

Catholic school board seeking deficit reduction in 1991 budget

By JANET BAINE
The Halton Roman Catholic School Board hopes to reduce their operating deficit in 1991 from \$5.25 million to under \$5 million.

Last week trustees were presented with a revised 1991 budget which identified potential reductions totalling nearly \$1.2 million with a further \$2 million reduction for 1992.

Even with these reductions, the 1991 operation budget would be \$95.5 million, 8.1 per cent higher than last year.

Business Services Assistant Joe Birett said that like all school boards, the Halton Catholic board blames the provincial government for the financial difficulty.

"Because Ministry of Education grants are not keeping pace with services demanded, we're facing a deficit," he said.

Nothing has been received from the Province to cover new expenses like the Ontario Health Tax (\$540,000), implementing Pay Equity (\$425,000), or the GST (estimated

at \$400,000).

Deletions and reductions which are being considered during 1991 include:

- * school operating budgets to be reduced below what they were in 1990

- * No growth in staff or services for 1991 unless funded by the Ministry of Education

- * slightly larger classes
- * special education and program services and staff reduced

- * plant and maintenance initiatives put on hold
- * staff reorganization deferred

- * Cost saving initiatives are under review

Education Director Cliff Byrnes reassured trustees at the meeting that no staff reductions are planned under these proposals.

"If someone resigns, we're not recommending replacement. If someone leaves on maternity leave, or a leave of absence, we're not recommending replacement," Byrnes said. He noted the board has been cutting back for four years.

"This board's been criticized in the community for poor financial planning and poor capital project planning," Chairman Don Schrenk said. "I'd call (the different approach) a good response to the needs of our students in providing better educational surroundings and alleviating the overcrowding."

He compared the 1991 budget with baking a smaller pie. "Everyone will have to take smaller slices," but he insisted that the quality of education won't suffer.

Surplus expected at public board

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
million over forecasted 1990 revenues thanks to additional money in the form of "certainty" grants from the Ministry of Education — grants the ministry hung onto until accurate enrolment figures for 1990 became available.

The bottom line
The bottom line is a \$4.8 million figure over budget.

The board is also reporting an additional \$4 million from supplementary taxes — taxes collected because of new growth within the region but Jenkins said that trend is likely to turn around in 1991.

Jenkins also said the supplementary taxes are not figured in with the \$4.8 million because those monies are carried over to the subsequent year at which time a great reduction takes place to offset the increase in tax revenue.

Divvying up the \$4.8 million surplus, trustees voted to put \$3.5 million in a reserve for:

- \$950,000 school restoration program;

- \$1.4 million towards asbestos work in the schools, meeting Occupational Health and Safety Act requirements for eye washes and safety storage stations in schools, storage sites for fluorescent light ballasts and work on transformer sites and a blue box program;

- \$600,000 for retirement gratuities;

- \$75,000 for completion of the 1990 library automation program and moving heavy technical equipment out the former G.E. Perdue School;

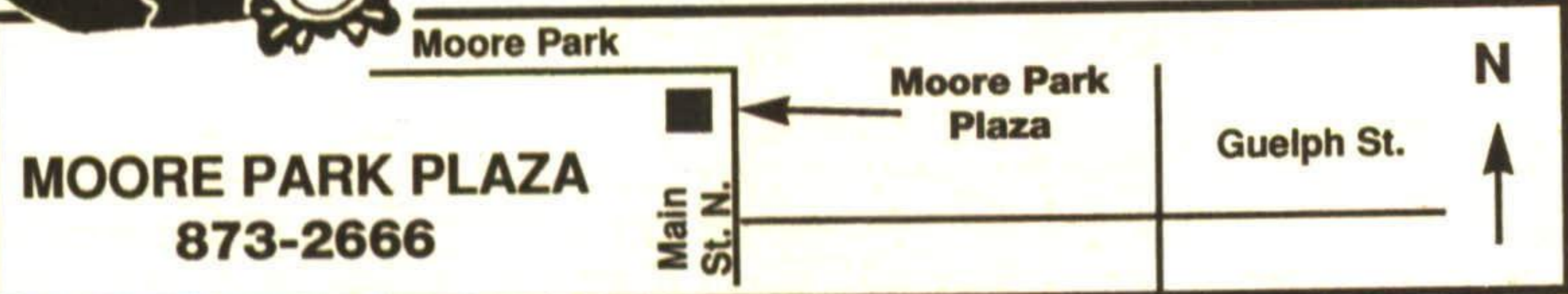
- \$500,000 general reserve for portables and general capital.

"These are things that in our opinion need to be done. This a way of providing the funds from 1990 to do them so these things will get done," Jenkins said.

(Angela Blackburn is a reporter with our sister paper, The Oakville Beaver.)



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