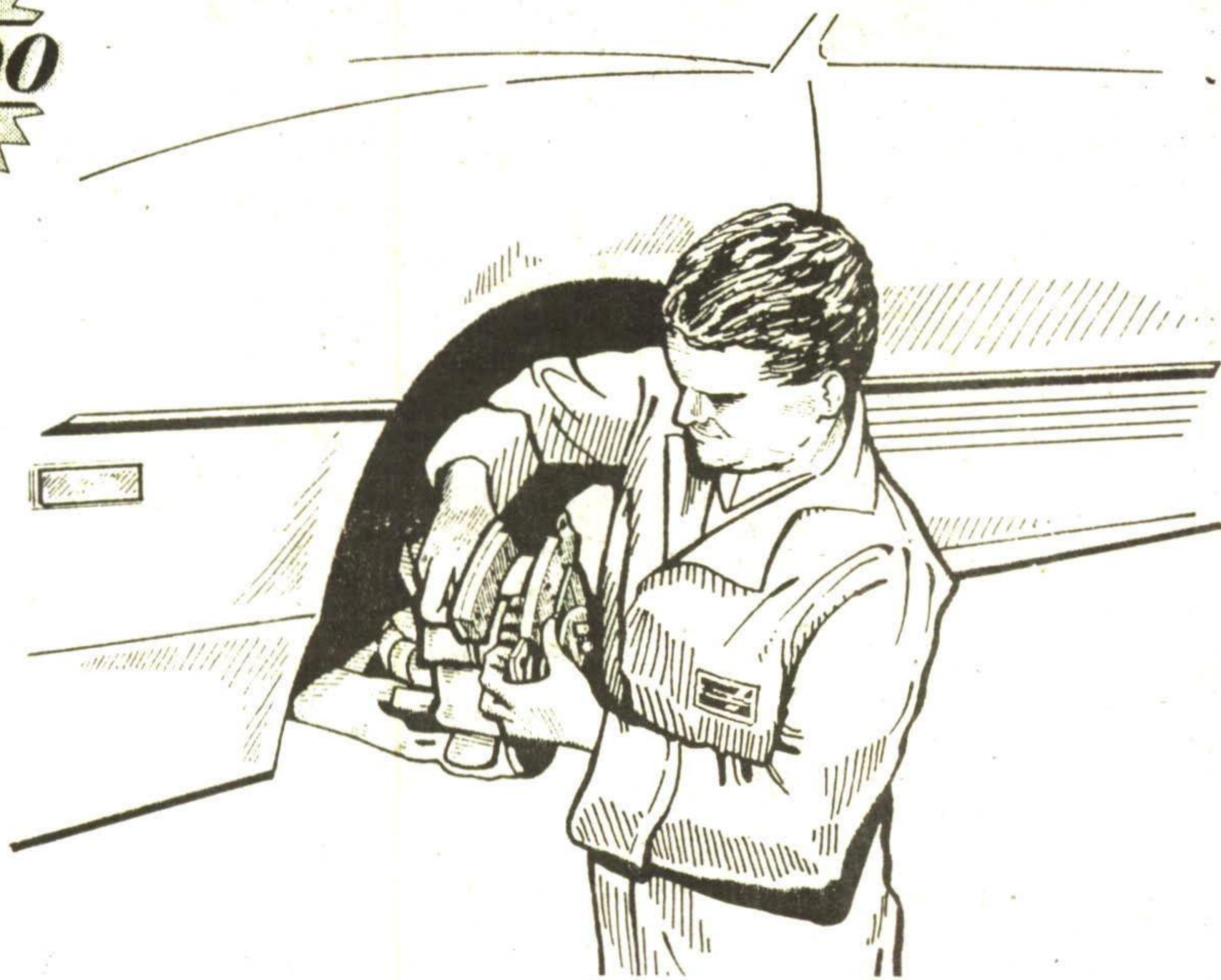


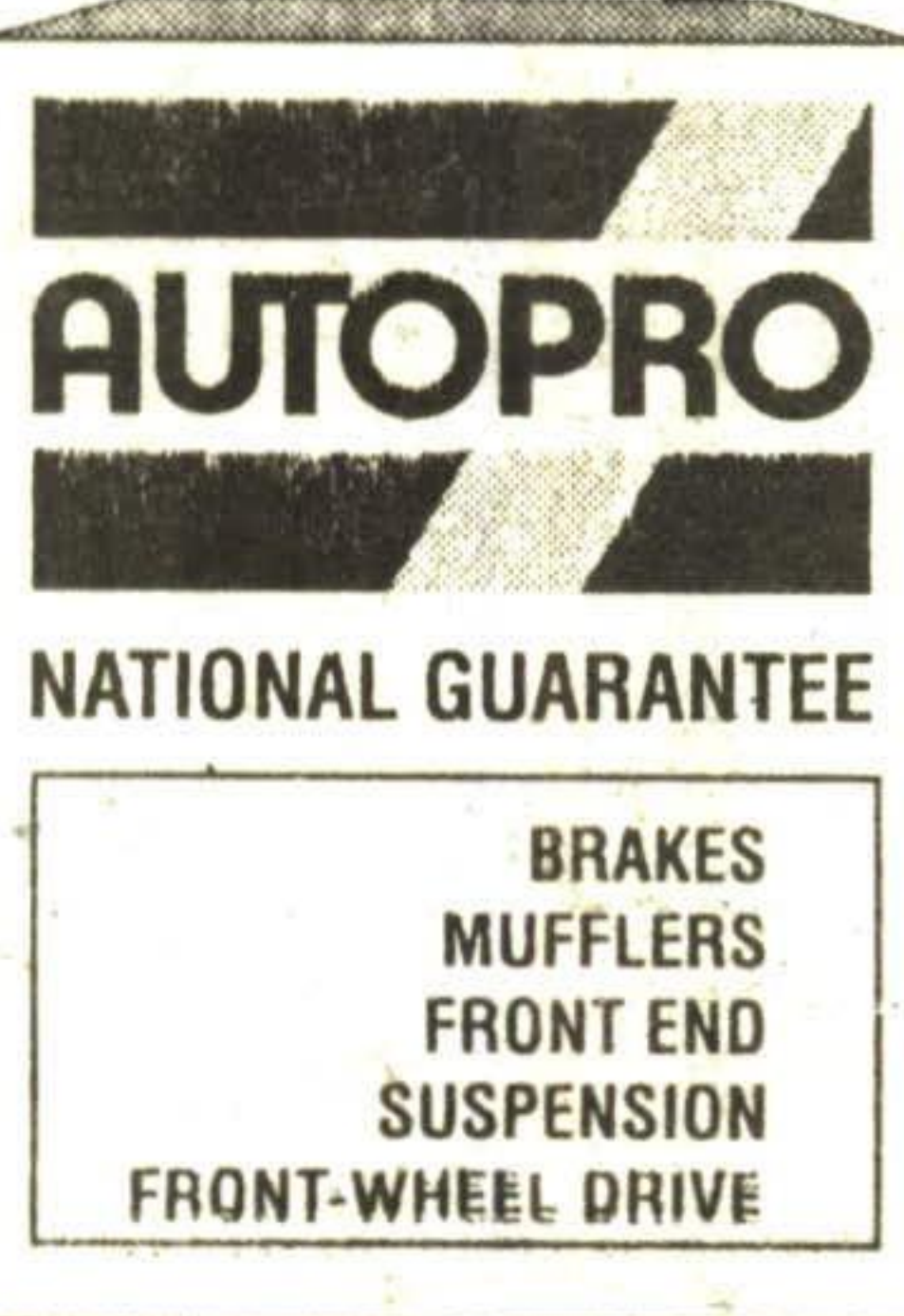
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Whiting talks education at Chamber open house

By LISA TALLYN
Staff writer

At a community open house Friday, members of the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce took the opportunity to discuss the Halton Board of Education with board chair Dave Whiting.

Whiting was asked about a variety of issues facing the board including the status of the 94 budget, whether the board is going to take advantage of the provincial/federal infrastructure funding, the school systems curriculum and discipline in Halton schools.

Whiting said the board's budget (about \$285 million) hasn't been finalized yet.

As it stands now Halton Hills residents will pay slightly less in education taxes this year than last, while some other areas in the region may see a slight increase.

"We plan to ask staff to come in with a budget to get to zero (increase) across the region," said Whiting. If that is successful Halton Hills will see their tax bill decrease even more added Whiting.

