

Virtual school tour a learning experience

Military families transferring to Petawawa will be able to tour their child's school online through a new program launched by the Conseil des écoles catholiques de langue française du Centre-Est.

The French-language board broke new ground yesterday when it unveiled its virtual tour of Centre scolaire catholique Jeanne-Lajoie in Pembroke. The project was funded through grants from Heritage Canada.

The board also launched revamped versions of its secondary schools' websites yesterday.

The Pembroke elementary and secondary facility was selected as the subject for the online tour, largely to serve military families being transferred to Canadian Forces Base Petawawa who want to view the school their child will

be attending prior to their arrival.

The tour includes interactive video, interviews with school administrators and students and rotating images of sections of the building. "We offer our full support of this progressive initiative that will ultimately benefit both the military and civilian families of this community," said CFB Petawawa Base Commander Lt.-Col. Dave Rundle in a news release. "This new virtual capability will help families make informed decisions relating to school choices in a timely manner."

Jeanne-Lajoie's virtual tour for both elementary and secondary wings can be found at jeanne-lajoie.ecolecatholique.ca. The secondary school websites are at ecolecatholique.ca/fr/Liste_des_ecoles_53.html.

— Sun staff

Board bus policy gets bumpy ride

Ban on alternating pickup, dropoff points unfair, mom says

LAURA CZEKAJ
Sun Media

A local mom is seeking answers from the Catholic school board after it stopped providing separate school bus pickup and dropoff locations for her children at both her and her ex-husband's residences.

In the eight years since the couple split up, Samantha Hastie's children, ages 12 and 14, have been alternating buses each week depending on whether they were staying with their mom or dad, who have a shared custody agreement.

Initially, the kids were attending St. Leonard Catholic School and are now both attending St. Mark High School.

This year the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board notified Hastie that the service had been provided in error and would be discontinued.

Hastie moved to Manotick Station Rd. a little over a month ago from Osgoode and the children continue to receive busing services from her house. When the children are staying with their dad in Kars, they have to find their own way to school.

Safety issue

"If it's not a safety or money issue, then why can't they allow more than one bus?" she asked.

It's a matter of safety, according to the school board.

David Leach, superintendent of finance and administra-

tion, wouldn't discuss Hastie's case specifically but said the board's transportation policy specifies that pickup and dropoff locations be the same, five days a week, throughout the school year.

"We do not provide transportation to two different addresses three days a week, or two days a week, or alternating in any form."

Parents may specify a different dropoff location, such as at a caregiver's, as long as it's consistent.

"The reason for the policy is safety, especially with elementary-age children," Leach said. "To do otherwise can produce a situation that is unsafe in terms of confusion on the parts of parents, students, the bus drivers and teachers."

Hastie's trustee, John Curry,

is expected to raise the issue at an upcoming meeting. Hastie is also trying to form a group of like-minded parents, especially in rural areas, wanting to fight the policy.

"In the city, teens can take any bus they want and they can take OC Transpo buses and they can go to any location, any time," she said.

The separate school board is not alone in its policy. The public school board also provides consistent bus routes.

Leach said that while the board is "entertaining" the issue, policies are unlikely to change soon as the board becomes involved in the initial stages of a provincially mandated transportation consortium with the public board.

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Resource bank set to make its mark

Laura Czekaj
Sun Media

An online teachers' resource bank launched by the Ontario Ministry of Education will enable teachers, parents and children across the province to learn from each other.

The online service is provided free by the province

and offers lesson plans, activities and multimedia items to elementary and high school teachers and students at 55 participating English-language school boards.

A small group of teachers at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board have been using the service to start, with more teachers expected to become

involved in the coming weeks.

Tim Hawes, assistant manager of information technology, said this is the first general repository for all course areas operated by the province.

There have been smaller, more course-specific ventures, but not of this magnitude.

"This will be a great resource

for teachers to supplement classroom learning," said Kimberly Webster, eLearning consultant with the board.

Tutorials

At the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board, superintendent Brent Wilson said teachers will be trained on using the resource bank over

the next six months.

"This really makes it easier for everyone to be involved in educating a child," he said.

Even a parent who notices their child is struggling with a particular component of the curriculum can log onto the site and find appropriate tutorials.

French-language schools

currently have access to online resources through Service d'apprentissage médiatisé franco-ontarien.

The resource bank can be found at elearningontario.ca and participating school boards will provide user names and passwords.

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Trustees OK closing of Grant, Christie

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board trustees voted last night to close two Nepean elementary schools, Grant Alternative and Christie Public, by fall.

