School board programs in jeopardy due to budget shortfall

Continued from pg. 1

School boards cannot run deficit budgets so Kisko said a summary list of all proposed program cuts will come to the next public budget meeting. That is scheduled for May 29 at 7 p.m. at the board office in Burlington.

The board funding of the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program that is in jeopardy amounted

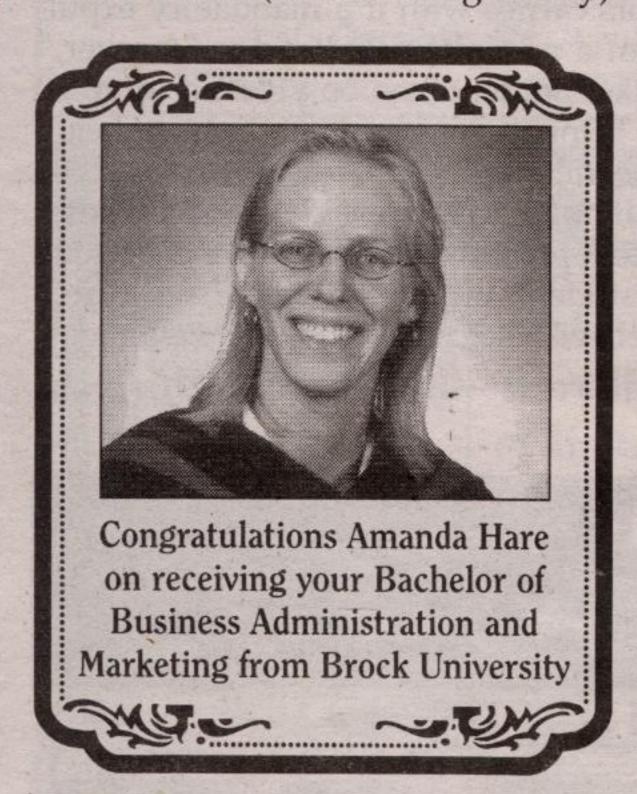
to \$80,000 this year.

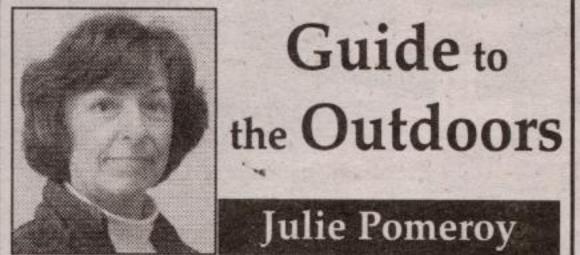
The board has had an ongoing relationship with the Halton Regional Police Service, which implements DARE by having officers go into elementary classrooms and giving anti-drug and peer pressure talks to Grade 6 students.

Celebrating Literacy and Food For Thought was a two-year commitment from the board that saw it give \$90,000 this year to the Halton Social Planning Council, to help it administer reading and snack and breakfast programs.

The idea of losing the three programs does not sit well with some trustees.

"I'm quite concerned we may be compromising (disadvantaged) kids' futures (and learning ability)





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905-846-5000 www.canoe-country.com by not ensuring their stomachs are full," said Burlington Trustee Peggy Russell.

She also noted her grown son took the DARE program and believes he benefited from it.

Despite the doom and gloom nature of much of the talk around the conference room during the budget presentation, education director Dusty Papke reminded people not to draw definitive conclusions.

"It does not mean we won't have food programs in our schools," he said. "It was not an easy decision (but) our backs are against the wall."

Milton Trustee Erica Andrew said, "I'm confident the programs will continue."

Board superintendent of education Gary Sadler said Halton Police and the social planning council were both informed about a month ago of the proposed budget cuts affecting their programs.

Sadler said there is still some hope, and even some expectation, that DARE, Celebrating Literacy and Food For Thought will carry on in the schools in some form.

