

Queen's Park Report

Answers on German Mills woes inadequate

By ALF STONG
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On Friday, the 8th day of June the Minister of Education provided the House with a written answer to the questions I had placed on the Order Paper on May 16th concerning German Mills Public School.

The questions which I specifically asked of the Minister appeared on the Order Paper in the following form:

"Will the Minister of Education cause an investigation to be made into the overcrowding conditions which exist at the German Mills Public School in Markham?"

"Will the Minister explain the policy of the Ministry which appears to prefer the bussing of pupils to distant empty classrooms in the Regional Municipality of York rather than construct new facilities or add on to existing facilities where circumstances warrant?"

"Will the Minister review the policy of the Ministry which requires that prior to the building of a school, there exist sufficient number of children in the area to

equal 80 per cent of the projected capacity of the said school and apply that formula to the building of a school on the Flowerdale site in the Town of Markham, in order to accommodate the excess enrollment in the German Mills Public School which is equal to 123 per cent of that school's designed capacity?"

"Will the Minister review the immediate need for a new school on the Flowerdale site in the light of projected figures over the next five years which indicate that school-age children in the area will increase to approximately 900 and which figure does not take into account the fact that there is presently before the Ontario Municipal Board an application by a developer to build in the area an additional 190 townhouses?"

"If this project is allowed to proceed the projected figures indicate that school enrollment will not decline until 1995."

"Will the Minister initiate a policy which would provide architecturally acceptable but movable school buildings to ac-

commodate the shifting need of the school population?"

"How does the Minister reconcile the Ministry's policy of fiscal restraint which includes bussing and which dictates against the welfare of children, with the more important need of providing adequate facilities so that the educational and social needs of children may be properly met in their own community environment?"

"Will the Minister therefore satisfy the needs of the children in the German Mills area of Markham and build a second school on the Flowerdale site?"

The answers received were inadequate falling far short of the action required of the Ministry and served nothing more than to avoid responsibility of that Ministry in providing for the educational needs of children in our area.

The answers to the questions asked were as follows:

"(a) The Ministry of Education is presently

monitoring the situation at the German Mills Public School in Markham.

(b) When circumstances warrant, new or additional facilities are authorized. As subdivisions are developing, children are often bussed to empty facilities elsewhere in the jurisdiction while new student places are being planned and built.

(c) The German Mills Public School has a capacity of 616 pupils. The present enrollment (April 30-79) is 731. The extra pupils are housed in eight portables with a capacity of 270 pupils. The additional 115 pupils is not a sufficient number to warrant the construction of a new school.

(d) An addition to the Bayview Fairways Public School is planned by the York County Board of Education. This will relieve overcrowding at the German Mills School and provide sufficient accommodation to meet expected enrollment increases.

(e) The Ministry of

Education encourages the use of relocatable school buildings. These are presently available and being used by a number of school boards.

(f) Adequate facilities will be provided as the need is evident. Bussing of pupils to schools with empty space is an efficient use of facilities as an interim measure.

(g) The Ministry in co-operation with the York County Board of Education is working to satisfy the need for additional school accommodation in the German Mills Area of Markham by allocating money for an addition at the Bayview Fairways Public School which is adjacent to the German Mills area.

The same Minister told the Legislature this week that if there are too many applicants to Ontario's 22 community colleges this fall, many of those who are unsuccessful could find places in privately run industrial training programs and at private vocational school.

She was responding to a

charge by Liberal Leader Stuart Smith that the government "is still surprised" by a boom in applications at the regents for community colleges and "is unable to

act in accordance with it". He cited a report by the chairman of the council of regents for community colleges, who said there

are 90,000 applicants for 40,000 first-year spaces at the colleges.

In the Minister's view, however, a more accurate figure for the

number of applicants would be 55,000, when students who have applied to more than one college have been deducted.

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The board and staff of Richmond Hill Public Library extend an invitation to all handicapped patrons to visit the library and view the new facilities.

Renovations and modifications of the main branch on Wright Street have now been completed to facilitate easy access to the library by the handicapped.

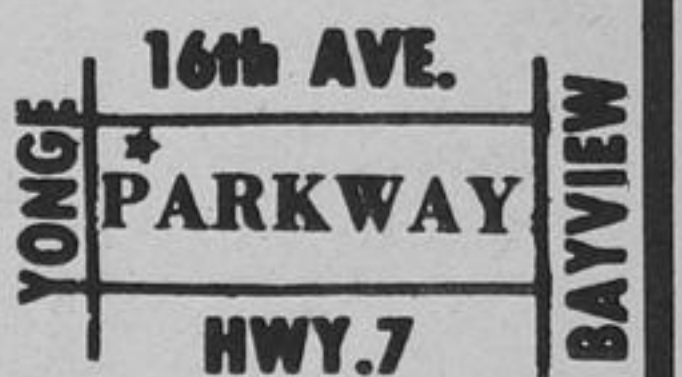
Wheelchair parking has been provided adjacent to

the new ramp entrance on the west side of the building and an elevator from the main floor to the lower level will allow free access to the audio visual department the Gordon McLaren Auditorium and the washrooms.

Special group arrangements can be made by calling the library and the board and staff hope as many as possible will use the new facilities.

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