

School board trustee finds cost-cutting no easy task

By KATHY YANCHUS

Special to The Independent/Free Press

To say that Oakville school board trustee John Scheel's cost-cutting proposals created some discussion at Monday's finance committee meeting of the Halton Board of Education, would be an understatement.

Scheel's 10 proposals were dissected, and for the most part, tossed out as trustees, who agreed with the intent of some, deemed them non-viable budget-reducing measures.

Scheel's recommendations included increasing the PTR (this proposal was discussed in camera as was one to reduce the number of consultants and coordinators) reorganizing the transportation system to squash inefficiencies, slashing an "excessive" administration and putting more vice-principals and department heads into the classroom.

Trustees supported only two of Scheel's proposals but it was more

of an urging of administration to continue to monitor the areas of transportation and lower attendance courses.

"I believe we're already doing everything we can to optimize the use of the buses," said Director of Education Bob Williams.

Empty buses do not necessarily denote inefficiency of use, added Superintendent of Business Service, Jerry Jenkins.

"Many of our buses do double and triple runs," he explained.

In response to Scheel's recommendation that department heads be required to spend more time in the classroom, Williams said administration's plan to reduce headships by one-third by 1995 will amount to "a greater savings than what trustee Scheel is asking for."

To withdraw 50 per cent of department heads would have a large impact on the schools, he continued.

"I believe it would cause considerable anxiety and unrest among secondary teacher and department

heads...certainly confusion," said Williams explaining that schools are currently planning curriculum for 1995.

"It seems it's always too late and we have to do this next year," said Burlington Trustee Diane Leblovic. "We have to move along in solving this. In times of economic restraint, one of the focuses we really need to have is teachers kids..."

"It's a big ship and we have to turn it around...it's tough when you take an adversarial approach," stated Burlington trustee Linda Glover.

When studied, Scheel's proposals were more philosophical in nature, said Siebert.

"He outlined savings that were achievable in those proposals," said Siebert. "But in making them firm enough to prepare a motion, he agreed the savings he had identified were not savings that would be related to the 1994 budget."

Siebert believed the process Monday night involved more of an urging of administration to continue to work towards goals over a longer

period of time.

A vote against Scheel's proposals was not necessarily a vote against the content, she added.

But you can't change such negotiated things as the PTR "willy nilly at budget time," these concerns should be aired during salary negotiations, said Siebert.

Philosophically, she could understand where Scheel was coming from, said Siebert.

"You wouldn't save any bodies now but the more people you had teaching, the easier it would be to change the PTR in the future," she said.


Siebert, in her debut as finance committee chair, said the 1994 bud-

get process was an extremely difficult one complicated in part by the social contract, Equal Value Assessment, and the lack of Ministry grant information. She was most impressed however, with the "public interest."

"Cuts are going to start impacting on the classroom...all the fat is gone," said Siebert adding that when she received her list of administration budget cut proposals to meet the 0 to 1 per cent mill rate - she believed that "if we do not hear from the people from this county now, I don't know what will be cut next year."

"We have to make a stand on what's important," she said.

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