

# Funding for school capital projects questioned

The Halton Board of Education's reception to the funding provided by the provincial government for school capital projects in Halton has not been a cheerful one.

Pat Hillhouse, chairperson of the board of trustees, said "Our number one priority wasn't even approached."

The board was hoping to get funding for a school in the Iroquois Ridge area of approximately \$7 million, Ms. Hillhouse said. The school is needed for about 500 students, she added.

A lot of these students go to the Sheridan Public School which has more students in its portables than it does in its building, she said.

All the public board is asking for is an "even-handed" approach to the two boards, Ms. Hillhouse said.

The public school board received over \$11 million for two major projects including a new secondary school. The Halton Roman Catholic Board of Education received over \$29 million for at least five major projects.

"If I were a trustee on the separate school board I would be very happy," Ms. Hillhouse commented at the May 10 board meeting.

She added the provincial decision "does not foster that cohesiveness" the two Halton

school boards have developed.

A considerable section of our community is upset, she said. "We will continue to pursue the issue," she said.

Halton Hills trustee Arlene Bruce said she could understand Ms. Hillhouse's comments and added, "We've fallen pretty short each year."

Ms. Hillhouse said the Iroquois Ridge school has been on the list that the Halton Board of Education sends into the government for seven years.

Ms. Bruce said it is hard to figure out the criteria the govern-

ment uses to select the projects it will fund.

The public board has nothing against the separate board because the two boards put in their own project lists like all the other boards, Ms. Bruce said.

"We work very well with the separate board and we don't want that compromised" by government decisions, she added.

Halton Hills trustee Dick Howitt also agreed with Ms. Hillhouse and said, "It's disappointing when it's your number one priority for elementary schools" that does not get funded.

Don Shrenk, chairman of the Halton Roman Catholic School Board, said "I sympathize with the public board."

"I don't pretend to understand" the political process which arrives at those decisions but "we have some very specific and real needs." The Holy Family school in Oakville has 805 students but was meant to contain 450, he said.

Walt Elliot, MPP for Halton North, said this was the second year the region as a whole received about \$40 million. "We know we need that school," he said, adding he was a bit surprised at the decision himself.

Mr. Elliot felt confident "that particular problem will be rectified next year."

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