

Dickson Hill Public School plans proper 'ending'

BY CHRISSIE O'BRIEN and HANNELORE VOLPE
Special

Dickson Hill Public School — the area's French immersion school since 1985 — is closing, at least temporarily, but not without a proper send-off.

The Hwy. 48 school hosts an open house on Wednesday from 3 to 5 p.m. All former teachers, students, parents and staff members are invited. During the day, pupils and staff will share a huge cake decorated with a photo of the entire

current student body, noted principal Suzanne Tordjman.

In 1997 the school was sold to the French Language Public South-West District School Board. The immersion program continued to be delivered by public board staff.

Next year, the 300 students from the Dickson Hill French immersion program will attend Glad Park Public School in Stouffville as well as Franklin and Buttonville schools in Markham. An addition is being built at Glad Park.

"We are continuing to see a steady demand for French immer-

sion. Moving the program to a bigger school is part of the growth strategy," said Ross Virgo, spokesperson for the York Region District School Board.

Dickson Hill has had English language junior and senior kindergartens, with French immersion from Grades 1 to 8.

Departing students are compiling a time capsule of yearbooks, writings, photos and other memorabilia.

They hope it will eventually be stored at Black Creek Pioneer Village, where the original Dickson Hill school house was moved to in

the 1950s.

The current Dickson Hill building opened in 1959.

According to trustee Randev Jaimini there is no concern that the school will be demolished after the public board moves out.

"If the French board was going to dispose of the property it would have to go through certain channels.

"It has to be offered to other educational institutions first. Only when they've refused it can it go to private channels," he said.

Mr. Jaimini says there is no move

in that direction at this time, and the school will remain as an educational institution under the French board — something the public board is happy about as its area office is on the Dickson Hill property.

Representatives for the French board say no decisions have yet been made about the Dickson Hill property.

"The school will be French language as opposed to French immersion, meaning at least one parent has to be Francophone," said Jean Luc Bernard, Director of Education.

Residents 'served well' despite shortage of doctors

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report, which looked at 22 indicators to rank communities' health.

Indicators include life expectancy, heart attack survival, stroke survival, low birth weights, hip fractures, hip replacements, knee replacements, pneumonia and flu, mammograms, Pap smears, hysterectomies, prostatectomy admissions, physicians per capita and specialists per capita.

Centres were divided into three groups — 15 areas that benefit from the advantages associated with being home to a medical school such as Toronto and Montreal, other major communities including Markham/Richmond Hill and rural areas.

"The results for (other major communities) show that affluent suburbs and satellite communities remain among the best places to get sick," the magazine concluded.

"Many have impressive health-care centres of their own, bolstered by the services available in large urban facilities just a short ambulance ride away."

Northwest Vancouver led the pack this year, retaining its top ranking with first place scores in a number of areas such as life expectancy, hip replacement, preventable hospital admissions and physicians per capita.

In the Greater Toronto Area, the area identified as Mississauga/Brampton/Burlington was tops, coming in fourth overall in Canada.

Meanwhile, Markham/Richmond Hill was listed as fifth in life expectancy, 17 in heart attack survival, eighth in stroke survival, 28 in low birth weights, 31 in caesarean sections, 46 in hip fractures, fourth in mammograms, 18 in Pap smears, first in knee replacements, 12 in asthma hospital admissions, 46 in physicians per capita and 42 in specialists per capita.

Dr. MacLean said the report highlights areas that need improvement, such as ensuring babies aren't born at low birth weights. But given the physician shortage, he said residents are receiving quality health services.

"What we do, we do pretty well."

Dr. MacLean wasn't surprised Peel Region municipalities outperformed Markham/Richmond Hill, arguing York has traditionally fared poorly in government funding compared to its neighbouring regions.

"The facts are the facts. We know Peel, compared to York Region, has significantly higher spending on health services," he said. "We're lowest of per capita health-care and hospital spending by a significant amount."



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