

Midland, Harbour sidestep French school vote -for now

Three more municipal councils faced Simcoe County council's referendum resolution Monday night, but only Orillia City Council put it to a vote.

Orillia councillors endorsed the county resolution to include the Penetang school question on a November ballot county-wide, although the resolution was endorsed by a narrow margin 4-3. One alderman was absent during the Monday meeting.

In Midland and Victoria Harbour, both councils managed to avoid a direct vote on the county's actual resolution for the time being.

Midland reached a compromise solution, voting to ask the Simcoe County board of education if the board wanted the school question on the ballot in November. In asking for direction from the county board, councillors wondered what the wording on the ballot should be.

What's the question?

Midland mayor Moreland Lynn reminded councillors that unless a single question could be formulated there was the danger of each municipality in the county devising its own French school referendum question, thereby clouding final results in November.

Midland alderman Richard Platt pointed out there was nothing in the Ontario Municipal Act which allows councils to add such a question to the ballot. "We just don't have any authority to do so," he said.

Neither does Simcoe County council have the legal right to place the question on a ballot, Platt said. Platt did say that the Concerned Citizens for Bilingual Unity's position is overwhelmingly supported in Simcoe county, but that "one has to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's."

SCBE position

In other words, Platt reaffirmed Simcoe County Board of Education's position of last week that "only a board of education has the power to make a decision to build a French high school."

Midland, Platt said, collects the taxes for the school board, "but we can't tell them how to spend it."

A small delegation of CCBU members, led by Margaret Garrett, appeared before Midland council Monday night asking council's support of the June 17 County Council resolution.

Victoria Harbour

Similarly in Victoria Harbour, councillors postponed a vote on the county resolution until they get some direction from Premier Davis and Dr. Bette Stephenson. Council voted to pass along a four-page statement from CCBU spokesman, Bruce Tinney, to the provincial government leaders.

In his statement, Bruce Tinney argues that the PSS facilities are adequate and already accommodate the needs of the French-speaking community without the necessity of further spending of

ratepayers, "Why am I being asked to pay for something that is not necessary?"

Council will await a reply from the Premier and the Minister of Education before returning to discussion concerning the possibility of including a French school question on its November ballot.

Vote not fair

On Monday, Harbour Reeve, Doug Jackson, said he didn't feel

council should pass the June 17 county resolution. "We should do something positive in (Bruce) Tinney's opposition to the school," Jackson told council.

He stated he didn't think it would be fair to make an exception on this one school. "If the minority have a right, then you don't subject that right to the vote of the majority," Reeve Jackson said.

Unless there was

some provision for holding a referendum on the building of every school in Simcoe county, Jackson didn't feel there should be one for this particular school.

Councillor Jack Baks said at least 50 per cent of the Victoria Harbour community is of French descent and some would attend the French school.

Again Jackson said, "Having a vote across Simcoe county is not

fair." Councillor Bev Juneau asked the Reeve why all Simcoe county shouldn't have a vote if they are all sharing the costs of the new school.

"They have a good school now," said Councillor Anne Connelly. "They don't need another one."

Turned down

"All I'm asking is that we turn down the (county) resolution and do something positive to help them," Jackson

replied.

"The main issue," said Baks, "is that we are creating separatists. We will not live as a United Canada."

The resolution was left as unfinished business until Harbour council meets again next week.

Penetanguishene, Tay township and Port McNicoll councils have all endorsed the county resolution.

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