

## New SouthFields Village school could operate in summer

By Bill Rea

A new school is in the works for SouthFields Village, and the Peel District School Board is looking to have it operate throughout the summer.

The Board's Physical Planning and Building Committee Monday night accepted the staff recommendation to have the facility be a balanced calendar school.

The recommendation was part of the Board's Annual Planning Document. It will be going before the full Board later this month.

The Planning Document stated the 650-student facility would be the third balanced calendar school in the Board, following Roberta Bondar and Ray Lawson Public Schools, both in Brampton.

The plan is for the new school to start operating in September 2017, but the new building will not be ready by then. Students will be housed for that school year at Countryside Village Public School in north Brampton. The Planning Document said there's enough space there to accommodate everyone for the year.

Caledon Trustee Stan Cameron told his colleagues the two balanced calendar schools have been successful, and he was confident this new one "will serve our community very well."

He also observed there are a lot of implications involved with this recommendation, and he praised Board staff for the thorough job that has been done.

"This has been a lot of work," he remarked. "This is the right thing to do."

The boundary area for the new school will be roughly bordered on the east by Old Kennedy Road.

Cameron said the academic year at the new school will actually start in August.

He also said students will get the exact same number of days off from class as those in other schools. They will be getting July off.

"The other four weeks are spread out throughout the year," he said.

The schedule for the current academic year at Roberta Bondar and Ray Lawson saw the kids get two weeks off early in October.

They will be getting an additional week before the start of the traditional two-week break at the Holidays, another week in February, ending with the Family Day long weekend, and there will be two weeks off, instead of one, at March break.

The advantage to this system is young people often get bored with two straight months away from school. "They're under-stimulated," Cameron observed.

He added the new school will be air-conditioned.

Shorter breaks spread across the year should mean less time is needed for review.

He added it should be a benefit to English as a second language (ESL) students, who normally would be exposed to just their mother tongue over the summer.

"They're not losing the new language skills," he said.

It will be possible for families to opt out of the balanced calendar program. Cameron said those students would go to James Grieve Public School on Bramalea Road. But he didn't think there would be many who would take that option. He said he's met with the principals of the other two schools.

"What those principals tell me is no one flexes out," he remarked, adding the principal at Ray Lawson has a waiting list of 70 kids who want in the program, but they don't live within the school's boundaries. "Clearly it's popular."

Cameron also said the concept of closing schools in the summer dates back to times when students would be needed to help out on family farms.

"It doesn't work all the time today," he said.