

# Board won't cut busing for specialized classes

Parents of many public school children taking specialized classes around Halton will be relieved to know cuts to their transportation funding have been removed from the ongoing school board budget deliberations.

The inclusion of nearly \$1 million in spending reductions in four areas of transportation has been whittled down to one area totalling about one-quarter of that amount, following the removal of the other three items by Halton District School Board senior administrators.

Proposed budget cuts of \$410,000 for the busing of French immersion students, \$168,500 for the transportation of English as a Second Language pupils and \$162,900 for gifted students had been on the chopping block up until just before Wednesday's school board meeting, when a revised list of budget cuts was unveiled.

While final budget decisions will be made by the 11 trustees in late June, there are still \$233,900 in cuts proposed related to transportation policy exceptions.

Board chair and Halton Hills Trustee Ethel Gardiner said she will suggest a busing policy exemption remain in place for students in Georgetown, citing longer, more dangerous walks for pupils there, particularly in winter. Halton's Catholic board has granted a similar busing exception to its students in the same area.

Board business superintendent Carla Kisko said the Georgetown component accounts for about \$70,000 of the quarter-million proposed cut.

Beyond the busing issues, the Halton public board still has many difficult decisions to make before it can achieve a balanced budget.

The new list of items under consideration for reduction amounts to \$4.05 million, down from the \$4.2 million proposed last week.

Board staff say they are working on the assumption of receiving \$285.44 million from the Ontario Ministry of Education for the 2002-03 school year, based on the latest student enrolment projections.

Another \$200,000 was added from the Halton board's reserve



**ETHEL GARDINER**

fund leaving it seeking \$4.05 million in reductions.

There were several other major changes made to the proposed budget, including decreasing the number of new education assistants to be placed in elementary schools next year, particularly for special education students.

The initial plan for 63 new full-time equivalent EAs was downgraded to 37 last week and has been further reduced to 27 additions, resulting in a saving of \$970,000.

"You are doing a great job," Gardiner told board staff, "but it is evident the kids will suffer greatly."

One area where almost \$500,000 in savings was found was retirement gratuities.

—By Tim Whitnell, special

## Catholic board also struggling with budget

In an effort to balance its 2002-03 budget, the Halton Catholic District School Board is considering cuts that could reduce service levels in a variety of areas.

On Tuesday, superintendent of business services and treasurer Joe Birett told trustees that, despite adjustments already made, the board is still about \$3.9 million short of balancing next year's proposed operating budget, which now stands at \$148.8-million.

"Staff is continuing to review the expected revenues and estimated expenditures in an ongoing effort to bring the two into balance," Birett said. "However, there is now little doubt that further reductions in budget expenditures will have a significant impact on the board's ability to deliver instructional programs effectively."

As a result, Birett made the board aware that it may have to consider staffing reductions in all departments and support services plus "severe containment of all salary increases" for 2002-03.

Also on the table are reductions in programs such as DARE and staff training initiatives, plus changing half-day/every day Kindergarten to full day/alternate day delivery.

Reductions are also being contemplated for student transportation (a \$712,000 shortfall is estimated) and grounds maintenance.

—By Howard Mozel, special



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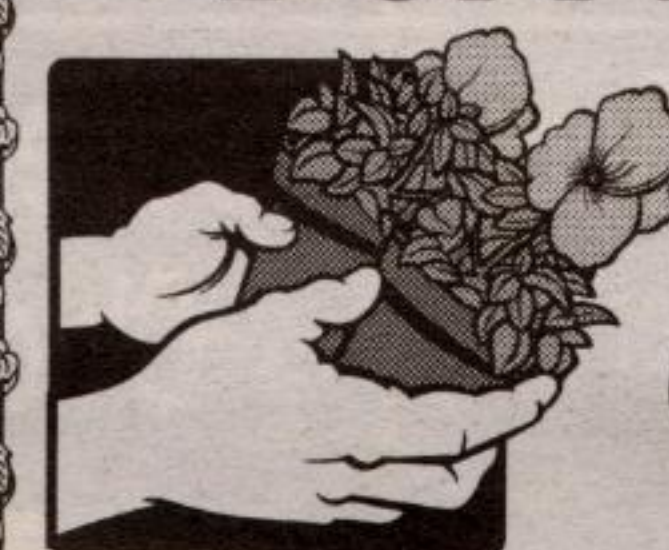
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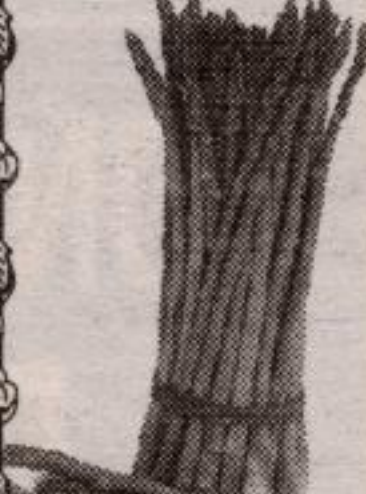


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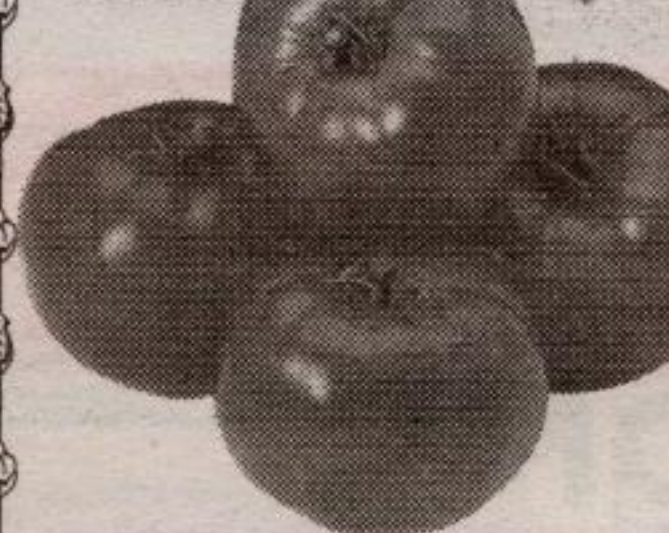


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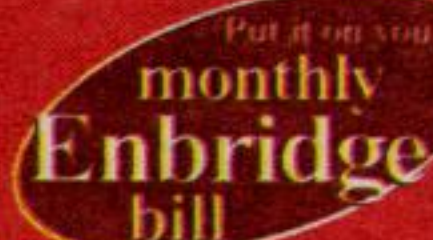
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