

Quality education comes first before building repairs, says board chair

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been successful negotiating more favourable prices.)

Mr. Bailey explained that cuts will also manifest themselves in such things as school maintenance. For example, if work such as painting that needs to be done is largely cosmetic, it will not be done immediately.

Facility repairs will likewise be deferred unless they become a health and safety issue.

The snow removal budget has also been trimmed so that asphalt playground areas won't be cleared, only walkways, driveways and other access points.

In short, Mr. Bailey said, quality education comes first, and the board is determined to deliver that with what money it has.

DARE funding cut

The board pulled the plug on \$25,000 worth of DARE funding and will encourage more school fundraising activities so this program can continue.

"We've run out of ways to cut," said Mr. Bailey.

"Parents are now getting a feel for the damage that's being done."

Given the fact there is no surplus in the budget, the board also can't designate any funds to acquire school sites in 2002-03.

North Halton parents will be pleased to know that proposed transportation for high school students in Georgetown to the new Christ the King Secondary School was maintained.

In passing the budget, there was a glaring absence of speech-making by the board taking Queen's Park to task over funding.

After the meeting, Mr. Van de Vrande explained simply that it wanted to concentrate on passing a fair budget, not "send a message."

More hurdles to come

In addition to the funding formula, hurdles facing the board next school year include the costs associated with the opening of four new schools — St. Joan of Arc, St. Elizabeth Seton, Holy Trinity and Christ the King.

"This has been one of the most challenging budget preparations that our trustees and staff have had to deal with," the board chair said.

"Despite the very tough decisions that were required, the Board is pleased that, as a team, we were able to minimize the potential serious impact of the required reductions in the classroom, while achieving a balanced budget and addressing the needs of our growing system."

Total \$645 million going to hospitals

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that the residents of Halton continue to have access to quality health care services in their own communities."

The money was part of last week's Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funding announcement which, according to the Province, bumps healthcare spending in Ontario by \$645 million over last year for a total of \$9.4 billion.

As a key part of hospital budgets, the \$645 million will be invested in a variety of ways: \$100 million for growth area hospitals; \$180 million to cover inflationary pressure; \$110 million to expand and enhance programs (such as cardiovascular services); \$65 million for acute care, rehabilitation and complex continuing care; \$120 million for one-time funding for hospitals that have demonstrated operational efficiency; and \$70 million to assist hospitals facing financial pressure or undergoing operational reviews.

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