

# Board's budget process criticized

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that I was prepared to do an (budget) overview for the board, but the trustees chose not to go that route."

Mr. Birett said it didn't bother him that trustees decided to pass the budget without much public discussion.

Mr. Van de Vrande singled out top board official Mr. Piovesan for some criticism of the process.

"I find it a lack of leadership. They (trustees/staff) need the budget passed so how it gets done doesn't seem to matter that much."

Mr. Piovesan said he doesn't appreciate the implication he isn't doing his job properly.

"To criticize anyone I feel it isn't appropriate or called for. We submitted a budget

and an extensive rationale for each of the items that were in the budget or not. Trustees had a few questions and then moved to adopt it. He (Mr. Van de Vrande) wasn't happy with the process. He made that very clear," he said.

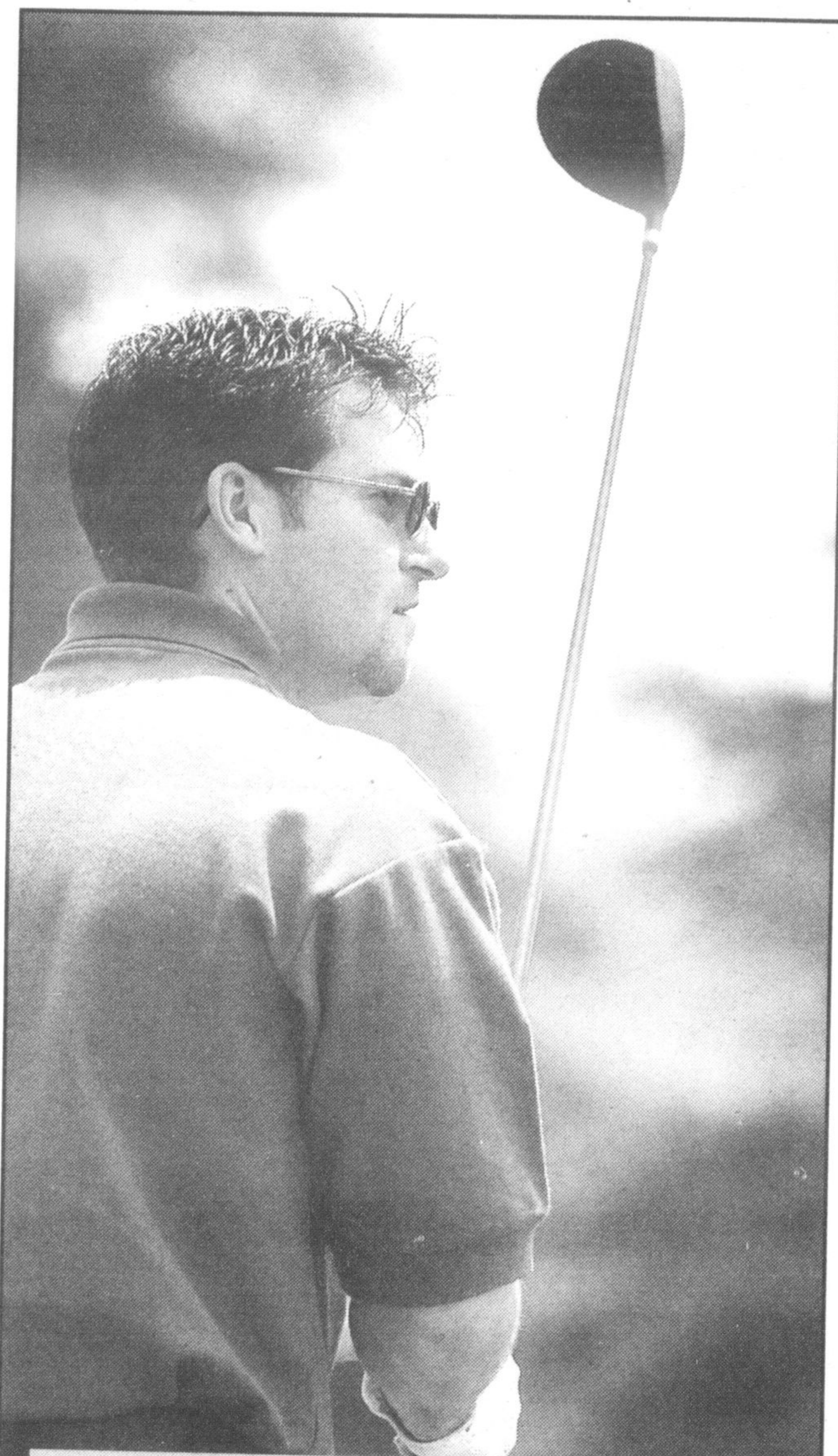
"Six out of eight trustees were satisfied with that process. They had questions answered either at the table or by calling the appropriate superintendent. If two-thirds of trustees were supportive of that, who am I to say that's wrong and you should have lengthy (public) discussions on it."

Mr. Piovesan indicated you can't compare the budget process this year with previous contentious ones where changes were required and done closer to the provincial deadline.

"Were there specific (public) questions asked of staff (this year)? I'm not sure. Last year was a very significant debate because there were cuts that had to be made. This year we did make cuts. Our first budget, a public document, showed a \$14 million shortfall. That was the budget we submitted April 1. Back on April 1 we didn't have the revised funding formula."

The updated dollar grants from the provincial government came in late April, he said.

"So revenue increases plus cuts added up to enough to balance the budget. We submitted the balanced budget two board meetings ago (May 20) without all the rationale because we were still working on it."



## Ready to drive

Roger Bixby, playing with the Mohawk Racetrack slots team, has the look of concentration before making his drive during the 14th annual Chamber of Commerce Golf Tournament at Granite Ridge Golf Club.

Photo by SABRINA BYRNES

## Catholic board gets cash injection

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\$36.2 million.

"Despite the potential impact of the elimination of OAC and the resulting double cohort of graduating students, the Halton Catholic District School Board is still in a growth pattern and will not be adversely affected financially by the double cohort phenomenon," said Education Director Lou Piovesan.

"In fact, overall, the board is projecting for next year a growth of about 500 students (elementary and secondary combined)."

Among the new curriculum initiatives featured in the budget are:

- An itinerant numeracy teacher position that will support the new Early Math Strategy, which will take place in all elementary schools with an emphasis on the early years.

- An itinerant literacy teacher position to provide support to schools and principals as they implement Literacy Matters, the board's literacy framework.

- New initiatives in the area of technological studies and the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program.

The increased funding in special education is related to the provincial ministry's favourable reassessment of the Halton Catholic board's needs, which will enable the board to more effectively provide the educational support required for its nearly 1,800 identified special needs students.

This increase is targeted primarily in the area of staffing and will provide for more educational assistants (EAs) and special education resource teachers, a new chief social worker and the start up of a new community living program at St. James School in Oakville.

Another highlight of the budget is the provision of a new program for students at risk that was recently announced by the ministry. It has resulted in approximately \$486,000 in additional funding to deliver the program.

It will focus on the co-ordination of strategies, work plans and staffing to promote success for students in grades 7 to 12 who may be at risk of not achieving their academic goals.

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