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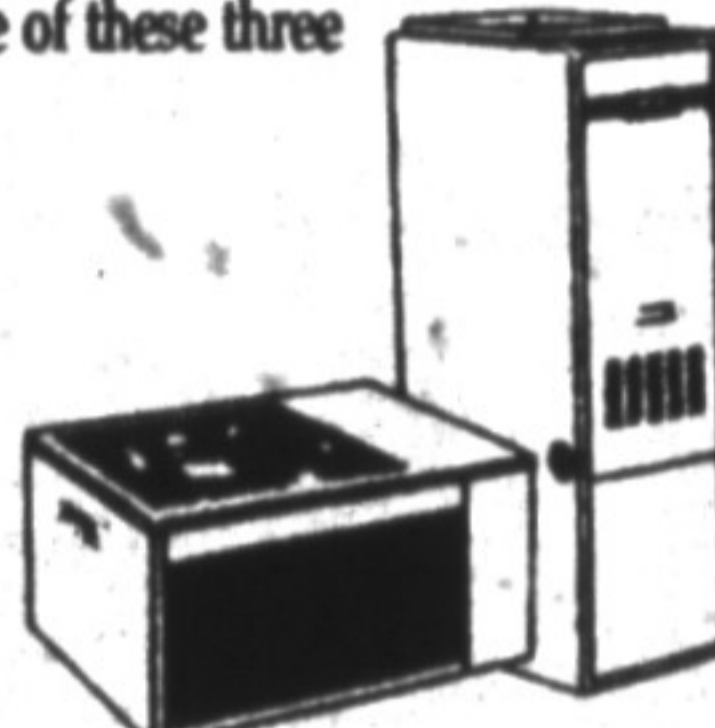


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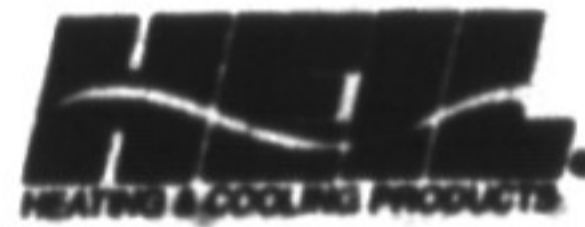
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Fewer students use the buses

Board saves \$340,000 by enforcing its policy

By **KAREN SASANI**
Special to The Champion

Eleven school buses were dropped from the Halton Board of Education's routes this year.

"This had little to do with budget, and more to do with enforcing policy," assured Reg Witoszkin, Transportation Officer with the Halton Board.

A recent policy review at the Board found discrepancies in busing practices around the Region. For instance, in Oakville some children were being picked up if they lived outside a 1.2 km radius of their school; in Burlington, it was 1.6 km.

This may have resulted from anomalies such as school closures, Mr. Witoszkin said. Policy states that busing is provided for Kindergarten to Grade 2 students living 1.6 km from their home school. For Grades 3 to 8 students it's a 3.2 km distance and for high school students it's 4.8 km.

He added that this reduction in vehicles results a cost savings of \$340,000 to the Board, which operates 217 vehicles.

The reduction primarily affects Oakville, Burlington and Acton, while Milton retained the same number of vehicles as last year (at 30), reported Mr. Witoszkin.

Parents along a route that collects students for Martin Street and W.I. Dick schools expressed concern that a lot more children seemed to be on the bus this year. A count by that bus driver on the first day of school showed that 67 students were riding. This meant many were riding three to a seat, and that some younger children could only find a seat next to the senior public students.

Buses for Kindergarten to Grade 6 schools are allowed to hold 72 passengers; Kindergarten to Grade 8 ones are allowed 58 and high school buses may hold up to 52. So, al-

though the number of students on that bus were within the limits, the transportation officer stated, "It's not a comfortable number for me... from a discipline and safety standpoint."

Because of the stricter policy rulings this year regarding busing eligibility distances, Mr. Witoszkin said approximately 1,700 students lost their riding privileges in Halton. In the case above, "a few kids may be walking down and taking the bus that shouldn't be," he said. They are reviewing the specific cases now.

Milton group home gets \$742,500 provincial grant

A one-time grant of \$742,500 will provide six adults with developmental disabilities with a home in Milton this fall.

The provincial grant will go toward the purchase, renovation and furnishing of a home and will provide residential and day programs for the residents.

Halton North MPP Noel Duignan made the announcement yesterday (Thursday) on behalf of Marion Boyd, Ontario's Minister of Community and Social Services.

In making the announcement, Mr. Duignan said the funding comprises a \$414,000 capital grant to purchase, renovate and furnish the home, along with \$328,000 to cover operating costs.

"Although we are currently undergoing an especially difficult economic time, providing funding to help people with developmental disabilities to live more independently, continues to be a priority with this government," Mr. Duignan said.

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