

Trustees okay funds to rehire teaching assistants

Some of the special education Instructional Assistant (IA) positions lost earlier this year through budget trimming have been reclaimed by the Halton District School Board.

After some debate and whittling down of the final figure, trustees unanimously approved the overspending of \$300,000 from the 1998-99 school year budget. This allows the board to bring some special education helpers back to the classrooms until at least the end of December.

Brenda Kearney, board superintendent of education for student services, had asked trustees to approve \$900,000 in IA funding for the entire school year, based on a verbal assurance by the Ministry of Education of the same amount in extra money coming to Halton.

But a jittery board, wanting the pledged government dollars in writing, voted in favor of a scaled back budget over-expenditure as an interim measure, until the extra money is confirmed.

The Halton public board had a special education budget of \$33 million last year which paid for 427 full-time equivalent IAs.

In 1998-99 the board, even with the \$900,000, will have a budget, including transportation, of just \$27 million. That money provides 279 IAs, 177 in elementary and 102 in secondary.

The new total includes the recent addition of eight IAs allocated for what is considered unsafe conditions regarding the feeding, lifting and toiletry needs of some special education students at various schools.


Should the full \$900,000 in added funding come from the province as promised, 19 IAs will be added to the mix for the current school year, which would still leave the board 125 IAs short of last year's complement.

As of March of this year, the Halton public board had 3,736 students officially recognized as being in need of individual attention and another 1,662 also receiving some level of IA help.

Instructional assistants do a variety of specific tasks in a one-on-one or cluster group setting in a regular classroom setting. They deal with children identified as being gifted, having an intellectual or physical disability, autism, behavioral challenges or visual, learning, hearing or speech impairments.

—By Tim Whitnell, special

Travel
with
Bruce Hood



THANKS, PRESIDENT MANDELA!

SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS WAS OUR HOST and we felt very privileged to be at a luncheon last Friday at the Sheraton in downtown Toronto, when HIS EXCELLENCY NELSON MANDELA, PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA MADE A REMARKABLE SPEECH! We were fortunate to be seated at the front, only about 25 feet from this amazing man, and it was a memorable experience for all in attendance. The world is truly a much smaller place than one would have believed as we shared in the background of his life in changing the fortunes of their vast country.

SAFARI ADVENTURES, SPECTACULAR SCENERY, FINE FOOD AND WINE, CULTURAL VILLAGES - so much to see and do in this ever increasingly popular country. There are a variety of ways to visit South Africa - with an escorted group, as individuals, do bread and breakfasts, stay at a game lodge, take a train ride with a vintage steam engine, join a safari for a close-up view of the mass of an elephant, or the height of a giraffe, a lion, or even a wart-hog! 'One of the most beautiful places on earth' is how many describe it, and **TOURIST TRAFFIC FROM CANADA** has experienced double digit growth in the past few years. This year it will likely really 'take off' following the visit of their esteemed leader.

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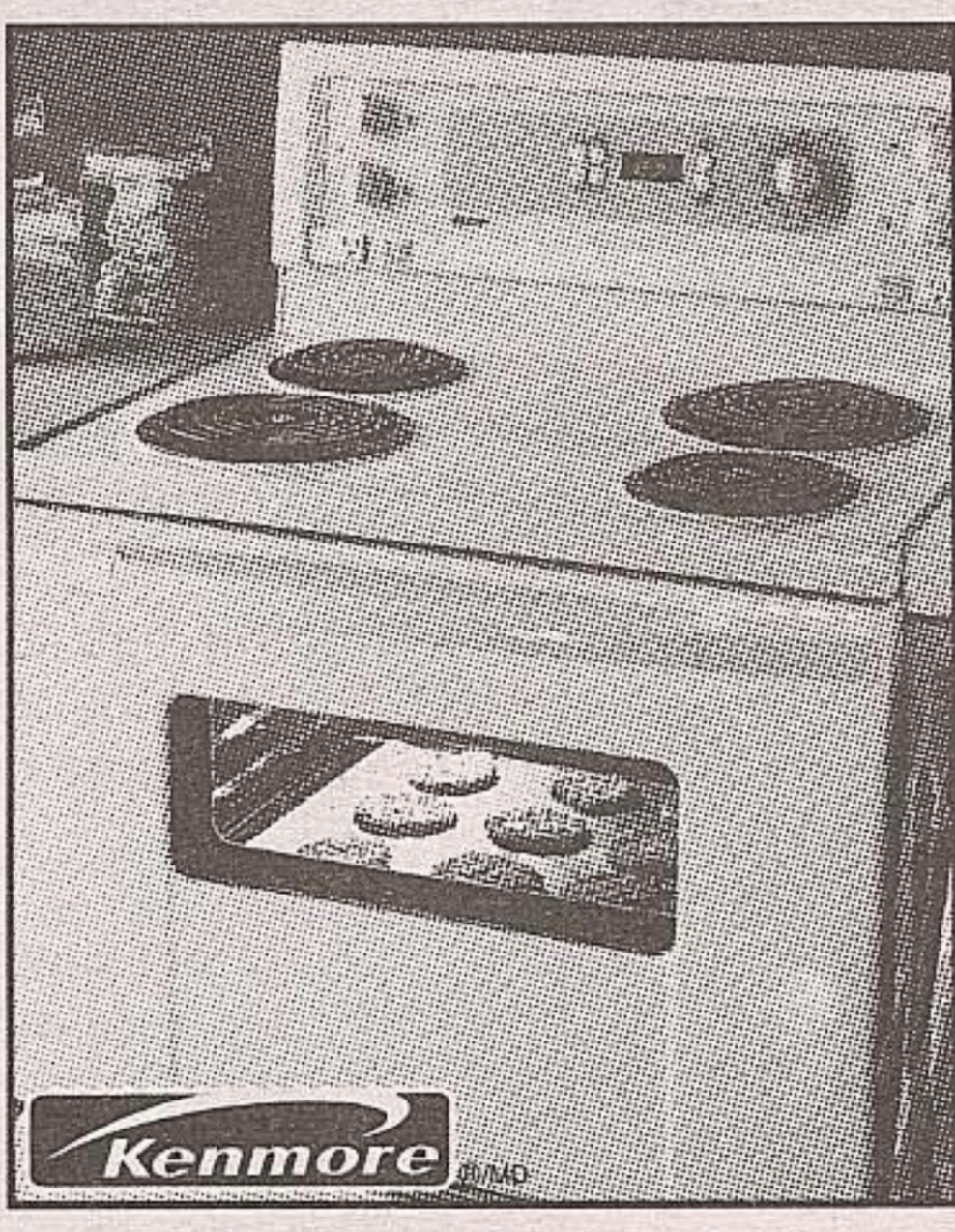


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