

Roman Catholic Board Concerned At Loss Of Senior Elementary Pupils

York County Roman Catholic School Board offers education in its own schools for Roman Catholic children up to grade 8 level, but in some areas it is losing a number of these children when they reach grade 7.

At a meeting of the board on November 17, Superintendent Joe Hodge told the trustees that some parents are concerned because the York County Board of Education is housing grades 7 and 8 in secondary school buildings and the Roman Catholic children want to join them in the "nice new buildings".

The parents worry that the children will grow up too quickly in the secondary school setting, which is very attractive to the youngsters, yet when parents are pressured by their children it is hard for them to resist, Mr. Hodge declared.

The board of education was forced to relocate some of the senior elementary students in September, 1969, because of serious overcrowding in public schools. At the same time, several of the secondary schools had empty rooms.

Area boards which were amalgamated in January, 1969, to form the county board had planned schools and additions much larger than were needed to accommodate the grade 9 to 13 pupils in the area.

With space available, the board of education could not justify additions to its elementary schools, and at present there are 160 grade 7 pupils and 146 grade 8 pupils attending Stouffville District High School, 191 grade 8 pupils at Markham District High School, 90 grade 8's at Sutton, and 292 at Huron Heights Secondary in Newmarket.

Principals of the schools concerned have reported to the board of education that it is working out very well and in most cases the children and

their parents are satisfied with the arrangements.

The Roman Catholic Board has another concern, however. Ratepayers who declare themselves as separate school supporters pay education taxes to the Roman Catholic Board for elementary education, but once an elementary school pupil leaves the Roman Catholic system and enters the public school system the parents must pay taxes or tuition fees to the board of education.

This usually means that the Roman Catholic Board loses the assessment, and if there are younger children in the family, the board is faced with the choice of educating them for nothing or insisting that they leave the separate school system.

This does not apply when a child graduates from grade 8 to grade 9 for Roman Catholic school supporters also pay toward the secondary school system.

Mr. Hodge estimates that at present about 85 percent of Roman Catholic children in York County are attending Roman Catholic Schools.

A year ago the board hired an assessment officer to visit Catholic families to encourage them to send their children to the separate schools, and Mr. Hodge does not want to see the trend reversed. He has written to Frank Kinlin, assistant deputy minister of education pointing out that the trend toward housing grade 7 and 8 pupils in secondary school buildings could

have serious detrimental effect on the separate schools, which are geared to serve students to the end of grade 8.

Metro Roman Catholics Concerned

The York County Board seems to be more successful than the Metro Roman Catholic School Board in its aim to educate all Roman Catholic children.

At a meeting on November 17, the Metro Board Chairman Joseph Fullerton reported that only about 55 percent of Roman Catholic children in Metro up to grade 8 are attending separate schools.

He recommended that the board base its needs on the idea of educating 100 percent of Roman Catholic children, and suggested the board petition the provincial government to have taxes on Roman Catholics go to their board unless parents specifically directed otherwise.

At present, all taxes go for public schools unless they are directed to the separate system.

His recommendation will be discussed by the board's planning and development committee.

The Metro Board's Superintendent of Planning and Development Ed Neville said in an interview that distance is a factor contributing to the relatively small enrollment of Roman Catholic children in Metro's separate schools.

In areas where the children live close to the Roman Catholic school, the percentage of Roman Catholic children enrolled is much higher, declares Mr.

Neville.

"We are trying to get our schools closer to the children."

The Metro Board provides buses for children who live more than one and one half miles from the nearest Roman Catholic School and in cases where there is a serious safety hazard for children walking.

His board has no figures to indicate how many children are lost to the system in transfers to senior public schools and junior high schools in Metro.

In York County, says Mr. Hodge, losses to senior public schools have been higher in some areas than in others, but loss to the Roman Catholic system.

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A recommendation of the finance committee of the 1971 Richmond Hill Town Council, with Ward 1 Councillor Andy Chateaufort as chairman, that cards bearing the telephone numbers of the fire department, police department, ambulance and town office be sent to every householder within the extended bounds of Richmond Hill in preparation for January 1, was accepted by the organizational committee November 16.

This recommendation was opposed by Reeve Donald Plaxton, who challenged, "They can all use a phone book, I hope. Most of the cards will find their way straight into the waste basket, a complete waste of money."

However, the majority of council added that the cards should be sent.

Councillor Stewart Bell thought it was an excellent idea. "We have a grapevine in Ward 5, through a citizens' group which will get the word around—but we need the cards, too," he declared.

When the reeve offered the suggestion that residents within the present boundaries of Richmond Hill did not need to receive these cards, Mayor William Lazenby reported that he knew of a case which proved they were needed. A young child died because its parents' neighbors to the community, called the Toronto Fire Department for a resuscitator. That department responded but to a similar address in the city. By the time local help arrived, it was too late to save the child.

The organizational committee, composed of those elected to the 1971-72 council, also asked the region to inform them as soon as possible if it will have the staff to handle the payroll and accounts payable for those services which will become regional responsibilities on January 1—police, day care centre, water and sewer trunk systems.

The town's staff wishes this information so it can be set up to continue these payments until the region is in a position to handle them.

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