

Police seek three

Halton Police are looking for three men in connection with the theft of an undisclosed amount of cash from a Main St. Acton grocery store Monday evening.

At about 7:30 p.m. three men entered the store and distracted the cashier while some cash was

removed from a drawer. All three suspects are black.

Two of the men are described as 6'1" or 6'2" with medium builds. One had short, curly, black hair. The third man was described as about 6' with a heavy build and a very dark complexion.

Provincial clawbacks blamed

School board expects to add another \$1.7 million to deficit

Another \$1.7 million is expected to be added to the Halton District School Board's \$3-million deficit.

Board members heard the bad news Wednesday night just before passing an operating budget of \$165.9 million. The short-year budget covers the period from Jan. 1-Aug. 31, 1998.

The increase to the budget deficit is from an expected provincial clawback of savings gained by school boards during the two-week teachers' strike last fall.

Business superintendent Wayne McNally said he saw staff drafting clawback legislation when he visited the ministry of education recently.

"It's not definite, but it's 99.9 per cent sure," he said. "It's about as definite as it can get without seeing it in black and white."

He said the clawback would cost the Halton board \$1-\$2 million.

"The government will probably redistribute it as something like learning materials grants," said McNally. "Then they can say they're putting money back into the system, but it will probably not be an even trade on the clawback."

Oakville Trustee Peter Petrusich estimated the loss from the clawback at \$1.7 million. He urged any extra board money, such as savings in snow clearing, go towards paying down the deficit.

McNally said provincial transition funds for amalgamations and downsizing will be sought to reduce the

deficit. He said the fund is available for many uses, but deficits are not specifically mentioned.

The business superintendent said the deficit must be cleaned up within a couple of years.

"We'll have to cut expenditures to a point where it's less than our funding, but there'll have to be a strategy on where you go for the next two years," he said.

Ethel Gardiner, chair of the HDSB and trustee for Halton Hills, said the increased deficit is not due to any extravagance on the part of the board.

"Definitely nothing was added," she said. "There wasn't a lot of flexibility because all of our staff and programs are already in place for the year but administration went through with a fine-tooth comb and anywhere they could save, they did."

The board will not tackle the deficit until its 1998-99 budget. McNally urged trustees to pass the short-year budget immediately because it's late and staffing decisions must be made.

A minor adjustment was made to the short-year budget, with \$157,000 moved from tuition fees to the decentralized school budget, which had earlier lost \$248,000.

Spending of decentralized budget items is controlled by schools and may not always go to supplies, said Dusty Papke, director of education.

But some trustees urged the \$91,000 more be returned to that budget.

—By Dennis Smith, special with files by Herb Garbutt, staff



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Holy Saturday	April 11	1 pm Blessing of Easter Food 8 pm Solemn Easter Vigil (with incense)
Easter Sunday	April 12	8 am Mass of Easter Sunday 10 am Mass of Easter Sunday 11 am Mass of Easter Sunday at St Brigid School 12 noon Solemn Mass of Easter (with incense)




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R.H.A.D.

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