

Chairman of Durham Board of Education Describes school funding 'crisis'

UXBRIDGE — An "accommodation crisis" faces schools throughout Durham Region including Uxbridge, says the chairman of the region's public board of education.

Ruth Lafarga appeared before Uxbridge Township Council Thursday to detail this and other issues facing Ontario's seventh largest school board.

Due to a difference in "rating factors" employed by her board and Ontario's education ministry, Durham now has more portables

in its system than any other public board.

Funding is not granted for classroom space above the figure reached through government calculations, thus forcing additional students into portable facilities.

"Basically, that rating factor is the big thing," chairman Lafarga said.

However, statistics indicate Uxbridge isn't as badly off as some of Durham's fastest growing municipalities, especially Ajax and Whitby.

Ajax, for example, had one in four of its students in portable classrooms as of September of 1985, while Uxbridge had a one-in-10 ratio.

Chairman Lafarga, who was accompanied by Uxbridge public school trustee Heather Beveridge, called for those with contacts in the Liberal government to exert pressure for more financial support.

"We need everyone's help in terms of lobbying for additional funding for our schools because it

really has an impact on the programs we can offer in the classroom," she said.

Whitby and Ajax are priority sites for new schools, noted Mrs. Beveridge, but Uxbridge could get another building in 1990.

Listed as some recent education improvements in Uxbridge are the new vocational wing at the secondary school and major public school renovations.

BUDGET

The board's 1986 budget will total about \$180 million in 1986, rep-

resenting an approximately 10 per cent tax jump over last year.

Mrs. Lafarga defended the increase, stressing it's needed to try and keep pace with the educational needs of over 48,000 students in Durham Region.

Nearly 60 per cent of each tax dollar raised in Uxbridge Twp. goes for education.

Mrs. Lafarga also looked to the future and said board members hope to soon establish new administration headquarters somewhere in the region.

She answered councillors' questions and admitted that, in the long run, the extension of separate school funding will have a major impact on her board.

Durham stands to lose millions of dollars, according to the chairman, as this funding system is fully implemented.

"If you think education is expensive, work out what it costs for ignorance," Mrs. Lafarga told Council members to conclude her presentation.



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Ruth Lafarga, chairman of the Durham Board of Education, addressed Uxbridge Township Council at a meeting March 27. She spoke of an "accommodation crisis" that she said affects schools in all parts of the region.

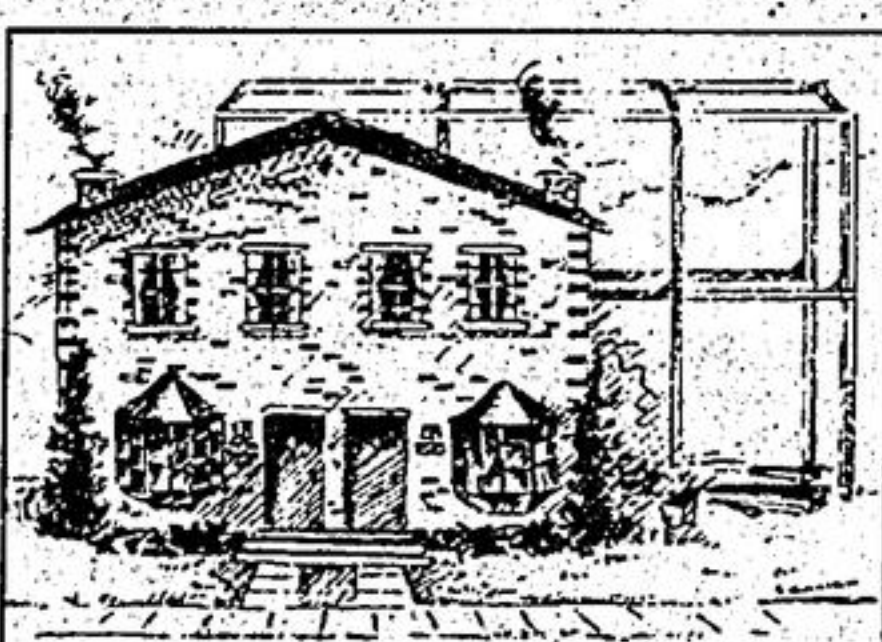
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