

Next budget meeting May 29

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 told trustees there was about 11 per cent leeway in next year's budget. However, an updated list of further commitments that the board is either legally mandated to provide or staff feel are essential was presented at the meeting. It amounted to another \$19 million in costs, or 7 per cent, being added to items for the new budget.

Among the additional commitments cited are: \$9.3 million in debt repayment on capital programs before 1998; \$4.9 mil-

lion for facility renewal, provincial money that must be spent during the fiscal year and is only for capital projects on existing facilities valued at more than \$10,000, such as roof, window or carpet replacements; \$1.3 million for continuing and adult education programming; \$500,000 for legislated ministry and special education initiatives; \$160,000 for board membership fees with various professional organizations; and \$260,000 for the Bronte Creek environmental program.

Historically, one of the few areas with budget discretion is school maintenance and operations, but it has already been stretched thin in Halton due to a lack of funding, said Ms Kisko.

"Everybody is robbing out of that area because it is one of the very few where we have some flexibility."

The next public budget meeting will be held May 29 at 7 p.m. at the board office in Burlington. Trustees are expected to approve the final budget sometime in June.

Program situation might not be as bad as originally thought

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 Joe Prasad, co-ordinator of the program, also said he wasn't sure what will happen if the \$80,000 in public school board money is lost.

"Obviously, we're disappointed and we'll have to see where we go from here. We are at the crossroads with this knowledge. The chief strongly believes we need

officers in the schools as a proactive stance. Every grade 6 child in the public and Catholic boards in Halton is exposed to it."

Sgt. Prasad said the program costs half a million dollars to run annually.

The DARE Halton fundraising committee generates much of the funding, such as via an annual golf tourney, while the Halton Catholic District School Board donated about \$75,000 this year, he said.

Halton police cover about 40 per cent of DARE's costs.

"We have a specific fundraising committee. We'll have to visit large corporations and ask for help," Sgt. Prasad said of a probable initial plan of action.

Will maintain funding

One piece of good news for DARE is that the Catholic board has no immediate intention of altering its funding commitment.

"We were aware that the (public) board was considering reducing its support for this program," said Catholic board Business Superintendent Joe Birett.

"Although we discussed the merits of doing that, we didn't feel that was an appropriate thing to do until we knew what the funding was and what the total balance was on the budget."

The Catholic school board's budget has yet to be approved.

The DARE program 'graduates' about 5,000 students each year, said Sgt. Prasad.

A police officer comes into a grade 6 class for one hour per week for 16 weeks. Pupils have to write an essay along the way.

A 'graduating' ceremony attended by parents and senior police officials is held at the end of the program.

The provincial government announced Friday that it would be providing \$350 million in additional funding for Ontario school boards next year.

The board is in the midst of tense budget deliberations and expects to have trouble staying within its means, so it has identified areas where savings can be made.

Board officials continue to harp about what they say is the inadequacy of the provincial government's education funding formula.

Scholarships available from women's club

The call is now open to female high school students for three Awards of Merit scholarships from the Canadian Federation of University Women.

Interested applicants must be planning to pursue university studies in the coming school year. Three scholarship (\$500) recipients will be chosen throughout Milton.

Applications are available in each school's guidance department and must be postmarked no later than May 15.

Two additional Awards of Merit (\$150) will be awarded to graduating students from E.C. Drury School for the Deaf and its ACE program.

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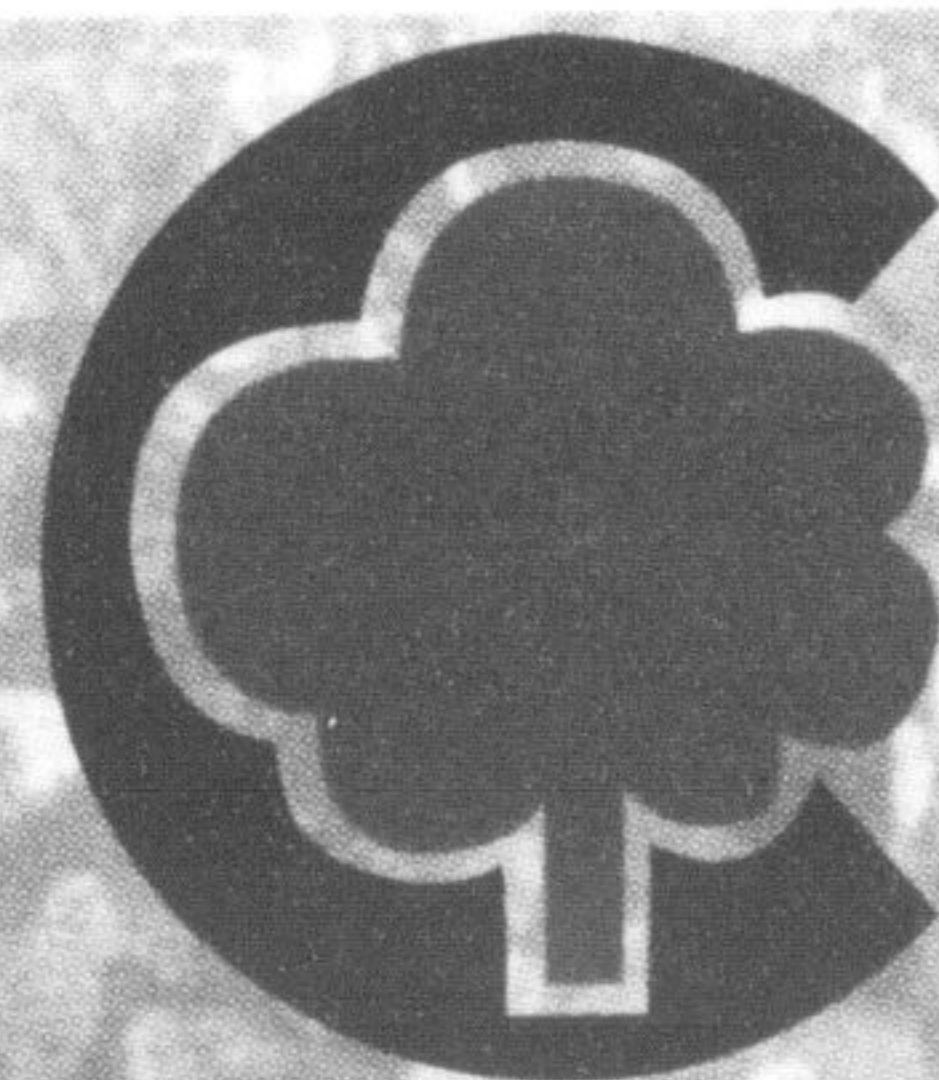


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