

Applause greets Fisher's motion to keep budget increase to 8%

A smattering of applause greeted a motion to hold this year's Halton board of education budget hike to eight per cent for 1983.

Introduced by Halton Hills trustee Betty Fisher, the motion was passed at the board's Thursday

night meeting. "Governments must cut spending. The board is no exception. Limits on spending must be set," Mrs. Fisher's motion read. "This is the year to 'bite the bullet' and make tough decisions."

Last year's \$113 million

budget was a 13.7 per cent increase over the previous year and brought criticism from businessmen, local and regional governments and taxpayers.

Conscious of the public's anger over mill rate increases, especially in a time of high unemploy-

ment and salary cutbacks, the trustees supported the motion to prevent another huge jump in the mill rate. "I don't believe an eight per cent ceiling can't be achieved," Mrs. Fisher said. "In light of the restraint programs of both the federal and provincial

governments, I believe eight per cent is somewhere between six and nine and I think it is achievable."

Supporting the rationale of the motion, Burlington trustee Noel Cooper, however, called the eight per cent figure a number "that's been pulled out of the air."

Finance committee chairman Bill Priestner said the eight per cent figure was realistic. "Last year, the reality was 13.7 per cent increase. I think restraints by the new law, if it's ever passed (provincial Bill 179), would make eight per cent a possibility," he said. "We may not be able to get lower than that."

Giving strong backing to the motion, Halton Hills trustee Arlene Bruce noted that the ministry of education requires additional programs, but doesn't give any direction as to what can be cut at the same time to keep costs in balance.

"School programs are like a vegetable garden that's filled up completely. Everybody's favorite vegetable is in there. Nobody wants anything removed," Mrs. Bruce said to the amusement of fellow trustees and a board room packed with about 300 secondary school teachers.

"That can't happen. We can't keep adding on without actually destroying what is there. I'm not asking our administrations to make our decisions for us but to give us some good guidelines," she said.

HOW CUT
Advising the board to stay within a designated amount of money and be sure to spend it wisely, Mrs. Bruce then made an analogy between shopping for the board to grocery shopping.

"If I took time to be selective and creative, I could probably put together a delicious, nutritious meal with it (\$10), and I'm asking our administration to be tough-minded, selective and creative and give us guidance as to how we can cut expenses," Mrs. Bruce said.

Rather than have the 1983 budget presented to the board based on need, with trustees picking through it to establish what "can stay" and what "must go", Mrs. Fisher recommended the board start off with a fixed rate of expenditure and allow administrators to decide what should stay and what go. Trustees then make the final decision according to material presented to them.

Trustee Elaine Riehm requested that the board be made aware of what is being trimmed as well as what is on its shopping list for the next year.

Teachers 'disappointed' with salary wranglings

Acton High School teachers are said to be disappointed and disillusioned with the Halton board of education.

The school's Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) representative, math teacher Bill Coates, said this week the mood among fellow staff is not positive because of the long delays in salary negotiations between the board and its teachers.

"I'm disappointed that negotiations haven't proceeded with a little more haste," he told The Herald Monday. "One gets tired every year of being one of the last boards to be able to settle. I wonder why other boards can reach early agreement and we don't."

Teachers shrug their shoulders and say "What else is new?" when Mr. Coates tells them no headway has been made be-

tween the OSSTF and the board regarding a new contract, he said. "What the heck is it all about?" Mr. Coates said. "Are we and the board working together for the same purpose or aren't we?"

Two months ago, the mood of Acton High

teachers was one of resignation and they were volunteering to show restraint, Mr. Coates said. "They were saying, 'Times are tough, maybe it's time teachers show a little restraint'. They were prepared to accept anything reasonable," he said.

The mood of the teachers has changed to become more bitter lately, Mr. Coates said. Teachers are asking "Why isn't something happening?" he said.

Georgetown District High School's OSSTF staff representative Joan Silk said about 12 GDHS staff were at the silent protest Thursday night at the board's meeting. "We were asked to go by the OSSTF to show the

board we're concerned about having some meaningful negotiations," Mrs. Silk said. "I think that's what we showed them."

"We feel the board is purposefully stalling and not acting in good faith because they're refusing to negotiate," Mrs. Silk said. "We started those negotiations in the spring, and it looks like they're stalling until the legislation is in effect."

Feelings are strong, Acton High's Clara Henderson said. The head of the English department said teachers are feeling frustrated. Mr. Henderson said he doesn't like the idea of having an adversarial relationship with the board when they're supposed to be on the same side.

New chairman plans tight grip on purse strings

Halton Separate School board trustees "can only hope and pray" that the province will soon fully

recognize Grade 9 and 10 Roman Catholic school students as secondary students for all purposes,

including funding, according to the board's new chairman.

Oakville trustee Rev. James Mihm, a former teacher in Hamilton-Wentworth's separate school system, made the remark during his inaugural address to the Halton board last week, noting that Queen's Park is gradually implementing some of the recommendations proposed by the Secondary Education Review Project (SERP).

Elected board chairman for the first year of the new board's three-year term, Father Mihm is pastor of Oakville's St. Michael's parish.

Burlington trustee Harry McDermott was elected vice-chairman, Halton Hills is represented on the board by Irene McCauley of Georgetown, re-elected for a second term in the Nov. 5 municipal election.

Attributing increased public attention placed on

school boards partially to the "size of budgets required to maintain the quality of education the people have come to expect" and partially to the public's interest in educational matters, Father Mihm stressed the need for fiscal restraint. The board must be able to justify the spending of every dollar, he said.

"This task is complicated by the new programs and directions which are brought forth by the ministry of education and which invariably are cost incurring," he commented.

By 1985 when the board's term expires, he noted, the province's Bill 82 will have been implemented, guaranteeing that schools meet the needs of exceptional (handicapped or gifted) students. He expressed concern that while the ministry is funding the implementation, it might not continue special funding after 1985.



Keep Hydro bills down

A resolution to save taxpayers from an eight per cent increase in the cost of electricity to school boards was approved by Halton trustees Thursday night. The Halton board of education supported the resolution of the Renfrew County Roman Catholic separate school board to petition the premier and treasurer of Ontario along with the ministry of education. The petition wants the government to order Ontario Hydro to roll back its eight per cent increase to five per cent, or to increase school board grants for 1983 to make up the difference in extra electrical costs.

No ministry grants?

An announcement is expected before the end of December regarding the ministry of education's grants to provincial school boards. Halton board of education director Wally Beavor is not very optimistic. He told trustees Thursday night that according to information he has gleaned from contacts, there won't be any ministry grants for Halton in 1983 or 1984.

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