

# Mortgage rates affect school enrolment

Fluctuating mortgage rates are making it difficult for school officials to accurately predict student enrolment figures for the coming school year.

It is a new phenomenon, said Rae Stoness, superintendent of employee services, in a telephone interview. He said that a family will take a one or two year mortgage and then due to the current economic situation

move on to another area, rather than renew it.

Stoness told the board of education trustees at the September 13 meeting that it is one factor affecting enrolment projections. Others include transfers to private and separate schools.

Last February, for example, the administration predicted 7,569 elementary

students in North Halton schools for the 1984-85 year but on Sept. 5, 183 students did not enroll. In the north's secondary schools, 186 students were not among the projected 4,155 expected to be there.

This mortgage rate factor has become more evident in the last two years, Stoness said. Its impact is more noticeable in the Milton, Burlington, and Oakville areas, he

said.

Meanwhile, the enrolment variance has made it difficult for the administration to estimate in February the number of elementary teachers required for the 1984-85 year. Due to the lower Sept. 5 enrolment, elementary schools have an excess staff of approximately 12.5 teachers.

In a report to the Board's trustees, Stoness

recommended that eight of the teachers remain in their current classrooms and four and a half will become supply teachers. The one half refers to kindergarten or special education teachers.

Trustees, however, tabled the recommendation until November.

## newsmakers

Georgetown/Acton, Wednesday, Sept. 19, 1984

### Drunk drivers

#### There's public pressure but penalties minimum

by Alex Matheson

There has been no change in the penalties meted out for impaired driving despite growing pressure from the public and encouragement by Ontario attorney-general Roy McMurtry.

Minimum penalties continue to be the norm, regardless of documented evidence that impairment is an overwhelming factor in serious accidents, said Halton crown-attorney Jim Treleven.

A blood alcohol level of .15 is relatively mild impairment although the chances of being involved in an accident are 25 times greater than for a sober driver, he said.

This evidence hasn't swayed judges from minimum sentences. In addition, said Treleven, judges aren't as much influenced by previous offences in upping the penalty as they are for other offences. A repeat thief is more likely to feel a steeper heavier penalty for increased violations than is an impaired driver, who is a much greater hazard to the general public.

Judges seem oblivious to crown-attorney pleas for heavier sentences and prosecutors can get frustrated calling for higher penalties if they are always ignored. "We could get a machine to give minimum sentences but judges are paid a lot to make decisions," he said.

When you have to see the victims and face the families, you realize the penalties are too light, Treleven added.

It is hard to get judges to rock the boat by giving different sentences. If one judge was more severe, lawyers would try to avoid his court, Treleven said. Also there would be more trials as guilty pleas would fall off with stiffer sentences. If we have to have more trials then we will do it, said the crown-attorney.

The end result of this punitive pattern is that people in Canada are not afraid to drink



and drive, he said. If there were automatic suspensions of a year to 18 months, as there are in Great Britain, more would be discouraged from getting behind the wheel while inebriated, he added.

It is in the area of suspension that Treleven is most concerned. "I am not as concerned with fines and jail terms for first offenders as getting a lengthy suspension of driving privileges," he said. This concern with licence suspension seems to be shared by the public, he added.

If a driver is caught twice, it is a good indication of a drinking problem, since the

chances of being caught are only one in 2,000, he said.

The minimum penalties given out for second and subsequent offences, being relatively light, are not discouraging. Nor are the penalties given for driving while licence is under suspension. As a result, it is estimated that as many as 60 per cent of drivers under suspension operated a vehicle as a normal course, said Treleven, and this doesn't include those who occasionally drive while under suspension.

A fine of \$250 is the minimum penalty for driving under suspension and that is what is normally given. For twice being caught

driving without a licence, the fine is \$500 minimum and judges rarely stray much from that figure, said the crown.

