

School board asks teachers, staff to take day's pay cut

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK

If Halton's 5,000 teachers and staff don't give up one day's pay, 75 of them will be laid off.

Education Director Bob Williams issued the options at a special information meeting for north area staff Thursday in Milton.

Williams said if staff don't agree to give up one day's pay he will be forced to make layoffs as the board tries to hold its tax increase to around four per cent.

Halton School Board trustees want to trim another \$2.4 million from this year's proposed \$293 million expenditure budget.

At last Monday's finance committee meeting trustees were told that a proposed 2.85 per cent mill rate increase was now 5.29 per cent because of a reduction in expected Provincial grants.

The Board will get \$61 million in Provincial grant money this year, \$4.7 million less than last year.

Almost 80 per cent of the Board's expenditure budget is for board staff's salaries and benefits and if the staff agree to the one day pay cut the board would save \$1 million. That savings, and \$1.4 million in cuts to the budgets for supply teachers, lunch room supervisors and supplies and services, would bring the expenditure budget to a two per cent increase.

That translates to a four per cent tax increase for the average taxpayer or \$50 more than last year on a total education tax bill of \$1,300.

Williams said if the teachers and staff don't agree to the wage concession proposal within two weeks he will be forced to start making layoffs.

After the meeting, Robert Little teacher Paul Hynds said he would accept a day's pay cut if it meant no layoffs.

"Nobody likes the suggestion of giving up a day's pay but we all as teachers understand the constraints the community is under. I can't speak for the whole group, but I think it is better to give up something and not risk layoffs," Hynds said.



CHEF'S DELIGHT: Volunteer chefs Gerry Rivers, Lynne Thackwray, and Marion Storey served up culinary delights to the hungry masses at St. Alban's last Tuesday in celebration of Shrove Tuesday. (Lori Frechette photo)

NEC control to be decided today

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK

The contentious issue of who should have development control over lands now under jurisdiction of the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) will be decided by Halton Council at its meeting today (Wednesday).

Currently, provincial taxpayers pay the NEC's \$430,000 annual development control operating budget. If the Region and area municipalities assumed the role the bill could drop by \$50,000 but the plan would add between \$90,000 and \$170,000 a year to the Region's share of the tax bill and \$20,000 to the municipal bill.

If the Province cut staff when the development duties of the NEC were lessened, provincial tax-

payers would save between \$185,000 and \$215,000 a year.

Halton Hills General Committee members grappled with the issue Monday as proponents of both sides argued their positions.


Former mayoral candidate Rob Barlow attacked Acton Councillor Rick Bonnette for supporting the change in control, questioning how he could support it when the Town passed a motion saying it would not support a change that cost the Town any money.

Bonnette said the change would not cost any money if the Province allows Halton to charge development fees.

In an earlier interview on Thursday, and again Monday night, Bonnette outlined his reasons.

"I think we should be masters of our own household. The NEC bureaucracy has grown from \$1 million to \$3.1 million in the last three years. We don't need four levels of bureaucracy telling people whether they can build a porch in their backyard. The Region has always been responsible with the environment and I think the opposition to the development control transfer is just a lot of paranoia among a few ratepayers who would rather see a totalitarian democracy rewarded," Bonnette said.

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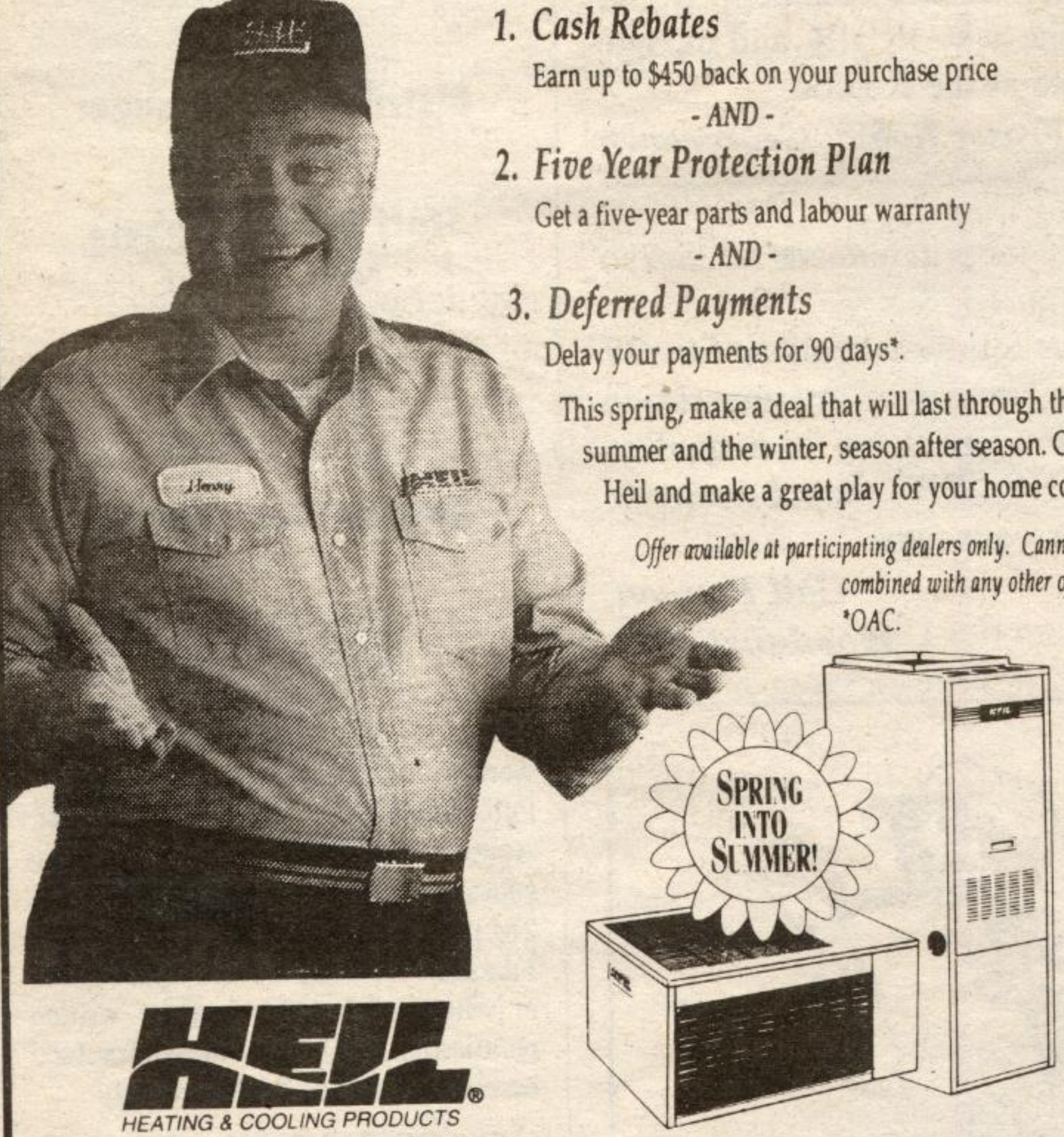
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