

"Unless (Premier Mike) Harris changes his mind, the cut is for real."

TIM KINGSBURY
Halton School Board Trustee



Halton board says it must act now to deal with expected funding shortfall

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Halton municipalities to finance continued operations. Under such circumstances, the board would have to resort to borrowing, the trustee said, an expensive alternative financing scheme.

"You look at the calendar, we've got March break coming up and then the end of March will be on us. Then it starts to cost us money."

In Tuesday's press release, board Chair Linda Glover said, "the measures are urgently required so we can prepare our 1996 budget and so we can meet our financial obligations in 1996."

Board lawyers "have recommended this action" so as to minimize financial exposure, Ms Glover said. If the school board waited for formal provincial notification of cutbacks and then let employees go, workers would receive lump sum payment in lieu of layoff notice. Legally in Ontario, employees are entitled to 16 weeks notice when more than 500 are being laid off at one firm.

"The action has been caused because of the provincial government's failure to release a set of financial measures which the board will need to manage drastic reductions in provincial grants," Ms Glover said.

As the board release was being distributed, employees were absorbing the bad news. Layoff notices were hand delivered by principals and supervisors at meetings with staff Tuesday.

Similar moves are taking place across

the province, orchestrated through the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, the lobbying body for boards of education. According to material supplied by the Halton board to its employees, "all public boards have been notified by their provincial association to initiate this action immediately."

Asked if such an organized campaign was a tactic for pressuring the province to release cutback details immediately, Mr. Kingsbury said it was "more a reaction to reality." But he did leave the door open to cushioning the layoff impact if, for example, "we could roll back everybody's salaries." That position is highly speculative, he cautioned.

Still, Mr. Kingsbury stressed, the layoffs are a measured response in line with anticipated provincial funding cuts that have been generally sketched already by Queen's Park. "Unless

(Premier Mike) Harris changes his mind, the cut is for real."

In an open letter to Premier Harris Monday Donna Cansfield, president of the Ontario Public School Board's Association, said her members "can't wait any longer" for provincial cutback guidelines. She warned the public school system is "quickly heading towards a state of turmoil."

Employee layoffs by group

What follows is a breakdown of the employees being laid off by the Halton Board of Education:

Caretakers and cleaners	...30
Elementary teachers192
Instructional Assistants	...201
Lunchroom supervisors	...564
Office personnel60
Secondary teachers380
Psychological services19
Superintendents2
Adult education53
Total1,501

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