

Education

Task force recommendations will have little impact

A provincial task force promoting the elimination of half the school boards in Ontario will have little direct impact on York Region.

Last Wednesday, the Ontario School Board Reduction Task Force released its interim report that contains measures to redefine the way boards are run so that more money is directed into the classroom.

A plan to redraw the school board boundaries and erase up to 50 per cent of the 168 Ontario boards won't change the look of the York Region public and separate boards, two of the largest in the province.

"It's really a non-issue," said Bill Crothers, chair of the York Region Board of Education. "There's no apparent impact at the moment."

However, a proposal to cut down on the number of trustees could see up to 15 fewer trustees making decisions on behalf of local taxpayers and parents.

Crothers said the York public board has an enrollment of 78,000 students, and the population is growing. According to the government report, boards with more than 80,000 should have between 11 and 13 trustees.

And the 18-member separate board, which oversees a student population of 42,000, will have its trustee reps cut to 9. Three of the current trustees are responsible for the French-language section of the board. The task force plan would shift this responsibility to a board

that encompasses virtually all of southern Ontario. This board would be one of 15 French boards to replace the current four boards and 74 French sections.

Michel Fortin, chair of the York separate French language section, proposes that the headquarters of this proposed French board be based in Aurora.

The task force said that a board of fewer trustees will be relieved of some of its responsibilities. But Tina Rotondi Molinari, chair of the York


Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board, wondered who will take on these duties.

The trustee reduction won't take place until the next municipal election in 1997. The task force also recommends capping the yearly trustee salary at \$20,000. The York separate trustees now earn \$12,500 a year while their public counterparts make \$19,650. Crothers said a report due this fall on the changing face of the Greater Toronto Area will have much more impact on York Region

than the board reduction report. "The Golden Commission will effect people here. It will re-organize people in the GTA," he said.

Municipalities in the GTA are putting forth ideas on how the GTA should be governed. Area mayors will meet next Friday to talk about their perception of how the GTA should be run.

The Golden report is expected in mid-November. The final report of the school board reduction task force is due by the end of the year.



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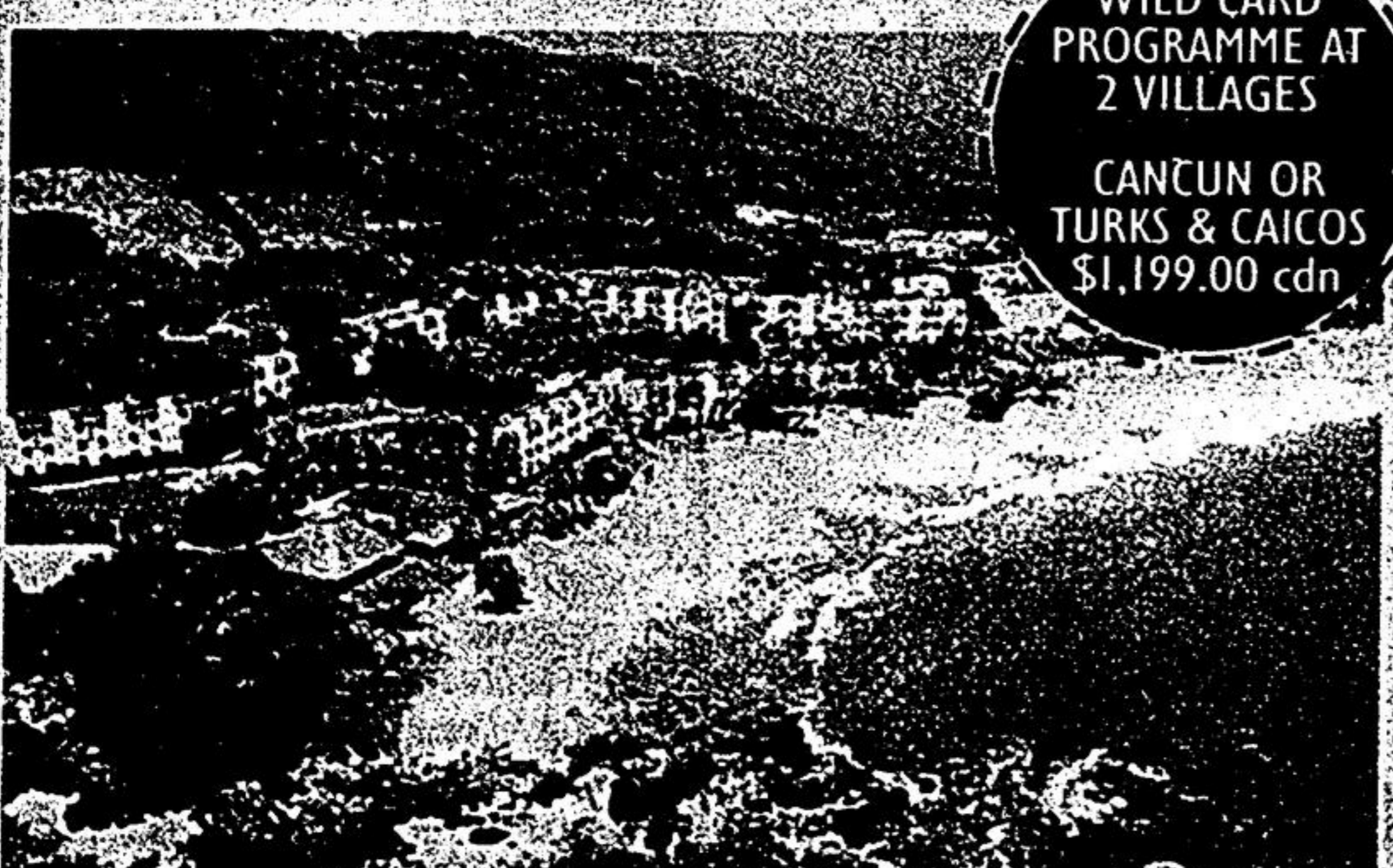
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