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# The Canadian Champion Weekend

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## One in 17 of Canada's poverty-stricken kids lives in Halton: report

If the Halton Social Planning Council were to assign a final grade to its report card on child poverty in the region, it might designate an 'F' - for frustration or failure.

In its recently-released study entitled Report Card 1996: Child Poverty in Halton, the council compiled a ream of data that illustrates, it believes, the widening gulf between the haves and have-nots in the region.

Using 1989 as a starting point, since it was in that year Canada's House of Commons passed a resolution seeking the elimination of child poverty by 2000, the council reports there are 1.3 million poor children in the country - an increase of 428,000 in the past seven years.

According to the 1991 census, 6,200

poor children, or 1-in-17, resided in Halton. "Halton is the type of community that shouldn't have any poverty. It is something that should embarrass all of us in 1997 in Canada," said Joey Edwardh, executive-director of the Halton Social Planning Council.

"There's frustration in knowing we have the means to end child poverty, but not the political will. We're so concerned in the short term about the deficit that we don't think of the long-term social costs," Mr. Edwardh observed.

The council's report reveals that at the local level the number of social assistance recipients has increased dramatically in the last seven years.

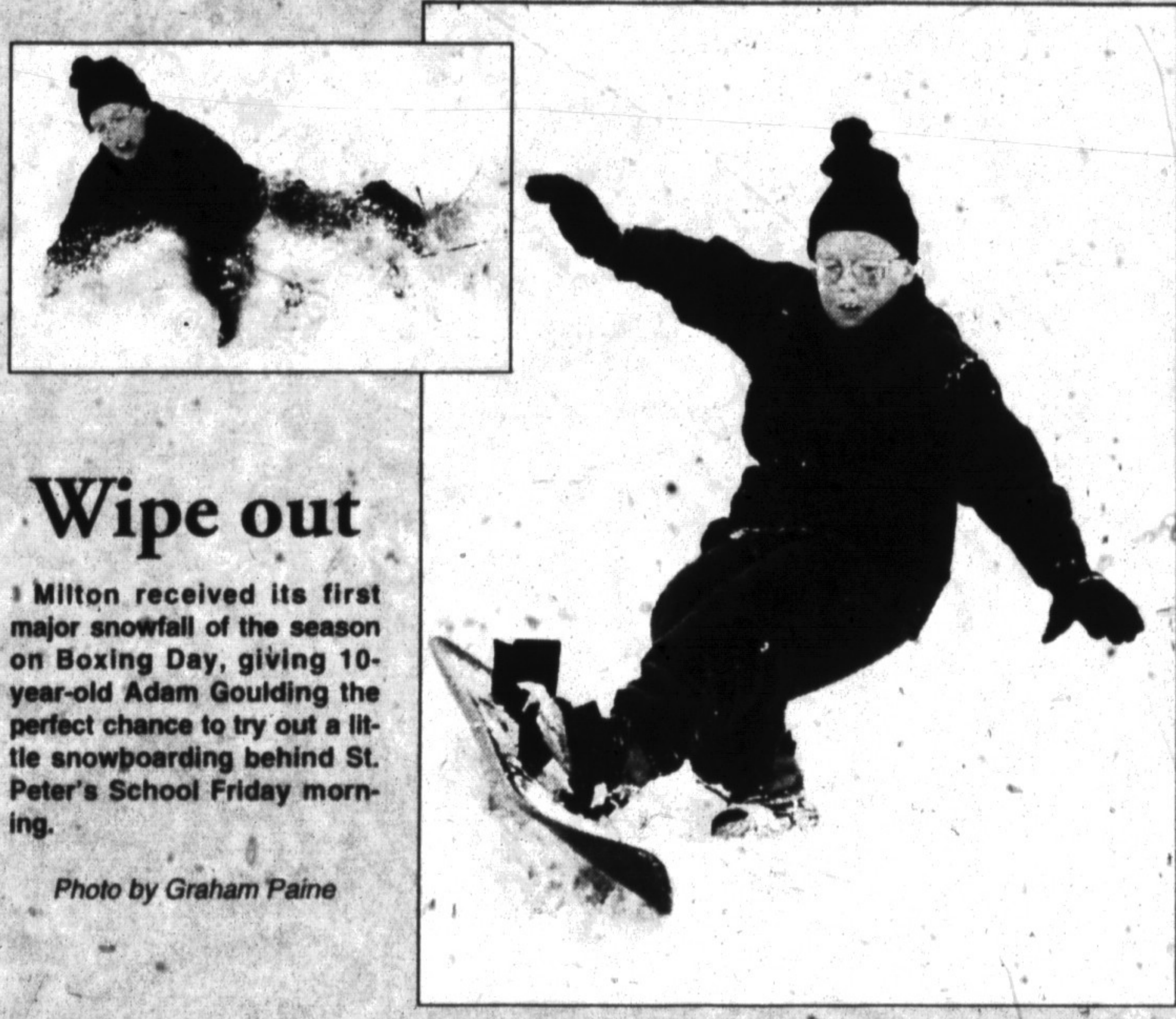
The number of short-term General Welfare Assistance cases rose 110 per cent, to 2,170 from 1,091, between 1989 and '96. Long-term assistance Family Benefit Allowance cases increased 117 per cent, to 4,236 from 1,952. Nearly 6,000 children in Halton were dependent on social assistance. Most of the numbers are bleak in the child poverty report, such as 3,500 adults and children being served by 11 food banks in Halton.

