations, said Church Council chair Kathy Sellers.

St. Paul's set up a long-range planning committee to outline a renewed mission and ministry of the church. It also examined what physical infrastructure was needed to support those goals. It was decided the aging Sanctuary, which needs roof repairs, was inadequate.

The cost to simply repair the facility was estimated at \$1.85 million. After repairs, the church would still be left with a facility that didn't help it meet its ministry goals, Sellers said.

Therefore, the council decided it

would be better to demolish the sanctuary in order to get out from under ongoing maintenance costs.

The decision now before the congregation isn't without opposition, both from the greater Milton community which has already begun organizing against the proposal and from within the church.

Rebecca Givens, who also sits on the Church Council, said the option of just repairing the facility has never been put to a congregation vote. She rejects the idea that St. Paul's programs could be better supported in the proposed 12,000-square foot church facility than the existing 22,000 square feet.

"It (the sanctuary) has been fulfilling the mission for 125 years," Givens said.

Sellers said it isn't the size of the church facility that's important but the layout and modern amenities.

The church would like to provide an 'Out of the Cold' homeless shelter in the basement of the cur-

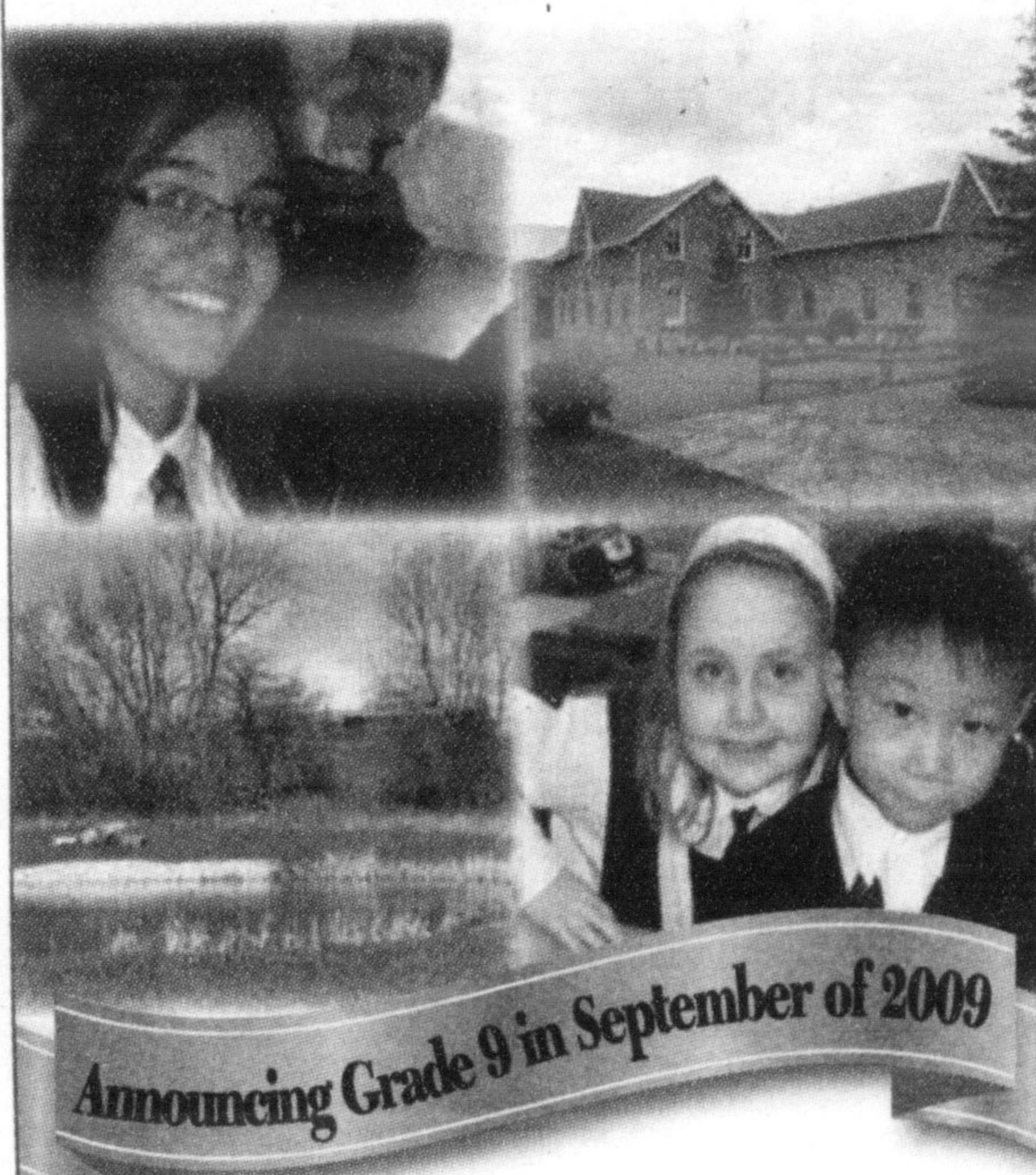
rent facility but there's no bathroom to support that program, Sellers pointed out as an example.

