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chairman balking at tax hike

By Lisa Wright
TORONTO STAR

The chairman of Durham Region wants to avoid a projected tax hike of 16 per cent for the area, which has been hard-hit by layoffs at General Motors and other industries.

"People are being laid off and factories are being closed," Gary Herrema told The Star. "I'm not about to have a 16 per cent increase."

The region's finance committee submitted its five-year budget forecast to Durham Council yesterday, painting a dismal picture of the struggle to provide for a rapidly expanding region.

Suffered losses

Severe program cuts are in order to get next year's projected 16.2 per cent increase below the double-digit range, Herrema said. He'd prefer the hike to be about 9 per cent, especially to help those who have recently lost their jobs, he said.

Regardless, the region is faced with substantial increases to keep pace with the growth over the next five years, the report says.

Tax hikes are projected for 15 per cent in 1991, 13.2 per cent in 1992, 11.5 per cent in 1993 and 13.9 per cent in 1994.

That means the average taxpayer would have to pay \$383 next year, \$434 in 1991, \$483 in 1992, \$537 in 1993 and \$608 in 1994. Regional taxes make up 18 per cent of residents' total tax bill. Most of the bill comes from municipal and education taxes.

Durham's population has increased by 25 per cent since 1984, resulting in additional demands for water, sewer and roads construction, police protection and social services, the report says.

The population is expected to increase another 20 per cent to 449,000 by 1994.

Stalled subway train stands hundreds on jammed platform

A stalled subway train at Dundas West station forced hundreds of people to crowd on to an already packed subway platform for more than an hour and a half yesterday.

"It was frightening," said Brown Morgan, a York University law student who got caught in the crush, which started just before 7 p.m.

Police had to be called to handle the flood of passengers who were let out at the Christie station on the Bloor line so they could catch an emergency shuttle bus to Keele station.

Hundreds of people were on the platform, many of them "hysterical," Morgan said.

"It's a miracle if no one got hurt. The platform was just jam-packed with people."

People were not leaving the platform to take the shuttle bus, she said, and "trains just kept



PATTI GOWER/TORONTO STAR

WAITING GAME: Ontario teachers occupy Education Minister Sean Conway's Queen's Park office last night, refusing to leave until Conway met them.

Teachers stage sit-ins over pension concerns

By John Deverell
TORONTO STAR

Ontario's teachers say Education Minister Sean Conway must resign for mishandling reform of their \$17-billion pension fund.

President Beverley Polowy of the Ontario Teachers Federation led about 100 teacher leaders and staff in an occupation of Conway's offices at Queen's Park yesterday afternoon.

She said they'd refuse to leave until Conway meets them and promises "a just settlement" of their pension concerns.

Later in the evening, Conway still hadn't appeared. Another group staked out the East York offices of Culture Minister

Pathak said the group planned to stay all night.

A union spokesman said all of Ontario's teachers will be in the classroom tomorrow. Only union officials who do not have any teaching duties will stay.

Elsewhere around the province, teachers took over the riding offices of many Liberal MPPs yesterday to underline their rejection of a government pension bill that is about to become law.

In Scarborough, about 70 teachers demonstrated at the constituency office of provincial Labor Minister Gerry Phillips, who was not there at the time.

At Queen's Park, Polowy said there will be no disruption of classrooms at this time.

the public purse and to future teachers of maintaining that scheme is too steep.

Conway and Treasurer Bob Nixon have moved to put the entire plan on to a fully funded basis, and are requiring the teachers to put in a further 1 per cent of their salaries to help pay for it.

Polowy said yesterday teachers accept the merger of the basic fund and indexation fund, which has a \$4 billion unfunded liability, into one plan. They also accept, albeit reluctantly, the deduction of 9 per cent from their salaries. But in return, they demand an equal voice in managing the plan.

And that, she says, means compulsory arbitration when

Health board seeks solutions to hunger crisis

By Jim Byers
TORONTO STAR

The City of Toronto's health board wants to end hunger and do away with the need for food banks.

Board members yesterday agreed to the need for a Toronto Food Council that would eliminate the need for food giveaways by pushing for better wages, better social programs and more affordable housing.

The council, endorsed unanimously by the board, also would work to set up sound nutrition programs for the thousands of city children who are going hungry.

Toronto City Council will be asked today or tomorrow to seek an end to food banks within five years.

"There is a hunger crisis (in Toronto)," Gerard Kennedy of the Daily Bread Food Bank told the health board. "Not just an urgency, a crisis."

The Daily Bread Food Bank is giving out more than \$1 million worth of food — about 600,000 pounds (272,160 kilograms) — to more than 85,000 people every month, he said. But even that isn't enough, and the agency has been forced to ration food on an ongoing basis, he said.

"The food banks can't provide enough food for our programs," said Richard Gosling, president of the Toronto Children's Breakfast Club, a group that provides 1,500 breakfasts to needy Metro children every day.

Twenty per cent of those getting food relief are under age 5, Kennedy told the board. Forty five per cent are 18 and under.

Board members yesterday responded with a flurry of recommendations, which included:

Endorsement of the Food Council.

Asking city council to make a public statement about the city's hunger emergency and to declare an 'End Hunger Week in the New Year.

Sending a distress signal to the federal government saying Toronto can't tolerate hunger and homelessness, and pushing for more action from Ottawa and Queen's Park.

Asking city council to establish an end to hunger as a priority and to examine its social program spending in that light.

"The thing I find really upsetting is that this isn't Ethiopia," said board member and Toronto school board trustee Fiona Nelson. "There's plenty of food in this country. It's just a matter of will."

It may be time the school board brings back free milk and free lunches to students who need help, she said.

FoodShare Metro Toronto executive director Richard Yampolsky said the city should press for long-term, social solutions so that people can buy their own food.

Star Santa Claus Fund
Goal: \$710,000
To date: \$411,803

Widow, son may spend Christmas out on street

By Deborah McNorgan
TORONTO STAR

Anna is terrified she and her 12-year-old son will be out on the street this Christmas.

In three days, she'll owe \$2,840 in mortgage payments but she has only \$13 in the bank. Her last paycheque arrived Oct. 16, a week after a slipped disc forced her to quit her job.

And her doctor has said it will be two to eight weeks before Anna is able to work again.

Her workers' compensation cheques still haven't arrived and she's two months behind in her mortgage.

"I have no family, no relatives here," sobbed Anna, who came to Canada from Croatia 20 years ago. Her husband died three years ago, leaving her with their son and a 16-year-old daughter with cerebral palsy.

Anna managed to pull in more than \$30,000 last year. She also rented out a one-bedroom apartment in her house. But her world began to fall apart when she hurt her back.

Then, on Dec. 1, her tenants moved out, leaving her without the rent cheque she had come to depend on.

"I've never lived on welfare in this country," the 41-year-old Toronto woman said.

Her son Jon knows enough not to expect a gift this Christmas. His mother has already told him she can't even afford a tree.

You can help children like Jon by contributing to The Star Santa Claus Fund.

It provides a brightly wrapped personalized gift box for children 12 and under packed with warm clothing, a small toy and a bag of Christmas candy. Thirteen- and 14-year-olds receive a \$25 gift certificate.

Send a cheque to The Star Santa Claus Fund, One Yonge St., Toronto, Ont. M5E 1E6. All donations are tax deductible.