Grant Alternative School will close and the Grant Alternative program will move into the Christie Public School building. Christie Public School will cease to exist in order to accommodate the Grant Alternative program. Christie students will be able choose to enrol in the relocated

Grant Alternative program. They will also have a one-time option to go to either Pinecrest Public School or Leslie Park Public School, both of which are also operating below capacity. Both Grant and Christie schools have been operating below capacity.

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Board investigates ban on cellphones at schools

Toronto District School Board staff will study the possibility of banning cellphone use in classrooms and halls, a move trustees could vote on in April.

Trustee Josh Matlow had proposed the idea in a motion slated for discussion tonight, noting North American schools, from New York City to Gatineau, Que., have banned cellphones after students used them in inappropriate ways like talking during classes or filming teachers.

Matlow withdrew his motion, after learning staff already plan to study the feasibility of a ban.

Province officially disperses funds for French-as-a-second-language programs

By Kathleen Hay
Standard-Freeholder
CORNWALL

The province's education minister was in Cornwall to announce the next phase of funding for French-as-a-Second-Language (FSL) students on Tuesday.

But a couple of school board officials said she should have brought more money with her.

Education Minister Kathleen Wynne confirmed the dispersement of some \$8.5 million the federal gov-

ernment contributes to the Canada-Ontario Official Languages in Education agreement to support FSL programs over the four years of its mandate.

Some \$8.5 million a year, for four years, is being dispersed among English school boards in the province, for a total of \$34 million.

In 2005-06, the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario received \$97,700 for FSL, while the Upper Canada District School Board obtained \$176,700.

Funding for the CDSBEO for the

remaining years is: \$92,600 (2006-07), \$153,600 (2007-08) and \$144,500 (2008-09), for a total of approximately \$390,700 over the remaining years.

Two board officials said Tuesday more would have been nice.

"I was sort of getting excited," said board newcomer, Trustee Todd Lalonde. "I expected this to be a gifts-are-starting-to-come occasion.

"To be honest, I'm happy money's been brought to our area, but it's definitely not enough."

Board vice-chair Nancy Kirby also admitted, too, she had hoped for a bit more. Budget deficits had forced funding for full-time junior and senior kindergarten to be slashed in half by 2000, and some families have gone to the French board where federal funding is available for the full-time programs.

"We'll have to discuss this (funding) at the board table," said Kirby. "We'll find out there where we can put it."

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Students have a huge asset with two languages: Wynne

MONEY: from the front.

Still, said Ron Eamer, the board's chair, the minister's visit was a positive indication of support the province is offering for FSL programs.

"The bottom line is there are a lot of boards across the province. We have to more or less stand in line and advocate for our students. Anytime a minister comes to visit at a school is icing on the cake," Eamer said.

Wynne said students have a great asset when they learn two languages.

"This government recognizes the tremendous advantage students have when they speak two or more

languages," she said. "Learning a second language not only strengthens students' problem-solving, reasoning and creative thinking skills, but also develops their understanding and appreciation of diverse culture."

The area's other English-language school board, Upper Canada, will see: \$103,000 (2006-07), \$152,000 (2007-08) and \$76,000 (2008-09), for a total of \$331,000 for the duration of funding.

Prior to arriving at Immaculate Conception shortly before 11 a.m., Wynne visited General Vanier Intermediate School, then had lunch at Cornwall Collegiate and Vocational School, before dropping by Ecole secondaire L'Heritage.

Queen's Park n'a pas de fonds pour décontaminer Le Trillium

Le Droit

La députée provinciale d'Ottawa-Vanier, Madeleine Meilleur, avance que son gouvernement n'a pas l'argent pour aider les gens de l'École élémentaire Le Trillium à décontaminer la cour de cet établissement d'enseignement qui se trouve sur des terrains qui ont été pollués voilà plusieurs décennies par l'aciérie Dominion Bridge.

M^{me} Meilleur a réagi ainsi, hier après une grosse journée de travail, à un article publié samedi dans *Le Droit*. Celui-ci portait sur les difficultés rencontrées par les parents membres du conseil d'établissement de cette école, qui souhaitent rendre plus verte la cour d'école de leurs enfants.

Pour ce faire, un travail de décontamination des sols est nécessaire, une lourde besogne de plusieurs centaines de milliers de dollars.

«Je ne crois pas que le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario ait de l'argent pour décontaminer cette cour d'école, a-t-elle indiqué. J'appuie l'initiative de ces parents et je les encourage à continuer, mais ils devront peut-être trouver une solution pour la cour d'école qui ne nécessite pas de décontamination.»