Givens said the church should examine other options in more detail before voting to demolish the sanctuary.

Tim Foran can be reached at tforan@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

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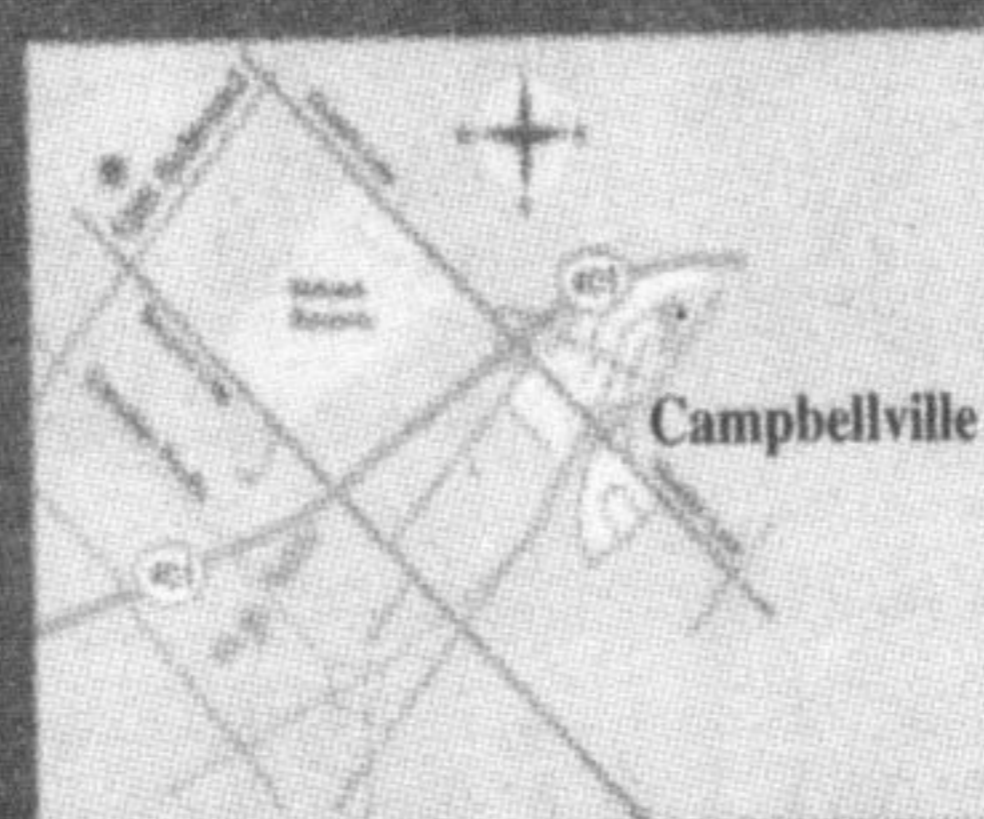
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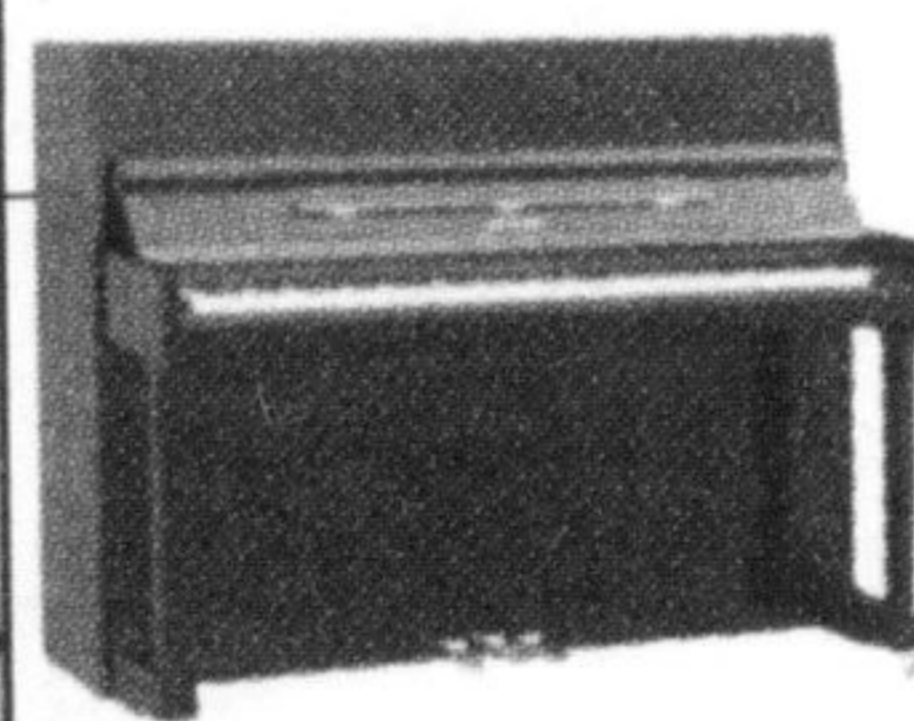
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Young boy assaulted

A teenager is being sought in connection with an assault at E.W. Foster School last Wednesday.

