



Mayor Rick Bonnette and Superintendent of Public Works Dick Spear watched as piles of tree branches were broken down into smaller pieces with a tub grinder machine. Local residents are welcome to drop off the remnants of the Dec. 21 ice storm from their property at the Town's Trafalgar Rd. works yard at any time.

Photo by Eamonn Maher

It's been a grinding winter for the Town

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

One of the few benefits of the pre-Christmas ice storm in Halton Hills is that there'll be plenty of wood chips to distribute to the public over the next

several years.

Locally based horticultural supply company Gro-Bark had one of its super-sized wood chippers— called a tub grinder— at the Robert C. Austin Operations Centre for a couple of days earlier this month to break down the massive piles of broken tree branches and limbs that have been brought to the works yard on Trafalgar Rd.

Town Superintendent of Public Works Dick Spear said that it's difficult to quantify just how much damaged trees

have been brought into the yard. Gro-Bark will invoice the Town by the cubic metre once the job is complete. Local residents are welcome to drop off the remnants of the Dec. 21 ice storm from their property at the Town's Trafalgar Rd. works yard at any time, which could take a few more months.

Municipal staff will break down the mulched trees so that it can be turned into wood chips and distributed to local residents for free at the Town's Earth Day celebration and tree sale on Saturday, April 26.

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Notification of bus cancellation on HDSB agenda

Continued from pg. 3

Associate Director Jeff Blackwell told trustees at the meeting that currently principals use their discretion in dealing with the cold. They will consult with the Weather Network or other similar sources to get relevant weather information.

In times of extreme cold principals can declare an abbreviated outdoor recess or cancel it; they can extend their decision to other outdoor school activities involving their students as well, whether they take place on or off school property during.

In a later interview, Blackwell said he can recall very few times a principal has told him that a student might have suffered frostbite as a result of being outside in the cold during school hours.

Strachan's motion also noted that since school buses still run on some bad weather days there is always the possibility of delays, and if the temperature or wind chill is extremely cold students may be exposed for an extended period of time.

The Halton Region Health Department has criteria in place for cold alerts, which may be considered as part of the board's review. Also, the board's current inclement weather procedures don't make mention of electronic means of contacting parents under its communication of policy and procedures.

Several trustees alluded at the board meeting to the Halton Catholic board having a cold weather policy.

The Halton Catholic School Board does have its own practices related to extreme cold and

heat.

If the outside temperature, with or without windchill, is minus 15 Celsius (-15 C) or warmer, Halton Catholic board students can stay outside for all regular activities.

Between -15 C and -20 C, students may remain outside for no longer than 20-minute intervals. If it's colder than -20 C (-4F), students must remain inside.

At the other extreme, if external temperatures, with or without the humidex, are cooler than 35 C (95F) Halton Catholic students may remain outside for all regular activities. Between 35 C and 40 C, students may remain outside for no longer than 20-minute intervals. If it's hotter than 40 C (104F), students must remain inside.

In a related discussion at Wednesday's public board meet-

whether transportation will run or if there will be any school closures is made by 6 a.m. at the latest on the day in question.

That information is sent to various designated local radio stations, is posted on the Halton Student Transportation Services website and is tweeted out by Halton board and placed on the board's website.

"Often (the) HDSB appears to be the last board to report based on when the information is posted, and parents are looking for more timely information," stated Halton Hills trustee Alice Strachan in her motion to the board.

"Due to the number of calls to be made, the Home Notification system can take more than an hour to reach all households and many parents may have already left for work by the time the information is communicat-

'Often (the) HDSB appears to be the last board to report based on when the information is posted, and parents are looking for more timely information.'

—Trustee Alice Strachan

ing, trustees approved considering how to improve the timing of letting parents know about transportation cancellations or school closures.

Also to be considered will be recommendations on procedures regarding communication to parents when transportation is running and schools are open when the weather is only questionable or there have been cancellations in the previous day(s).

Currently, the decision as to

ed to them."

Strachan noted some parents are requesting that such information be made available to them quicker.

"They see information from other school boards and wonder why they have not been informed by HDSB," she noted in her motion.

Both issues are expected to be combined into an administrative procedure that will go back to trustees for information by late April.

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