

# Budget pressures looming at the public school board

Halton District School Board business superintendent Carla Kisko had immediate good news and looming bad news for trustees at last week's board meeting.

She told them the board was on target to date to reach its original budget figure of \$283.8 million for 2001-02, which has since been revised to \$284.6 million.

However, provincial funding formula pressures and particularly retirement gratuities continue to cause concern about reaching budget projections by the end of the fiscal year, said Ms Kisko.

A \$2.8 million overall deficit is forecast for the current year after factoring in an expected \$5 to 6 million in retirement gratuity payments in 2002. The amount paid out in 2001 was \$5.7 million.

"It is an outstanding problem for lots of boards of about \$160 mil-

lion" in coming payments, she told trustees, "and that is significantly up. In most cases it is being addressed through reserves."

The Halton public board used most of its reserve fund last year to eliminate its \$2.2 million budget deficit.

Ms Kisko said the board has an unfunded liability related to future gratuity payments but that the amount isn't known because it has not been determined actuarially.

### Not word from Province

Ms Kisko said appeals have been made to the provincial government for aid in covering retirement gratuities but no word has been received.

Gratuities are part of teachers' negotiated agreements and have been offered at the Halton board for at least 30 years. They consti-

tute a lump-sum payment upon retirement.

Most full-time employees of the board, including principals and administrative staff, are entitled to gratuities.

The payout is calculated by considering an employee's years of service, number of banked sick days and their annual salary. The amount paid is equal to the lesser of 50 per cent of the annual salary or the terms of employment.

A teacher gets 20 sick days over 10 months. Those unused are banked and carried over to the next school year.

Prior to 1998 school boards were able to keep the difference between retiring and new teachers' salaries and that usually paid for the former's owed gratuity.

About 150 teachers left Halton last year.

# Booths now available for Showcase Milton

Following the success of last year's Showcase Milton, the Milton Chamber of Commerce has decided to host the event in 2002.

This year's Showcase Milton will be held May 24 to 26 at Memorial Arena on Thompson Road.

"Booth consumers and exhibitors were extremely pleased with the success of last year's show," said Sandy Martin, executive director of the Milton Chamber of Commerce.

"The show provides an excellent opportunity for local businesses to introduce their products to Milton's expanding resi-

dential base. It's also a great way for new and current residents to learn more about their community."

A committee of volunteers are responsible for the show's management.

"We're going to build on the great base we established in 2001 with even more activities, displays and prizes," said Jamie Krane, committee chair.

"We were also able to move the show forward one week, in response to requests from our exhibitors."

Along with products for the home and garden, Showcase Milton will

feature travel, entertainment, fitness, automotive, real estate and insurance information.

"We have already had a lot of interest from returning exhibitors to the 2002 show," Ms Martin said.

"Many businesses were sorry they missed out last year and are very keen to become involved in 2002. We expect that booths will sell out very quickly after last year's success."

Booths will go on sale February 11 at the Milton Chamber of Commerce office.

To reserve a booth or for more information, call Andrea at (905) 878-0581.

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