

Budget process slowed down

Due to a slowdown in grants from the Ministry of Education, the Halton Board of Education will have to wait an extra two weeks to approve a \$223.2 million operating budget for 1989.

The board was scheduled to meet March 30 to vote on the budget which was to go before municipal governments by a March 31 deadline. But grant regulations, which make up 32 per cent of the total board budget, will not be available until March 31.

Municipal governments, including the Town of Halton Hills, kick in about 63 per cent of the board's annual operating budget. But now the town will not review the budget until after April 13 when the board votes on an 8.2 per cent

increase over last year.

In prior years, increases have leapt over the 10-per-cent mark, says Acton and area trustee Arlene Bruce.

The original figure submitted by the board's finance committee for approval was an 8.4-per-cent increase to a total of \$223.6 million. But that figure was pared down during the five weeks of deliberation by the finance committee.

The board's budget has been described as "labor intensive."

Over 77 per cent of the budget pays for staff salaries. Other costs that use a large chunk of the budget involve supplies, services and fee expenses which jumped \$2 million over last year to a total of

\$22.6 million for 1989.

"New initiatives" launched in the present school year will ac-

count for \$2 million of the new budget.

Although government grants pay almost one third of school board costs, trustees are afraid that grants are shrinking in size every year. Mrs. Bruce said there has been a continued decline in the percentage of funding allocated by the Ministry.

This belief has led trustees to lobby the provincial government for funding, and has caused trustees to vote in support of a lot levy proposed by the provincial government to pay for the building of new schools.

Committee is waiting for salary reviews

Halton Hills' General Committee needs "further discussion" before choosing a five-person committee to review Town government salaries.

Although the motion to form a review committee was approved at a February 1988 council meeting, Mayor Russ Miller said Monday that a committee was not formed and that more discussion with Town Administrator Dan Costea would be needed.

In a report to the Town's General Committee Monday night Mr.

Costea said the municipality can choose to form the public group called an Independent Review Panel or to use "review and comparisons" with other municipalities to determine Town salaries.

But Councillor Norm Elliott, chairman of the General Committee, said the salary review committee was already approved and that Monday night's discussion was a "reaffirmation" of council's decision last year.

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Rural Dignity group goes to Queen's Park

Despite the snowfall, the first day of spring was marked by clear signs of new life in rural Canada.

Rural Dignity of Canada, the "grassroots" citizens' group trying to save rural post offices from closure and privatization by Canada Post, took "Seeds of Hope" and several gardening tools to Queen's Park Monday to "remind city media and provincial politicians that their help is needed to bring pressure to bear on the policy makers in the postal corporation (and the federal government) to change a highly discriminatory, unwanted rural post policy," said Rural Dignity of Canada member for Ontario, Liz Armstrong.

Ms. Armstrong said nearly 400 post offices across Canada have been closed or privatized by Canada Post, and 226 are now being "reviewed." She says review is the first phase of closure or privatization.

Ms. Armstrong told media assembled at Queen's Park that the first day of spring this year had been declared "Rural Revitalization Day." Similar events were being held in Ottawa and other provincial capitals, she said.

The door-to-door delivery promised by Canada Post cost \$750 million per year, said Ms. Armstrong. All 5,000 rural post offices

across Canada "can't possibly lose more than \$100 million per year, and in fact probably much less than \$50 million total," she said. She added that even the few profitable rural post offices could be closed down or privatized.

Ms. Armstrong said that Canada Post's decision to close postal service during lunch hour in some areas was "completely insensitive." It's "the busiest time of day," said Ms. Armstrong.

Locally, Canada Post "left Limehouse with no post office," said Ms. Armstrong. "The previous postmaster in Limehouse was paid \$18,000 per year for her services, while the retail postal operators who succeeded her... made less than \$350 per month for the same work."

"No wonder they dropped the postal contract in October," she said.

Ms. Armstrong said Rural Dignity could understand Canada Post's budget cuts if profits weren't being made within the company, but "Canada Post is now profitable," she said.

"They're projecting a \$26 million profit this fiscal year, so why continue a policy that is clearly rendering rural communities second class when it comes to mail service?"



Citizen of the Year

A capacity crowd turned out at the Georgetown Lions Club Hall Monday night to honor former high school teacher Tom Ramautarsingh as the 1988 Georgetown Citizen of the Year. Mr. Ramautarsingh spoke fondly of his teaching days, and delighted the audience with several

"variations" on the use of the English language. Lion Stan Callaghan (left), Chairman of the Selection Committee is seen here presenting Mr. Ramautarsingh with the Citizen of the Year Plaque. (Herald photo)

Local church collection taken

Halton Regional Police say an unknown person climbed into the window of a local church Sunday night and took \$10 from the collection box.

The suspect entered Holy Cross

Church in Georgetown through a rear basement window sometime between 7 p.m. Sunday night and 8 a.m. Monday morning, say police.

The investigation continues.

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