According to police, at about 3:30 p.m. a nine-year-old boy was walking around a corner at the Coxe Boulevard school when he accidentally bumped into a male teen.

An altercation ensued and the boy had his head hit against the side of the school. He sustained minor injuries.

The suspect is described as a white male, about 18 years old, about five-foot-six with a slim build and blond hair. He was wearing a grey jacket and jeans.

Anyone with information about this incident is asked to call Halton Regional Police at (905) 878-5511, ext. 2415, or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477.

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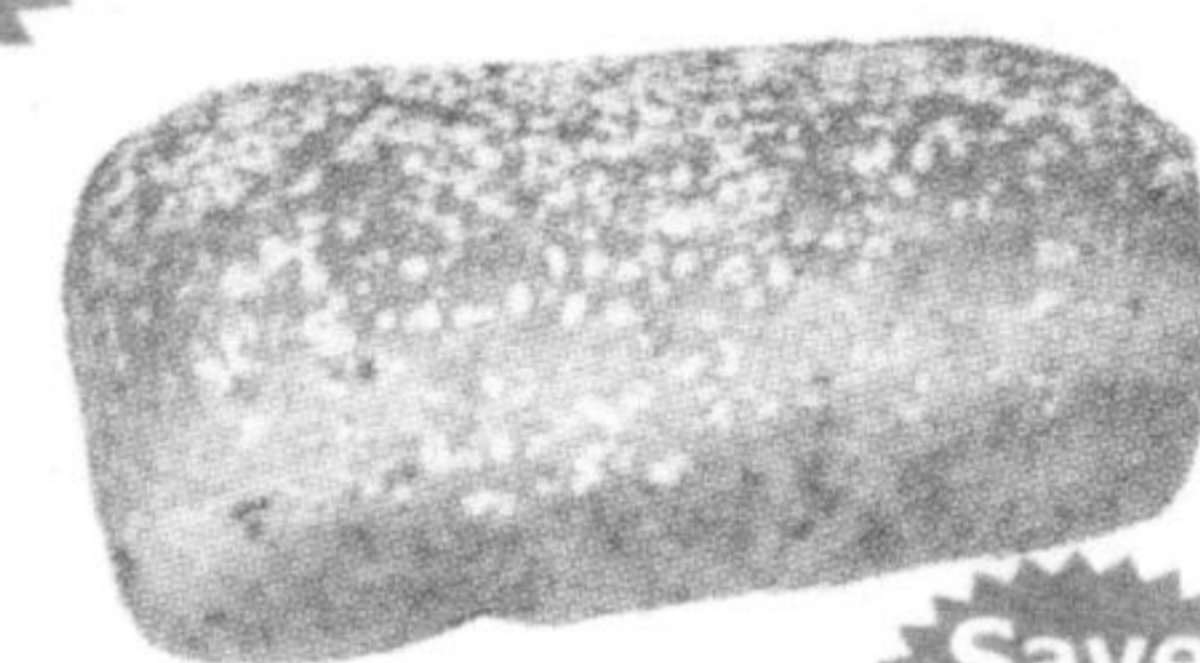
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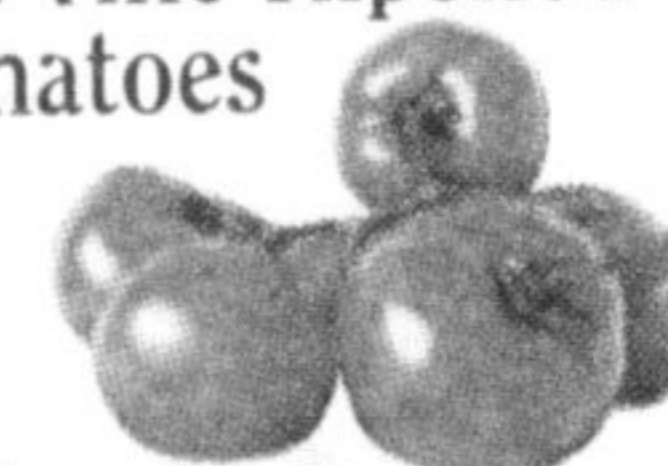
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