Whiting explained one of the major stumbling blocks in determining the board's budget is the fact the board won't know until March 25 what grants they will

receive from the province.

"We have built into the budget a 7 per cent reduction in grants," said Whiting.

Whiting said if the board has to make transportation cuts, one area that could be slashed is high school busing south of Hwy. 5.

"That could lead to a good moral argument to open up schools to optional attendance," said Whiting.

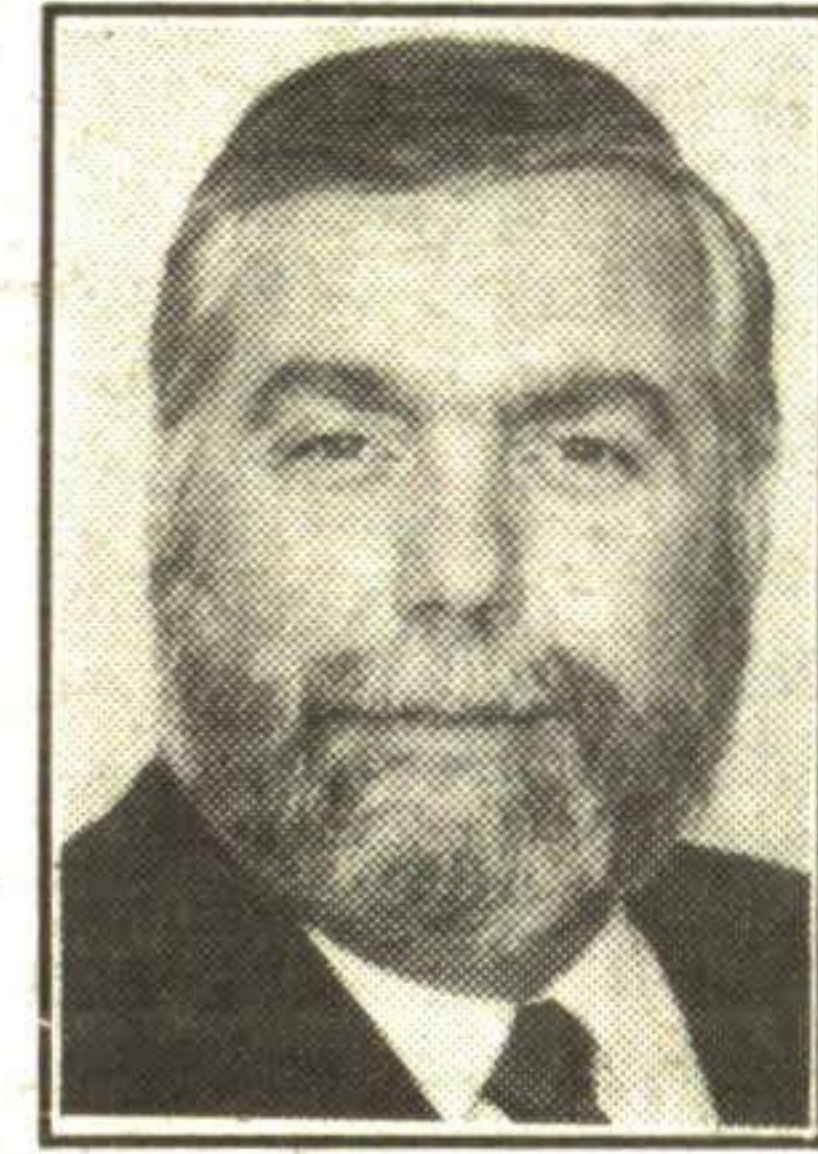
He added in the long run that could impact on the Acton High School. If given the choice, some students may choose to attend high school in Georgetown, leading to a dwindling student population at Acton High and possibly closure of the school.

Whiting was also asked whether the Halton Board was considering reducing its number of trustees.

He said the board was not considering reducing the number of trustees, but despite population growth in Oakville and Burlington, no new trustees would be added in the next election.

"We are pretty lean. We have only 18 trustees compared to 24 regional councillors," said Whiting.

In regard to the infrastructure funding program Whiting said the Halton Board can't afford to take full advantage of the \$4.4 million (including the board's share), because it doesn't have the money.



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