

# Innovative project survives another year

The Bronte Creek Program has had another year of life breathed into it.

The environmentally-based study project, for secondary students within the Halton Board of Education, was given a new lease on life when trustees decided to pump another \$16,000 into the 15-year-old set of courses.

After considerable debate, trustees voted 12-6 in favor of a motion to reallocate funds from the recently approved 1996-97 budget and direct staff to find the necessary money from areas that will not affect the classroom.

Burlington Trustee Sheila Flook, a strong proponent of the program and the instigator of the motion, couldn't contain her happiness, smiling broadly when the motion carried.

"I didn't come in with full confidence it would pass. Third-time lucky I guess," Ms Flook said after the board meeting. She was referring to the fact her two previous attempts to have the Bronte Creek Program saved during the board's marathon April budget deliberations were rejected.

The Bronte Creek Program is a four-credit

course which enables 90 secondary school students to spend an entire semester at one of two environmental camps: Camp Sidrabene, at Appleby Line and Britannia Road, and another camp near Georgetown.

The high school students take on the dual role of learner and teacher. They still do their regular studies, earning a science credit for example, but they also garner a co-op credit and develop leadership skills, noted Burlington Trustee Sandy Van Harten, another strong advocate of the program.

The teenagers instruct and coordinate the activities of about 4,000 grades 4, 5 and 6 Halton students over the course of a school year. The youngsters, many of whom do overnight stays, enjoy earth education activities and are steered toward a healthy, environmentally-friendly lifestyle.

Ms Van Harten, who said there is a lengthy waiting list to enrol in the program, indicated the Bronte Creek camps appeal to students who are looking for something apart from the usual school format. She said her son, often disinterested in his regular school studies, participated fully in it.

Despite general acceptance among trustees that the Bronte Creek Program is a positive venture for the board, several expressed their concern about having to take money from someplace else, especially since the budget had already been passed.

Milton Trustee Tim Kingsbury felt it unfair to give special consideration to one program following several arduous weeks of deliberations over a \$282-million budget. "I find it hard to come right after the budget and say the Bronte Creek Program is more important than instructional assistants and others" who will be laid off, he said.

Ms Flook responded to suggestions of favoritism by saying, "The doors to corporate sponsorship seem to be wide open" and that's what program administrators hope to concentrate on in order to make the project self-supporting following the next school year.

The Bronte Creek Program had a total budget of \$271,813 in 1993-94 but has seen that whittled down in each of the last three years. A projected budget of \$144,848 in 1996-97 represents nearly a 50 per cent drop in expenditures.

## Doctors:

# Province squeezing

By STEVE LeBLANC

Special to The Champion

Ontario residents will likely face added costs for various health care services, or be unable to obtain these services altogether in their community. That was the warning given by local physician Dr. Garnet Maley this week, in light of recent funding cuts to Ontario's health care system.

Dr. Maley's comments came Monday, on the eve of a new radio campaign by the Ontario Medical Association (OMA), in response to recent cuts.

In three 30-second public service announcements, the OMA charges the provincial government with underfunding Ontario's health care system by half a billion dollars this year.

"The funding slash will likely mean passing the costs on to the patient," said Dr. Maley, president of the Halton County Medical Society. "Studies show that since 1992, Ontario's population has grown by 700,000." There are also "140,000 more seniors (over 65) who require more extensive services. If you think things are bad now, just wait a few months."

He said the province's cuts will essentially mean an expenditure freeze for doctors, adding that the cap will be a particular detriment to small-town doctors — who service a greater ratio of patients and generally provide more services.

"The government always talks about doctors' high salaries, but they're usually talking about our gross incomes," he said. "They forget that about a third of that goes to administrative expenses and salaries, and another third goes back to the government in taxes. What's going to happen is either doctors will be less willing to practice in smaller towns, or the ones that do will cut back on their services."

Dr. Maley is currently surveying the 614 doctors practicing in Halton Region. While results will not be in for at least another week, he expects that with these latest cuts, most doctors will be less likely to offer certain services — or more willing to start charging for the ones they now offer at no charge.

"Many doctors may start asking for payment for services like back-to-work notes, over-the-phone advice or prescription renewals. Either that, or they simply won't provide services they're not getting paid for anyway," Dr. Maley warned.

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Ever been to the METRO TORONTO ZOO? There are two additional reasons to go there now, in addition to the current myriad of animals to see (a super place to take the kids!) - TWO KOALA BEARS from Los Angeles. The Koalas are on loan from the SAN DIEGO ZOO, another very interesting place to add to your 'things to see and do sometime' - with a visit to southern California.

Niagara Falls is still listed as a prime location to visit for those who come to this area of Canada from far off! It will be more inviting to people closer to that area this fall when the CASINO gets up and running. Four hours is the average stay for the 14 million 'daytrippers' who visit there. All numbers will change with an additional 6 million anticipated and longer times spent - a real boon for the hotels and other tourists facilities throughout this area - one of the true 'Wonders of the World'!

DID YOU KNOW DEPT. The PANAMA CANAL, another Wonder of the World, man made style, is 51 MILES LONG (somebody convert that to clicks for me!) joining the two Oceans. A fascinating trip on a Cruise ship!

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