

# Caledon Citizen

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Covering all of Caledon

Office Staff: Cheryl Phillips

Telephones: 905-857-6626 or 905-857-5846

Fax: 905-857-6363

Email: admin@caledoncitizen.com

Website: www.caledoncitizen.com

Main Office: 25 Queen Street North, Bolton  
Mailing Address: 25 Queen Street, North, Bolton L7E 1C1

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Publisher: Bruce R. Haire

Advertising Manager: John H. Archibald

Editor: Mark Pavilons Email: editor@caledoncitizen.com

Staff Reporter: Alan Liczyk Email: alan@caledoncitizen.com

## Education funding: no easy solution in sight

School boards in Ontario have a lot in common, not the least of which being that they all get virtually all their money from the province.

Of course, that hasn't always been the case. In fact, it wasn't all that long ago that the boards were able to raise their own cash through property tax levies that in some municipalities represented half or more of the total residential tax bill.

That all changed in the mid-1990s when the Conservative government of Premier Mike Harris bought some, but not all, of the recommendations of former Toronto mayor David Crombie for changes in which level of government would be responsible for various public services.

The government accepted the Crombie report's recommendation that the province provide full funding for elementary and secondary schools but not the accompanying proposal that all the related costs be paid from the government's general revenues. Instead, the province has continued to impose an education levy on property taxes that for most homeowners adds up to hundreds of dollars annually.

More recently, the McGuinty Liberal government has taken costly steps toward reducing class sizes and improving relations between the government and the various teacher unions. It has also provided more money to the school boards, but a lot less than some say they need.

Consider, for instance, the plights of the Toronto District School Board and its next-door neighbour, the Dufferin-Peel Catholic board, which both are currently struggling with huge budgetary deficits which they blame on a one-size-fits all provincial grants system.

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic board has accepted terms of reference for a special adviser appointed by the Minister of Education who is to help the board achieve a balanced budget within two years.

The trustees' decision followed threats to have an outside agent make the cuts necessary to balance the books.

A year ago, the board estimated its 2005-06 budget deficit at \$17.1 million. By last December, the board had cut that estimate to \$15.1 million, and through a series of cost-saving measures it reduced it further, to

about \$7.4 million. But the latest estimate of its 2006-07 cumulative deficit is about \$21.1 million.

Such figures all pale beside those found in Toronto, where trustees have been given another month to find out who to slash a current \$84.5 million shortfall.

Sheila Ward, chair of the Toronto District School Board, has warned parents that some program cuts are inevitable.

"The issue is not cuts or no cuts. To put that in front of parents is not honest. The question is, do we make them or do we leave it with the province?" she said in an interview.

The extra month will allow the Toronto board to have the benefit of an investigation by two provincially appointed factfinders.

But it is otherwise considering a two-year plan to eliminate its deficit by closing most school pools, shutting down schools, dropping food programs, hiking fees for parking and outdoor education and cutting administrators, education assistants and lunchroom supervisors. Meanwhile, the Toronto Catholic board postponed dealing with its \$34 million budget deficit pending consultations with its parents.

That board is looking into suing the government for a commensurate share on the basis that it didn't receive a \$55 million loan the government gave, and forgave, the public board.

While all those school boards maintain the province's school funding system doesn't provide enough funding, Education Minister Sandra Pupatello says no more money is coming and all but a handful of Ontario's 72 boards have balanced budgets.

Under the Education Act, the government could withhold funding from any board that doesn't have a balanced budget.

There's clearly no easy answer to the problem, but we think one thing that should be considered is the restoration of an element of local funding.

We would welcome a return to each county or region having its own school system, so that the county or regional government could decide whether it should supplement provincial education grants in order to meet widely-accepted local needs.

If nothing else, such an arrangement would be highly cost-effective.

This year's "MUST HAVE" toy  
already flying off shelves.

HAHAHAHAHA  
HEE HEE HEE HEE  
ELMO LIKES  
SILLY SHEEP!



## Our Readers Write

### Canada Post responds

I would like to respond to reader Jim Cassell's letter, Reader is 'going postal,' in the Sept. 13 Citizen.

Canada Post began operations in a new North Brampton facility in May 2004 to accommodate growth in the area, serving Brampton and surrounding areas of Caledon East and Bolton. Urban coding, which provides a unique address and postal code for each resident, became effective for identified customers Oct. 17, 2005.

To encourage full customer and business support of this address change, Change of Address cards and complimentary mail redirection were initially offered for a six-month

#### Postal change overdue

I agree with Mr. Cassell 100% (Reader is 'going postal,' Sept. 13). This stupidity has gone on for far too long! We are being abused!

Our rights as taxpayers are being eroded on a daily basis with nary a whimper from the constituents. Let's face it, if conditions are considered too hazardous for the postal workers, then it stands to reason they are too hazardous for us!

This constant playing of the "liability card" by the post office only ensures intrusion on the part of those who could affect positive change, which, as we know, is long overdue.

I for one do not want, under any circumstances, to take my orders from the staff at the post office. As it is, I've spent most of this year playing hide-and-go-seek with my mail. Repeated contact with my regional councillor, the mayor and MP David Tilson have, thus far, garnered nothing substantive in the way of improvement, but has generated a lot of mail, some of which was actually delivered!

If we don't speak up, the situation will not improve, but only worsen!

C. Orion  
Caledon

period. In February 2006, Canada Post extended complimentary mail redirection for an additional six months, in effect, supporting the address change for one full year.

Canada Post recognized the needs of the community and actively solicited input via meetings with local officials, two town hall sessions held during the summer of 2005 and the issue of several customer letters. A dedicated 1-866-495-5056 line remains in place for customers to share their questions and comments.

Canada Post routinely reviews mail delivery routes and operational changes are made to improve service for our customers. As all routes have established boundaries, the travel distances for customers to pick up parcels from their local post office varies dependent upon their physical location on the route.

Canada Post has a responsibility to ensure safe working conditions for all of our employees. The Criminal Code of Canada imposes liability on corporations that fail to take reasonable measures to protect employee and public safety. Under the new Bill C-45, an amendment to the Criminal Code, the liability is now extended to all employees of the corporation who direct the work of others and who must take "reasonable steps" to ensure the safety of workers and the public.

Please note that the driver mentioned in the letter is a valued employee of Canada Post, not a contract driver, and his vehicle equipped with corporate signage and an operational flashing yellow light. As a result of an accident in August, 39 customers have been temporarily converted to centralized delivery via group mail boxes, pending the results of an ongoing investigation by Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC).

Centralized delivery sites are always  
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# Caledon Citizen



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