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# Weekender

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## Education

# Director given 'sweetheart deal'

RICK VANDERLINDE  
Metroland Staff

Public school board director Bob Cressman will be paid his full salary for a year plus a \$48,000 consulting fee following his retirement June 30, The Weekender has learned.

Estimated to be worth between \$200,000 and \$230,000, the deal was approved by trustees during a private meeting April 7.

A copy of the contract was leaked to press Wednesday afternoon. Under the agree-

ment, Cressman will retain his status as a board employee, even though he is retiring as director a year earlier than planned. He will receive his full salary — between \$120,000 and \$135,000 a year — and his benefits, which include the free use of a car. He will receive another \$48,000 after



GRESSMAN

July 1, 1994 for his services as a consultant to the board. Included in that fee are three reports he will write on issues facing the board.

Several trustees openly disagree with the deal but they were out-voted during last week's special meeting.

Whitchurch-Stouffville trustee Harry Bowes accused a group of trustees, including board chairman Bill Crothers, of using the package to get rid of Cressman.

"It's absolutely disgraceful," Bowes said yesterday. "They just paid him off. They made him a sweetheart deal, it's as simple as that." Crothers and a group of trustees once known as the Reform Team have openly feuded with Cressman in the past. Crothers declined to com-

ment. Bowes said Cressman had originally agreed to leave at the end of his contract June 30, 1994 without any "golden handshakes."

But that changed last August when trustees decided to hire a new director this July. Cressman had originally agreed to coach the new director for one year. But that arrangement was altered last week when the new compensation package was approved. Cressman said Tuesday he wasn't forced into early retirement.

"I've never been pushed into anything in my life," he said. "This is just a major conflict between trustees that I'm caught in the middle of."

Cressman was angry someone had leaked his retirement pack-

age to the press.

The final clause in the package says the deal "shall not be disclosed to the public."

Cressman threatened to take legal action against anyone who breaks that clause. Aurora Trustee Ron Wallace said he disagrees with the compensation package but there's nothing that can be done about it now. Wallace said he and other trustees believed they had enough votes to stop the package, but three trustees swung the other way when the vote was taken. "I wondered what the hell do we want to get rid of him a year early for?" Wallace asked. "I don't agree with it, but I'm happy for Cressman. He's gonna get paid for another whole year."

## How can it be?: Bowes

The York Region Board of Education trustees voted two-to-one for the deal to give their retiring director a \$230,000 goodbye.

A one-year contract allows Bob Cressman to resign as director this summer yet collect his director's salary until his retirement from the board 12 months later. In addition he'll receive a \$48,000 consulting fee, but at least six trustees voted against the deal, according to a board source.

The Weekender asked seven trustees their opinions on the deal:

**HARRY BOWES**, Whitchurch-Stouffville: "I don't know how he can be an employee of the board and a consultant to the board."

**RON WALLACE**, Aurora: "My preference would have been for (Bob Cressman) to stay." Wallace said the majority of the board felt differently, and the democratic process prevailed. Because the contract was discussed in a private session, Wallace would not discuss its terms.

