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'HOMETOWN PAPER, NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWS!'

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6, 1996

## School board lays off 1,573

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK  
 The Acton Tanner

Halton public school employees – 1,573 in total – have been handed layoff notices in a move that Board of Education chair Linda Glover called “frustrating and demoralizing.”

The pink slips were given to one in three of Halton’s 4,800 staff. One hundred ninety-two elementary teachers could be laid off along with 380 secondary school teachers, 30 CUPE caretakers, 273 instructional assistants, 564 lunch-room supervisors, 60 office personnel, two superintendents, 53 contract adult and continuing edu-

cation staff and 19 psychological services employees. Layoffs for non-union management could be announced in May.

Halton’s 85 school principals received that bad news in a special meeting at 8 am Tuesday morning and passed the news on to staff later in the day.

How that translates to Acton schools was unclear at press time as principals were dealing with the naturally upset, affected staff.

In an interview on Sunday, Glover said that the board had no choice but to issue the notices under the Labour Relations Act, which requires 16 weeks notice to

employees for any layoffs of more than 500 people.

“We have to look at staffing levels because the province has not given us the “tool kit” it promised that would allow us to make major cuts to the budget,” Glover explained.

“I believe that the layoffs will affect the students in the classrooms. Staff moral will be damaged and that could emulate to the students because if you are not sure if you have a job or not, you would feel a little bit down,” Glover said.

“It is hoped that it will not be necessary to terminate all the staff

who have received notices.”

Glover said that Halton’s share of the announced \$400 million in provincial cuts for education would be \$8 million and the layoffs will be necessary unless the province’s tool kit includes provi-

sions for the board to save money, including implementing an early retirement package for teachers whose age and length of service totals 85 years, user fees for lunch room supervisors and reducing planning time.

## Explosion rocks Acton home; cause unknown

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK  
 The Acton Tanner

An investigator with the office of the fire marshall continues to probe the cause of an explosion that did \$50,000 damage to a McDonald Boulevard home on Monday night.

The blast, which occurred around 9 pm and was described by neighbours as “a muffled thud,” blew out windows in the basement and upper two floors of the single family home as well as the patio doors. The back wall of the house suffered severe structural damage, buckling and having bulged out about a foot.

Home owner Frank Geng, who lives alone, was doing some house cleaning at the time of the explosion and was not injured.

In a press release, Halton Regional Police reported Geng had heard a hissing noise coming from the valve of a 20-pound propane tank earlier that evening when he was in his garage.

He brought the tank inside his house into the basement, where he opened and closed the valve several times to make sure it was fully shut off.

On the scene at noon yesterday (Tuesday), Fire Marshall Inspector Robbie Schnurr said he had a good idea what caused the blast but would not comment publicly until his investigation was complete.

“We haven’t ruled out anything as a cause for the explosion and will have to use the process of elimination to come up with the cause,” Schnurr said outside the home at 268 McDonald Blvd.

“The shock and the damage is consistent with a flammable vapour explosion and what we are trying to do now, is determine what the flammable liquid was.”

Schnurr also said he had a good idea what the ignition source was, but again refused to identify it for *The Tanner*.

Schnurr said they found evidence of spot fires including burned newspapers, a burned mop and a singed broom in the basement of the home.

At press time the site was still secured with yellow fire department barrier streamers. The site will remain secured until the investigation is complete.



### PROUD WINNERS!

Showing off their hardware received at the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce Business Achievement awards held last Thursday were the winners in each award category: from left, Suellen Bramley from Sheridan Nurseries (Civic Pride award), John Duncan of D.D.H. Distribution Services Ltd. (Business of the Year), Carol Brunelle from Acton’s Red Dog Cafe (Entrepreneur of the Year) and Connie Bath of the Acton IGA (Employee of the Year). Story, Page 2. (Karen Wetmore photo)



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