

New era for board

We don't envy the task ahead for trustees and senior administrators at the Halton Catholic District School Board this month.

Within that short period of time, the region's Catholic school board needs to cut at least \$2 million from its operating budget for the 2011-12 school year.

That's because the board's expenditures for the fiscal year are expected to outpace revenue by about \$3.2 million.

Added to that financial strain is another \$1.26 million worth of new initiatives and programming the board had hoped to offer students next year.

By provincial law, a school board is not permitted to carry a deficit of more than one per cent of the operating grant revenue it receives from the province. Halton's Catholic board anticipates receiving about \$312 million for next year, which means a minimum \$2 million has to be slashed from its projected expenditures for next school year.

While at first glance, it would seem that a school board with an operating budget of more than \$312 million should have little difficulty finding \$2 million in savings. It's important to understand that approximately 85 per cent of the board's operating costs are allocated to fixed salaries and benefits of its employees.

The remaining 15 per cent is spent on things like classroom resources, transportation, utilities and custodial contracts.

The Catholic board's budget must be finalized and submitted to the provincial Ministry of Education by June 30.

"We are moving into a different era in our history," said Education Director Michael Pautler, referencing how the days of the Halton Catholic board being among the highest-growth boards in the province are in the past.

Estimated enrolment figures for the next school year see a net increase of less than 60 new students spread over 50 Halton schools.

With a provincial election this fall, now may be the best time for supporters of Catholic education in Halton to start asking, 'Where's the money for my child's education going to come from?'

WEB POLL RESULTS

(Go to www.independentfreepress.com)

There are plans for a truck distribution centre on Steeles Avenue that will see 240 trucks entering the centre each day. Do you support council approving a zoning change to allow the centre?

- Yes (59%)
- No (41%)

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Steve Nease

905-873-0301
Publisher: Ken Nugent
General manager: Steve Foreman (sforeman@theifp.ca)
Retail advertising manager: Cindi Campbell (ccampbell@theifp.ca)
Managing editor: John McGhie (jmcghie@theifp.ca)
Distribution manager: Nancy Geissler (ngeissler@theifp.ca)
Classifieds
 Kristie Pells (classified@theifp.ca)
Accounting
 Rose Marie Gauthier
Editorial
 Cynthia Gamble: News editor (cgamble@theifp.ca)
 Ted Brown: Photography (tbrown@theifp.ca)
 Lisa Tallyn: Staff writer (ltallyn@theifp.ca)
 Eamonn Maher: Staff writer/sports (emaher@theifp.ca)

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Email:

jmcghie@theifp.ca

Mail or drop off:

Independent & Free Press, 280 Guelph St., Unit 29, Georgetown, ON, L7G 4B1.

Letters to the editor

MoT's speakers offend residents

(This letter was originally sent to Jim Wang and Neil Ahmed, Project team GTA West, and members of Halton Hills council. A copy was made available for publication.)

Dear sirs,

As citizens of Halton Hills we are offended at the remarks of the individuals representing the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and applaud the mayor's and councillors' stand on this sales pitch.

What offends us most are Mr. Ahmed's remarks that we are largely isolated, and can be avoided or mitigated (read alleviate pain, value, grief, or appease anger). That statement is preposterous! Why is some of the finest farm land in the province, closest to fresh market populations being proposed to be paved over in this time of ever escalating fuel costs?

It is impossible to take a ribbon of land 175 metres wide between Five and 10 Sideroads the whole length of Halton Hills and not impact much of our population. I'm sure Georgetown South will enjoy the noise and fumes!

We have valuable historical areas compromised, The Scotch Block,

complete with possible aboriginal burial sites, plus historic homes and century farms. No matter where this corridor might run in this area, we would know at the very least, half a dozen families that would be affected. The whole region will be impacted!

This proposed intrusion has not been well-publicized nor delineated except in a very rudimentary fashion, making it impossible to critique it in a meaningful way. This ambiguity, and provincial sales pitch is unsettling and worrying to us as it should be for many of our citizens. We, the constituents, have lost control of our environs despite the hard work of our mayor and council and are once again being told by the province what is best for us.

We don't want sympathy, but some empathy, consideration, and understanding, just might help us constructively critique the GTA West, and Places to Grow philosophy!

Tom & Sylvia Tyhurst,
Georgetown

Residents must raise concerns

Dear editor,
Wake up Halton Hills! Impor-

tant decisions are being made right now that will seriously affect our quality of life.

Ontario is planning a corridor from the Highways 9 and 400 area, southwest to join Hwy. 401 for future movement of people, goods and energy.

Its preferred Option 4.3 would slash through Halton Hills's Official Plan for agricultural and employment lands, terminating near Milton, impacting our tax base, creating a north/south traffic barrier and destroying our rural atmosphere.

The Citizen's Advisory Group, of which I am member, has been working since 2008. In my view, Option 4.4, flowing north of Halton Hills into the Guelph area provides an overwhelmingly beneficial long-term solution.

The Province has given the public until June 30 to respond. This is your chance to speak up!

Please contact Ted Arnott, MPP www.tedarnottmpp.com or email <http://www.gta-west.com/comment-form.php> or Neil Ahmed, Consultant, Project Manager, project_team@gta-west.com

Jim Bray,
Georgetown