

# Trustee's bid to limit terms defeated 5-4

By **TIM WHITNELL**  
Metroland Media Group

The outgoing vice-chair of the Halton Catholic District School Board probably didn't get the kind of reception she envisioned from her fellow trustees in bringing forward a suggestion to ask the provincial government to limit the term of trustees, and also to consider prohibiting former school board employees from running for election as a trustee.

Despite pointed opposition, Halton Hills Trustee Rosanna Palmieri almost had her proposals accepted but lost a 5-4 vote at a recent board meeting.

The motion, which was seconded by outgoing trustee Joanne Matters of Burlington, stated, in part, that a trustee is "responsible for the setting of policy and ensuring compliance without any conflicts of interest and must ensure that their decisions are not clouded or swayed by any self-interests such as family and friends, and are made for the overall good of the Catholic taxpaying community and to bring glory to God."

Palmieri hoped to convince her colleagues around the board table to direct the chair of the board to submit a letter to the Minister of Education. The correspondence would ask the Province to consider placing a term limit on the office of school board trustee and also consider prohibiting former board employees from standing for election for the position of school board trustee.

Palmieri lost the October municipal election to Mark Rowe, who retired this past June as a teacher with the Catholic board.

A number of trustees and student trustees spoke against the motion saying the notion was "offensive, unconstitutional, discriminatory and an affront to the country's democratic system of electoral representation."

Those against the idea also stated that Canadian politics has not traditionally excluded anyone from running for election and that it is everyone's right to have an opportunity to run for any position on the board.

Some trustees added that the tone of the motion was demeaning and derogatory and that former employees of the board are also taxpayers and should be allowed to hold the position of trustee.

Palmieri addressed some of the concerns raised by trustees opposed to her idea. She said her intent was to improve the democratic process. She said that based on past experience new people are deterred from running for office where there's a long-standing incumbent running. That, she said, closes the system. She further noted that over time trustees tend to make close friends at the board and it can become difficult to make objective decisions.

Palmieri believed her ideas would open up the system and encourage more candidates to run.

Palmieri, two other outgoing trustees and Matters voted in favour of sending the suggestions to the Province. Voting against the motion were four re-elected trustees and outgoing Milton trustee Sandor Koso.

Three students trustees, who can vote on motions before the board but whose votes are not counted in the final tally, also voted against Palmieri's motion.

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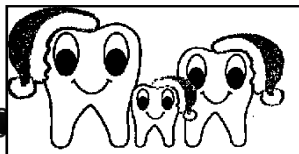
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