

'Nothing is sacred' says Williams

From LAY-OFFS on page 1

"Eighty per cent of the budget is staff resources. It's staff that makes the system work.

"We aren't in manufacturing," said Mr. Williams.

The news last week that provincial transfer payments to school boards would rise by only 1 per cent this year confirmed their expectations, said Mr. Williams.

For the first time, provincial transfer payments were announced over three years - 1 per cent in 1992 and 2 per cent in 1993 and 1994.

Now the board is faced with cutting back.

"What we're looking at has very long term implications. We're looking to at least three years of tough, tough restraint," he predicted. "We don't want to do kneejerk things in year one that we'll regret in year two and three.

"Nothing is sacred," said Mr. Williams outlining a line-by-line look and questioning of the budget, if each item is necessary and if it could be done more cost-effectively.

Mr. Williams also called for more staff flexibility in managing budget

accounts.

"We'll need that if we expect schools to live with fewer resources in real terms," said Mr. Williams.

The director cautioned trustees that slashing in vulnerable areas occurs at many boards but it isn't the way to go.

Trustees engaged in an hour-long debate about big and small items they might ask staff to look at cost implications of cutting versus the program.

Specific items ranged from Kindergarten schoolbags, to newly approved transportation policy additions, to French Immersion transportation, to better use of fax machines and electronic mail, to limiting trustee expenses to a \$1,000 per year limit.

Oakville ward 3 trustee John Scheel wants staff to prepare a priority list of 30 to 40 items where money could be saved rather than a line-by-line budget.

He said it's then up to trustees to weigh them, adding, "I can't count stamps and I don't want to get into that."

Business superintendent Jerry

Jenkins wanted to know how far staff should go to look for cost savings - if it should go as far as policy changes.

Trustees weren't unanimous on this point.

"Long term recommendations, I think is the way we have to go and one way to do it is to scrutinize the policies," said Burlington trustee Lynda Schreiber.

"We have to look at changing direction as well as reducing expenditures," said Oakville Ward 6 trustee Linda Lane.

"I think we'd be tying your hands, not to look at policy," said Oakville Ward 4 trustee Penny Siebert.

Oakville Ward 2 trustee Cheryl Reid said there isn't enough time for the board to begin looking at policies, separating term, and still be on time with the March 31 budget deadline.

Mr. Jenkins said policies couldn't be changed by March but they could be put in place in September if changed in the budget process.

"We can't do it by March but if it's the will of the board we can do it by September," said Mr. Jenkins.



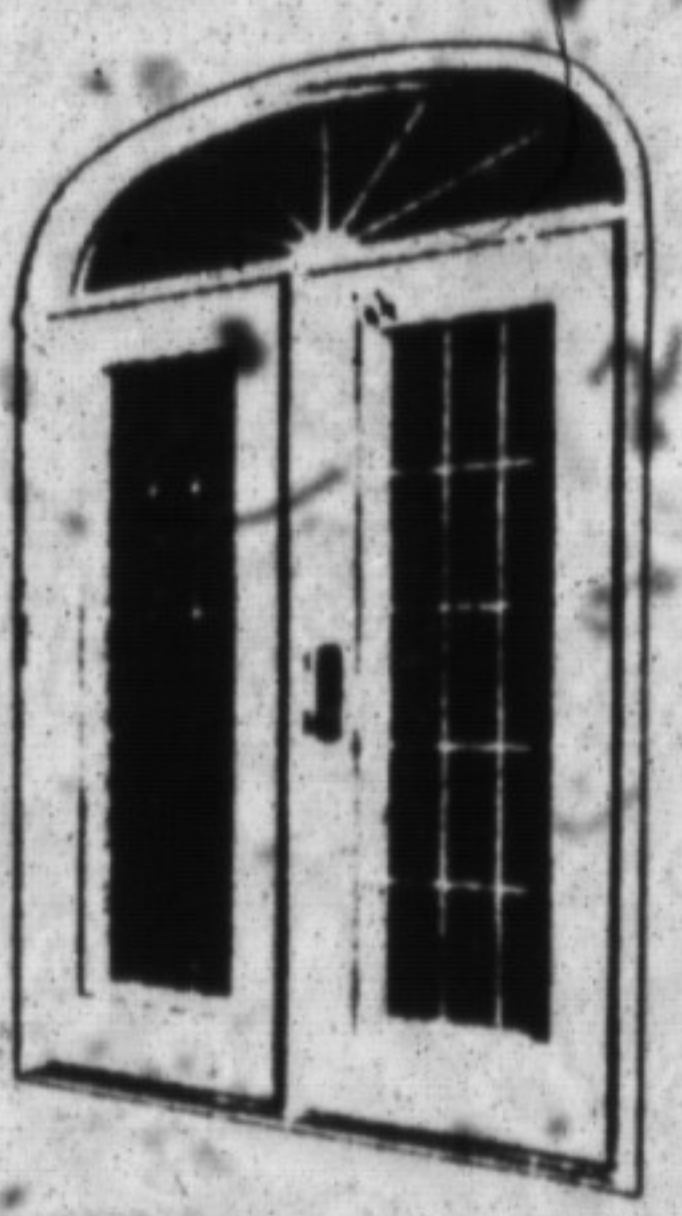
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