

## Municipal Elections '88

# Bruce to address decline in funding

Halton Board of Education trustee Arlene Bruce will approach the issue of declining government funding and improved teaching quality if re-elected in November's municipal elections.

Mrs. Bruce, trustee for Ward 1 and 2 (Acton) has been a board member since 1980. She said Monday she will pursue the trustee's seat this fall with a focus on "shrinking" government grants to the school board, although she has not made an official announcement to seek re-election.

"Whenever we get a grant from the province in Halton, the percentage gets lower. This year we're at a 30-per-cent level," she said, pointing to 1988's 32.4-per-cent allocation. The figure for 1987 was 35.7 per cent and for 1986, 38.3 per cent.

A decrease in the dollars allocated to directly fund education means more money will come from taxpayers' annual education payments, said Mrs. Bruce.

"Halton Hills has grown so much this year, the government looks at Halton and says, 'Oh, they have more taxpayers there now!'"

But despite reduced government grants, the Ministry has issued the Board of Education a mandate to reduce class sizes, including primary classes which must be down to an average of 21 students within two years.

"We have to take the class sizes down very drastically. We've been given three years to get them down," she said. And although the province issues a mandate, they do not supply "total costs for anything," she said.

Straying from the issue of funding, Mrs. Bruce said she would like to see the quality of teaching staff educators graduating from teachers college, "improved."

"The on-the-job training is the basis of being a good teacher," said Mrs. Bruce, who explained that a



Arlene Bruce

joint program with the Waterloo school board, aimed at improving teaching skills, is already in progress.

And the Board's newly-appointed Director of Education, Bob Williams, has a screening program for teachers, said Mrs. Bruce.

The trustee said she is pleased with Mr. Williams' appointment, saying he is "very bright" and familiar with the school board system, but warned of the dangers of

a power transfer. "The transition is difficult. It can be so easy to lose the good things you've accomplished if everyone is not watchful," she said.

Mrs. Bruce sees funding for new schools in Halton as an "immediate" goal. She will join the Board in lobbying the provincial government for increased funding if re-elected as trustee for Acton.

"We will certainly be pursuing added funds for capital costs for school space," she said.

Mrs. Bruce's experience on the school board so far has been "interesting, challenging and varied."

"There are so many sides to education. It's very broad in scope. (The Board) is the second largest employer in Halton - second to Ford," she said.

Mrs. Bruce will officially announce her intention to run for trustee in Ward 1 and 2 in the near future, she said.

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## 'Cost-effective' education a priority

Georgetown trustee Dick Howitt, a six-year veteran on the Halton Board of Education, announced Monday that he will seek re-election.

Mr. Howitt, trustee for Wards 3 and 4, said that "cost-effective" education will be a top priority in the 1988-89 school year.

"We have to find the most cost-efficient way of delivering education," he said.

But Mr. Howitt added that the Board of Education is already a "good" system. "We're already delivering good quality education for the children. It will be necessary

to continue this policy."

Funding, a major issue in recent board discussions, will also be an issue for trustee Howitt if re-elected. He said (ALSBO), the Association of Large School Boards of Ontario, has a permanent lobbying member at Queen's Park, petitioning for increased funding.

But Mr. Howitt said Halton Hills has "done very well," and has facilities "second to none."

"In the north (of Halton region) we don't take a back seat. We get our fair share," he said, indicating the



Dick Howitt

\$1 million budget spent on renovations to Georgetown District High School to renovate the facilities and to add an "all-weather" track. He also noted Stewarttown received a new gymnasium with board funds.

And Mr. Howitt sees Bob Williams, new Director of Education, as someone who will maintain the board's status quo.

"Organizational changes are an example (but) to what extent I don't know. A lot of the good things we're doing, Bob will continue."

Some of the good things Halton's board has done include implementing an instrumental music program in the middle school level.

"By the time these kids get to high school," said Mr. Howitt, "they'll be in good stead musically."

The program, suggested by Mr. Howitt in his early years on the board, is being implemented this fall. "It's coming to fruition now. This will be the first year for it."

Mr. Howitt, a member of ALSBO, is also a former Halton Hills town councillor, former member of the finance committee, a previous chairman of the Halton Hills Library Board and a past vice-chairman of the Halton Board of Education.

## New candidate wants to see greater input

Rod Taylor has announced he will be making a bid for a trustee's position with the Halton Board of Education in the upcoming municipal elections.

Mr. Taylor will seek election for Wards 3 and 4 (Georgetown), putting him up against trustee Dick Howitt, who has indicated he will be running for re-election.

Mr. Taylor, 46, has been a resident of Georgetown for 15 years, and he and his wife, Ruth, have three school-aged children.

While generally satisfied with the quality of teaching in local schools, Mr. Taylor is concerned about resource allocation within the system and an administrative and policy-making process which he feels at times, seems very remote from the classroom and the needs of the students.

If elected, he intends to address school board issues from a "Halton Hills perspective."

"I believe there should be greater ongoing parent and public input to board policy-making," he says.

"The trustee should be a conduit for expression of community views and concerns in the board decision-making process and should have a primary responsibility for keeping the community informed on current and emerging issues."

The distance between Halton Hills and the board offices of Burlington is another concern Mr. Taylor feels must be considered, and residents must be kept well informed of developments.

"Many parents feel their interests are not being represented," he says. "They see the board in Burlington as a distant thing... They don't feel they have input. I want to improve the liaison between the community and the board."

The needs of Halton Hills being overshadowed by the larger urban areas is something else to be wary of, Mr. Taylor says.

"There is a danger of being over-



Rod Taylor

shadowed (by Burlington and Oakville)," he says. "One of the big concerns they have in Burlington and Oakville is that they don't have enough schools. There is a possibility that they could divert funds we would use for our own resources in Halton Hills. Our needs here aren't in the direction of new schools."

The role of the trustees with the school board is an important one, and they must remain accountable, according to Mr. Taylor.

"Trustees should appear to be doing more than accepting or rejecting staff recommendations," he says. "It is essential in any policy development process to ensure that alternative options and alternative means of achieving them have been explored fully. This should not only be done, but for a publicly accountable body, it should be seen to be done."

In terms of funding allocations with the board, Mr. Taylor would like to see improvements, including an increase in lobbying of the Ministry of Education.

Mr. Taylor has been active in local groups with an interest in education, and represented George Kennedy Public School on the Halton Hills Consolidation committee in 1985-86.

Currently, Mr. Taylor is employed in policy analysis and development with the Ontario government.

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## Norval news

**NORVAL**-Amy Burke is pleased to announce the joining of hands in marriage of her daughter Sharon L. Preston, and Richard S. Arbour on Sept. 30, 1988 in Norval United Church at 6 p.m.

**NORVAL**-Get well wishes are extended to Ada Sinclair and Em McGilvray, both of Georgetown. Ada is a patient in Peel Memorial Hospital and Em is recuperating at home following a short stay in Georgetown hospital.

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