

Staffing biggest cost Board grapples with budget

By DONNA KELL
Herald Staff

The Halton Board of Education is in the process of reviewing a \$223.6 million budget that consists mainly of "ongoing costs" to pay for staff and programs.

The board, described by Acton and area trustee Ariene Bruce as "labor intensive" will suggest an 8.4 per cent increase over last year's actual budget.

"Most of our costs are staff, so they're ongoing," said Trustee Bruce. Almost 77 per cent of the 1989 budget increase will go toward staff costs. And 71 per cent of the total \$223.6 million budget will pay Halton Board of Education staff. The total for salaries and wages suggested in the 1989 budget is based on current contracts and is \$158.5 million.

Supplies, services and fees, "new initiatives" and transportation contracts are the next largest budget increase at a combined total of 29 per cent of the budget increase, or almost \$31 million.

This year's total increase may seem high at \$17.4 million, but it is less than last year's 10-per-cent increase, said Mrs. Bruce.

"It was the same with surrounding boards (last year). We were all at the 10-point-something mark for increases," Trustee Bruce said, giving neighboring Peel and Hamilton school boards as examples.

Cutting corners where staff salaries are concerned isn't feasible, said Mrs. Bruce.

"We have to be competitive and reasonable," she said. "Our staff salaries are not at the upper end of the scale. We've maintained a very moderate increase."

But staff salaries aside, the board's remaining chunk of a possible \$223.6 million budget will go to programs. "New initiatives" as the board refers to programs approved over 1988, will get almost \$2 million.

Supplies, services and fee expenses will increase almost \$2 million this year, bringing the annual total for the 1989 budget to \$22.6 million.

And these costs continue, said Mrs. Bruce. Each year new initiatives are added they must be paid for with initial costs and with fees for continuation.

Although there is some provincial funding to offset costs for new

services, provincial government grants have dropped in percentage of the last few years, says Mrs. Bruce, who added "the province is not keeping up with cost of living increases."

Grants for the year's board of education budget will not be approved until early March. The school board budget itself will not be approved until it reaches board trustees at the end of the same month.

Presently, the budget goes before review at a board finance committee meeting where new costs and increases are discussed.

The budget process first begins in the schools where recommendations are made, then goes through the administrative staff and "they go through several budget cutting processes," says Mrs. Bruce.

The finance committee is recommending a final 1989 budget of \$223.2 million if costs can be reduced, bringing the increase down \$212,000 to an 8.4-per-cent mark from the proposed 8.5-per-cent increase.

But after the budget is approved by finance committee members, it goes before board of education trustees for their vote by a March 31 deadline.

In The Schools



OUR new civic centre

Town Councillor Al Cook was at George Kennedy School recently to help launch a flag fund for the new civic centre in Halton Hills. Here a

student explains to Mr. Cook his vision of the new town hall. (Herald photo)

Jr. kindergarten registration

Separate board overwhelmed

By DONNA KELL
Herald Staff

The Halton Roman Catholic School Board's Junior Kindergarten program isn't scheduled to begin until September, but already the board has surpassed its original enrolment projection.

After an early registration drive in February the board went over the top to 102 per cent of their projections for the Junior Kindergarten program to be introduced Region-wide in September of this year. Both enrolment and staffing are already well under way.

"We were very pleased and surprised at the numbers," said Director of Curriculum Services Lou Piovesan. "We have, as of today, 925 junior kindergarten registrations and 900 senior kindergarten registrations."

Mr. Piovesan said there is usually a higher registration for senior kindergarten students than for junior kindergarten students, but figures for February show an opposite trend.

And figures for February reflect

only 80 per cent of the projected enrolment for September, he said.

"We can expect probably 1,100 at the senior kindergarten level and 1,200 at the junior kindergarten level."

The Catholic board will have junior kindergarten available at all its 27 elementary schools, including the new Ecole Sacre-Coeur in Halton Hills.

But public school board supporters cannot register for the Catholic junior kindergarten classes. "These are all children of separate school supporters," said Mr. Piovesan.

Bill 30, passed in 1986, which gave provincial government funding to separate school boards across Ontario specified "open access" only to the secondary level in separate boards.

Four separate schools in Halton Hills will have junior kindergarten in September, 1989. At Holy Cross School in Georgetown, there were 46 early registrations. Nine students registered for junior kindergarten at Sacre Coeur School on Guelph Street. St. Francis of Assisi registered 16 junior

kindergarten students in February and St. Joseph's School in Acton had 25 registrations.

Mr. Piovesan said these numbers could increase by 30 per cent at September registration.

The popularity of the junior kindergarten program is shown by the number of registrations, said Mr. Piovesan.

"That's reflective of the demand and the need throughout the Region and in Halton Hills," he said.

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Trustees hold the PEACE

Halton Board of Education trustees are not sure how badly they want PEACE in the Region.

PEACE (Police, Ethnic And Cultural Information) is a pilot project of the Halton Regional Police in conjunction with the Ontario government and Halton Region.

On Feb. 14, the Halton Regional Police Chief James Harding sent a letter to the board of education asking for funds to pay for a written report on the PEACE programs planned for this summer.

Chief Harding said in the letter that the report, and a video tape of the program, were "an important component" of the project.

Other funding for PEACE will come from the Ministry of the Solicitor General and from the Regional Municipality of Halton, he said.

But some trustees said no funds were available for the PEACE project.

"I support PEACE but I don't think we should give them any money," said Burlington Trustee Marg Bullock.

Oakville Trustee Janis Millman said she wondered if the board would have funds for such a project.

Although it was suggested that a public information meeting be held before trustees voted on a funding decision, Director of Education Bob Williams said there would not be a meeting.

And "as a board we have every right to decide if we want to go that route" of informing the public, said Milton Trustee Bob Clarke.

PEACE would involve one student from every secondary school in the system, said Mr. Williams. He added that each student would complete a report after he or she attended the program.

Participants would be students "of both visible and cultural minority groups."

Halton police have not determined the locations of the PEACE program but should know sometime in March.

Meanwhile, the board of education will not vote on funding until regular board meetings resume after the March Break and Easter holiday.