If a driver, while impaired, drives very badly, for example the wrong way in a lane or up on a sidewalk and kills someone, he is likely to be charged with criminal negligence causing death which carries a maximum penalty of life in prison. The minimum would be nine months in jail, while the norm is 15 to 18 months behind bars, said the crown. Crowns are constantly trying to get the court to take a tougher stance, he added.

With similar circumstances, but the victim only injured, the maximum is 10 years in jail.

If a victim is killed by a drunk driver, where the driving infraction itself is not severe, he may be charged only with impaired, said Treleven.

Charges of dangerous driving may be laid against a drunk driver where driving was bad but not outrageous enough to warrant criminal negligence, he added. Here the maximum penalty is two years in jail.

For the first impaired driving conviction, the maximum penalty is a \$2,000 fine and six months in jail with a possible three-year suspension of driving privileges.

If a person is caught driving drunk twice, a fine cannot be levied and the maximum penalty is one year in jail and a three-year licence suspension. What is normally given is the minimum 14 days in jail, usually served with the convenience of the criminal in mind, and the minimum six-month licence suspension.

If a third offence occurs, the criminal is eligible for two years in jail and an unlimited driver's licence suspension. Normally, he is sentenced to three months in jail and given the automatic three-year suspension.

### Celebrate Cultural Centre's birthday

Again this year the Town of Halton Hills Recreation and Parks Department is preparing a program of happy events for the whole family. The week to keep in mind is October 9 to 13, when the third birthday of the Cultural Centre is celebrated.

Previous years' programs have been very successful and this year should be no exception. "Something for everyone" has always been the theme—with support and participation this theme will continue.

The popular Nursery and Kindergarten School shows kick off the events with performances on October 9 and 10 at 10.00 a.m. and 1.30 p.m. "The Inner Stage Theatre" presents 3 short stories—"Flip", "The Carrot Seed" and "Caterpillar Story."

Tuesday October 9 at 7.30 the beautiful old movie "How Green Was My Valley", starring Walter Pigeon and Maureen O'Hara will bring back many memories.

The "biggie" for local talent will be the ever-popular Amateur Night on Wednesday evening, October 10. Entry forms may be picked up at the recreation offices.

Thursday, October 11 will be devoted to the public and high schools in the community. Here will be an opportunity for family and friends to see our future stars in action. A free evening of entertainment.

By popular demand, "Second City Touring Company", returns with another new show "Walter, Walter, There's a Soup On My Fly." Reserved seating for this one so order tickets early. On sale now.

For Saturday afternoon, October 13 the Arts Council will be sponsoring a fabulous local group "Personality Convention"—this seven member band has performed locally and at the CNE and has been a big hit. Their concert will certainly fill the bill for the teens.

Saturday evening, October 13, will feature a golden oldie the movie "Kiss Me Kate," starring Kathryn Grayson and Howard Keel.

### Dollars added

The Halton Board of Education trustees voted at the Sept. 13 meeting to add \$28,000 to the 1984 budget or \$85,000 for the 1984-85 year.

The money will be used to hire para-professional support staff for kindergarten teachers in classes with more than 25 students. According to Sept. 5 enrolment figures there are 18 classes in the region with over 25 students including Acton and Georgetown schools.

According to board policy, any kindergarten classes with more than 25 students, the teacher may have additional support. The para-professional may have some teacher training but it is not necessary, said Rae Stoness, the superintendent of employee services.

If the size of the kindergarten classes decreases under the 25 students, the para-professionals may be contract terminated with two weeks notice or transferred to another class if needed there, he said.

### Library Board -briefs-

#### Foreign languages

Both the Acton and Georgetown libraries will have access to a wider range of foreign-language books and materials in the near future thanks to a new exchange program tying Halton in with Hamilton-Wentworth region. At a cost of \$1,400 the Halton Hills libraries will be able to obtain books which area residents have requested in languages including Finnish and Ukrainian.

