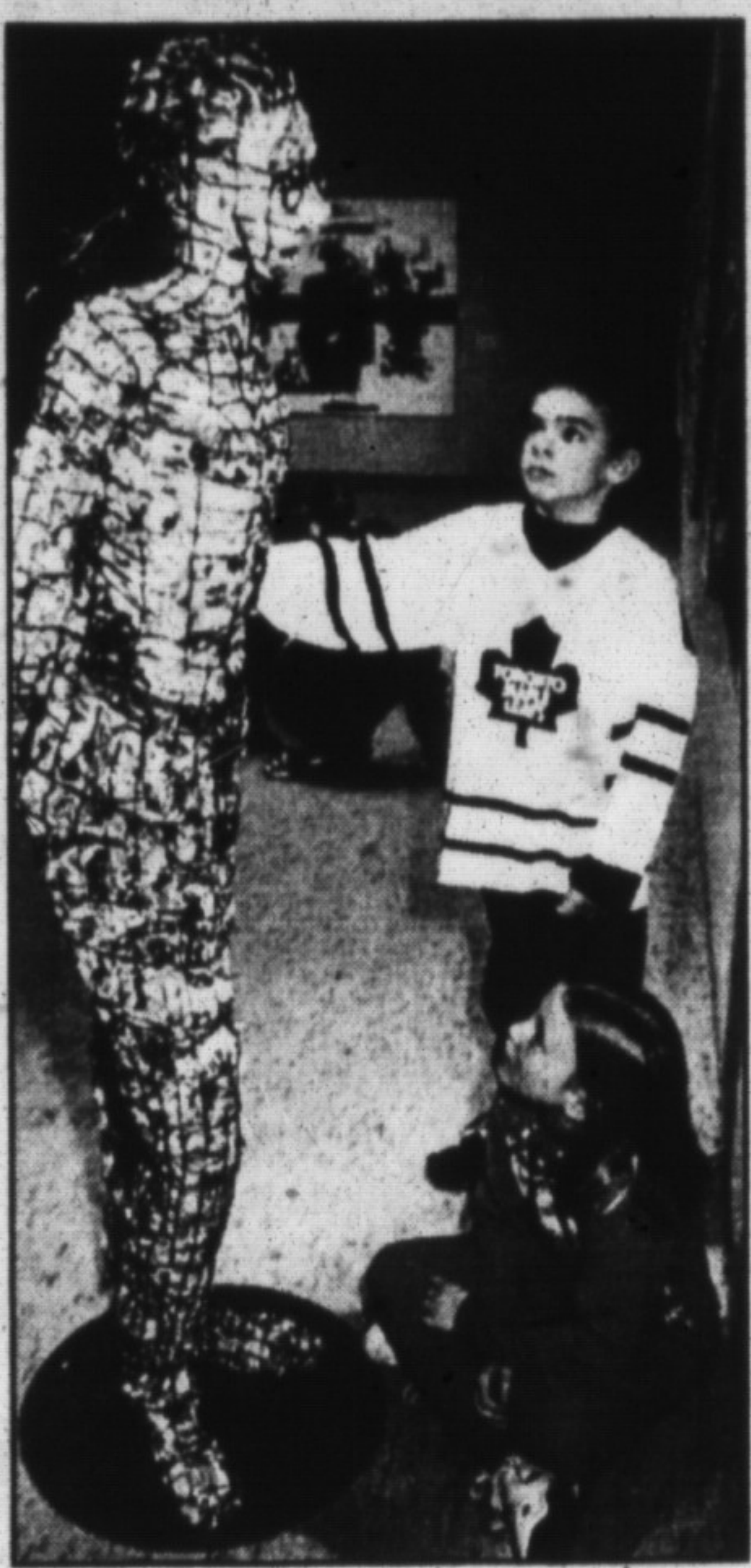


# This is art, kids

E. W. Foster School students Scott Turner and Tammy Merritt, both 8, look over the work of Eric Brittan during a recent trip to the Burlington Art Centre. Here, they examine a piece in the Isaiah Series.

Photo by Ron Kuzyk



# Town likely to jack up leisure fees

By BRAD REAUME  
The Champion

A massive, exhaustive report on leisure services produced an equally exhausting debate on proposed user fees at town council's general committee meeting Monday.