Jean-Yves Lalonde plaide pour une réduction des taxes scolaires pour les entreprises

Le Droit

Robert Sweet et Jean-Yves Lalonde, respectivement présidents du Eastern Ontario's Warden's Caucus et des Comtés unis de Prescott et de Russell, exigent que le gouvernement de l'Ontario réduise les taxes scolaires des entreprises et des industries de la province pour favoriser l'économie de l'est de l'Ontario.

En rencontre prébudgétaire avec le ministre des finances de l'Ontario, Greg Sorbara, à la mi-janvier, MM. Sweet et Lalonde soutiennent que la facture de taxes des contribuables des secteurs commercial et industriel peut être de sept à huit fois plus élevé que celle des contribuables résidentiels dans certaines municipalités de la province.

« Il est impératif que nous réduisions le fardeau fiscal pour tous les propriétaires fonciers et il est particulièrement essentiel pour les industries et les commerces. Les taxes scolaires commerciales enlèvent de l'argent à nos employeurs, qui pourraient autrement utiliser ces fonds pour les investir dans leurs usines et leurs opéra-

tions », confie M. Sweet.

« Investir dans les entreprises signifie une plus grande croissance économique et plus d'emplois pour nos résidents », indique M. Lalonde.

FONDS DE PROSPÉRITÉ

Les deux hommes ont profité de la rencontre avec le ministre Sorbara pour lui rappeler d'autres doléances. Ils sollicitent un investissement de 20 millions \$ annuel du nouveau Fonds de prospérité afin de soutenir la croissance économique locale, et de l'argent pour la construction d'un réseau pour Internet à haute vitesse.

Ils aimeraient aussi obtenir des revenus associés aux quelque deux millions d'acres de terrain appartenant à la province. Pour l'heure, aucune des terres de la Couronne ne rapporte de revenu de taxes aux municipalités ou aux comtés, en dépit des services d'urgence qui desservent ces endroits.

Le Eastern Ontario's Warden's Caucus représente 13 comtés et municipalités qui s'étendent de la Ville de Kawartha Lakes, à l'ouest, aux Comtés unis de Prescott et de Russell à l'est.

Champion à 13 ans

J'ai toujours cru qu'aux échecs, l'expérience menait à une maîtrise parfaite.

Mais, comme dans bien des disciplines, il arrive qu'un joueur d'exception nous émerveille.

Récemment, le Cercle d'échecs de Hull tenait son championnat de parties rapides, soit cinq minutes pour chaque participant.

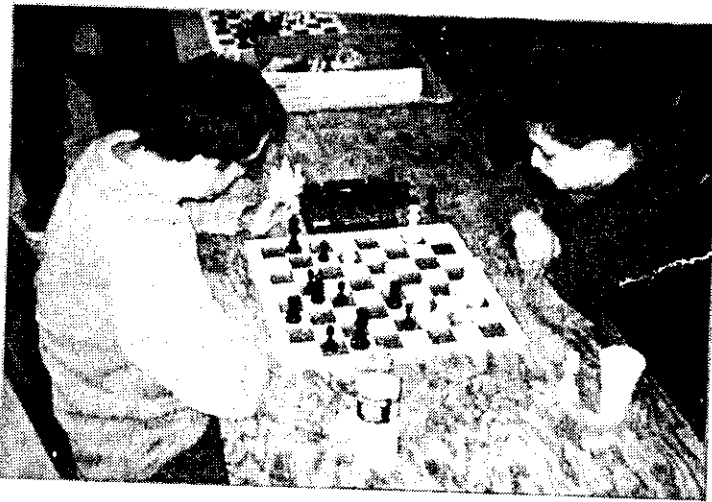
L'événement a attiré un nombre record de 33 joueurs ce soir-là, y compris sept joueurs de la catégorie Expert.

Tous ces joueurs aguerris s'affrontaient dans des parties où la rapidité et surtout une très grande maîtrise de la discipline menaient à la victoire.

À la grande surprise de ces « experts », le championnat a été remporté par un jeune garçon de 13 ans, **Karoly Szalay**, d'Ottawa.

Ce « Crosby » des échecs a donné une véritable leçon d'humilité à tous les concurrents.

Le Cercle tient ces activités à tous les mardis dès 18 h 30 au 120, rue Charlevoix, dans le secteur Hull.



Sur la photo, on voit Karoly affronter l'expert **Martin Malette** lors de la finale.