

Georgetown taxes up, Acton down: Treasurer

Georgetown ratepayers are going to shell out more for the regional tax man this year than their Acton counterparts, according to preliminary mill rates put before Halton regional council Wednesday.

Acton ratepayers in fact will be paying the regional tax man less this year than last year.

The mill rate of Georgetown ratepayers is .1655 which is up 4.21 mills over 1977. For a home assessed at \$5,590 the tax bill will amount to \$92.51. Last year the same home was charged \$68.98.

For Acton ratepayers, the mill rate is .1923 which is down 4.21 mills over 1977. For a home assessed at \$4,460, the 1978 tax will amount to \$85.77 which is \$16.01 less than in 1977.

The increase to Georgetown is due to the expanded sewage treatment plant, Halton

treasurer Don Farmer told council. He predicted that 1979 would see an increase to Acton ratepayers, however, because of debt charges from the expansion to the sewage treatment plant there.

That portion of the preliminary mill rate in Georgetown which is chargeback for sewers is 6.55 mills, up 4.23 mills over 1977. In Acton the chargeback for sewers dropped 3.51 mills over 1977.

Regional chairman Ric Morrow told council the preliminary mill rate is the first opportunity to see the productive results of the budget process started September, 1977. The positive advantage in getting mill rates struck early is to let projects in the region get underway sooner, he said.

Mr. Farmer told council that

a \$306,000 surplus has been built in to the general account and depending on the final audited figures for 1977's expenditures, there may be some changes in the mill rate but only of a minor nature.

The proposed 1978 operating budget for Halton region is \$34,777,400.

Regional council deferred a motion by Milton Coun. James Watson who had asked that the region consider levying a one mill increase to area municipalities for a resource recovery plant. A one mill increase would raise about \$2 million, treasurer Farmer said.

The preliminary mill rate for the former township of Esquesing is 11.36 mills and 9.95 for the former township of Oakville in Halton Hills.

For urban Milton the preliminary mill rate is 26.51 which is 1.02 mills over 1977. For Oakville, the preliminary mill rate is 19.36 which is 0.52 mills less than last year and in Burlington the mill rate dropped a fifth of a mill to 22.02.

The mill rates were supplied to the regional treasury department by area treasurers, who had recommended that in areas where there was a reduction that a reserve fund be set off to offset future sewage costs or to provide additional capital expenditures from current funds, Mr. Farmer said.

Separate teachers reject offer

Halton separate school teachers have overwhelmingly rejected the latest board contract offer in a vote conducted at region chiefs Friday.

Bob Boyle, chief negotiator for the teachers, says 343 teachers, or about 90 per cent of the 380 cast ballots rejected the board's latest offer. Only 16 teachers did not vote.

Mr. Boyle says the vote was called because the board had implied it was dealing with a few hard-nosed negotiators who were not listening to the teachers they represented.

"The results indicate that the teachers have confidence in the negotiating team," he says, "and they feel the board's offer is unacceptable."

"Their Jan. 11 offer was only an increase of \$6,200 on the grid over their July 9 offer," he says. "We've been negotiating for six months and the board has only moved \$6,200. They should realize that it will take more than that on the table to reach a settlement at this point."

Mr. Boyle says he has contacted Jane Devlin, the mediator appointed by the Education Relations Commission and requested her to set up a meeting to restart negotiations.

Hartley Sherk, chairman of the board's salary negotiations committee, says he is prepared to continue negotiations if the teachers are willing to do so.

He has not yet heard from Ms. Devlin, he says, and he will want to know the purpose of the meeting when it is called. He feels it will be up to

the teachers to respond to the board's final offer if they want to resume negotiations.

Mr. Sherk doesn't feel the board should offer the teachers more money, but he would be willing to give them more take home pay if they were willing to accept a "cut in fringe benefits by 50 per cent."

"We have already exceeded the guidelines by .06 per cent in our final offer," he says, "and that's .06 per cent too much in my opinion. It's time that the board told the teachers how much they'll earn, not the teachers telling the taxpayers how much they'll pay."

Individual teachers may earn up to 11 per cent increases under the final offer, Mr. Sherk says. It's only the ones on maximum qualifications who won't get big increases.

The total cost to the board from fringe benefits, increments and teachers shifting in qualifications over all the teachers and principals is approximately \$771,000 he says.

"The fact that they rejected our final offer doesn't mean that I'll automatically rush in with a new bag of money and say 'I'm sorry they're upset,'" he says. "We offered them a fair, equitable and reasonable salary increase and that's all the teachers can expect."

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Speyside school parents urged to keep quality education foremost

By MAGGIE HANNAH Herald staff writer

Parents of Speyside public school pupils were urged last week to keep the quality of education their children receive as the foremost concern in their battle to retain the local school.

Pam Sheldon, chairman of a parent's group which is investigating the possible closing of the 17-year-old school on Highway 25 south of Acton, told parents at the meeting she wants to stop rumors about the school's fate and take some positive action to keep it in operation.

If this is not possible, she said, she hopes "Speyside parents can keep their perspective and not fight to keep the school open at the expense of quality education" for their children.

The possibility of the school being closed was raised by the passing of a board policy in November which listed a closing program for schools with dropping enrollments.

Once schools with seven classes drop to an enrollment of 170 pupils or less they will be investigated by a committee to determine ways of maintaining the school's viability. The cut off point for closing a school with seven classrooms

is 90 pupils.

North area superintendent Don Gentileman told parents they had simply anticipated the board by a few months in its forming of a committee to investigate ways of keeping the school open. The board will have called for such a committee under its new policy when the school begins its 1978-79 year.