#### VDTs dangerous?

Concern over the possibility that computerized Video Display Terminals (VDTs) could cause fetal damage in women of child-bearing age who operate them has spread to Halton Hills libraries. Chief librarian Betsy Cornwell will be polling her staff on their interest in having VDTs at the libraries tested for radiation emission. Staff expressed concern after reading about survey results showing that 36 per cent of 803 women VDT operators suffered from miscarriages, stillbirth or fetal malformation. A similar survey from Denmark had even more striking results.

#### Thinking safety

Library staff in Acton and Georgetown will be breathing easier once they've taken first aid and fire extinguishing lessons from the appropriate authorities. The Library Board last week acknowledged that its precautions in both cases fall short of regulations laid out by the Workers Compensation Board and the Town fire department. Staff will comply with requirements accordingly.

#### Public welcome

While no one in the Acton area took the Library Board up on its invitation to drop by last Wednesday night's meeting with comments or questions, they can still join their Georgetown neighbors next month when another public session is planned. The Board meets in the committee room of the Georgetown library at 7.30 p.m. October 10, starting the regular session with a special forum in which the public can speak its mind.

### Harsher penalties don't help - defence

by Alex Matheson

One prominent criminal lawyer sees the incidence of impaired driving dropping dramatically but from the fear of hurting and killing people and the growing stigma attached to the crime, not because of fear of legal retribution.

For this reason, Bruce Hillyer doesn't support the cry for stiffer penalties for those convicted of driving while under the influence of alcohol. Nor does he support heavier sentences for those who maim and kill while driving drunk.

Fines and jail terms don't act as deterrents for this crime, he said.

But, he said, the big surge in publicity in the past six months is acting as a deterrent. Not only has this come through traditional channels, it has also been a more important part of beer advertising, said Hillyer.

He said government publicity has been such that "all of a sudden drinking and driving has become socially unacceptable." This affects the middle class where a lot of the offenders are.

Hillyer doesn't believe that an increase in the length of the licence suspension would deter first offenders and for three-time offenders a three-year suspension is a "real kick".

More treatment for alcoholism and less for the criminal nature of the act would be of more help and this is the trend in the US he said.

However, on the other side there is deterrent value in convincing the public that the offence is a crime. As it is now, the impaired driver, after conviction, doesn't feel that he is a criminal, while a convicted shoplifter does, Hillyer said. Yet the consequences to the public from the impaired driver are far more serious than from the shoplifter, he added. But in the last six months there has been a change in the way impaired driving is being viewed as a crime, said Hillyer.

Fear of killing someone is still the largest deterrent to drinking and driving, the defence lawyer said.

Defence lawyer Jack Belleghem wants to see the limits for impaired driving lowered, which would mean an increase in the number charged, but more importantly catching the problem of impairment earlier. Along with this would have to go lower penalties and permission for more discretion in sentence for the judge. If penalties are raised, violators could fear retribution more and go to greater ends to avoid apprehension, with more police chases being a consequence.

Belleghem advocates greater limits on the issuance of liquor permits and would go further and rescind some, further limiting facilities from which people would have to drive home.

"We as a society have decided that we are prepared to put up with the chaos arising from alcohol abuse for the economic

benefits of sales and jobs resulting," he said.

Not expecting that all taverns will be closed, Belleghem is in favor of making the tavern owner more responsible for the condition of his patrons when they leave the premises. Instead of kicking the drunk out, make sure he stays so he doesn't drive or conversely find him a way home, said Belleghem. In the same vein, Belleghem believes the homeowner should bear similar responsibilities for his guests.

To further minimize impairment, Belleghem believes lower-content alcoholic drinks help. With these, sickness may precede drunkenness, he said.

The main thrust against impaired driving should come through publicity leading to peer pressure condemning it, similar to that against smoking, he said. Along with this should go a ban on lifestyle advertising which implies that drinking is socially enhancing. If liquor and beer companies are allowed this form, they should be compelled to show the less glamorous effects of drinking, he said.

