



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Laughing like hyenas

Milton District High School environmental club members Jennifer Inglis (left), Amy Scherer and Adam Bletsoe recently had the opportunity to see a hyena skeleton. It was part of an exhibit of endangered species which featured animal skins and bones. Instructor Loretta Penny points out features of the skeleton.

Trustees settle for 2 per cent hike if they get \$6 million from staff

By KIM ARNOTT
Special to The Champion

Higher taxes, fewer services and salary cuts are among the highlights of the Halton Board of Education's 1996 budget.

The \$272 million budget, finally approved Tuesday night, will cost the average taxpayer an extra \$26 a year in educational taxes.

It will also mean fewer classroom computers, staff layoffs and cuts to busing services. In a historic move, trustees also voted unanimously to ask for \$6 million in salary and benefit concessions from the board's teachers and other unionized employees.

"I think this figure is reasonable," said Halton Hills Trustee Dick Howitt. "I think every part of the system needs to make a sacrifice."

As part of that across-the-board sacrifice, Mr. Howitt suggested trustee salaries be cut by five per cent, effective Sept. 1. "It's an insignificant amount, but I think it's a symbolic thing on our part to show leadership," he explained.

Trustees approved the cut, which will bring their annual salaries down to \$12,255 and save the board about \$12,000 a year.

Trustees also agreed to eliminate school lunchroom supervisors, cut more than 80 administrative and secretarial positions and lay off 25 per cent of the counsellors, therapists and instructional assistants who provide support services to students.

The decision to cut support services doesn't sit well with Heather Holden, executive director of the Learning Disabilities Association of Halton.

"You're forcing the kids to fit into the 25 per cent cut," she said. "The system is supposed to be adapting to the kids, not vice versa."

The association has suggested it may take legal action against the board for violating provincial regulations meant to protect students with special needs.

School board employees are also unhappy with the budget, which will result in layoff notices for at least 400 staff members. A statement issued by the Coalition of Concerned Halton Public Education Employees warns, "Employees, the community, parents and students should be very concerned about the impact this budget will have on the quality of public education in Halton."

Trustees began the budget process facing a proposed \$286 million budget, which would have required an

eight per cent tax hike. Under the pared-down budget, taxpayers will see a two per cent mill rate increase, which translates to the \$26 jump on a residential assessment of \$6,700.

Highlights of cuts/annual savings

Board retirement dinner	\$5,450
Instructional Swim program	\$140,137
Lunchroom Supervisors for regular students	\$450,000
Classroom computers	\$1.14 million
Staff training	\$50,000
Pineland public school renovation	\$5,000
Central pick-up for French Immersion students	\$100,000
Late bus service for secondary students	\$39,990
Professional and legal fees	\$50,000
Furniture and equipment	\$100,000

That's timely; taxman cometh

The IRS will knock on the door as the Milton Players' latest production opens tonight.

The community theatre group will present Love, Sex and the IRS at the Milton Seniors' Activity Centre tonight (Friday) and tomorrow night (Saturday) as well as May 2, 3 and 4.

The IRS — Internal Revenue Service — is the United States' equivalent of Canada's tax collection arm, Revenue Canada.

Directed by Michael Butcher, the play features twists of fate, mistaken identities and lots of laughs, says Mag Brown of the Players.

The cast includes Linda Spence (Kate Dennis), Andrew Finnigan (Leslie Arthur), Gino Raimondo (Mr. Jansen), Andrew Dundass (Jon Trachtman), Cedric Briggs (Floyd Spinner), Chris Butcher (Vivian Trachtman), Kelly Clark (Connie) and Alan Winterfield (Arnold Grunion).

The first three performances are show-only and tickets cost \$10. The May 3 and 4 showings are dinner theatres at a cost of \$28 per person.

Tickets are available at Peggy's at Milton Mall and Stop for a Party, downtown as well as the seniors' centre, 500 Childs Dr. Call 875-0629 for information.

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