

Hot dogs for Deidre

Janet Soucie (left) and Kerrie Milton cook up some ribs and hot dogs at the Loblaws charity barbecue for ill five-year-old Milton girl Deidre Scholtz Saturday in the Milton Mall parking lot.

Photo by
Graham Paine



Kingsbury frustrated over Halton board's 'tool kit'

By STEVE LeBLANC
Special to the Champion

Earlier this month, local public school board trustee Tim Kingsbury voiced his frustration concerning the lateness of provincial education minister John Snobelen's "tool kit" in the wake of massive layoffs across the Halton Board of Education.

His frustration has since grown to outrage for what he calls "an interesting toolbox with no tools in it."

Mr. Kingsbury said the tool kit — released a day after the Halton board announced it would lay off more than 1,500 employees — provides individual school boards with no bargaining power, including the inability to open up contracts. He described it as an empty tool box, which has literally handicapped school boards.

Tool kit

The tool kit was designed to help individual school boards deal with sweeping provincial funding cutbacks.

"A lot of the things that were believed to be included in the tool kit, including the power of opening contracts, were not there," voiced Mr. Kingsbury, who chairs the board finance committee. "This tool kit is going to net cost us money and won't save us one nickel. First they cut the bucks, then they tie our hands. I find this very frustrating."

As a result, he said the board may have no choice but to remove at least some of the notices of terminations handed out to teachers, instructional assistants and lunchroom supervisors two weeks ago. "We'll know more after the report from staff at our next meeting this coming Monday night. The board may have no choice but to remove some of the notices, not due to a financial standpoint, but because the government provided us with no tools these notices won't be considered legal," he explained.

The recent layoff announcements relate to the local board anticipating a \$10-\$15 million funding shortfall. While stating he had no idea what the final figures will be, Mr. Kingsbury said the board's layoffs will likely prepare for a \$14-\$15 million funding slash.

"I'm guessing it will be at the high end of the poll and not the low end," said Mr. Kingsbury, who added

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— Tim Kingsbury



this would allow for a freeze on the mill rate. "It's either an increase to the mill rate or a reduction in services."

"The government has announced a legislative funding grant slash of \$7 million alone for Halton. Anyone who thinks this won't have a devastating affect on the education system is fooling themselves."

The local trustee also took objection to recent statements made by Halton North MPP Ted Chudleigh, who saw the layoff announcement as an over-reaction.

Mr. Kingsbury said: "Ted seems to be out of step with education minister John Snobelen, who was quoted in the (Toronto) Star as saying the board's figures are probably appropriate to allow for the maximum amount of flexibility."

Send letters

He said he would send letters to Mr. Chudleigh and other local MPPs, inviting them to their upcoming meetings since "they seem to have all the answers."

Mr. Kingsbury said that while the tool kit will be neither a help or hindrance to projected cuts to board management, he believes the layoffs will be at least as aggressive as the 25 per cent slash indicated two weeks ago.

"We are already leading all provincial school boards in low cost of administration. With these upcoming cuts, we'll be way ahead."

"I don't see these recent layoffs as the end of education cuts, in fact I don't even see them as the beginning of the end. I'm expecting even more funding cuts in the next provincial budget. I just hope they provide tools for the school boards to deal with these cuts, because it's not happening so far," Mr. Kingsbury said.



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