The council's report indicates the minimum cost of living for a family of four in Halton in 1994 was \$27,599, almost exactly the amount that two parents working full time for the minimum wage would earn in a year.

Other poverty indicators include the cost of housing. The average rent in October 1996 for a three-bedroom apartment in the region was \$941, a 20 per cent increase from \$770 per month in 1989. In April, 1996 there were 2,212 households on the Halton Housing Authority and Halton Non-Profit Housing waiting lists.

On the subject of daycare, despite 1,450 subsidized child care spaces in the region, the report cites there were 637 children awaiting such accommodations in 1996, nearly double the 1993 total.

The Halton Social Planning Council recommends the federal government fulfill its mandate to end child poverty by 2000 by ensuring income security levels and services for needy families, recognizing the cost of raising children through the Child Tax Benefit and focussing on job creation and retraining.



### Wipe out

Milton received its first major snowfall of the season on Boxing Day, giving 10-year-old Adam Goulding the perfect chance to try out a little snowboarding behind St. Peter's School Friday morning.

Photo by Graham Paine

## Trustees' conflict case delayed until judge meets complainant

### Civil trial won't resume until Feb. 10

By **TIM WHITNELL**  
 Special to The Champion

The conflict of interest case involving five Halton public school board trustees has been delayed, again.

Senior regional Justice James Carnwath told opposing lawyers in the case recently in Milton court he wants to see the individual launching the complaint against the trustees in court before he makes a ruling on a defence motion to dismiss the entire matter.

"I, as a trier of fact, was not prepared to continue without having Mr. Houston testify in court," the justice said.

Judge Carnwath was referring to David Houston, the Burlington resident and member of the Taxpayers Coalition who brought an application forward to have trustees Linda Glover, Ethel Gardiner, Flo Belford, Joe Pavelka and Penny Siebert removed from their positions.

Mr. Houston contends the five contravened the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act by voting on last spring's budget despite their relationships with people employed by the Halton board or a neighboring board.

Judge Carnwath was supposed to hear a motion from Brian Nolan, the Windsor lawyer representing the trustees. The latter was going to argue Mr. Houston had gone beyond the statute of limitations in bringing the complaint against the trustees and therefore the civil case should be dismissed.

However, Judge Carnwath's preference to hear from Mr. Houston in person, and not rely on just his affidavit, precipitated the delay in the case until the week of Feb. 10.

The justice's ruling caught both lawyers by surprise. "The judge has the discretion to hear live evidence," a disappointed Mr. Nolan observed.

"We would have preferred to have the matter ended today," he said on behalf of his clients, Ms Glover, Ms Siebert and Ms Gardiner, who were present in court.

"It puts a little life into it, maybe humanize it," William Dunlop, Houston's lawyer, said in trying to see the bright side of Judge Carnwath's decision.

Mr. Dunlop said Mr. Houston is vacationing in Florida for the winter, but he would call him as soon as possible. He said it shouldn't be a problem to get Mr. Houston in court next February.

### NEWSLINES

#### Christmas Fund makes history

Out of this world! A total of \$21,414 was donated to the Christmas Bureau Fund, blowing away *The Champion's* goal of \$16,000.

Donations poured in right up until the Christmas Eve deadline, making it the most successful Christmas Bureau Fund ever.

Local families going through tough times enjoyed a nice dinner and presents were provided for the kids, thanks to the overwhelming generosity of Miltonians.

*The Champion* would like to extend its hearty thanks to all those who participated.

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