

Must cut spending

Province shifts onus to boards

Tough new guidelines on spending announced by Ontario Minister of Education Tom Wells will have a serious impact on the public school education system and the Halton Board will not escape the effect of the minister's announcement.

Director of Education Em Lavender and Superintendent of Business and Finance Bruce Lindley told trustees Thursday of the announcement and explained its ramifications.

In recent years the province has absorbed about 62 per cent of the costs of operating various boards of education across Ontario. Instead of 62 per cent, the board will be subsidized by 60 per cent at the elementary level and 54 per cent at the secondary level in 1976.

MLR rates up
Lindley noted he had not computed mill rate increases but he assured trustees they would be necessary as a result of the provincial crackdown on spending.

The Ministry of Education has said that only those capital projects that received sketch plan approval before Nov. 1, 1975 will proceed next year.

If the Ministry enforces that guideline to the letter of the law it could cause a delay in construction of a new high school slated for Acton. The board had planned to open a school in Acton in 1977 and one in Milton the following year.

Board officials told trustees the Acton school was five days late in getting its approval to be within the guidelines.

Priority basis
In his speech Wells noted the projects that would be delayed would be reassessed and rescheduled on a priority basis.

No new capital allocations will be considered at this time for 1976, however.

Boards will be allowed grants on increases at the elementary level of eight per cent plus \$80 and at the

secondary level grants will be paid on per pupil cost increases of eight per cent.

Costings at the elementary level jump from \$926 to \$1,000 and from \$1,441 to \$1,556 at the secondary school level.

In his speech Wells said, "There is little question that the rapid rise in spending by all governments in the past several years has contributed heavily to the inflationary spiral. And now as the entire country is being told to exercise economic restraint, the government has taken the position that, for its part, it must now set an example in holding down its rate of spending, beginning immediately."

Until it's over
The period of restraint, Wells said, will not be a one year exercise but will prevail until the goal of effectively curbing government spending has been attained.

Wells noted that the total budget for the Ministry of Education was \$1.7 billion and that, \$1.5 billion was

turned over directly to school boards.

"Looking at provincial-municipal spending relationships as a whole, it is interesting to note that in the five-year period 1970-75, spending by local government increased by 70 per cent. That is to say, municipalities, school boards and local agencies increased their spending from \$3.6 billion to \$6.1 billion," Wells said.

"A very large part of this increase has been financed directly by greatly increased provincial grants which have doubled from \$1.4 billion to \$2.8 billion in five years."

Better services
"The result of this has been that local government has been able to achieve expanded and improved local services with only moderate increases in local mill rates."

"In other words, with the province pouring more and more money into local government, municipalities have had to raise property taxes only minimally.

"The figures bear this out. Over the 1970-75 period, local mill rate increases averaged only about three per cent a year, even though local government spending increased by 70 per cent in the same period."

"This is obviously not the time to initiate costly new programs, however innovative they might be, unless those can be offset by making reductions elsewhere in budgets. Now is it time to be allocating funds for new projects and activities which may be viewed as relatively remote from the actual learning process in the classroom," Wells said.

Busting pressure
The Minister's announcement is expected to cause additional pressures on the board to bus students to schools in the region where space is available.

In many parts of the region schools are facing crowded conditions and growth projections indicate that pressures on schools in those areas will

increase.
Robert Baldwin School in Milton is a prime example. That school is overcrowded now and there are still new families moving into that area.

Instead of being able to walk to Baldwin, youngsters moving into the area will have to be bused to Stewart town and Pineview where growth pressures don't exist and classroom space is available.

Pictures and stories which don't appear in today's paper will likely be in the next issue. There were so many events over the past two weeks there is a large pile of pictures waiting to be published.

They'll show up in due time, depending on the number of pages in the next couple of issues of the Free Press. As always, that depends on the amount of advertising sold.



LORNE DOBERTHIEN, LEFT, hands the keys of two vans to Elmer L. Desroche, centre, and Erling Morris. The pair of 12-seat vans are donated to Track-3 Skiing to transport "anyone who wants to ski, and who had a physical problem" from Toronto to Collingwood. Track-3 Skiing, a group of volunteers who teach the sport, have the use of the vans for a three month rent free period. The vehicles were donated by L. and L. Ford, Mercury and Ford Motor Co.

Tighten screws on spending trustees say

After being advised that the move would be extremely difficult if not impossible, Halton Board of Education defeated a motion calling for a six per cent maximum increase in expenses outside of salaries.

Trustee Tony Goodyear advanced the motion and insisted the board had to take a hard line on spending. He noted the federal price and wage controls would control salary increases but expressed concern about cuts in the rest of the board's operation.

Superintendent of Business and Finance Bruce Lindley said that in some areas the costs were fixed and there could be no cuts. He told the board that hydro could go up by as much as 22 per cent. If the board was to hold expenditures to a six per cent increase across the board for supplies and services, there would have to be substantial cuts in some areas to counteract the large fixed increases over which the board has no jurisdiction.

While there was considerable support for cost cutting measures, the board felt it could not support the recommendation as it stood.

Board answers questions

Representatives of Halton Renaissance Committee and HEAL (Halton Education Action League) continued to dominate the question period during the Halton Board of Education regular meeting, Thursday.

Lillian Kilpatrick asked if the salaries of the key administrators of the board could be made public or whether that is considered top secret.

Her second question asked about the public's right to know where tax dollars are spent without having to ream through volumes of paper.

To the first question, chairman Judy Alexander explained only salary ranges were necessary under provincial legislation and only salary ranges are available from the board.

Betty Fisher of Georgetown asked a series of eight questions which all dealt with reorganization under the chairmanship system. Mrs. Alexander assured her answers in written form would be forthcoming.

Gordon Reade, Renaissance Chairman also questioned the board with regard to work on a values education program being done by Dr. John Meyer. Those questions will be answered at a later date as well.

Two injured

Two people were injured Saturday when a car struck a telephone pole on the Eighth Line at 10 Sideroad. Driver Lorne Bradley Edgar, 22 Gower Court, Georgetown, and Laura Opwood, 28 Regal Cr., Georgetown, both suffered minor injuries in the accident.

The driver pulled to the side of the road to make room for an oncoming car, he told police. Damage to the car was estimated at \$1,000 and to the guy wire and pole \$25.

Trustee Len Auger suggested that while there are a number of areas where the costs are fixed, there are still ways to "tighten the screws."

He suggested keeping school and administrative buildings a little cooler and using smaller lighting fixtures as a place to start.



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