The committee passed a wide range of user fee increases, pending further discussion prior to next week's council meeting. Some fees will remain at 1995 levels but most will increase; from as little as 25 cents for a one time swimming fee to \$96 increase for private social use of the Nassagaweya Community Centre.

Fee increases in most cases do not come near fully recovering costs.

"Taxpayers who don't participate shouldn't be funding leisure services except for capital projects," said Councillor John Challinor. "Costs should reflect the cost of the program and not include a subsidy."

Despite an analysis provided by leisure services director Jennifer Reynolds, Councillor Wally Hunter wanted more of the costs of administration associated with recreational programs.

"In the private sector it's easy to see if

costs are comparable to others providing the service," he said. "Perhaps people paying the user fees are funding inefficiencies within the leisure services department."

Ms Reynolds defended administration costs, saying the workings of her department including taking information calls, dealing with parents, organizing registrations and other duties that are "integral to providing the service."

Before slamming the report, citing oversights and assumptions, Mr. Challinor praised its depth. But, because of its implications, he called it "the most disturbing report" he had seen in four years on council. He suggested a phase-in of user fee increases to get to a full recovery.

"We would have to look at what the market will bear," he said. "Nobody will sign up for some programs if they had to pay the full cost of the program."

Ms Reynolds suggested council consider that if they want 100 per cent cost recovery and no one will pay the associated costs "then we shouldn't have those halls."

Summer user groups are staging a registration at Milton Mall in early February and are pressing for guidelines as to what user fees will be charged. Mr. Challinor

was upset the scheduling allowed council such little time to consider the massive package.

He failed to get a deferral while calling for the need to simplify the report. He also wanted to hold a separate meeting to address setting a financial hardship policy for some leisure service users, and to examine routine subsidies paid to some user groups.

Councillor Rick Day suggested the week between the committee meeting and Monday's full council meeting should be enough to iron out the majority of problems. That satisfied most councillors, who voted against the deferral.

Current policy of the leisure services advisory board is to deal with financial hardship in a confidential manner on a case-by-case basis, Ms. Reynolds said.

Mr. Hunter warned committee members that each would have to say where their particular budget priorities are in light of the massive cuts in provincial funding grants which will be applied during the 1996 budget process.

Ms Reynolds suggested council had the latitude to make changes to user fees based on budgetary concerns. The full council will debate the issue further on February 5.

