

Peel Board chairman calls it quits

By STEVE PECAR
Staff Reporter

Kent closes book on political career that began with first Board in 1969

The chairman of the Peel Board of Education has resigned from his post.

Bill Kent, who at 20 years service was the longest serving board member, will be leaving to devote more time to his private management consulting firm. The move also leaves vacant Kent's seat as one of two trustee for Ward 2.

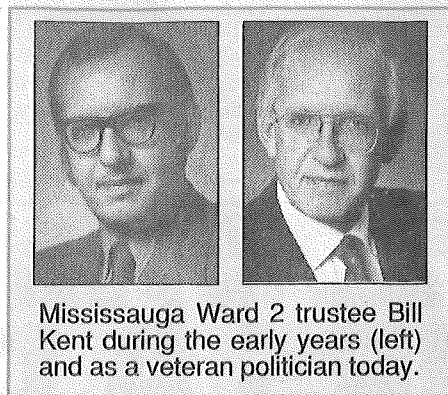
"It's a difficult decision, the Peel board has been part of my life for so long," Kent told *The Mississauga News* last night. "But I think it is time to move on and meet some more challenges."

Kent's decision marks the end of an era as he was the last original trustee from the board which was formed in 1969.

He held the Ward 2 seat for all of the years since, except a period from 1972-1976 when he took a voluntary absence.

Kent's years at the board also included an unprecedented 10 years as chairman which he served in three stints, with the most recent being from 1990 to the present.

He said during that time he watched the



Mississauga Ward 2 trustee Bill Kent during the early years (left) and as a veteran politician today.

board evolve from one that had a low-key approach to one that had grown to be the largest in Canada with more than 90,000 students and an annual budget of some \$650 million dollars.

"Bill Kent will be missed," said Ward 3 trustee Ruth Thompson, who now becomes

the most senior trustee on the board. "He was an outstanding chairman who had a firm grasp of the issues and how they should be done with. Filling his role will be difficult."

Bob Lee, director of education for the board said he has known Kent since the time when he was first elected and saw that he had a never-ending desire to the right thing for the students of Peel.

Lee said the past few years have been difficult for the board because of the economy and for a number of tense issues but Kent has always been up to meet the task.

"As a result, his influence on education in Peel will be long lasting," Lee said.

Kent said in looking back, the board may have grown too quickly and that decisions were often made by throwing money at problems.

In retrospect, because of the financial

◊ See *New Brunswick* on page 2

New Brunswick beckons to Bill Kent

◊ Continued from page 1

restraints all school boards face now, he said it would have been good practise to exercise a more conservative approach to handle the growth because the experience would have taught today's decision makers well.

Still, he said maybe that aggressive approach allowed the board to make gains that it would never be able to accomplish now.

On the future of education, Kent said he is angered by the provincial government's "indifference" towards the legitimate concerns that school boards have and he

intends on continuing to work to reform the system.

As a private citizen I will be able to speak out differently from when I was chairman," he said. "They didn't listen to me then, maybe they will listen to me now."

Kent said he began seriously thinking of resigning a year ago but decided to stay on to take the board through its budget process.

For the past several years he has maintained a residence in New Brunswick as well as Clarkson and although he said there has never been a problem with his commuting, his outside business interests now are such that it

recently where I was running the chairman's office out of airports," he said. "When I could see that I was going to have trouble giving 100 per cent to the board, I decided it was time to stop."

Kent's last duties as chairman will take place today when he leads a board meeting dedicated to social contract issues.

Meanwhile, the board will now after to decide how the vacant positions on the board will be filled.

While no official candidates have stepped forward for the chairman's job, it is believed that vice-chairman Beryl Ford from Brampton is interested.

As well, the board will have to decide if it should appoint another trustee for Ward 2 (the ward is entitled to two seats on the board) or fill the vacancy by appointment.

Because the cost to hold a bye-election can run anywhere between \$50,000 to \$100,000, it is expected the board will chose the second option with just over a year left in the term.

The Kent record

Bill Kent leaves behind a long career of educational service in Peel.

He was first elected to the board of education in 1969 where he served for two terms including a year as chairman in 1972.

After taking a leave from his trustee duties from 1973-1976, Kent was elected to represent Ward 2 in Mississauga in late 1976 and has represented the ward without interruption since.

In 1978, Kent began his second run as chairman of the board which lasted until 1984.

By 1985, Kent's influence ranged beyond Peel Region when he served as chairman of the Ontario School Trustees Council and from 1985 to 1987 he was also president of the Canadian School Boards Association.

Kent's third stint as chairman of the Peel Board of Education began in December of 1990, a position he has held to date.

takes him across the country.

"It was getting to the point