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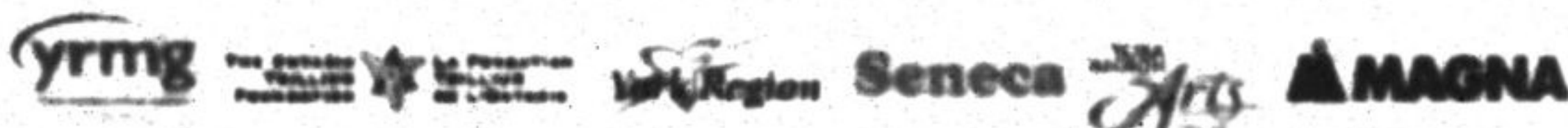


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LEARNING: York boards wants classes through Dec. 23

Christmas break may start later

BY TERESA LATCHFORD
tlatchford@yrmg.com

Your children's Christmas break may start later this year.

The York Region and York Catholic district school boards have submitted a request to Education Minister Leona Dombrowsky to keep students in school until Dec. 23.

The request comes after the boards heard from parents that the later start would better match their work schedules.

If approved, students would return to class Jan. 9.

The public board has also fielded concerns from parents about children, particularly younger ones, having too much time off before the actual holiday, spokesperson Ross Virgo said.

Some parents find it difficult to arrange child care before Christmas as most parents work right up to Dec. 25.

This also factored into the board's thinking, Mr. Virgo added.

Last year, students were off a week before Christmas and returned to school Jan. 2.

"We also want to have our holidays coincide with other school districts because of the crossover," Mr. Virgo added. "There are families with children in different school boards and teachers may work in different school boards than their children attend."

Several boards across the province conducted surveys, giving parents three options, according to Ontario Public School Boards' Association president Catherine Fife. When given the option to leave the holiday schedule the way it is, shift the majority of the holiday

from December to January or to do a mid-week split, most parents favoured the shift.

"Some felt it would be a fuller break if it was moved to after Christmas," she said. "It makes sense."

The ministry has confirmed the submission of modified school year calendars from the majority of boards across Ontario, according to ministry spokesperson Gary Wheeler.

Some parents find it difficult to arrange child care before Christmas as most parents work right up to Dec. 25.

School boards are tasked each year with creating a calendar to best meet the needs of their communities while ensuring students are in school for the required 194 instructional days.

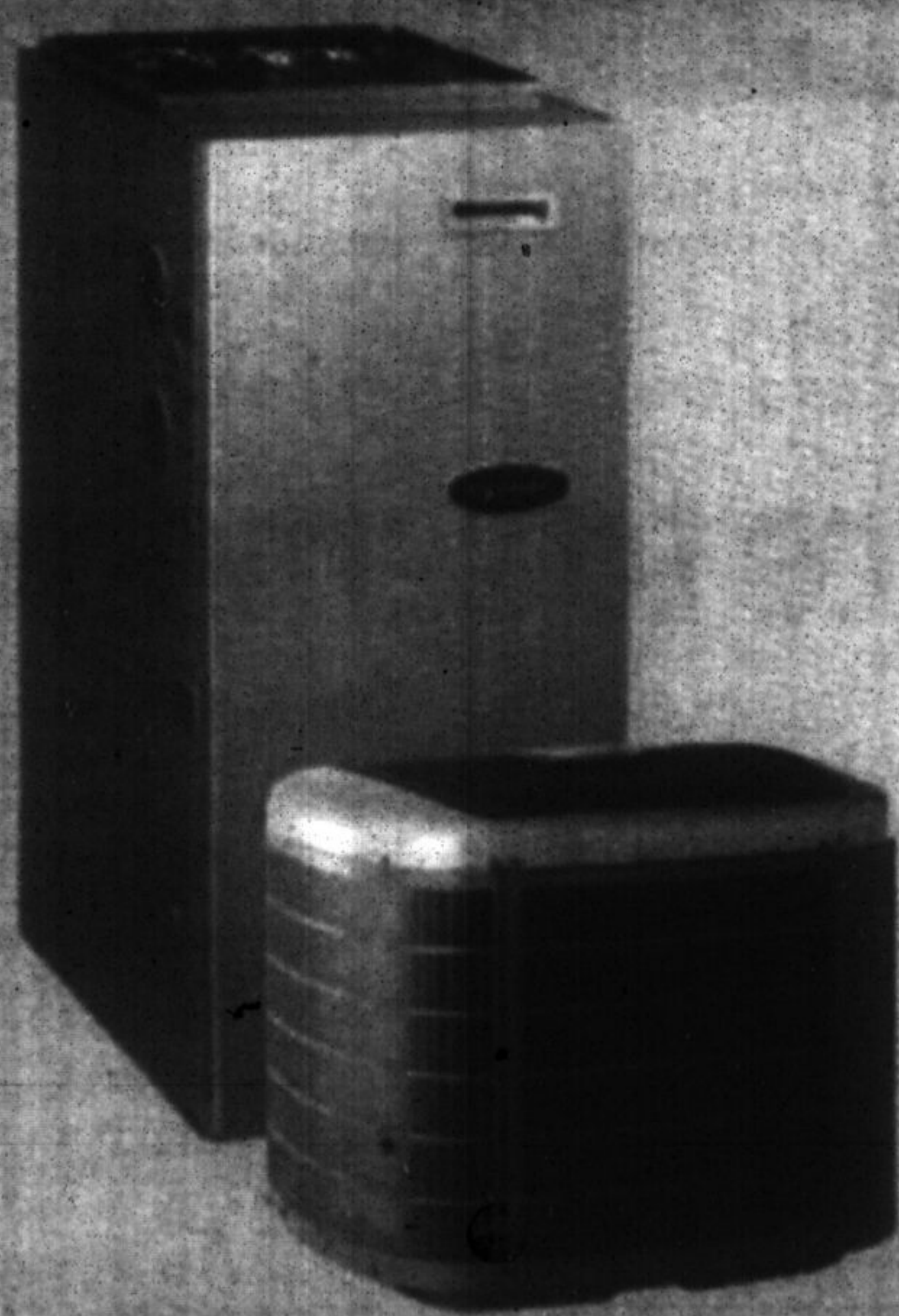
Boards wishing to use a modified school calendar for schools in their jurisdiction must request permission of the minister, Mr. Wheeler said.

Along with the request, boards must submit documentation indicating their communities have been consulted and are aware of the proposed modifications.

The ministry is reviewing the requests and, if approved, the changes will provide consistency in school year calendars across the province.

Approvals are expected this spring.

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