The committee must include the area superintendent, the school principal, three parents a teacher and a trustee, he said.

In studying the situation the group will consider ways the school can cope with its situation using normal resources.

Looking at alternate organizational arrangements, and examining potential growth as well as visiting other schools to compare the adequacy of service between the two will be part of the group's task, he said.

Mr. Gentileman said he doesn't see Speyside being closed in the foreseeable future, so long as the board sticks to its present policy.

The past five years have seen the enrollment drop to 170 in 1977 from about 244 in 1972. Part of the reason for this is the fact that Kindergarten classes entering the school are smaller than the Grade 6 classes which graduate each year.

This trend is expected to begin reversing in 1980, however, when the number of school age children begins to again increase.

Speyside also lost approximately 10 pupils last year following the opening of St. Joseph's separate school in Acton.

Mr. Gentileman said that Halton lost 1,100 students last year when families migrated to areas with a lower cost of living. Some of these pupils may have left Speyside.

Although he expects the school to remain open, Mr. Gentileman said some of the empty rooms in the school may be closed off completely to reduce the fixed cost of operating the facility.

Closing the whole school would save the board \$20,000 annually in fixed costs but sealing off rooms so that there is no heat, hydro or maintenance costs for them would save the board \$1,200 per room. He predicts that this move may be very soon.

Another move the board might make, Mr. Gentileman says, is to twin Speyside with another school. He admits that the matter has been discussed informally although no decision has been made. If such a decision is announced March 10 because that is the date on which principal placements will be announced for the coming year.

Twinning schools saves the cost of principal, Mr. Gentileman explained, because the teachers are considered to be one staff working in two locations.

A parent in the audience noted that a board schedule listing schools by size indicates that the only schools in the appropriate size range (200-300 students) are Glen Williams, Park, Joseph Gibbons, and Howard Wrigglesworth Schools. All of these are in Georgetown.

Asked which school the students would be sent to if Speyside were to close Mr. Gentileman said he had "never even thought of the question."

Acton would be his first thought, he said, because Milton expects quite a bit of growth in the next five years and the hill toward Limehouse would make it bad for busing pupils there.

A parent noted that the group will have to keep an eye on outside forces which may also drop the enrollment with out moving families out of the community.

He pointed out that Mr. Gentileman's own statement that he would recommend Grade 6 students to be sent to Stewarttown so that it will become a middle school rather than a senior school as soon as there is room in the facility and this will cost Speyside more students.

Mr. Gentileman was questioned on whether the board should be giving more concern to the pupil teacher-ratio because parents are concerned at the rising cost of education even though enrollments are dropping.

Dropping the pupil-teacher ratio by 1 costs the board \$1 million, Mr. Gentileman said,

and research indicates that to make any significant change in the learning situation for students the change has to be in increments of five. This makes it too costly, he implied. He indicated that the use of paraprofessionals might increase efficiency and reduce costs but teachers are opposed.

When it was suggested that changing the school boundaries to bring more students to the school might be a way of keeping it open Mr. Gentileman warned parents that other schools may also try this tactic when enrollments begin to drop to the danger point, and then, he added, Speyside could lose.

Norman Howell, Speyside's principal, says the current boundary extends west along the town line two concessions west of Highway 25, south to about 10 sideroad, runs north between the Fifth and Sixth lines to 15 sideroad, turns east to the Eighth Line, jogs north for half a mile, turns west again half way between the Eighth and Seventh Lines, goes north almost to the Canadian National Railway tracks, turns west to between the Sixth and Seventh Lines, then south to between 15 and 17 Sideroad west to between the Fourth and Fifth Lines, north to the extension of 25 sideroad, and west on that road to the Town line.

The school serves approximately 115 families, Mr. Howell said, and the predicted enrollment for 1978 is 158 students.

OBITUARY

John Henry Watson

John Henry Watson, of Waterdown, wage and salary officer for Halton Region, died Feb. 5 in Hamilton General Hospital. He was 64.

Mr. Watson a native of Woodstock joined the Halton county staff as personnel officer in April, 1967, and transferred to the region in 1974.

He was a member of the Waterdown Legion Branch 551. Mr. Watson leaves his wife, Ruth, and sons Rick of St. Catharines, Bob of Millgrove, David of Waterdown, Lachlan of Burlington, and Brian of Waterdown. He is also survived by two brothers, George of Cambridge and Douglas of Beachville.

Funeral services will be conducted this afternoon at 1:30 p.m. from Kitching Steeple Funeral Home in Waterdown with interment at Grace Anglican Church Cemetery in Waterdown.

Bill 151 committee meets

Regional government has operated and can continue to operate effectively within the present legislation given the full support and co-operation of the area municipalities.

The statement from Ernest Reid, chief administrative officer of the region, is contained in a brief on the region which Halton's Bill 151 committee will study Friday.

But besides Mr. Reid's remarks on regional government the brief also contains briefs submitted to the committee from Halton Hills, Milton, Oakville, Burlington, Actonians for Action, Noel Bates and J.B. Goodfellow both of Burlington. There are 18 recommendations by staff in the brief.



SCIENCE FAIR

Centennial Middle school science fair last week attracted 28 entries from students who enjoy experimenting in physics and biology. Grade 7 students Todd Osborne (left) and Mark Townsend (right) used a propane torch and cleaner bags to prove the principle that hot air rises in the above picture while below Richard Ramsay, also in Grade 7, explained the steps in purifying water through filtration and the addition of chlorine. Other entries ranged through simple subjects like growing crystals and how air currents move to more complex things like a self-sustaining moon lab and panels using solar energy.



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