

French students will be bused to Humberview

By Bill Rea

The Peel District School Board will be providing bus service to students living outside the area who attend Humberview Secondary School for French immersion and extended French.

The service will come into effect next September.

The Board approved two motions to extend the service put forth by Brampton Trustee Harkirat Singh and seconded by Stan Cameron of Caledon.

The motion to bus French immersion students noted there is currently no public transit in Caledon, but the Board provides busing for students living within the boundary area for Mayfield Secondary School. There are, however, students living in Brampton who attend Humberview who don't have access to buses.

Cameron was successful in April in getting bus service to Humberview for French immersion students living on the west side of Caledon.

He also said the impacted Brampton students live in an area bordered by Airport Road, Mayfield Road, Goreway Drive and Castlemore Road.

Mr. Singh said it wasn't fair that students in Brampton were not getting the same service their fellows in Caledon get.

Board Chair Janet McDougald observed there will be about 22 students involved, and the annual cost will be about \$16,000.

Mississauga Trustee Brad MacDonald agreed, commenting he never supported Cameron's motion in April, but since it passed, it's important that no group be left out.

Student Trustee Arunoshi Singh of Brampton agreed the service should be extended. She said she has to ride two or three buses per day to get to her classes, but she has access to public transit.

Student Trustee Kaustav Chaudhuri of Mississauga added students who have been in the French immersion program for eight years must have a passion for it, and they shouldn't be denied access.

Brampton Trustee David Green was another who didn't support Cameron's motion in April, but who agreed it was important to be fair to all.

"I don't see the difference between the students in Caledon and Brampton," he said. "They're all Peel students."

Mississauga Trustee Rick Williams observed the Board has always prided itself on the programs it offers, and if French immersion is one of them, then students should have access to it.

"I think it's only fair and equitable," he said.

Brampton Trustee Kathy MacDonald called it a "no brainer," and Mississauga Trustee Sue Lawton said she would "reluctantly" support it.

"We are a Board that champions fairness and equity," Mr. Singh said.

The motion regarding French immersion students passed unanimously, but there was opposition to passing the service to extended French kids. In the end, the motion passed.

Mr. Singh said he had been hearing from extended French parents, wondering what the difference was.

"I think parents deserve to have access to both programs," he commented.

The motion called for extending the bus service to students attending Humberview but who live outside the busing area.

Brampton Trustee Suzanne Nurse observed there will be nine affected students in Caledon and the cost of providing the service will be about \$40,000. There are 13 students in Brampton who are affected, and the cost will be about \$8,000. David Neale, controller of corporate services with the Board, explained the figures are higher in Caledon because the geographic area is so much greater.

Lawton was not prepared to support that.

"These are programs of choice," she said, adding if they spent too much on buses, it's money that wouldn't be spent on programs.

"Money that's spent on busing is not being spent in the classroom," Mr. MacDonald added.

Cameron pointed out extended French starts in Grade 7, and Humberview is the school Caledon kids use, as well as those in the impacted area of Brampton.

Graduates of the program get a Certificate of Bilingual Studies in Extended French upon graduation.

"Addressing transportation issues like this one is a byproduct of living within a board where urban meets rural," Cameron said. He also pointed out that if Caledon had transit, the matter would not have come up.

Cameron agreed there were concerns that this could be a precedent with Regional arts students in Caledon wanting busing too. He pointed out extended French is not a regional program, adding it's funded by the Province.

?This is not a slippery slope to me,? he declared.