

Chudleigh enthused, Andrew reserving judgement

By IRENE GENTLE
Special to the Champion

A new education funding model is receiving top grades from MPP Ted Chudleigh while Trustee Erica Andrew feels the numbers may need to improve.

Or at least to stabilize.

Choosing her words carefully, Ms Andrew of the Halton Board of Education said she couldn't comment on a new funding model announced last week by Minister of Education Dave Johnson until all the kinks have been worked out.

"There's nothing I can say right now because we still don't know what it is," said Ms Andrew. "We've got some numbers and general statistics but we don't know what we're going to get."

Ms Andrew refused to comment on the model, which provides money based on the number of students and individual needs, rather than property tax assessments. The model also defines classroom spending for the first time.

By defining classroom spending funding is funneled directly to the classroom, leaving what the provincial government feels are bloated administration budgets behind.

The government has earmarked \$14.4 billion for the next three years for education.

Separate grants will be set up for adult education, junior kindergarten, school renovations and new school construction.

The model also puts teachers back into the classroom for longer hours per day, reducing preparation time.

Ms Andrew said until the numbers are crunched she is not prepared to give an opinion.

"Right now I don't know how this will affect Halton and I don't want to guess



Erica Andrew

until the numbers are final and we have a chance to analyze them," said Ms Andrew.

In contrast Halton North MPP Ted Chudleigh couldn't wait to praise the model, which he believes is a step forward in education reform.

"We're turning the chart upside-down so the student is at the top," said Mr. Chudleigh. "Good education is thinking about the child first."

By putting funding on a per-student basis, introducing standardized report cards and strictly defining what constitutes classroom spending, the plan is to take education into the 21st century by going back to the basics of more teaching and less administration.

"There may be some administrative problems in the public board to meet the budget. I believe their administration budgets are quite high," said Mr. Chudleigh. "The thing to focus on is it's a fair funding model."

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It's adding up to confusion

With all the figures being thrown around following the release of the Ministry of Education's funding model, there seem to be a lot of incorrect numbers out there.

Administrators with the Halton District School Board and the Halton Catholic District School Board maintain they need more time to gather information from the ministry and interpret what it will mean to their respective budgets for the 1998-99 school year.

So far, the figures bandied about by different groups just don't jive.

For instance, the Ministry of Education sent out a chart detailing revenue impact of the new funding model for all school boards in the province.

The graph states the Halton public board had operating revenue of \$243 million in 1997 and will lose 0.5 per cent for \$241.7 million in 1998-99.

But a look at the total operating and capital revenue to be made available to the Halton public board in 1998-99 shows the projected figure of \$259.9 million falls far short of the \$276 million budget the board is currently operating within.

Operating revenue normally excludes funds put aside for capital projects, such as renovations or new school buildings.

Dusty Papke, the public board education director, said last Friday that, "Grant formulas have yet to be

issued to the boards in order to allow them to calculate the actual funding levels under this new funding model."

The Halton Catholic board, the ministry says, had operating revenue in 1997 of \$99.8 million, and that will increase 11.7 per cent to \$111.5 million in 1998-99.

Joe Birett, business manager with the Halton Catholic board, said he doesn't know where the government got the \$99 million operating revenue figure for this year.

"The figure we have is about \$119 million," said Mr. Birett. "Obviously, they've done some other (funding) exclusions, but do those exclusions get included in future years?"

Mr. Birett said he has no idea at this point how the numbers will shake out, but he does have a feeling his board will be somewhat better off than the neighbouring public board.

The Halton Elementary Teachers' Association (HETA) said initial grant figures for the public board indicate that funding for 1998-99 has decreased by more than \$20 million.

A HETA release added, "Even more alarming is that funding will be decreased in the following two years, even though projected enrolments for Halton continue to increase."

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For September 1998

Halton Catholic District School Board

ADVANCED registration for those children who will be attending Junior and Senior Kindergarten (not currently registered) in the Catholic Schools in Burlington, Oakville, Milton, Georgetown and Acton will be held at all schools on

WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY

April 15 and 16, 1998

9:00 a.m. to noon

1:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Junior Kindergarten

Children are required to be 4 years of age on or before December 31, 1998.

- ◆ Roman Catholic Baptismal Certificate required.
- ◆ Before registration is finalized, a child will have completed the prescribed program of immunization for diphtheria, tetanus, poliomyelitis, measles, mumps and rubella.
- ◆ Families registering for the first time at a school are requested to provide the child's medical card at the time of registration.
- ◆ For further information or alternate registration date, please contact the principal of your nearest Catholic School.

Senior Kindergarten

Children are required to be 5 years of age on or before December 31, 1998.

James V. Sherlock
Chair of the Board

Fred L. Sweeney
Director of Education