

# Features

## Halton School Board happy with own religion policy

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT  
The Herald

An hour of education about religion is what the Ministry of Education is offering Ontario school boards, but local trustees, teachers, parents and Halton Board officials are saying 'no thank-you.'

"I don't see any need to change at present," said Bob Parry, Halton's superintendent of policy and planning, "unless our trustees start feeling a lot of pressure to provide religious teaching, I don't think we'll do anything about it."

Halton Hills trustee Dick Howitt said he hasn't heard any comments from parents indicating they would want the 60 minutes per week of education about religion from grades one to eight "that would reflect the multi-faith nature of Ontario's society but are not indoctrinational," as described by Education Minister Marion Boya.

This policy, announced in December, was developed following a review of the Ontario Court of Appeal Decision of Jan. 30, 1990, regarding religious education.

Educators and other interested educational groups will be able to comment on the new policy since a resource document will be sent out within 18 months.

Trustee Howitt said his comments will indicate concerns about the policy.

"I wonder if we have instructors qualified to teach religious instruction and even if we did, the instruction would take more time away from the already crowded school curriculum," he said.

Personally, Mr. Howitt feels "religion should be the responsibility of parents who shouldn't



Bob Williams

rely on the public school system to provide religious instruction."

Joyce Sinley, Chairman of McKenzie Smith Public School Parent Teacher Association, spoke as a parent and instructor when she said "religion should be taught in church."

"I feel strongly that with so many additional subjects like French language, Aids, sex and values education being taught now, there isn't room for much more," she said. "It would take time away from other school subjects."

George Robbins, principal of Centennial Public School and Arlene Callaghan, principal of Joseph-Gibbons Public School, are also against the idea of religious education.

They say they're happy with Halton school board's current policy of moral and religious instruction.



Dick Howitt

Halton's policy makes it exempt from teaching religion, said Mr. Parry. Since the early 70's, when Halton requested exemption from religious instruction as a result of recommendations from the McKay commission on the topic, Halton schools don't offer any specific religious instruction.

What religious ideas are taught in schools are incorporated into the opening ceremonies.

Marilyn Henderson, president of the Halton Council of Home and School Association, explained that all Halton public schools have a manual of readings. The readings aren't taken from any one faith of religion but represent a wide range of "attitudes towards people, the environment and moral issues."

Ms. Henderson was on the committee that established the manual and she said the commit-



Noel Duignan

tee discovered through discussion that "parents were more interested in a moral society rather than religious education."

But not all parents are against religious instruction in schools.

LeAnne Taylor, speaking as a parent, though she is Chairman of the Robert Little Public School Parent Teacher Association, said she would like to see religion taught in the schools.

"Knowledge of religion gives kids an understanding of other cultures and when people have a better understanding, it helps reduce prejudice and discrimination," she said.

"Education about religion should begin at the elementary school level because that's when children begin to form opinions. By the time they're in secondary school, they've often already formed opinions which, if prejudiced, can be hard to change."

She said education about religion would be particularly helpful in schools like Robert Little, which are in small communities like Acton and Georgetown, since these areas don't expose kids to multiculturalism and differences in religion.

But Superintendent Parry doesn't see how education about religion would really benefit younger children in the public school system.

"In the primary grades, it's difficult to teach the abstract notion of religion as well as comparing different religions," he said. "Youngsters can't conceptualize too well and to discuss the concept of different religious beliefs can confuse children."

Bob Williams, Halton's Director of Education, supports Mr. Parry, saying kids don't develop abstract reasoning powers until they're in their teens.

"However," he said, "we can teach them values and honesty and respect for each other which doesn't necessarily have to be under the guise of religion."

Halton North's New Democrat M.P.P., Noel Duignan, supports his ministers objective, saying, "I believe there should be some education programs dealing with the whole subject of religion in schools."

But from the opinions of the Halton school board and local interested parties in the issue, it doesn't appear that the idea is supported here.

Their comments and opinions will be collected by the government but the ultimate choice to teach education about religion has been left to the school boards and Halton School Board has decided to leave things the way they are.

## Halton police add to force

Halton Hills residents will be seeing a new face policing their town as one of seven new cadets to the Halton Regional Police Force was sworn in today (Friday).

About this time every year, a new police officer was hired by Halton Regional Police. This year, three women and four men were hired and were sworn in as police officers in a badge presentation ceremony at the Burlington police detachment at Locust and Elgin Streets today.

