

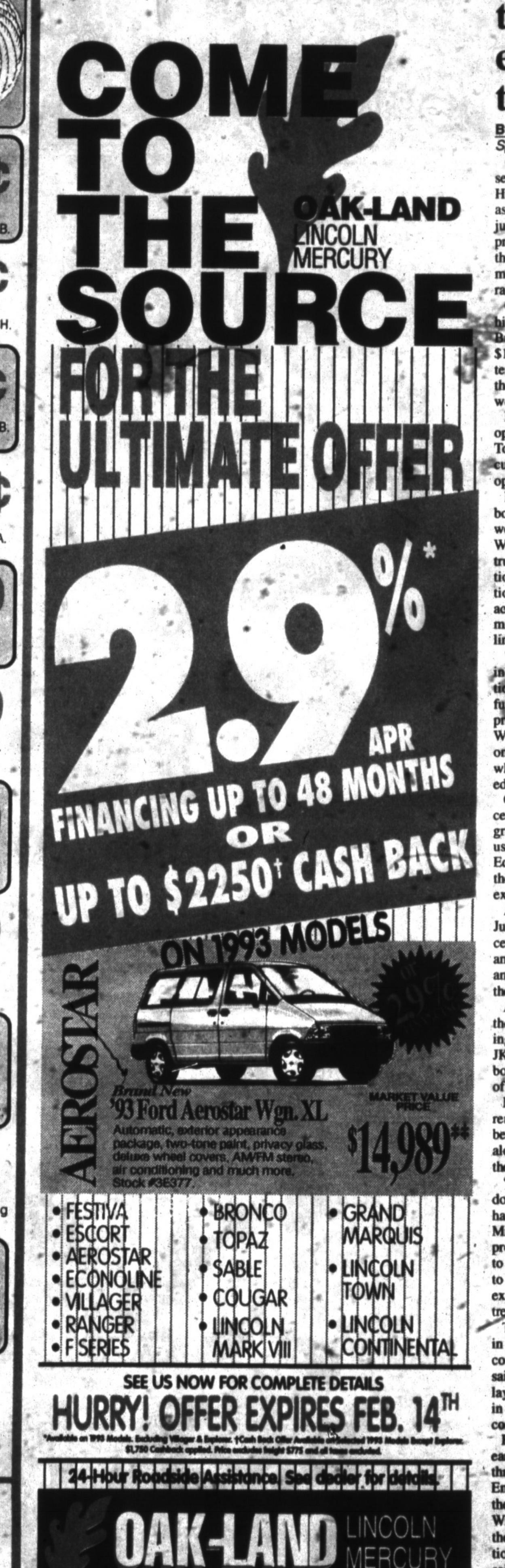


TUES. 9 AM - 8 PM

THURS. 9 AM - 9 PM

SUNDAY 10 AM TO 5 PM

SPECIALS ARE IN EFFECT FROM TUES. FEB 2 TO SAT, FEB, 494. WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO LIMIT QUANTITIE



## **Board** wants to freeze education tax rate

By KATHY YANCHUS Special to The Champion

Cancelling bus service for all secondary students living south of Hwy. 25 and offering kindergarten as a full-day alternate program are just two of the sweeping changes proposed by the administration of the Halton Board of Education to meet the proposed zero per cent mill rate increase target.

Cutting the bus service for urban high school students in Oakville and Burlington is expected to save \$189,000, while altering kindergarten services would save \$67,400 in the 1994 budget. Both measures would begin in September.

Last year the board approved an operating budget of \$291.3 million. To reach the zero mill rate increase, current projections would put the operating budget at \$282 million.

In his address to the public school board's finance committee last week, Director of Education Bob Williams outlined the game plan to trustees. With social contract reductions totaling \$9.4 million, an additional \$4 million must be cut to achieve a zero increase, while \$2 million would have to be chopped to limit the increase to one per cent.

"To make the kinds of reductions. including our social contract obligations, will mean nothing less than a fundamental restructuring of our programs and services," said Mr. Williams. "I believe this to be the only way to achieve the targets while still preserving the quality of education .

Other proposals include the cancellation of the Bronte Creek program (\$166,252) and a switch to a user fee program for Outdoor Education. The cancellation of further computer purchases in 1994 is expected to save \$300,000.

As far as the implementation o Junior Kindergarten (JK) is con cerned, Mr. Williams said he is "no anticipating any budget implication: and if there are, we'll deal with them then."

According to a directive issued by the Ministry of Education and Train ing, unless a board has just cause JK must be implemented in school boards in some form by Septembe of 1994.

Mr. Williams said the board is cur rently looking at its JK options, bu believes it has had "just cause" al along and JK is "not considered in the 1994 budget proposal."

"We are facing an economic downturn. Taxpayers have been hi hard and can't bear anymore," said Mr. Williams. "Funding from the province has plumetted from 1969 to 1993, from the 60 per cent range to 21.5 per cent of Halton's per pupi expenditure last year. We expect thi trend to continue."

The board must chop \$9.4 million in each of three years to meet socia. contract obligations. Mr. William said he is not anticipating an layoffs and a five per cent reduction in staff over three years can be ac complished through attrition.

Forty-two non-teaching staff chos early retirement packages this yea through the Ontario Municipa Employee Retirement System an they will not be replaced, said M. Williams. Over the next few month there will be a complete reorganiza tion of all non-teaching staff, h

The public is invited to provid input on the budget at the Feb. 7 an 14 meetings of the finance committee

