

# Educators' reaction about school funding is cautious

By DENNIS SMITH

Special to The Champion

Local educators are restraining their enthusiasm for provincial initiatives aimed at increasing extracurricular and remedial support at schools.

An extra \$50 million for school boards and the repeal of mandatory extracurriculars for teachers highlighted last week's announcements.

But some Halton education officials are reacting cautiously, saying they need more information.

Larry Chud, president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation in Halton, was skeptical about the increased funding, which will be shared by boards.

"One wonders if it is really new funding the government is announcing," said Mr. Chud. "It will help, but it's not enough."

He said he's pleased mandatory extracurriculars are being scrapped, but Mr. Chud is awaiting details from the Education Ministry on teacher workload.

"It's a better sign than worse. It has significant potential to be good," he said. "The question will be what counts as instructional time. Coaching football may not

count, but covering for the coach may count."

Extracurriculars — like after-school sports and clubs — and remediation — the extra academic help for students — have suffered because high teachers must handle 6.5 classes per year instead of six.

To improve the situation, the Education Ministry will expand its definition of instructional time and provide greater workload flexibility so boards can recognize extracurricular activities. Details are expected in another week or so.

Halton District School Board Chair Ethel Gardiner said the announcement has occurred well past board staffing deadlines and will cause timetabling conflicts.

"Down the road I hope this is going to make extracurriculars more accessible for kids," she said.

"It is certainly going to, in the short-term, cause a great deal of disruption in our schools."

Ms Gardiner said she'll need more details before commenting further. "We don't know what strings are attached to the announcement."

The ministry will require boards to plan for extracurriculars at high schools. It's also encouraging extracurriculars training for both teachers and community volunteers.

Ontario Education Minister Janet Ecker said the government is committed to providing good education and has increased funding by \$360 million for the next school year.

"We must continue to work together with all of our education partners to see much-needed reforms to the system through completion and success," she said.

Another teacher representative was pleased with the funding increase, estimated at more than \$7.5 million for the Halton Catholic District School Board.

Richard Brock, president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association, Halton elementary unit, said the key is there's freedom about how the funding can be used.

"This can finally be the relief we have needed in the areas of split grades and excessive supervision, while achieving comparable compensation packages with the rest of the GTA as we preserve our preparation time," said Mr. Brock.

Besides the Catholic board's \$7.5 million increase, Halton's public school board will receive nearly \$5 million more, noted Burlington MPP Cam Jackson. "Education continues to be a priority and we've increased funding yet again to help Halton schools ensure our children receive the education they need to succeed."

## YOU ARE INVITED

### To Participate in a Master Plan for Halton Region's Agreement Forests

The Region of Halton is preparing a Master Plan for the 1564 acres of Agreement Forests located in the Town of Milton and Town of Halton Hills that are owned by the Region and previously managed for forestry purposes under agreement by the Ministry of Natural Resources. The purpose of the Master Plan is to guide forest use and management activities over the next 20 years to ensure the health, safety, and sustainability of the forests.

The study process will document existing natural and cultural resources, identify issues, conflicts and opportunities among forest, natural heritage, cultural and recreational objectives, and establish appropriate strategies and actions required to manage the forests sustainably.

The Region is establishing a Regional Forest Public Liaison Committee to assist the exchange of information among stakeholders and to provide input into the Master Plan. This committee is intended to reflect a broad range of interests and users of the forests. The Region is seeking the participation of 12-15 members from clubs, organizations, community groups, and residents to represent such interests as:

- Hiking
- Residents adjacent to the forests
- Aboriginal interests
- Forest related services & industries
- Cross country skiing
- Hunting and fishing
- Snowmobiling
- Citizens at large
- Equestrian/riding
- Naturalists
- Other forest interests

This Regional Forest Public Liaison Committee will meet 3-4 times through the study process. Regional Staff will select a cross-section of members based on submissions received. **If you are interested in participating on this committee, please submit your name, address, phone number, affiliations, with reasons for your interest by May 30, 2001 to Ms. Patricia Herring as set out below.**

In addition, the Region will host two public information meetings during preparation of the Master Plan. These meetings will be advertised in the local newspapers and notice will be sent to those on the mailing list. **To add your name to the mailing list, or to obtain further information, please contact:**

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# MOHAWK FIREWORKS NIGHT.

## Sunday, May 20th.

The Mohawk Family Fireworks Festival kicks off at 6 pm with free pony rides, face painting, a petting zoo, Jungle Cat World show, clowns and The Stylamanders, a special kids' performance. There'll be a mouth-watering BBQ with food specials for kids, and of course, a huge fireworks display beginning at 9:30 pm.

Please, no pets or personal fireworks.  
Sorry, no live harness racing that night.



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