

Candidates for board of education comment on issues

H.H. (Bert) Hinton



H.H. (Bert) Hinton seeks to retain seat

H.H. (Bert) Hinton is the Halton Board of Education School Trustee for Acton and Georgetown and he is in the running to retain his seat. Prior to being elected to a term two years ago, Hinton was chairman of the board of Sheridan College. He was also charter member and president of the association of colleges of applied arts and technology of Ontario. On the local political scene he served as warden of Halton County and reeve of Acton.

"I think I have been extremely aggressive for accountability of budget and where I have not been able to get them to reduce the budget I feel I've contributed to them coming in with five per cent rather than 10 per cent." He continued by saying he has taken a firm stand on salary negotiations against unwarranted increases.

He recalled he tried to get trustees to give up their salaries, in a bid to get them to cut expenses.

"I have a concern about the

board's participation with municipalities on recreation expenditures. I think the board has shown a lack of responsibility in cost sharing by paying more than its share."

He added he is definitely in favor of the community's use of schools in recreation programs, though he is concerned they are developed on a cost benefit system.

Hinton called for the establishment of a new Halton Board of Education committee. He said he felt since the board of education is regional and recreation, for grant purposes is local, there should be a board committee to deal with each municipality separately but using the same criteria so that cost sharing is fair to all. Such a committee would work towards a user-pay system for all parties.

Declining enrolment is still an issue Hinton feels deserves attention. We must make sure remedies are constructive and make common sense, said Hinton.

Pam Sheldon



Issues important to candidate Pam Sheldon

I think there has to be careful planning for new schools and additions, Hinton said. Special education is also important, but its programs should be evaluated against costs and benefits, Hinton said.

Hinton said the Halton Board has improved in its relations with the public. "I feel I've attempted to make the Halton system more responsive to public demands for more discipline and basics in the core curriculum. I think the Halton system is responding to questions of criticism and responding positively to these concerns," Hinton said.

Hinton said he has attended most of the Halton board's committee meetings this year, even the ones for which he is not a member. Also he describes as "very important" his attendance at commencement exercises where he says he gets first hand knowledge of what graduates have missed and gained in the system.

Pamela Sheldon is challenging Bert Hinton for the ward one and two seat on the board of education, and the issues are very important to her. She lives with husband Jim and two school-aged children in the Speyside area.

"Empty financial promises are the seeds of disappointment to the taxpayer," Mrs. Sheldon declared. "The Halton Board of Education is locked into the same inflationary spiral that is playing havoc with budgets everywhere. The unfortunate result is that as the dollar buys less, more dollars are needed just to maintain the status quo. The only way to offset this in a period of restraint is to eliminate waste where possible, take full advantage of provincial grants, and reallocate existing funds to provide better service at the classroom level. The period of restraint is affecting everyone... the Halton board is not exempt."

It is a highly documented fact that when the required number of Spec. Ed. and Remedial teachers are available to the numbers of children requiring special help, the incidence of "turned off" children decreases. I believe strongly that these children should be exposed to this assistance as early as possible in their education, ideally at the elementary level, she continued.

"The child who is given the best basic education available during the formative years is in a much better position to cope with the stress of education at the secondary level. This, in turn, ultimately leads to more productive people in society."

"It is my belief that weighting factors" should be instituted in the North when Spec. Ed. teachers are distributed. Factors such as lower enrolments and geographic distances between schools are, in my view, the cause of disproportionate numbers of specialized human resource people available. This discrepancy should be rectified as soon as possible."

Along this same vein, Mrs.

Sheldon would truly like to see a better over-all deal for the formative years.

Both at the Provincial and the Municipal level the case for "the young student" is repeatedly over-looked, she says, although report after report urges more emphasis of education at the elementary level. The Provincial grants-per-student are 40 per cent higher for the secondary student than the elementary; the Halton Board of Education consistently "underspends" at the elementary level while spending on or above ceilings at the secondary level; the pupil-teacher-ratios at the elementary level remained higher than the provincial average at 23.5 (which translates into larger classroom sizes) and when declining enrolments threaten school closures it is usually the elementary school that goes. "I believe the elementary student MUST

remain close to his/her home and within the security of their own community. At the secondary level the child is better able to cope with being further away from home.

