

Glen Abbey residents want say in school site decision

By **CHERYL ELLIOT**
Special to the North News

Glen Abbey residents will get an indication on whether or not they will get a high school in their community after the Property Committee of the Halton Board of Education meets next Tuesday.

The site designated for a high school at the corner of Pilgrims Way and Glen Abbey Gate is owned by developer Genstar.

According to Genstar's development manager for the Toronto region, Colin McGregor, the company has offered the board two options: buy the designated site, or look at purchasing an alternate Genstar property at the corner of Third Line and Upper Middle Road in a few years.

McGregor acknowledged that the board was in a difficult position because of the cutbacks in provincial funding.

"Boards are finding it very difficult to find funding to develop school sites," he said. "But by the same token, something has to give here."

McGregor explained that the Town of Oakville is leasing the high school site and this arrangement covers the cost of taxes for the property.

However, the Town will not be renewing the lease in 1994 and Genstar, which has been holding the property as a school site for seven years, would like the board to purchase the land or have the land rezoned for single family houses.

BUILD HOMES ON SITE

The developer has prepared a sub-division application for 85 single-family houses on the site.

"We are holding off our sub-division application until after Tuesday night," said McGregor. "We are giving the Board an opportunity to try and sort out this situation."

Should Genstar get approval to develop the school site, McGregor expects to be "putting shovels in the ground by next summer" and starting construction of homes by fall.

Two years ago in the capital forecast to the Ministry of Education, the Board slated a high school be built in Glen Abbey in 1997 - costing \$42.3-million - including the cost of the land and accommodating 1,500 students.

800 STUDENTS GO SOUTH

According to Gord Dixon, assistant superintendent of business of the Halton Board of Education, 800 high school students are currently bused from Glen Abbey to schools south of the QEW.

About 500 of the Glen Abbey students boost T.A. Blakelock High School population to 1,150, short of its capacity of 1,700. The remaining 300 students are transported to Queen Elizabeth Park High School.

Dixon said a five-year capital

forecast will be reviewed by the Property Committee next Tuesday before going to the board for approval.

He expects the Glen Abbey high school will be discussed at the meeting, as well as, the Genstar proposal to the board.

SECOND HIGH SCHOOL

A high school is also designated for West Oak Trails, but according to Dixon, no building site has yet been assigned.

"The need won't be there for a second high school in the next five year period," he said. "We will be concentrating on the first school for northwest Oakville."

Ward 4 Trustee, Penny Siebert, would like Glen Abbey "to retain a high school."

She feels that if the board accepts the alternate site from Genstar north of Upper Middle

Road, it is indicating that only one high school is needed for Glen Abbey and West Oak Trails.

"The issue for me becomes," said Siebert, "are the (board) staff projections, which were used to determine that we needed two high schools, still valid?"

Although she sympathized with Genstar's situation, Siebert said that it usually takes five to 10 years to get a school in developing communities.

"If the fact that it has taken so long is a reason to do so," she added, "then we would be changing designations for schools all over the province."

However, Siebert said if the board's projected student numbers do not support two high schools in the northwest section of Oakville, "then I obviously can't fight moving to one school."

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