

Letter to education minister spells out Ecole Le Caron students' concern

On Wednesday of this week, a group of students from Ecole Le Caron, Lafontaine, and several Francophone citizens of the area delivered two letters to the Education Minister, Bette Stephenson, expressing frustration at delays in construction of the proposed French high school in Penetanguishene.

Following is the entire transcript of those two letters:

Last spring, we, the students of Ecole Secondaire LeCaron, visited with you to get an answer to our demands for a French Language Secondary School.

On April 23, Dr. Stephenson promised us a school that was to be ready for occupancy by January 1981. Meanwhile, we are housed in a once-condemned rehabilitated building in Lafontaine, some 8 miles from Penetanguishene.

We were willing to put up with a multitude of inconveniences because there was hope. That hope is quickly changing to a slow-burning anger when we are faced with a winter in that cold building, a town council that refuses to cooperate, a school board that has its hands tied and a government that will not act.

A fire in our school has already claimed two classrooms. Does it need to claim lives

before you act?

We are here today to claim the fulfilment of that April 23rd promise the same way Dr. Stephenson claimed our cooperation.

The Honorable Bette Stephenson
Minister of Education
Parliament Buildings
Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario

Dr. Stephenson,

Over a month ago, the Simcoe County Board of Education requested your assistance in overcoming difficulties in the acquisition of land for the erection of l'Ecole Secondaire LeCaron. These difficulties are the initiatives of certain members of Penetanguishene Town Council who have publicly vowed that the school will never be built. To this day, we have had no reaction on your part.

The working committee, for the most part, is an unproductive waste of time, despite the good will and cooperation of the SCBE members and the French Language Advisory Committee's members.

The chairman, Mr. John Storey, refuses us copies of his reports to you and when he reports back to us, the details are sketchy and verbal. Our concern is: does he report faithfully what should, in fact, be a joint

report by our committee, and when he reports back, is it that you gave him nothing to say? In our humble opinion, it is very strange that Mr. Berchman Kipp, who is actually the francophones' representative at the Ministry, is not chairman of the working committee. We, therefore, suggest that effective immediately, Mr. John Storey be replaced by Mr. Kipp in that position.

Solution

It has been more than six months since you came to Barrie and spoke so eloquently of good will and cooperation rather than a legislated solution. We have, at long last, the cooperation of the SCBE, and God knows, you have had ours for a long time! Now, where is yours and that of your Ministry?

It is evident that the only solution to the whole Penetanguishene crisis is for the government to take its April 23rd decision one step further and through the appropriate ministry, overcome the town's delaying tactics.

We are extremely please with the calibre of the principal and teaching staff at LeCaron, as well as the

fruit that their efforts bear among our adolescents.

It would be disastrous for this community, if, through a further delay on your part, the principal at LeCaron were unable to offer the 1981 candidates an opportunity to avail themselves of such a superior quality of education in a complete school.

Committee

We have on numerous occasions, attempted to have the working committee study alternate sites for the new school, but, invariably, we were reminded of the April 23rd agreement in principle. We are six months later and NOW is the time to reassess our positions.

We are now requesting a meeting of the working committee with you within the next 10 days to evaluate our progress to date and to look at other alternatives. The tenuous situation in Penetanguishene cannot be prolonged without some major confrontation.

This letter is being hand delivered to your office to insure that its contents are not misinterpreted to you by some overzealous official in your

department.

I shall await your call at 705-533-2741 in the immediate future.

Be assured, Madam Minister, of our fullest cooperation as long as all your undertakings are for the well-being of our french-speaking students.

We stand ready to meet with you on a few hours' notice.

Veillez agréer, madame le Ministre, l'expression de mes sentiments distingués.

Claudette Paquin
Comité Consultatif de Lange Française,
Simcoe

cc: Honorable William Davis, Premier
Ministre de l'Ontario;
Honorable Thomas Wells, Ministre des

Affaires Intergouvernementales; Mr. Roy McMurtry, Attorney General; M. Max Yalden, Commissaire aux Langues Officielles; M. Berchman Kipp, Sous-ministre adjoint; Mr. John Storey, Directeur régional; Mr. Irving Harris, Directeur d'éducation, SCBE; M. Pierre Genest, Conseiller légal.

Obituary — Basil Chuck Gervais

Mr. Basil (Chuck) Gervais, most recently of Alliston, Ontario, died suddenly Oct. 15, 1980, in his 63rd year, at Dufferin Area Hospital, Orangeville, Ont.

Born and raised in Penetanguishene, Ont., Mr. Gervais had spent the last 22 years in Alliston and was single. He was predeceased

by his parents, Charles Gervais and Josephine Roi and by a sister, Blanche and two brothers, Robert and Emery.

Mr. Gervais is survived by a brother, Gerard Gervais of Penetanguishene and by sisters Irene Gervais and Doris Gervais, both of Dunnville.

Funeral services were held Oct. 17, 1980, at St. Ann's Memorial Church under supervision of Father Louis Dignard and burial followed at St. Ann's Cemetery, Penetanguishene.

Pallbearers for Mr. Gervais were: Ray Lafreniere, Gil Tessier, Eugene Ducaire, Richard Gervais and Bernard Desrochers.

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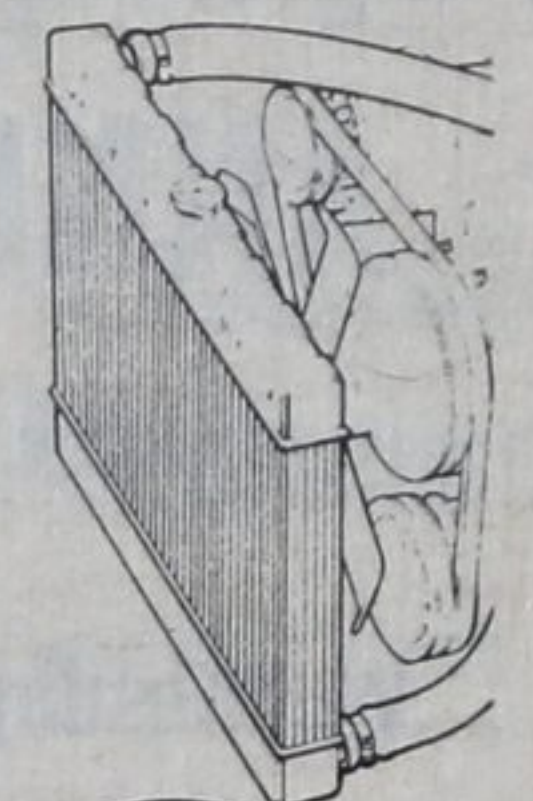
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