"This is not to say there are not special needs at the secondary level... there are. My point is that with good solid planning, and common sense discussions, a shift in priorities could take place that would be a definite advantage to the elementary level, retain the special needs required at the secondary level, while still working within the framework of financial restraints... which are definitely necessary."

It is a source of concern to her that the Halton Board of Education does not accept Provincial grants-per-student ("your money, too") for the elementary students, to the level that is available to them. "In this way, I feel they are subsidizing neighboring school boards while we are finding it difficult to cut the municipal levy substantially or provide better service."

As well, I am unable to rationalize the view that the teacher salary is approximately \$14,000 (elementary) while administrators are making approximately \$21,000. No "one" person has a greater influence on your child than a teacher... with the exception of the parent... and yet the salary scale deems the administrator more important!"

"I do not believe that educational decisions should be made for administrative convenience and I question the salary priorities," she told the Free Press. "The Halton Board of Education trustees have, in my view, lost sight of their intended role. Their first concerns must be students and taxpayers not administrators. Mrs. Sheldon has found that many parents are concerned with bussing policies used in the North Halton Region. It is a highly complex movement of students and definitely needs further investigation. "Some of the concerns which I intend to pursue are supervision policies for children arriving at schools very early; total time on busses;

equality of bus services, weather reports originating from Burlington when, in fact, weather variations are sometimes extreme."

In conclusion Mrs. Sheldon said, "I suppose if I were forced to make just one statement on the whole business of education I would have to say that the days of "academia" are numbered. I believe that students must be given more options in the trade and skill-oriented programs to counter the high student unemployment crisis.

"Of what possible use is

grade 13 or a B.A. if it's unmarketable? Of course, for those students who excel or who are simply very motivated, they must have the right to pursue an academic education; however, I believe that most students would like their education to be the vehicle through which they can ultimately take their productive place in society. If there were fewer unemployed students... there would be more tax dollars generated! The shift in education must be towards productivity!"

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Betty Fisher



Betty Fisher finds costs are concern

Voters in wards one and two are frustrated and infuriated by the amount of money being spent on education, says Betty Fisher.

The 34-year-old mother of three is one of two women running for the Halton Board of Education in Esqueping and Acton against incumbent H.H. (Bert) Hinton.

In a recent interview with this newspaper she said the response to her campaign has been "excellent" to date.

"I find the people in wards one and two are extremely sensible people when it comes to their beliefs in the education of the young."

The voters feel that while costs of education are rising, "they feel the quality of education is declining. I share their sentiments."

The parents also feel that there is lack of effective discipline and schools and cite the high rate of vandalism and lack of respect for others in the attitudes and behaviour of pupils, Fisher said.

"I feel the board has to take a very close look at the problem and reorganize their position regarding discipline in schools and make sure it is enforced," she said.

"At the same time the community must grow closer to the schools to make sure there is a concerted effort between the parents and school to ensure consistent discipline of the children."

Mrs. Fisher recalled that only 15 years ago if a child got in trouble at school and the parents found out there would

have been not only strict discipline in the schools but home would have followed it up.

"That's the case today but we must strengthen that position," she said, adding that strong discipline "did keep you in line."

During the interview, Fisher outlined her position on why she is running, the possibility of splitting the vote in the race, declining enrolment and rising costs, the learning of basics, bussing, community use of schools and her affiliation with community organizations.

Fisher said she believes it is the child's right to receive the best education the tax dollars can provide. "I feel this is not being accomplished." There are some areas where children are receiving a "top quality" education and there are others that need "upgrading."

"Because of my total involvement in the educational process in the last five years I know the educational system like the back of my hand."

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