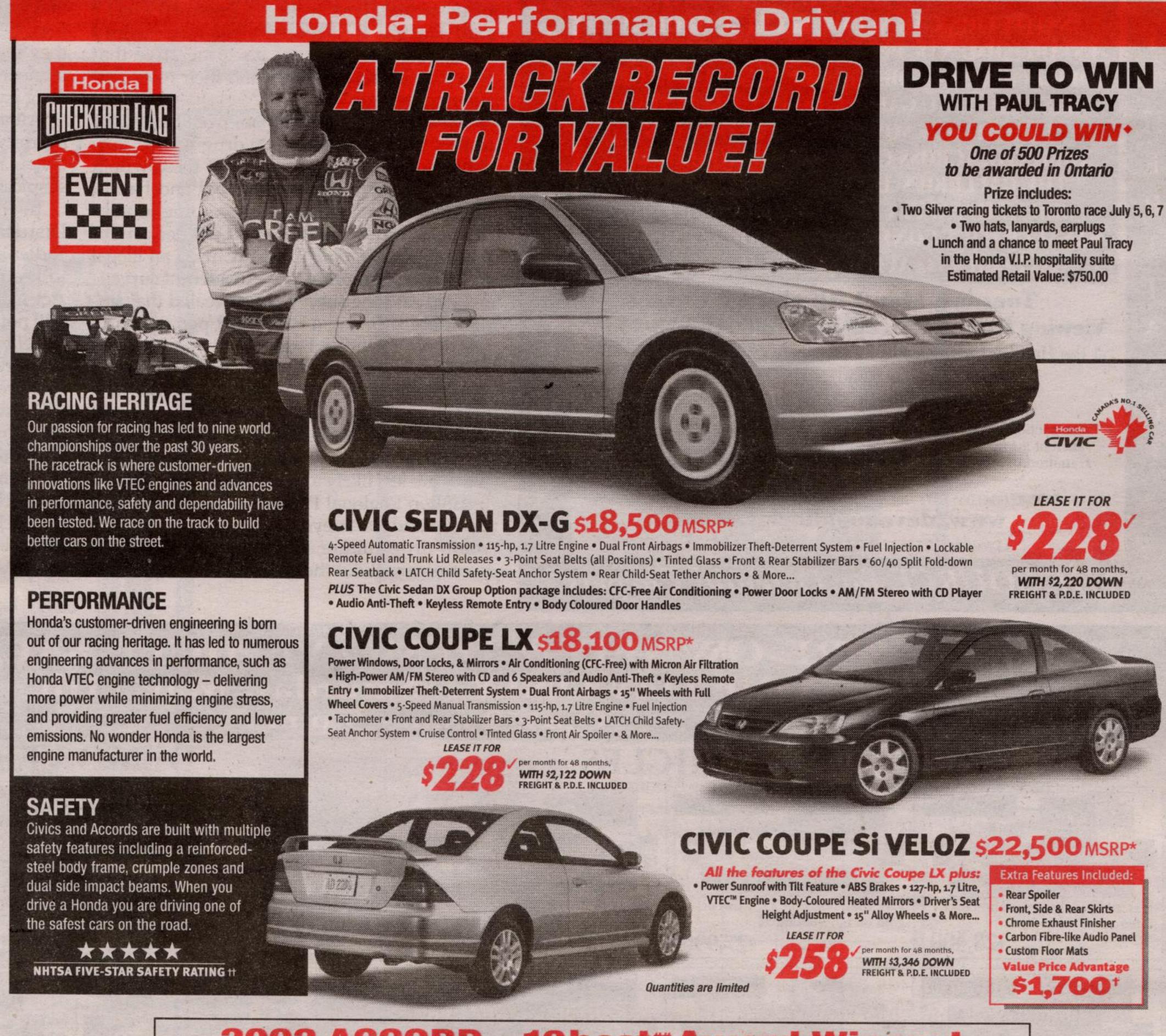
"The individual school communities have the support of local sponsors like grocery stores and companies that give (money or) services in kind," he noted.

Sadler said board staff has tried to come up with alternate forms of funding for the school-based programs that don't receive specific ministry funding but "there isn't a

He said he should be meeting this week with the DARE reps and soon with the Halton Social Planning Council.

"That's why we will have meetings with these groups, to see what ideas we can come up with."

—By Tim Whitnell, special with files by Herb Garbutt, staff writer



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