

# Opinion

## Dick makes a point

It's easy to understand the frustration of Halton Hills trustee Dick Howitt with the budget process of the Halton Board of Education. He voted against the board's \$254 million budget last year when he felt the opportunity to slash parts of it were denied the board because blanket overviews were supplied instead of detailed accounting.

Howitt threatened to walk out of last Monday's early beginning to the budget process, again because of the vagueness of the material.

"I get completely frustrated unless I know the details," the disgruntled Halton Hills trustee said.

Monday's meeting was the first of two for trustees and the public to hear a review of the board's functional budget. These meetings will be followed by another on November 19 in which trustees will hear public input. This will be followed by trustee discussion of the review process in a closed caucus meeting. All of this is before the board starts the normal budget process in February.

There's no doubt the board, stung by the criticism of last year's whopping 14.59 per cent increase, is trying to do something about making their budget more acceptable to the public. However, they face a formidable task because 77 per cent or \$196 million of the budget is directed at fixed school and support services. Approximately 76 per cent is for salaries and benefits to the 5,000 employees of the board, most of them bargained in union contracts.

Trustees, in effect, really only have some control over 24 per cent of the budget.

But this is what bothers Dick Howitt. He feels the administration should have to justify every item and program so trustees could turf out those no longer wanted. Instead the board has received only overview pabulum which frustrate trustees who conscientiously feel they must offer taxpayers relief from the constant escalation of education costs.

To be fair, the board has seen funding from the Province shrink year after year from a high of 60 per cent in 1973 to 27 per cent last year. This means local taxpayers must pick up the slack.

However, the Halton Board has not interpreted the cut-back in Provincial funding as a message to apply the brakes in spending. There has been some cost cutting but trustees have never had the opportunity to ponder each item as Dick Howitt would like and this is what he finds so frustrating. In effect he is suggesting administrations of the board are not letting trustees do their job.

In other years when the budget process did not get going until February the protracted time limit may have been responsible. But with this year's early start it would make it not only possible but feasible.

Dick Howitt has a point but he shouldn't have to walk out of a meeting to make it. The board's attempts to make the budget process more public is commendable but if it is merely a public relations exercise, then the public won't be fooled. -H.C.

### Capsule comment

Spring forward - fall back. It's time to turn back the clocks an hour so we can catch up on the hour's sleep we lost in the spring. Official time for the change is 2 a.m. Sunday but don't wait up. Change it before you go to bed even if the birds are singing.

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Those who maintain the world series is an American (U.S.) institution where no foreign teams may ever intrude got some ammunition from this year's four game sweep, when both teams wore the Stars and Stripes prominently on uniforms. Well maybe but if the Jays or the Expos ever made it maybe they could wear a maple leaf with the Dominican, Venezuelan, Cuban, Mexican and other flags in a cluster.



"HERE THEY COME EDNA, TO CUT FUNNY FACES IN US - WHY DON'T THEY MAKE PIES ANY MORE?"

"HAPPY HALLOWEEN - 1990"

## Our readers write

### Dogs and cats should be neutered

Dear editor,

Tens of thousands of dogs and cats are destroyed in animal shelters and pounds annually in Ontario. Most of these animals are healthy and friendly pets. They have to be killed because there are many more adoptable dogs and cats than there are responsible people who are seeking to provide a pet with a good, caring home.

Who is to blame for the tragic reality of pet overpopulation? While no one particular group is solely to blame, a major contributor of "unwanted" animals is the irresponsible pet owner.

Some people whose pet has contributed to a litter of puppies or kittens being born often justify the situation by saying that homes were found for all the young animals. These people do not realize that the homes they found for the puppies or kittens could have gone to dogs and cats waiting patiently to be adopted in animal shelters and pounds. Unfortunately, many of these animals will have to be destroyed due to a lack of good homes for them. Neutering (a general term meaning a spayed female or castrated male animal) an animal will ensure that it cannot contribute to the pet overpopulation problem.

While neutering your pet so it cannot contribute to the tragic problem of pet overpopulation is important, it is not the only reason why your pet

should be neutered. Neutered pets can be much healthier. Neutering dogs and cats eliminates or significantly decreases the chance of various medical problems from occurring to dogs and cats. With exceptions made for animals bred for show (by responsible breeders) or upon the recommendation of a veterinarian, all dogs and cats should be neutered.

If you would like a free pamphlet produced by the Ontario Humane Society entitled Why You Pet Should be Neutered, please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope (#10 business type) to: N. Glenn, Publications Coordinator, Ontario Humane Society, 620 Yonge Street, Newmarket, Ont. L3Y 4V8.

As well, the Ontario Humane Society has also produced a poster entitled "One of the Unlucky Ones" which illustrates the tragedy of the unnecessary problem of pet overpopulation. Copies of this poster can be obtained from the Society for \$2 each (postage and handling included). For orders of 5 or more, posters cost only \$1.25 each.

Please help reduce the pet overpopulation problem. See your veterinarian regarding having your pet neutered.

Sincerely,  
N. Glenn Perrett,  
Publications Co-ordinator.

THE GEORGETOWN INDEPENDENT / THE ACTON FREE PRESS

# WEEKEND

KEN BELLAMY  
Publisher

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