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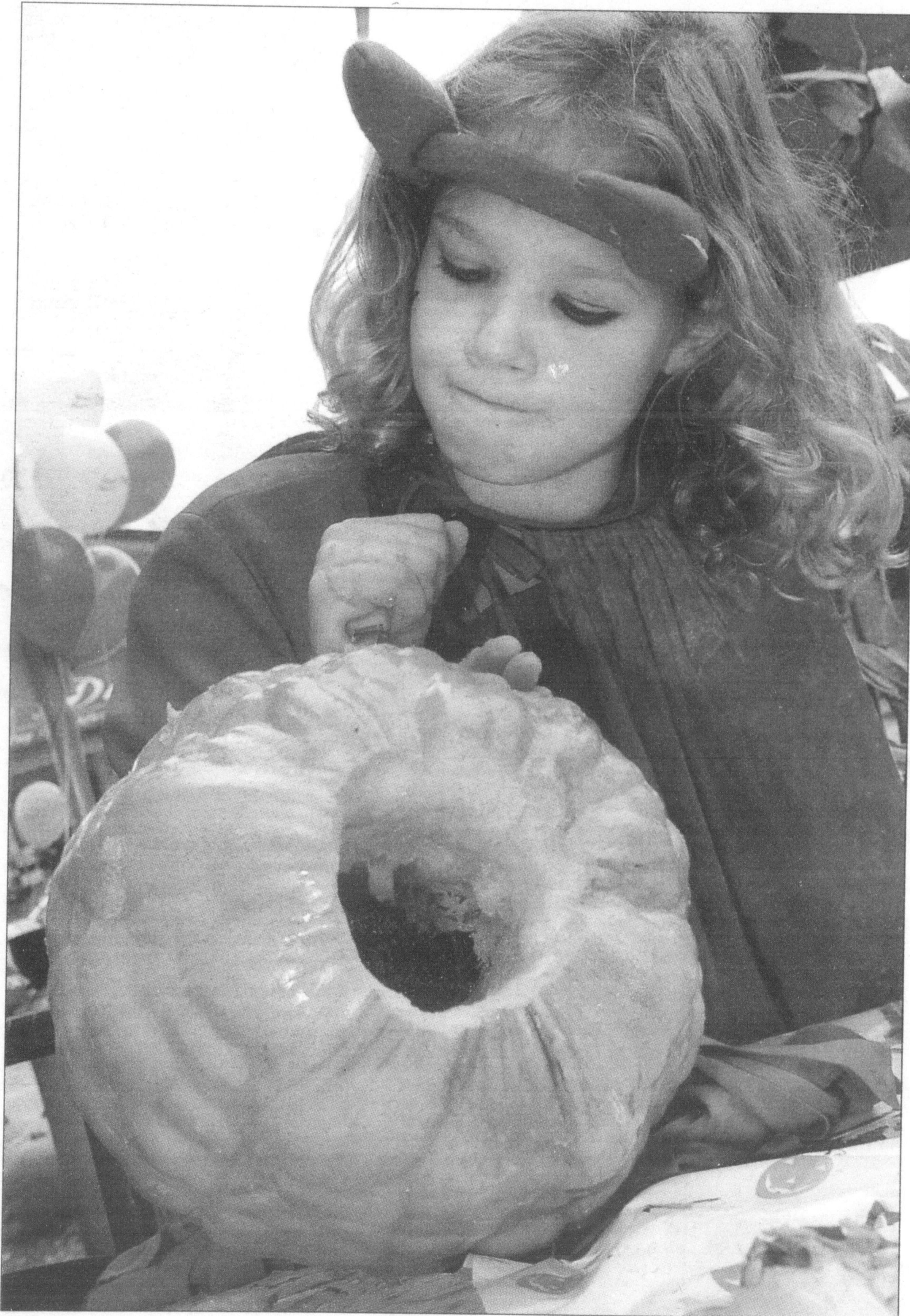



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JACK-O-LANTERN: Jennifer Newton, 10, has a devil of a time carving her pumpkin on Main Street Saturday. She was taking part in a fundraiser for a CT scanner for Milton District Hospital. The event, which also included face painting and a silent auction, was co-hosted by Troy's Diner and the Milton Downtown Business Improvement Area.

GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

Board left scrambling to fund trustee raises

By Tim Whitnell
SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

New information about the way the Ministry of Education will fund raises and retroactive pay for all trustees in Ontario has left Halton's public board with increased costs to last year's budget and the current one.

The board has the challenge of finding more than \$90,000 in extra costs between the two budgets as a result of the impact of recently approved trustee salary hikes and retroactive pay.

The breakdown of the budget pressures is \$44,841, an amount that represents half of the cost of retroactive pay, for the 2005-06 school year. The other cost is \$46,618, half of the amount to cover trustee pay increases; it will be added to the current-year budget.

Halton District School Board Superintendent Steven Parfeniuk said the ministry informed the board October 13 that it plans to foot 50 per cent of the costs for both the retroactive portion and the raises that trustees voted themselves October 4.

Thought raises were covered

He said previous dialogue with the Province had led him to believe the board would be on the hook for all of the retroactive pay for the board's 11 trustees but felt confident the ministry would fund the entire raises they will get this year.

"The new guidelines around trustee remuneration were set out by the Province (and shaped by a six-person citizens' committee) so from my perspective it needs to reconsider" 100 per cent coverage, he said.

To that end he noted the Council of Superintendents of Business of Ontario (COSBO) is working with the Province to try to get confirmation whether additional monies will flow to school boards.

"They meet regularly with ministry staff and they'll be outlining their con-

cerns with the 50 per cent (salary) funding."

Parfeniuk said board administrative staff is still finalizing figures for last year's budget (2005-06).

"It's an additional cost pressure on our year-end positions," he said of the retro pay and pay raise increases," he said.

"We did budget for a contingency fund and we will be taking a budget report to trustees in January."

Parfeniuk said the emergency fund sits at about \$500,000.

"We told them (trustees) we wouldn't use it without their approval," he added.

By January he said there could be other costs — unforeseen or anticipated — that might put increased pressure on staff and trustees to deal with sooner rather than later.

For now, though, Parfeniuk said the board is getting some relief in the area

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