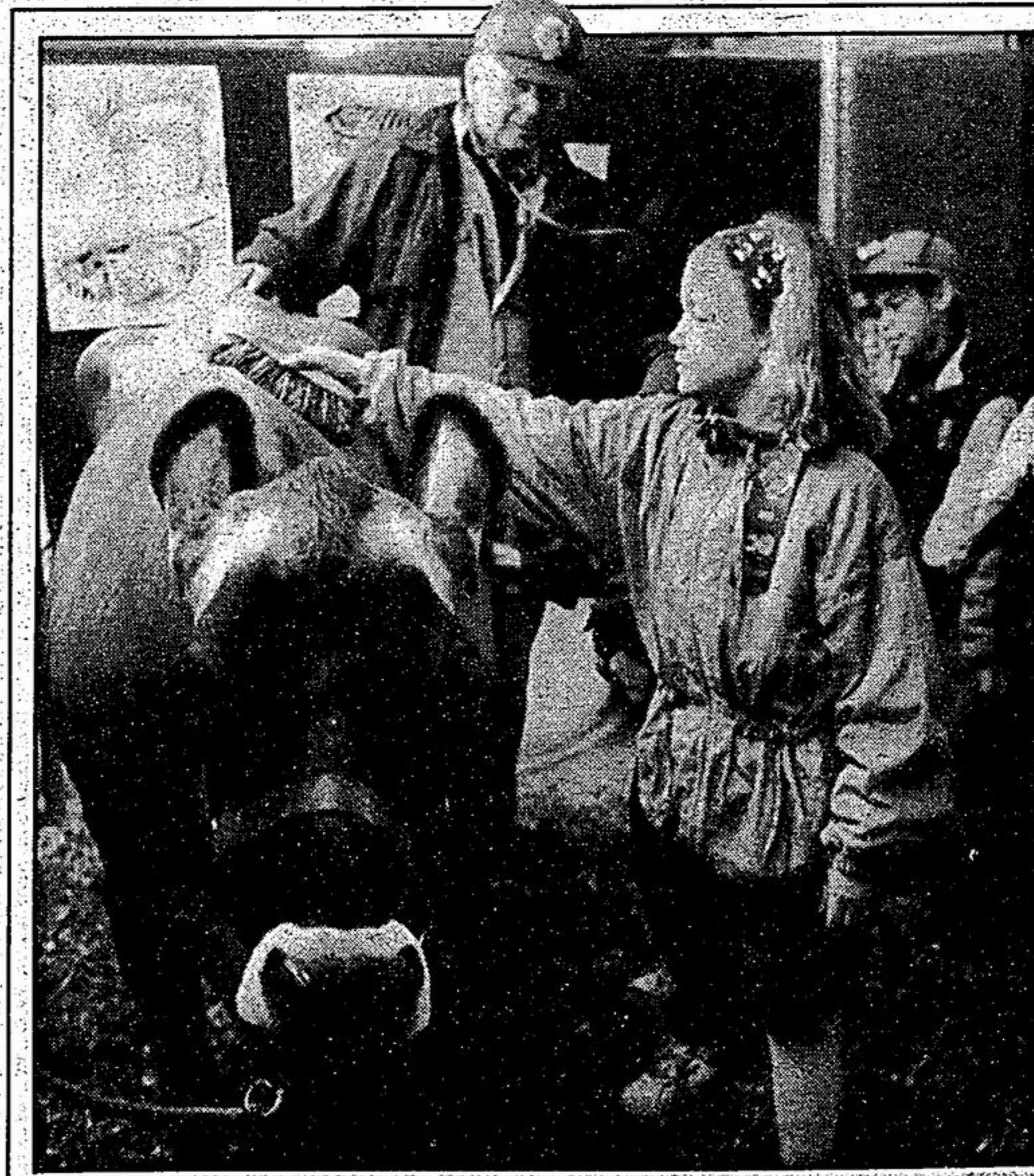
**KEN TAYLOR**, East Gwillimbury: The change to pay off Cressman "made me mad," Taylor said. He added his anger is directed toward the process. "I'm not upset with the new director or the old director (but) I'm against paying two directors for one job." According to Taylor, Cressman is not getting any extra fees this year although he admitted the director might receive consulting fees.

**HEATHER SINCLAIR**, Richmond Hill: This trustee refused to discuss what occurred in private and said she could be sued for disclosing the director's contract terms. But Sinclair said she was disappointed in what is happening with taxpayer's money.

**LES PENGELLY**, King: "I'm unhappy with the principle," Pengelly said, referring to the sudden switch in Cressman's role at the board for the 12 months starting in July. "It directly put Bob Cressman out the door. I don't get an answer to my question, 'What's the rush?'" Pengelly would not comment on the question of Cressman receiving consultant fees plus his regular salary.

**BILL CROTHERS**, Markham: "Bob Cressman has created and built an organization. If the board is contemplating making changes to that it would put him in a position of disagreeing." When asked if it is worth it to pay Cressman a consulting fee, Crothers said: "The majority of the trustees believe so."

— Julie Caspersen



## Mooooore to the left!

Ashley Carter of Orchard Park Public School brushes down a cow at the Markham Fairgrounds on Friday as part of the York Pizza Project. Children learn about how the elements of a pizza are made, from the cheese to the sausage to the crust and spices. Students from across the region take part in the program each year.

Photo/STEVE SOMERVILLE

## Tribune to serve on executive

The year 1992 proved to be a challenging and often disappointing 12 months for the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce - one which its new president doesn't wish to

repeat. President-elect Helene Johnson said the 1992 executive, of which she served as 1st vice president to Tony Arrigo, "worked like hell."

(Please See Page 2)

## Society celebrates 70 years

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Horticultural Society is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year and is inviting residents and members to attend its first meeting and floral show on Mon., April 19 at 8 p.m. at the Stouffville United Church.

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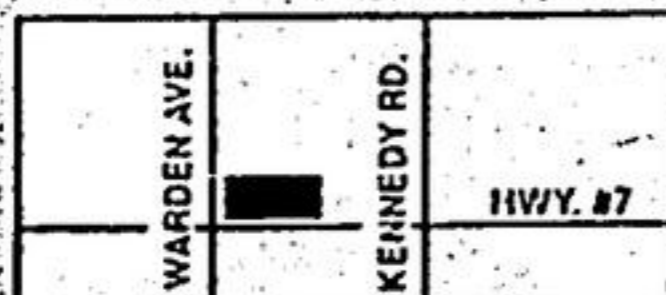
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