

French education changing

by DAVID KRAYDEN

French language education might never be the same again.

A series of public meetings were held throughout North Simcoe last week with a view to defining the direction of francophone education in Ontario.

Although sessions occurred in Barrie and Orillia, by far the most well-attended was Tuesday night's meeting at Le Caron Seconde in Penetanguishene.

Over 100 people were there for over three hours of informative presentations and lively discussion.

Chances are, most didn't know about the meetings if they or their children were not

directly involved in a Francophone school in Penetanguishene.

The meetings represent what Denis Chartrand calls "the first phase in a long consultation process." Chartrand is the Superintendent of French-Language Units for the Simcoe County Board of Education.

Officially, these meetings are called a Committee of Inquiry on Governance of French Language Education in Simcoe County.

The essential idea is that Francophones "can't afford to be split into two groups," Chartrand says.

At Tuesday night's meeting, Chartrand told the crowd that if changes are made to the present education system, "Simcoe Country

Francophones would be united under a system...of more efficient management."

However that system may look, it will certainly not be what it is today. Francophone schools, both public and separate, would be placed under their own School Board. So French Public and French Separate Schools would be linked together under autonomous French governance.

Language and religion have undoubtedly been the twin pillars of animosity in this country. That's why public meetings are being held first before any linking of the public and separate schools occurs.

The exact conditions of that union have to be carefully defined first.

The committee of inquiry is made up of one member from the public and separate French Language Education Councils. Genevieve Roy represents the public FLEC and Ernest Vaillancourt the separate FLEC. Jean-Louis Bourdeau, a long-time employee of school boards across the province is the president.

From now until April 1988, this committee will hear testimony from concerned parents and teachers, read prepared briefs and essays from education analysts, begin another series of public forums and finally prepare a report which will outline a series of recommendations which have been gleaned from the previous six months of intensive research.

What will exist at that point will be a French Language School Board of some kind. Currently, three models exist for that board.

The first recommends outright fusion of Roman Catholic and non-Catholic Francophones. This model is based almost entirely on linguistic unity and religion is merely offered as an instruction period, from which non-Catholics would be excused.

The second model offers a predominantly Roman Catholic board from which non-Catholic Francophones could purchase services.

The third model recommends a sharing of services and management but a retention of Roman Catholic and non-Catholic jurisdictions.

Ann Gagne, the Superintendent of French Language Schools for the Simcoe County Separate School Board, says none of the three models might survive. A hybrid of the three might even be created.

"People might say, 'I like model number one, but...'. And those are exactly the objectives which we are trying to achieve. We are looking for public response. If this version doesn't quite fit then let's try to fix it and make it work," she says.

Gagne points out that no legislation currently exists for the creation of a French Language School Board but "approval exists in the sense that funding is in place."

Last week's events were primarily designed to "create an awareness of what the French language communities across this county mean."

"Give us some feedback: we don't expect any short-term answers," she says.

When Denis Chartrand was asked if the purpose of this whole exercise is to unify Francophones to ultimately preserve the language, he said "We are starting with the feasibility of a French Language School Board and I think that answers your question."

The president of the public FLEC, Basile Dorion, expects a lot of flexibility from the committee.

