

## Boards asked to work with region

■ *Officials fight for more schools*

LISA QUEEN  
Staff Reporter

Threats are heating up in York Region to halt new home construction until schools are built.

"We will certainly say (any) subdivision will not proceed if schools aren't built in time to accommodate children," Vaughan Mayor Lorna Jackson assured school officials Thursday.

Public school board chair Bill Crothers and other officials from both York boards were at the regional council meeting to complain about provincial changes to education funding.

They're upset Queen's Park is insisting every classroom throughout the region be filled before a new school is built.

In a worse-case scenario, that could mean students in one end of the region would have to be bused to empty classrooms at the other end of the region before the board can request funding for any new schools.

Newmarket Mayor Tom Taylor has already called for all York mayors and school boards to meet with York-Mackenzie MPP Frank Klees over the funding issue.

Upset at the growing number of school portables in his town, Taylor wants to find a way of making new school construction a higher priority.

Jackson called on the boards to work with towns and cities. If board officials fear a new school will be delayed in any new subdivision, she advised them to contact local councillors and ask them to halt the planning approval process.

Markham Deputy Mayor Frank Scarpitti suggested they should start warning new homebuyers that it may be years before a proposed school is built in their subdivision.

The issue of delayed school construction has been a headache for years in York Region.

In the past, the province insist-

ed three-quarters of a new subdivision be occupied before a new school was built.

That has forced the boards to bus students to older, overcrowded schools and pack them into portables.

But mayors and councillors — who point out the Greater Toronto Area is on the leading edge of huge growth — are now threatening to use a new weapon to deal with the problem.

Municipal Affairs Minister Al Leach assured them this spring that they can stop new subdivisions until they are satisfied all services are going to be in place — including everything from schools to roads.

GTA mayors set up a task force in April to investigate whether they should slap a moratorium on development as a way of negotiating more school funding from the province.

Last month, Richmond Hill became the first municipality in York to officially threaten to use the tactic.



WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN: Peter Bramwell, 83, of Green Gables Nursing Home receives hoards of hugs for donating this hand-made, family-heirloom quilt, crocheted by his mother Camille when he was a young boy. The quilt was grand prize in a raffle to raise funds for cancer research. Kathleen Gordon, left, won the draw, conducted by Yvonne Salmon, activity co-ordinator for Green Gables. Liz Lightfoot, fundraising chair for the Markham/Stouffville unit of the Canadian Cancer Society, was on hand to accept a cheque for \$300. Photo by STEVE SOMERVILLE

## Town facelift now underway

JOAN RANSBERRY  
Staff Reporter

You're lookin' good Stouffville. Tonight, a committee struck to give downtown Stouffville a much-needed facelift, is delivering a what's-done and what's-to-come report.

Committee chairman Eric Button said the meeting, which is being held at the train station, will give people a chance to discuss the "health and future well-being of the business community" in downtown Stouffville.

"The first steps to improve the downtown are now being completed and we wish to start planning for further improvements," said Button.

The long-awaited make-over has begun; soon, all the dull gray cement planters that line Main Street will be gone; ugly signs will

disappear; weeds will be pulled; new benches will be in place; beautiful flowers are already hanging from the upgraded lamp posts.

Even the fire hydrants are being repainted.

Down the road, the street lights will be dimmed, giving the downtown a softer and more appealing look.

The meat and potatoes of the rejuvenation plan, featuring a traditional mixed formal theme, was unveiled in March.

Members of the local Business Improvement Area (BIA) and its revitalization committee have been very busy.

BIA member Lorretta Lavell has visited businesses and is giving an overview of what's in and what's out for the downtown core.

The plan includes:

- removal of all planters on Main Street

- removal of unnecessary signage

- painting lamp posts black

- erecting hanging baskets

- Library Lane will have entrance promenade baskets done in the town colours blue and yellow

- new benches

- new garbage receptacles

- a much-improved maintenance and fertilization program

- fire hydrants painted

- a Blue and Yellow Garden Contest for best garden bed, best balcony and best window display

- town colours will be used in flower beds at appropriate sites throughout town, including at the municipal office on Civic Avenue

- upgrade of services including street, sidewalk, cleaning and weed pulling

Armed with a modest budget, including \$15,000 from the town, the committee, under the direction of Lavell, is doing the job.

## Teachers fear mass firings

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strikes across Ontario next fall. "McQueen would typically handle negotiations for a teachers' union local once each year. But he already has four scheduled.

"Teachers view the new funding formula as an attack on unions. Some even believe the government is setting the stage for a mass firing.

"I don't think they could possibly fire that many teachers and still have a school system," said McQueen. "Toronto alone has 8,000 teachers. There are a lot of new teachers out there, but not that many."

"None of us want a strike — we want settlements. If it is part of a larger scheme, they have proven to be devoted so they are capable of doing whatever they choose to do."

But York-Mackenzie MPP Frank Klees said there is no plan brewing at Queen's Park to fire teachers if a massive strike occurs.

"I think we're optimistic that at the end of the day, the process will bring a resolution," Klees said yesterday. "The process is in place; everyone has a right to take advantage of due process and... when the process is followed and the decision made, I expect there will be compliance."

Klees pointed out the new funding formula has provided \$130 million more for teacher salaries than was available last year. Should a strike occur, Klees suggested there wouldn't be much support from taxpayers who were stung by the province-wide action last fall.

"If teachers feel they are justified in withholding services once again, at least it will be a legal strike."

The Tribune is pleased to present:

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