

Gifted and marginal students to be hit

By **KIM ARNOTT**
Special to The Champion

Special education students, already hit hard by layoffs of support staff, will have to brace for another round of cuts.

In a report released to trustees of the Halton District School Board last week, staff outlined plans to cut programs for gifted students and those at risk of dropping out, as well as programs for students with learning disabilities and developmental problems.

The new provincial funding formula will only pay for 210 special education staff, down from the 256 used by the board last year.

"In the secondary panel alone, the reduction of special education teachers will be 27.39 full time equivalents," superintendent Brenda Kearney told

trustees. "That's not a choice any of us in this room would like to make, but that's the reality."

The impacts of the cuts will be felt across the region and across the system. The report recommends:

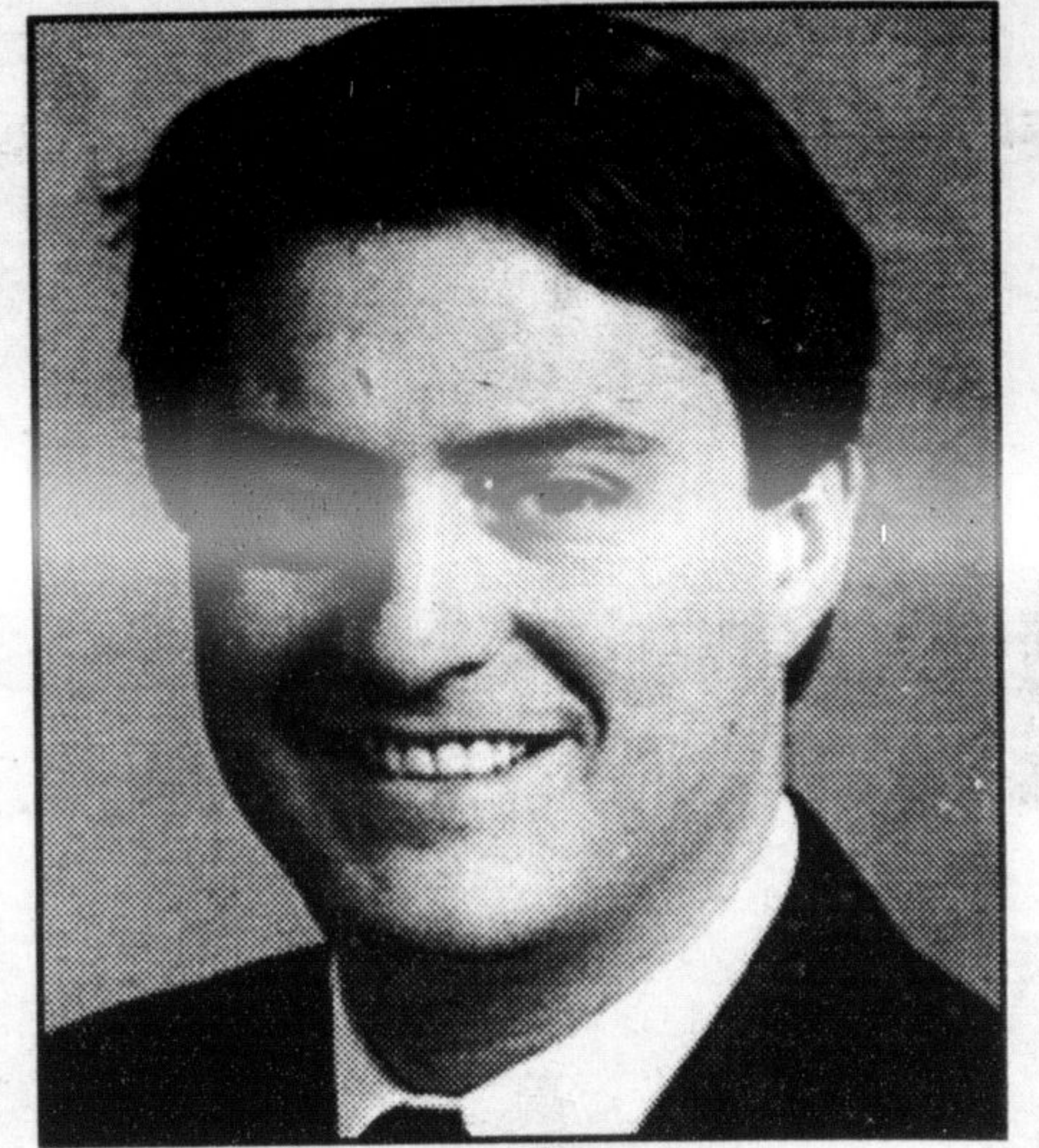
- Eliminating peer association classes in Burlington and Oakville. Gifted students will be given the option of attending self-contained classes in those areas, provided there is enough demand;
- Eliminating elementary cluster classes, with students streamed into self-contained classes or provided with resource support;
- Eliminating the Halton Alternative Education Program (HAEP), aimed at high school students at risk of dropping out;
- Decentralizing the satellite program which

offers self-contained classes for learning disabled students with average or higher academic ability. The number of students involved will also be capped and students will be limited to a one-year placement in the program;

- Merging the high school developmental education program in Oakville with the Burlington program at Lord Elgin High School.

Ms Kearney told trustees she wasn't happy with the level of cuts she was recommending, but couldn't see any other way to deal with the reduction of staff resulting from the provincial funding formula.

"I think I have the Ministry's phone number stamped into my head," she said. "I call them on a daily basis to make sure they hear us loud and clear from Halton."



Rob MacIsaac

MacIsaac gets cold shoulder

By **BRAD REAUME**
The Champion

Don't call us, we'll call you.

Milton town council thanked Burlington Mayor Rob MacIsaac for his suggestion to explore combining municipalities, and told him they would get back to him.

The Burlington mayor made his pitch on Tuesday night at Town Hall, pushing for local municipalities to "get out ahead" of anticipated change by having discussions to determine if there is any interest in amalgamation.

After the meeting council discussed the matter for almost half an hour in a closed-door session. This despite the fact that the Municipal Act requires such discussions be held in public. The discussions led to no formal plan of action.

"We will have to deal with it out of camera," said Milton Mayor Gord Krantz. "We didn't really get into it. There is a certain amount of sensitivity surrounding this."

Burlington has already asked Flamborough, its neighbour and Milton's neighbour to the west, to join in such talks. According to Mr. MacIsaac, Flamborough representatives are anxious to meet and a time has been set.

After the council meeting Mr. Krantz said councillors would first have to "get their minds wrapped around the issue" even though the Burlington overture has been public knowledge for several weeks.

"This is not what I expected. I was hoping for an answer tonight," said Mr. MacIsaac. "We are not too sensitive about it, but we believe it is better to have the discussion sooner than later, because it will happen sooner or later."

Mr. MacIsaac told Milton council that Burlington council wants to crest the wave of change, given the amalgamation of Toronto, proposed amalgamation in Hamilton and the expectation of a Greater Toronto Services Board usurping one level of local government.

Mr. Krantz said Milton is in no rush but would not delay simply for the sake of delay. He did point out that Milton has expressed an interest in potential amalgamation with Halton Hills.

"Does Burlington have anything in common with Halton Hills? Not likely," said Mr. Krantz.

The mayor did say that two separate sets of talks may evolve, one with Halton Hills, the other with Burlington and Flamborough.

He added that he has no difficulty entering into discussions, but would not, until

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