

West side French immersion students will be bused to Humberview in '16

By Bill Rea

French immersion students living on the west side of Caledon will be able to get bused to the program at Humberview Secondary School in Bolton.

The main catch is the service won't be available until the fall of 2016.

Trustee Stan Cameron, Caledon's representative on the Peel District School Board, was able to successfully get his motion passed at last Tuesday's Board meeting, with the amendment delaying the implementation until 2016. Cameron had wanted it to go into effect this fall, but his motion was deferred until last week until senior Board staff had a chance to meet with Town of Caledon officials to discuss possibilities for future transit in the area. He wasn't involved in these meetings, but he did say the deferral meant they passed the deadline for when student numbers have to be assigned to Humberview for the next school year.

Elementary students on the east side of Town can take French immersion at either James Bolton or Ellwood Memorial Public Schools, and then go to Humberview once they get into high school. Things have been tougher for kids on the west side. The French immersion program is at Herb Campbell Public School but Humberview is the only high school in Caledon offering the program, and the board has a policy about transporting these students.

"These are students who are going to have to find their own way to Humberview," he commented, adding there's no public transit in town for them to use.

Cameron mentioned the Board, in 2012, set up a secondary French immersion review committee. One of the findings, he said, dealt with "inadequate access for Caledon students living in the Mayfield Secondary School boundary."

The recommendation to provide busing to Humberview came from the Board administration, he said, although he added the vote narrowly passed by a 6-5 count.

Cameron said some of the opposition came because parents who live in areas where there is public transit don't have school buses taking their kids to French immersion.

"If we had public transit in this community, I would not be having this discussion," was the counter argument he said he used.

In terms of expense, Cameron said Board transportation staff predicted they need the equivalent of two full buses to get the west side kids to Humberview, costing about \$80,000 per year. He added if there's less than 33 students from the west side, they could do it in one bus.

Cameron said one problem has been students have to start French immersion in Grade 1, and after eight years, many of them want to carry on, taking advantage of dual-language diplomas and all the opportunities coming from that.

"Our kids on the west side were clearly shut out of that opportunity," he said.