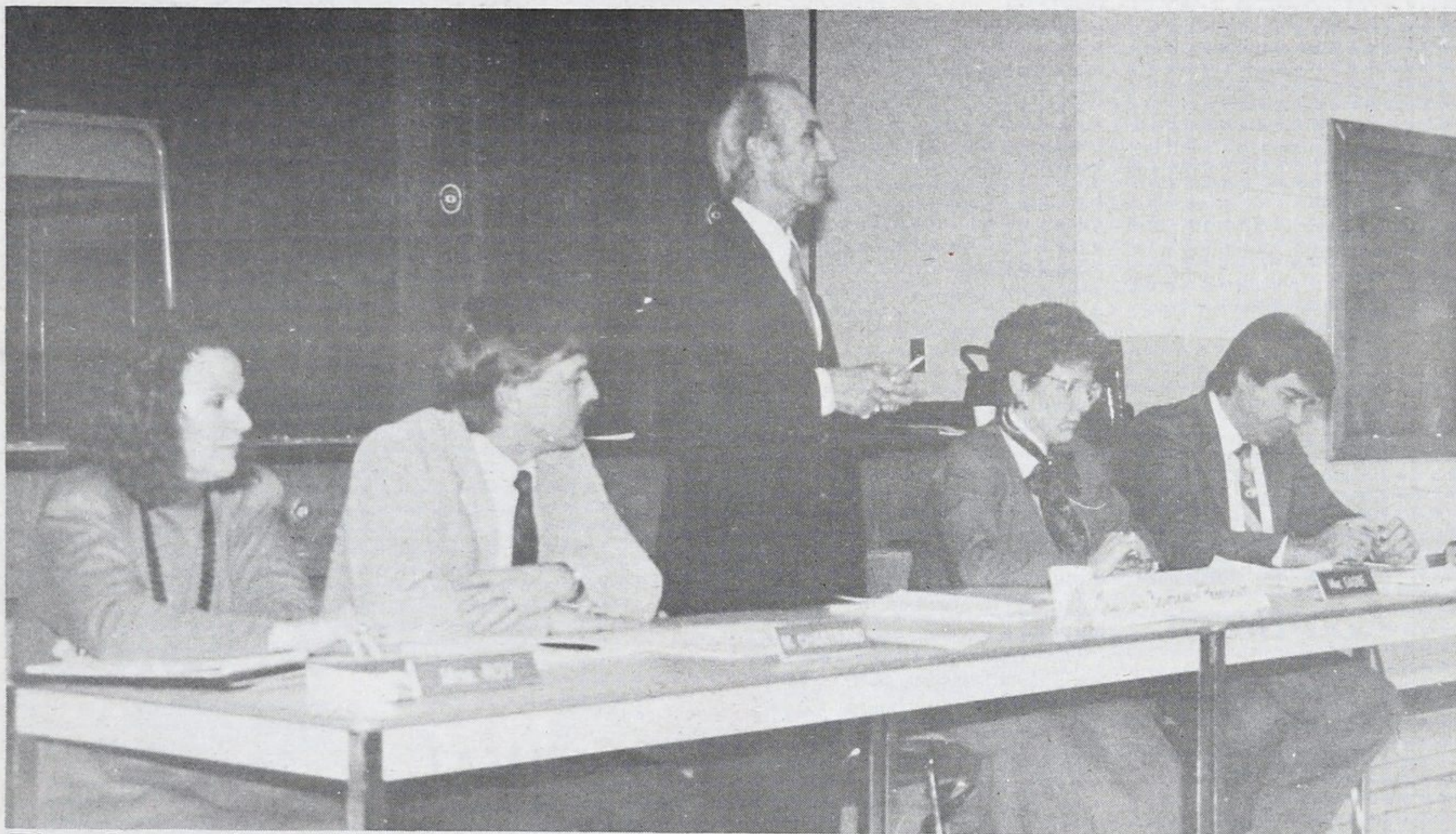
"I don't think we're going to say 'take these models or leave them,' we'll have to look at all the options. That's why we're getting the public involved anyway."



Vol. 20 No. 48, Folio 96

Wednesday, December 2, 1987

40 cents



The Committee Awaits

Last week was an historic week for Francophones in the Huronia area. Public committee meetings were held to decide what

course should be taken to create an autonomous French language school board. In this picture from left to right are Genevieve

Roy, Denis Chartrand, Jean-Louis Bourdeau, Anne Gagne and Ernest Vaillancourt.

No more nude swimming

Penetanguishene Town Council is getting tough with the hooligans who show a flagrant disregard for parks.

It's also getting tough with joyriders, vandals and all-night partiers.

In a bylaw passed last week, council expressed its position of being "desirous of setting rules and regulations governing the parks and recreational areas in the Town of Penetanguishene."

The bylaw bans the use of vehicles on roads and thoroughfares in the park.

It sets a mandatory closing time from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. during the months from April to October and from 7 p.m. to 9 a.m. during November to March.

Another section bans drinking, swearing, indecency, gambling, begging, vandalism,

carrying firearms, playing games or making political speeches and other assorted acts without the permission of the parks board.

The town has also reserved its ownership of the waters and emphasised its right to police the use of those waters. This means no more nude swimming.

And if you do change into a swim suit, you'd better do it in a change room.

The clerk of Penetanguishene says the bylaw was long overdue. Yvon Gagne calls it "a bit of necessary housekeeping."

"People were driving right up to the beach and parking there," he says.

Though park rules were in place previously, Gagne explains that "now the bylaw is enforceable under the Municipal Act and is thereby enforceable by the police."

Ron Marchildon, the areas Parks and Recreation Officer, says the parks desperately needed some sort of control.

"We had terrible problems with ATVs (all-terrain vehicles) driving in the park. These people were merrily doing wheelies and digging up the earth.

The Township of "Tiny has its problems along the beach with these sorts of people who don't care who or what they run over. Well, we've taken some action on it."

Marchildon explains Penetanguishene has endured problems like this "ever since the park was opened."

But the bylaw could have been tougher.

Unlike Midland, Penetang won't have a so-called "pooper-scooper" to drive around and pick up pet excrement.

Gagne says the hours of operation had to

be clearly defined for the park because all-night parties were becoming a problem.

"People were complaining about the noise but the worst of it was coming from the trailer parks," he says.

People who ignore the bylaw will be fined and with this added revenue Gagne hopes the town can "break even" with its operation of the park.

Gagne reveals "\$600,000 has been spent on the waterfront park over the past 20 years, very little of that has come from trailer park revenue."

Gagne thinks it will be "almost impossible" to police the trailer parks.

"If you have a bylaw, you must have intent to police it," he says.

What happened at Le Caron: see page 14