

LEARNING: Paying more for copyrighted material

# Act boosts York school board's costs

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A decision to increase fees to use copyrighted material in classrooms will cost York's public school board an additional \$300,000 annually.

The federal government recently adopted the Copyright Modernization Act, aimed at bringing Canadian copyright law up to date for the digital age while protecting and creating jobs, promoting innovation and attracting new investment to Canada, according to Industry Minister Tony Clement.

However, the new law also allowed Access Copyright, the agency responsible for issuing licences to those wanting to use copyrighted material, to double the fee to use copyrighted material, such as articles and passages in books, in school classrooms to \$5.16 per student.

The licence gives educators and students advance permission to copy from millions of copyright-protected newspapers, magazines, journals and books

without having to obtain the go-ahead every time something is distributed in the classroom.

While it doesn't seem like much per student, the collective total is large. The York Region District School Board is expecting a 1-per-cent increase in student population this year, bringing enrolment to 116,000. When added up, the fee is close to \$600,000, board spokesperson Ross Virgo said.

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"The new legislation has more than doubled the fee," he said. "It's something we just have to hold our nose and pay."

Access Copyright originally proposed a fee of \$12 per student, which would have cost the

local school board more than \$1 million in annual fees, said Ontario School Boards Association finance director Wayne McNally.

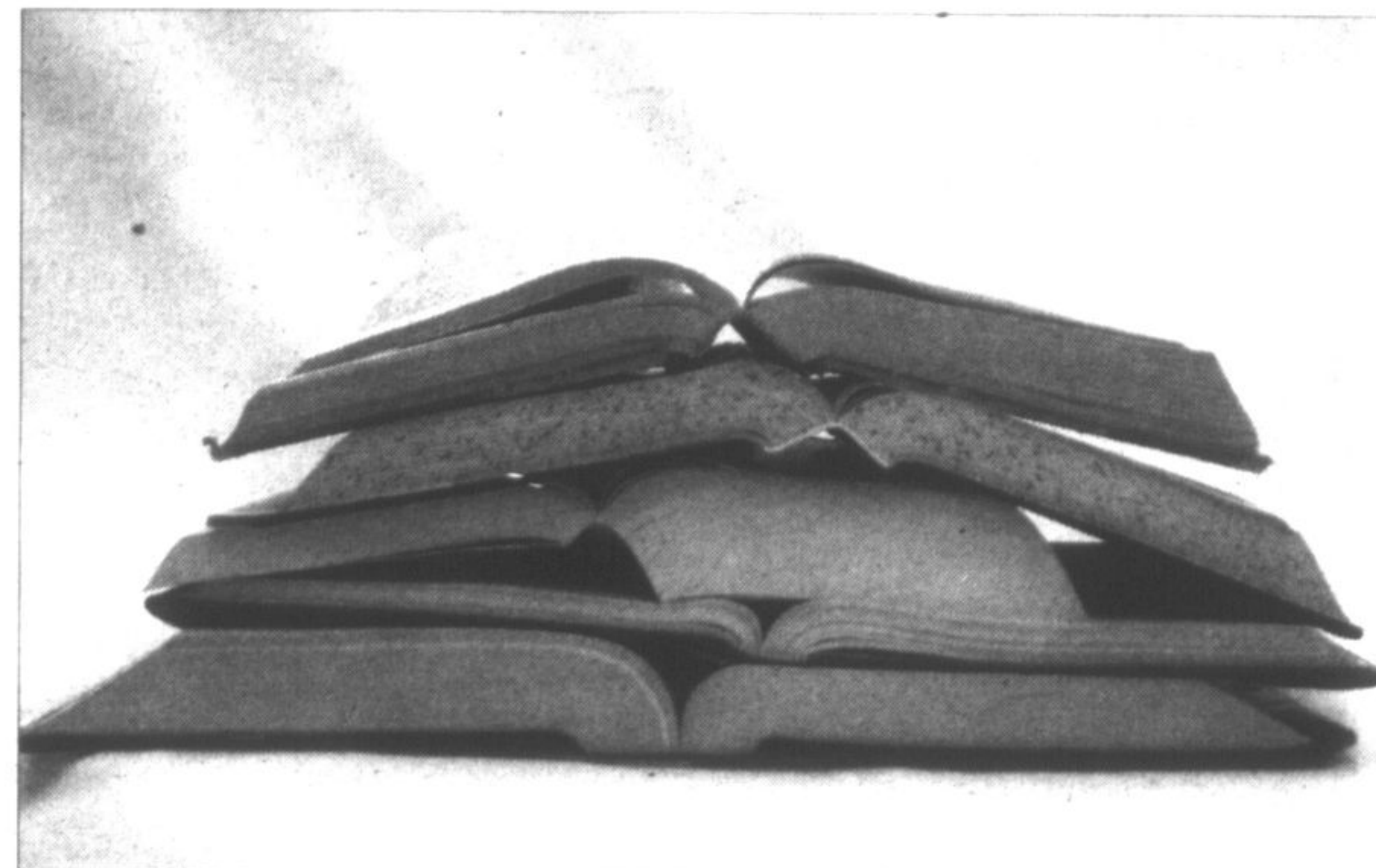
After negotiations, the agency settled on \$5.16 per student.

There was a retroactive clause in the deal, but the Ontario government has stepped up grants to school boards to cover the fees. The boards remain responsible for the fee going forward.

July 27, the Supreme Court ruled copying tests and exams should be excluded from the fee based on an appeal filed by the association, however, it will do little to decrease the fee.

"The school boards have to have a balanced budget so they will be looking to cover the extra cost," he said. "Every board will have a different strategy, but, unfortunately, it means they are likely to cut in other areas."

The public board won't pass the additional cost to students or taxpayers. Instead it will work to absorb the cost through additional pupil funding through pupil population growth, Mr.



STAFF PHOTO/SUSIE KOCKERSCHIEDT

New legislation means school boards will have to pay more to photocopy and distribute copyrighted material to students.

Virgo said.

"Not all of this funding goes to pencils and teacher salaries," Mr. Virgo said. "It just means some hard decisions will have to be made."

It is never easy for a board to

come up with additional funds to cover an operating cost increase, he added, noting other projects will have to be set aside.

"Classroom expenses are top priority and, in this case, it fits into that category," he said.

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## Driver facing charges

A 30-year-old Stouffville man was arrested after several people called police in Barrie to report a vehicle being driven erratically on Hwy. 400 Tuesday night.

Motorists said they had to take evasive action to avoid collisions.

OPP officers pulled over the vehicle on Hwy. 400 at Mapleview Drive and saw suspicious objects in the back of the car.

The man was arrested on an outstanding warrant.

He also faces charges of possession of property obtained by crime under \$5,000, failure to comply with undertaking or recognizance, careless driving and driving under suspension.

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