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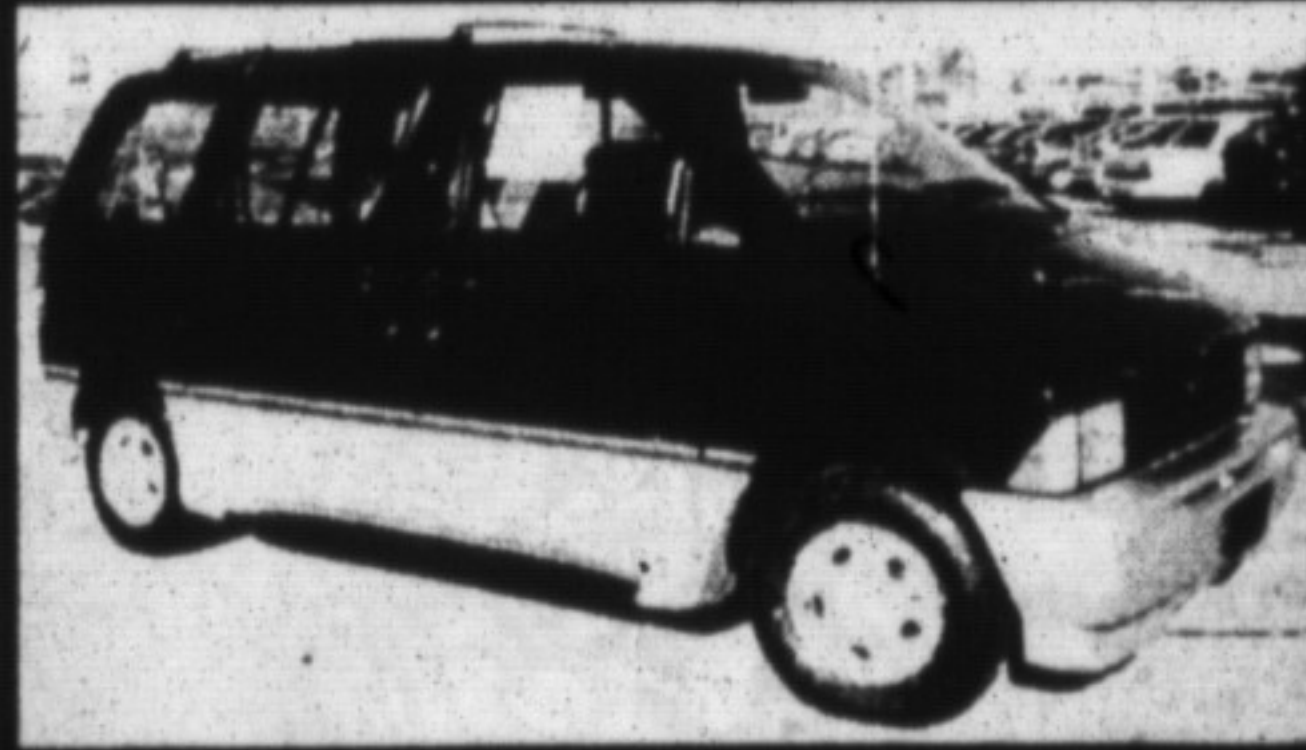
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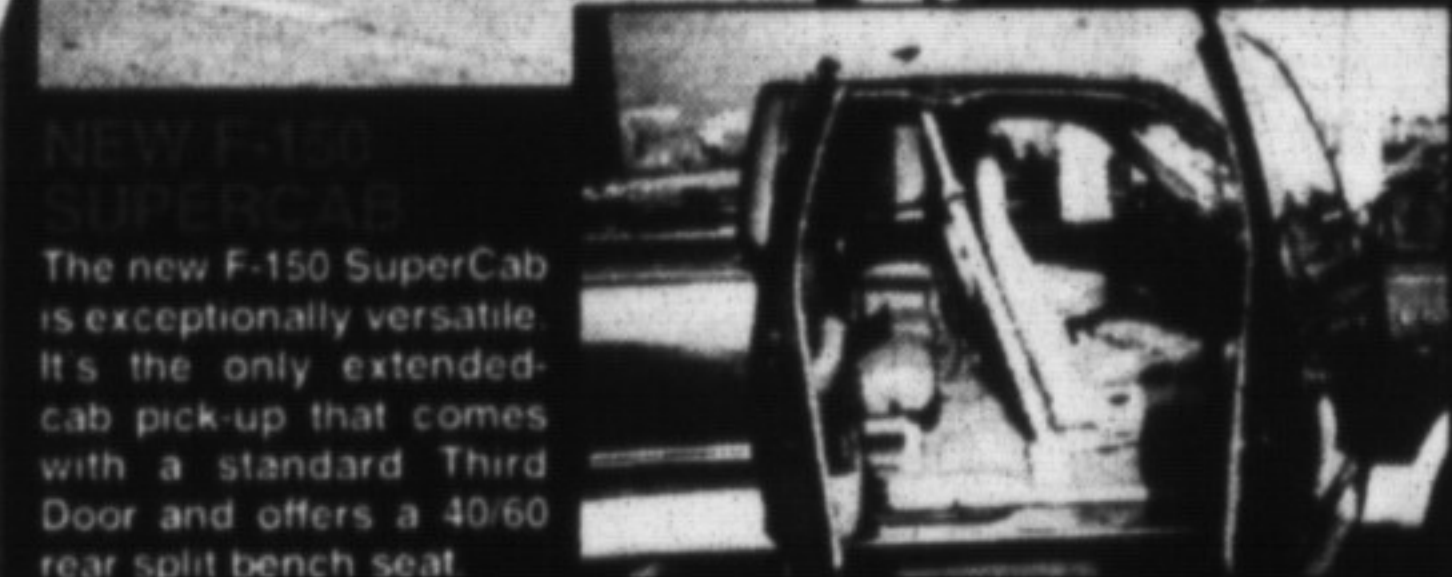
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