



GIFT OF LIFE: Acton blood donor Larry deSouza chats with clinic co-ordinator Julia Roehrig as he donates blood at Thursday's clinic at the Acton Legion. - Frances Niblock photo

Year of change in Acton schools 'frustrating'

By FRANCES NIBLOCK
The New Tanner

From the teachers' walk-out to the new education funding formula - this past school year has been one challenge after another for students, parents and educators in Acton.

"I've never quite seen a year like this in terms of change, frustration and uncertainty in my 39 years as a teacher and four as a trustee," exclaimed Halton District School Board chair Ethel Gardiner in an interview on Sunday.

Gardiner, who spent most of her teaching career at Robert Little school, said she knew it would be an extremely difficult year, based on all of the uncertainties coming from the government.

"I also knew it would be difficult in terms of having 10 trustees rather than 18 with the same work load. But, I was sure that we could adapt and adjust and do the best that we can do."

Gardiner said that despite all of the turmoil in education across the province; it's still a pleasure to go into Halton schools.

"We need to focus on the outstanding jobs that the people in our schools are doing with our kids. That's what counts. Students in Halton, and their schools, continue to receive awards and recognition and even provincial recognition," Gardiner said, admitting that the extra workload for secondary school teachers may mean less extra curricular activities for some students.

"It's probably not realistic to expect that they would spend the same amount of time with kids (on extra curricular activities) but they are going to do the very best that they can for kids because I know that's why they are there," Gardiner said.

Faced with massive cut-backs in spending the Halton Board has been forced to lay-off teaching assistants and some secondary teachers. All elementary teachers who received layoffs are expected to be called back and this week the Board was interviewing principals and vice-principals after an unexpectedly high number of retirements.

Gardiner said one of the issues that the Board will be working on over the summer is accommodation. Although the Board hasn't received the final figures from the Province, it knows that it has approximately 500,000 square feet of more space than it should for the approximately 40,000 students in Halton.

Until the Board disposes of that space it can't apply for any money for new schools in the rapidly growing areas of both Burlington and Oakville and the Board is currently reviewing boundaries in those areas.

Gardiner said that the upheaval of the year is outweighed by the pride she feels to be associated with Halton students.

"It makes it a little easier. When we see all this stuff happening and we see that our school are still able to carry on a do such a superb job, it's really gratifying, it really is."



TEMPORARY PARENTS Sue and Doug Long of Bower Avenue had a mother duck leave two of her ducklings behind in their yard. Although their dog Missey has grown quite fond of them, the Longs have been searching the area in hopes of returning the ducks to their mother. The ducks have taken temporary shelter in the Longs kitchen sink- Ted Tyler photo

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