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**Education**

**Trustees balk at tax hike of 7.8%**

**Cuts pending to keep hike to 5%**

**JULIE CASPERSEN**  
Staff Reporter

It's back to the drawing board for trustees who refuse to hike school taxes by more than 5 per cent.

The York Region Board of Education should call it quits and levy a 7.8 per cent educational tax hike, said Director of Education Bob Cressman, but trustees want to shave the budget as close to a five per cent target as possible.

Trustees asked that the budget be sent back to administration to trim an additional \$10 million, but Cressman objected, saying the move is not fair to staff members who have already shaved \$15 million in the proposed first draft of the budget.

"I think you should set the rate at 7.8 per cent and walk away from it," Bob Cressman advised the budget committee Wednesday night. He also recommended that trustees should take part of the responsibility for seeking out the cuts to programs and services. "I'm about ready to give up, but if you want to do it seriously you join us,"

Cressman said. "Let (the cuts) come from colleagues and staff. Maybe it will be accepted with a degree of sensitivity."

Cressman suggested stopping the practice of allowing community group to use schools for a yearly savings of more than \$1 million, but acknowledged trustees want this practice to continue. "I have a problem with that, but you don't, but that will be a staff cut recommendation."

Six trustees will join staff in zeroing in on feasible cuts to be presented to the budget committee next Wednesday.

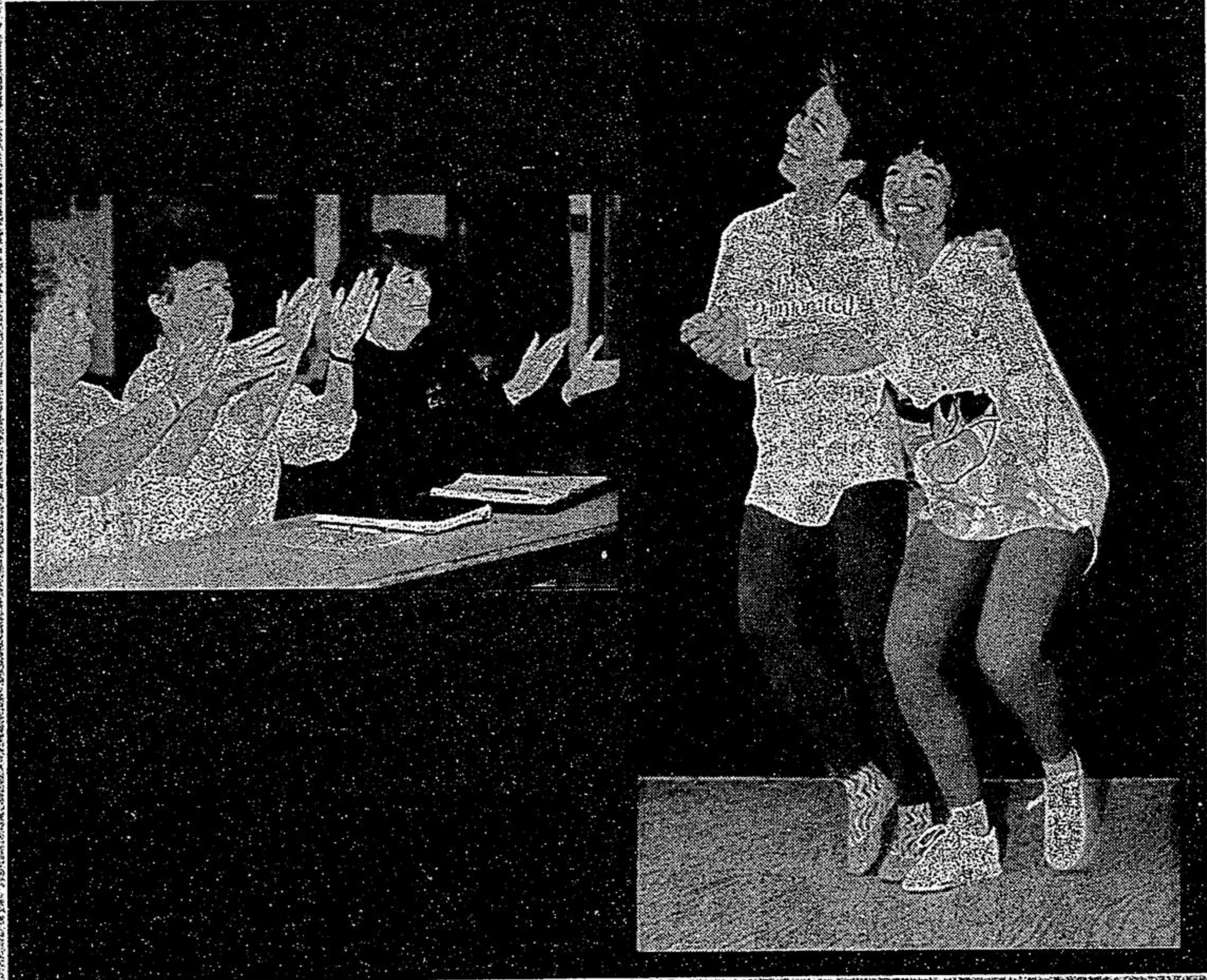
Staff presented a list of 51 potential reductions at a February meeting. The reductions, and their impact on the 1992 budget, included:

- cut the budget by \$336,000 by reducing the math and science priority by 25 per cent and delete the \$300,000 budget reserved for refurbishing science labs
  - cut transportation for French immersion and Arts York for a savings of \$218,000;
  - discontinue community use of schools for a \$440,000 saving for the remainder of this year.
- In addition, senior administrative staff have been told to reduce their salary expectations. The board also attempted to

renegotiate contracts signed last year with their teachers. The contracts gave teachers an 11

per cent wage hike over two years, effective September 1, 1991, but the teachers' federa-

tion refused the offer to take pay cuts in an effort to help the board balance its budget.



**Cuts at board draw little local attention**



Board chairman Harry Bowes explains some of the finer points of pending budget cuts to a sparse crowd at Summitview Public School.

**BRUCE STAPLEY**  
Correspondent

A public meeting to explain proposed school board budget cuts drew only a minimal crowd to Summitview Public School recently.

Fifteen people, many of whom were teachers, watched and questioned as York Region Board of Education chairman and Stouffville board trustee Harry Bowes displayed school officials' budget paring suggestions on an overhead screen.

Among the areas offered for consideration for cutbacks are teachers and non-union staff salaries, transportation, pupil-teacher ratios, facilities, renovation and expansion, general expenses, community use of schools and the board's math science priority.

The night before the Summitview meeting the board's budget committee had passed motions which will reduce the number of consultants, drastically cut allowances for supply teachers and wage freeze caretakers overtime at 1991 levels.

Bowes lamented the board's financial position, claiming it would require a 9.9 per cent increase in the current year's offered in 1991. With Ministry of Education grants expected to be cut drastically when they are announced April 1, Bowes said the board and the taxpayer would be faced with some tough decisions.

"There will be a lot of cuts (in the board's budget) but there will still be a lot of pain for the taxpayer," Bowes said.

After outlining the proposed cutbacks, Bowes suggested to

those in attendance that they "think whether you would want these cut from your system or not."

When several in attendance questioned whether such community uses for schools, such as Cubs and Scouts were likely to be cut, Summitview principal Doug Winger told the audience not to fear the worst. "We were told to list everything, but they (the board) are looking at the things that cost (the most)."

Bowes expressed the board's chagrin with the policies of the Ministry of Education, saying the board was being told to do more with less money. He cited the government's insistence that junior kindergarten be introduced as an example.

"It would cost \$110 million to

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