Protesting students rally at board office

By TIM WHITNELL
Special to The Champion

They came, they chanted, and some of them even agreed to disagree.

A throng of students, numbering in the hundreds, assembled outside the Halton Board of Education building in Burlington last Thursday afternoon, most of them there to protest the impending layoff of 572 public secondary and elementary teachers in the region.

Burlington's M.M. Robinson High School provided the bulk of the placardwaving student protesters, due to its proximity to the J.W. Singleton Education Centre.

They carried signs that stated, "Our education is our future" and "Adult learners are adult earners", Chanting "hey hey, ho ho, we won't let our teachers go", the crowd of mostly teenagers denounced the anticipated \$400 million in education cut-backs sought by province.

There were some dissenters among them, most notably a pair of Burlington Central High School students who sided with the provincial austerity program, and

they were jeered as they tried to speak to the crowd.

"(Premier) Mike Harris is making the cuts that need to be made," said Olivia Demone, a grade 10 student. Fellow grade 10 student Ian Ross told the crowd health and welfare are being cut and so should education, as he carried a sign proclaiming 'Education is a privilege, not a right.'

The two students went into the board office, along with eight anti-layoff student protesters from various high schools, to meet face-to-face with board Chair Linda Glover and board director Bob Williams.

The pair debated the school system with their peers, suggesting courses like music, technical subjects and drama are optional, and could be dropped in order to save money.

"School should be about school, English and math," Olivia stated.

But Ms Glover said the province mandates certain programs be offered to students.

"We're waiting for a definition of core programs from the ministry. Currently, you're required to take some of these subjects," said Ms Glover.

Both pro-government teens felt larger classroom sizes, as a result of fewer teachers, would not be such a detriment to learning.

Dave Rynax, an OAC student at MMR, said some classes at his school are already too big and not conducive to optimum learning.

"My brother has a learning disorder. He was born that way. He needs that extra help. If he gets put into a class of 50 he's not going to get the help he needs."



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

He does windows

Jack Coups of George Kent Home Improvements cleans up a vinyl roundtop casement window, one of the many he had on display Saturday at the Spring Home Show in Milton Mall.

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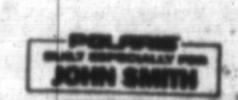
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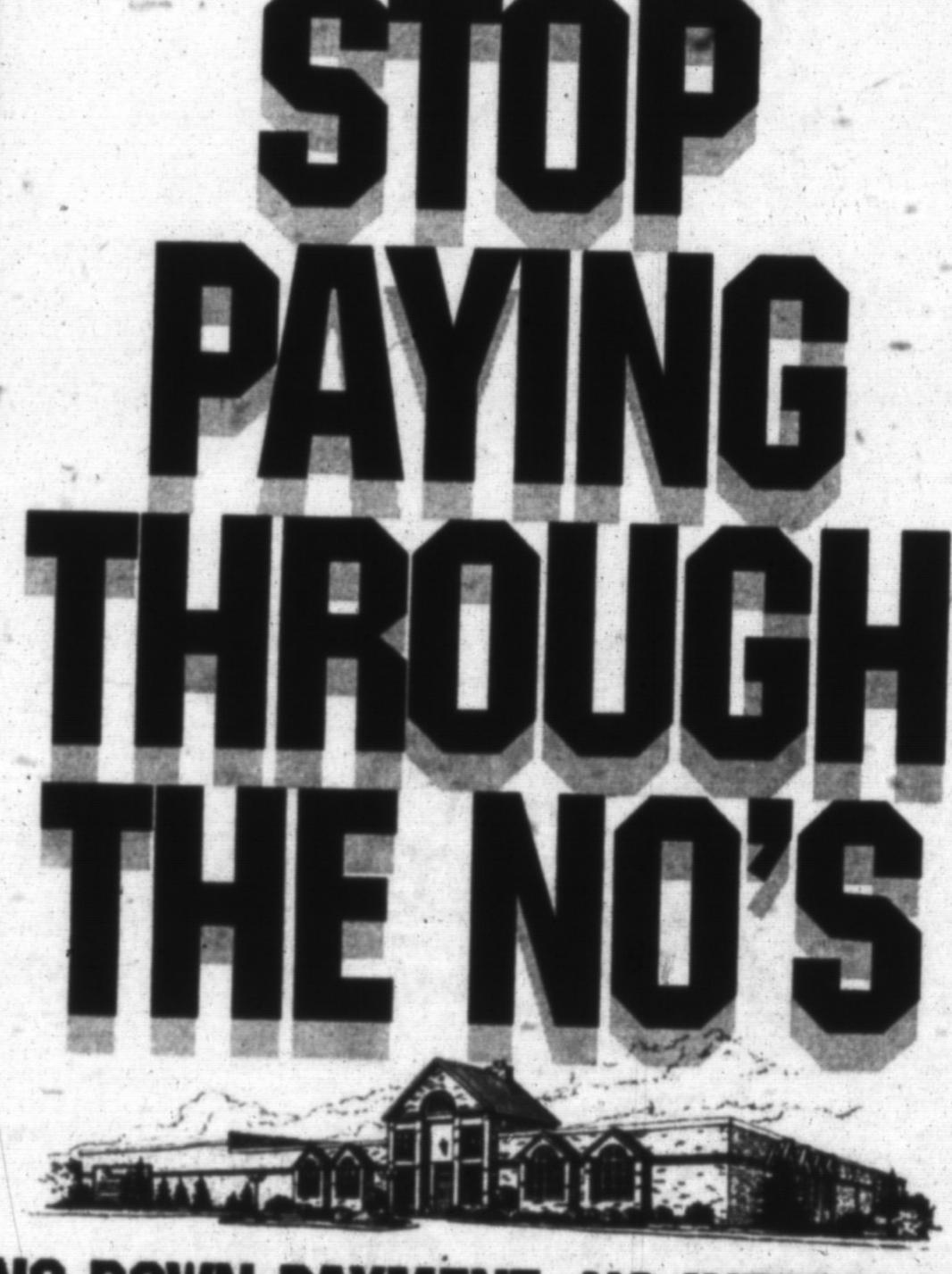


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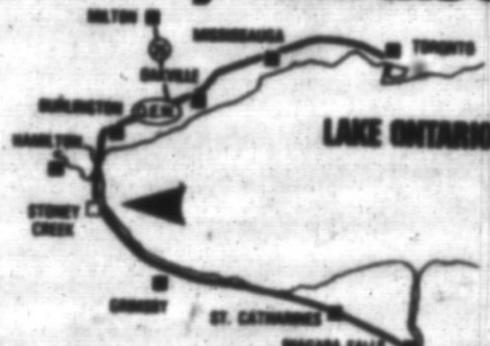
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