

Rozanski report is praised by local education officials

By LISA TALLYN

Special to The Champion

Local school board officials have high praise for the Rozanski report on education and welcome recent funding boosts by the Province for special education and teachers' salaries.

"Dr. Rozanski got it right," said Halton District School Board (HDSB) Director of Education Dusty Papke. "I'm delighted with the report."

Added HDSB Chair Ethel Gardiner, "It validates what the school boards have been saying for years — that the funding formula does not work. We've been trying to operate the education system in 2002 while being given 1997 dollars."

University of Guelph president Mordechai Rozanski, chair of the Education Equality Task Force, released the 107-page task force report last Tuesday.

It included 33 recommendations and called for the government to annually review its education cost benchmarks.

Mr. Rozanski told the government \$1.1-billion needed to be put back into education to bring school spending in line with inflation and increased salary rates.

The task force also recommend-

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ETHEL GARDINER

ed an additional \$689 million investment in items such as special education and building improvements.

"The recommendation to infuse almost \$2 billion into education during the next three years was particularly well received," said Mr. Papke.

"Stability in education funding, and comprehensive reviews of the cost benchmarks and the funding formula as a whole are also key recommendations in the report."

Mr. Papke also welcomed the \$250-million funding announcement from the Province Wednesday for special education.

"That is absolutely wonderful news," said Mr. Papke, who added the board currently spends \$3.2 million more each year on special education than it receives in funding.

While it's not known yet how much the board will receive, without that special education funding the board could possibly have been facing a year-end deficit, he said.

Halton Catholic District School Board Director of Education Lou Piovesan was also happy to see the funding announcement.

"We're very pleased because we believe there should be additional funding coming our way based on a review of our needs in that area," said Mr. Piovesan.

He also praised the recommendations in the task force report.

"It certainly confirms what we've been saying—there was nothing wrong with the funding formula, but the benchmark had to be addressed and brought up to date in order to better deliver education services to our students," said Mr. Piovesan.

"We look forward to the government responding positively to those recommendations."

Ms Gardiner said she will remain cautiously optimistic "until I see how these dollars will be allocated to individual boards."

She said it is a little more prom-
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