

# Innovative programs under the gun



Green sheds have sprouted along creeks in the Stouffville area and last week a press release from the Ministry of Environment explained the structures. This one is located on 19th Ave., just west of the 10th Line. The building is part of a comprehensive water

quality, quantity and sediment monitoring program being conducted on the Duffins Creek-Rouge River water system. The sheds house streamflow recorders and automatic suspended sediment samplers.

Don Bernard

By TED WILCOX  
**MARKHAM** — Donald Sim of Markham, newly elected chairman of the York County Board of Education would like to re-evaluate certain innovative programs approved by past boards.

Mr. Sim also told The Tribune in a recent interview that as chairman he hopes to make board meetings speedier and more orderly.

Among current school programs he questions are the "new math," the nine "professional development days" allowed teachers, and the investigation into "moral reasoning" in York County schools.

Regarding the latter program as it related to Markham District High School, he said: "The whole thing was ridiculous."

Furthermore, Mr. Sim said he "does not believe the open-concept schools are working."

The innovative programs often "sound good on paper, but when you translate them into

practice, they are simply paying someone's salary."

Noting that the Ontario Institute of Education had cited the York Board as "pioneers in innovation," Mr. Sim said he thought that the innovations have resulted in "some hasty policies."

Instead, Mr. Sim said he would like to see "penmanship, spelling, and sentence structure stressed again. Also, he favors such ideas as a 10 to 15 minute phys. ed. break in the classrooms that could "break up the monotony."

Regarding the conduct of the board meetings, Mr. Sim said he hoped things could move "a little more smoothly than in the past" when meetings could go on until the small hours of the morning.

He said he would first indicate to the members that they would go by the "Robert's Rules" of procedure, which among other things doesn't allow any member to speak twice until each has had a chance to speak once.

Because self-discipline didn't work in the past, Mr. Sim said discipline now must be imposed from the outside.

Speaking of last year's testing results which seemed to show that York students had declined in basic skills,

Mr. Sim said he disagreed with former chairman Merna Colbourne's assessment of them.

He said he felt the tests showed that York children indeed are less skilled in math, reading, etc., today.

The only valid point made by the "apologists" for the low scores, he said, might be that a typical classroom now includes more children who, in the past, would have been flunked.

The fact that kids today communicate more visually through TV, etc.) than through reading and writing, he said, was "a very minor argument" for the low scores.

"I think that for the amount of money spent and the cultural advantages of being next to Toronto...our kids should be in the 80th percentile (nationally), instead of us arguing about the 40th or 60th."

(York students finished close to the 40th percentile, but apologists said that the score was not that significant.)

One area that Mr. Sim did commend the past board about, was the way they began dealing with the teachers after the strike. He said he hoped the board would "continue on with that type of approach and be available to teachers."

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## Well problem brings plea for water

**BOX GROVE** — Water supply, generally one of the simplicities of life, has become a complex problem for a group of residents in the community of Box Grove.

In a letter presented at a recent meeting of Markham Council, Barry Needler said that all of the homes on Ridgevale Dr. and the 9th Line are on wells but some of these are experiencing a shortage of water.

Mr. Needler said that it had been rumored that the water table has been disturbed due to construction of sewers in the new housing developments at Highway 7 and the 9th Line.

"Nevertheless, it is not uncommon to see a water truck filling a well or hear a neighbor ponder the expense of drilling for more water," he said. "I have made enquiries at

the Water Works Department and understand that there are no plans to pipe water to the area in the near future."

Councillor Carole Bell told council that she was aware that the water shortage in that area was a real one, and that what water was there is often polluted.

"These people have tried to buy water from suppliers," she said. "But even this is difficult because they can't find enough people who sell water."

"The town owns trucks," she pointed out, "and I think we should look into the possibility of supplying water to the people in Box Grove who have the problem."

A motion was made and carried to refer the problem to the engineering committee for investigation.

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