A drinking driver, said Belleghem, is a tragedy. He is basically a good person who is flawed. Court should not take away his driving privileges, leading to a loss of job and livelihood. "We don't want to destroy or disgrace the person. Catch them sooner and don't hit them as hard," he said.

To that end, Belleghem would be in favor

of more spot checks or entrapment of offenders outside licenced premises or any other infringement of "supposed liberties" if it is better for the majority. The lobby against catching drunk drivers outside bars was led by the tavern owners themselves for self-interest, he said.

What offenders fear most is the licence suspension and that insurance companies won't pay for the damage to their own vehicle.

Belleghem said the average person charged with the crime is lower middle class. It may be that professionals, such as doctors and lawyers, are more aware of what they have to lose, he added. However, he disagreed with Hillyer that impaired drivers don't feel like criminals.

Assistant crown-attorney Anthony Vale said despite the monotony of defending people on impaired driving, lawyers enthusiastically take the cases because of the fees that they can command.

Many other crimes are committed by people who pay through legal aid, while many of those charged with drunk driving can afford to pay large fees in an attempt to avoid a licence suspension.

For these people, the fine and legal costs are of less concern than the loss of driving privileges, said Vale.

### School, library board at odds over visits

The Halton Hills Library Board will stand firmly behind its policy restricting the use of its facilities by school children despite growing pressure to provide additional services.

The matter has been referred to the Board's planning committee for further discussion, but members made it clear last Wednesday that they don't wish to approve requests by some area teachers to borrow large amounts of books and other materials to augment classroom resources.

In a report to the Board, children's librarian Joy Showell said some of the teachers who routinely bring their students to the library to work on special projects have asked for a "special status notation" on their personal library cards so they can borrow items "in bulk."

Commenting that library staff already have their hands full helping the students with their individual project needs, Showell advised against extending the Board's "nursery box" program, in which a number of items are circulated among pre-school nursery classes, to the older students. Such a move would set a precedent that would force the libraries to service all private, public and separate schools similarly, she warned.

Showell's report indicated that teachers from local Christian schools in particular have expressed a need for better service, saying their schools don't have resource centres like most public schools.

Showell and chief librarian Betsy Corn-

well took exception to teachers suggesting it is the library's "duty" to meet the schools' needs.

Showell suggested a compromise in which teachers could borrow up to 12 fiction books and 12 non-fiction books (to a maximum of two books per subject), but board chairman Norm Elliott said the figures are "excessive."

"This is an extremely touchy subject, but

it seems to be an unnecessary concession," he said. "We'd be establishing a policy we don't want."

Board members were virtually unanimous in their opposition to extending services. George Albert expressed doubt that other libraries do so; Ian Carter said library staff should simply refer the teachers to the board if they wish to challenge policy; Rob Burnett noted there is

### Can't count on grants

The Halton Hills Library Board was warned last week that its summer programs for youngsters, called a resounding success again this year, could be severely cut back at the last minute unless contingency money is budgeted for them.

Outlining a new approach entitled "Share Literature with Children", children's librarian Joy Showell advised the Board last Wednesday that nothing is guaranteed as far as Provincial funding of library summer programs.

Showell explained that a \$6,800 Summer Canada grant from Ottawa, a \$1,300 Experience '84 grant from Queen's Park and another \$650 from Ontario's Outreach project enabled the local libraries to employ a summer student to run its children's programs. Criteria for the grants isn't even announced until late spring, she said, leaving librarians biting their nails in case

the grants are not approved at the last minute.

"I just don't know how the Province expects you to plan your programs when they leave it so late," Councillor Pam Sheldon commented.

Showell said this year's summer Experience program and Reading Olympics were again popular success with children and parents alike. The summer student in charge has produced a booklet for toddlers, "Tales for Twos," copies of which are now available, and helped launch the libraries' plan to make it easier for parents to "share literature with children."

Showell reported that the Acton library is setting up a "parent's corner" featuring a small collection of brochures on a wide range of topics related to bringing up children. There will be an informative bulletin board and a toy collection to help