Prior to the ceremony, the recruits are called cadets and must pass the Ontario Police College basic recruit training course to be sworn in.

Halton Hill's new officer is David William Jones who's been a resident of Niagara Falls for over 23 years. He attended A. N. Myer Secondary School, graduating with a Grade 13 diploma.

Officer Jones then attended the University of Guelph where he successfully earned a Bachelor of Arts degree with concentrations in political science. He has previously been employed as a Special Constable with the Niagara Parks Police.

Now that he's sworn in, Mr. Jones will police the area with a coach officer for about three months. He'll then write a coach officer's exam and if he successfully completes it he'll be out on his own as a 4th class officer explained Sergeant Rod Galbraith of the Human Resources training bureau.

The following is a summary of the other six cadets who joined the Halton Regional Police Force.

**Brenda Jean Hammond**  
Brenda grew up in Hamilton and attended Delta Secondary School graduating with a Grade 12 diploma. She then attended Mohawk College and was an Honours Graduate from the Travel and Tourism program. Brenda has been previously

employed as a passenger agent for a major airline, a waitress and a sales clerk.

Brenda has held the Canadian Artistic Roller Skating Champion title since 1981 and represented Canada at international competitions including the Pan Am Games.

Constable Hammond is assigned to No. 3 District in Burlington.

**Thomas Frederick Reilly**  
Tom has grown up in the Hamilton Wentworth area and attended Ancaster High and Vocational School graduating with a Grade 13 diploma.

Tom then attended the University of Guelph, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree. He majored in sociology and anthropology.

Tom has been previously employed as a real estate agent, installer, and maintenance/landscaper.

While attending the Ontario Police College, Tom was selected by his classmates to be their sports representative.

Constable Reilly is assigned to No. 3 District in Burlington.

**Allan Jeffrey Bryer**  
Al grew up in the Toronto area, graduating from New Toronto Secondary School with a grade 12 diploma. He was awarded the Technical Scholarship for highest standing in the Auto Mechanics program.

Al then went on to Centennial College, Scarborough receiving a certificate in the Motor Vehicle Mechanic Apprenticeship Program.

Al has previously been employed as a Communicator with this Police Service, as a bus driver and as a delivery person.

Constable Bryer is assigned to No. 2 District in Oakville.

**Diane Phair**  
Diane grew up in Burlington and attended Lord Elgin Secondary School. She graduated with her Grade 12 diploma.

Diane has been previously employed as a medical secretary, a receptionist and

store manager.

While attending the Ontario Police College, Diane received the "Ernie Effort Award" for her outstanding participation during fitness activities. She was also selected as a member of the Drill Team which performed at the graduation ceremonies.

Constable Phair is assigned to No. 2 District in Oakville.

**Jodi Lynn Thompson**  
Jodi grew up in the Milton/Burlington area. She attended Lester B. Pearson High School and graduated with a Grade 12 diploma.

Jodi then attended Mohawk College, Hamilton, where she successfully completed a 2-year Law and Security Administration Program and was named to the Dean's Honour List.

Jodi has previously been employed as a cashier, part-time investigator's assistant and receptionist.

While attending the Ontario Police College, Jodi received the intramural sportsmanship award for her class.

Constable Thompson is assigned to No. 2 District in Oakville.

**Luciano (Sean) Mazuto**  
Sean grew up in the Ridgeway area and attended Ridgeway Crystal Beach High School where he graduated with a Grade 12 diploma.

Sean entered the Canadian Armed Forces in 1986 where he had a successful career as a military police officer. He has also been previously employed as a general labourer and stock manager.


While attending the Ontario Police College Sean received the "Golden Template Award" for the most outstanding accident report. He was also selected as a member of the Drill Team which performed at the graduation ceremonies.

Constable Mazuto is assigned to No. 3 District in Burlington.



### Offices ransacked

Grant Isaac, barrister, solicitor and notary was surprised to find his filing cabinets and drawers ransacked when he entered his office in the Professional Arts Building at 99 Sinclair Avenue in Georgetown Tuesday morning. His office was one of 11 offices entered, Halton Regional Police say. No evidence of forced entry was found outside the building, but each of the office doors inside were forced open with a blunt object with the exception of the pharmacy and a dentist's office. Police suspect the damage and theft was committed by youths since only two Radio Shack speakers and \$51.61 was stolen. Valuable items such as fax machines, answering machines, computers and typewriters were all left behind and though offices where drugs are kept were opened, there was no reported loss of drugs, police say. At present, police have no suspects. (Herald photo)



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