

Long wait for nothing, Catholic board says of 'tool kit'

Trustees and senior staff of the Halton Roman Catholic School Board were disappointed with the long-awaited release of Education Minister John Snobelen's 'tool kit.'

"We were promised this kit at the end of January," said Alice Anne LeMay, chair of the board.

"It's taken the minister a month and a half to deliver no specific or concrete measures to help boards address the required budget cuts that he has mandated. Instead, the minister has reiterated that education spending must be brought under control, while maintaining and improving quality programming with no increase in local taxes."

In a recent press release, the Catholic board said that Mr. Snobelen reinforced his commitment to saving \$400 million in 1996-97 through



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changes to operating and capital grants.

And, he indicated that he plans to introduce legislation in the spring to amend the Education Act, making junior kindergarten optional and providing greater flexibility to school boards in their adult education programs.

However, he also stressed that classroom funding should be protected.

Halton Catholic school officials say a lack of substance in the tool kit indicates the province is passing the difficult task of finding solutions onto the local level.

Fred Sweeney, director of education, noted that "the impact of this empty tool kit to the board is drastic."

"The board does not have excess fat to trim in its administration, and its maintenance and custodial costs are one of the lowest in the province," he warned.

"This announcement provides little incentive for school boards which already operate efficiently."

Because it is one of the high-growth boards, the freezing of capital funds for new school construction creates great concern for the Roman Catholic School Board.

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Students organize to battle layoffs

By CAROL BALDWIN
Special to The Champion

Halton students have joined together to fight the system, because they feel it is compromising their education by laying off their teachers.

The students aren't sure who is at fault, but they're determined to do something about it.

Last week representatives from every high school in Halton, except Milton's E.C. Drury and Oakville's White Oaks Secondary School, gathered around a circle of tables and heard Halton Board of Education officials explain why they laid off 380 high school teachers and later reinstated 199 of them.

Representing the board were Linda Glover, the chair, three Oakville trustees — Penny Siebert, Linda Lane and Neil Reid — and the superintendent of education services, Keith Johnson.

But, after hearing all the explanations, Scott Kubacki, a representative from Oakville Trafalgar High School said no one was taking responsibility for the layoffs. "The government is blaming the board (of education) and the board is blaming the government and the unions."

The information meeting organized by Scott and fel-

low student council members failed to provide the answers students were seeking, but it did convince them that some cuts were unavoidable and action on their part was necessary.

After the question-and-answer period between the students and board officials, the students started their homework. They left the round-table discussion with a name — The Halton Students' Alliance — and a plan of action.

"We are going to continue with our pink ribbon campaign," said Scott, describing it as "support for the teachers because this is hard on students and really hard on teachers, especially those who have been cut. We are saying that we are aware of what's going on, that our education matters and that we want to get involved."

The students have formed two committees, one to formulate and distribute a petition and one to encourage letter writing.

"We're going to create an information package with addresses, an example letter and information on what we are trying to do. Then, students can choose and make an informed decision."

The students were scheduled to meet again in Oakville yesterday (Tuesday).

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