

# Rowe backs new equity policy

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The revised policy recommends the formation of a student support and discussion group called Safety, Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity (SIDE) Spaces.

Maria said this would be too generic in nature to help gay or lesbian students within the Halton Catholic board.

Rowe said the policy supported by the board "has the SIDE program as the vehicle to achieve a forum to discuss and address student concerns."

"It will replace groups that already exist in high schools across the board and are currently working very well," said Rowe.

According to background information provided to the board, SIDE Spaces would enable students "to access peer support without the danger or threat of non-acceptance in order to work together to make their schools more welcoming for all members of school communities regardless of race, origin, sexual orientation or ability."

After the board meeting, Marai said he wants to see the opportunity for stand-alone GSAs to be formed at Halton Catholic board schools for students who want them.

"I appreciate the work done on it (policy), but I think SIDE.Spaces has sidestepped the issue. If students want that, good for them. We are not going far enough with SIDE Spaces; if students want GSA clubs, they should have them.

"We're saying to LGBT (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transsexual) students you can't be visible (within the support group) if you're gay.

"My fear is that we have changed the debate," said Marai, believing the new policy will essentially

result in a banning of GSAs and the word gay.

"I don't think it sends the right message (to students). I don't think we should put a negative connotation on it."

Superintendent of education Mary Tessari said the board is trying to cater to a variety of students in need of support.

"We really feel that the concept of SIDE Spaces is a much more inclusive format," said Tessari.

Students who are gay may have feelings of isolation or be bullied, but there may be other non-gay students with similar feelings and experiences, said Tessari, adding that to cater to only one type of student in a school-based support group would not be as inclusive as it should be.

Tessari does not agree with Marai's contention that schools should have GSAs since separate interest groups already exist within schools.

"Multicultural groups, drama (club), the swim team, those types of things will go on. That is a totally separate thing. They have an entirely different purpose.

"SIDE Spaces are for any student who feels they are not accepted," added Tessari.

The revised interim equity policy now goes to community stakeholders such as parents, school principals, the Catholic Parent Advisory Committee, school council chairs and church parish pastors for input over the next three weeks.

The compiled remarks should go back to the board's policy committee on March 9 with a possibly further revised equity and inclusivity policy potentially going back to trustees for a vote on the second and maybe third and final reading at the March 22 board meeting.



## Shinny-nanigans

Ashton Sicard, 11, (left) gets a pass from dad Daniel as 11-year-old Robert Park defends the net during a game of shinny at the George Kennedy Public School outdoor rink Saturday. Rising temperatures late this week may put future games on hold. Photo by Jon Borgstrom

## Police/fire blotter: Driver charged

A Georgetown man is facing charges following a collision on Mountainview Rd. at River Dr. about 7:20 p.m. Friday.

Halton Police say a vehicle stopped at the intersection for a red light was rear-ended by a man driving a pickup truck. There was a brief discussion between those involved, then police say the driver of the truck left the scene. No one was injured.

Police located the truck and driver about 8:10 p.m.

Charged with impaired driving, having over 80 mg of alcohol in 100 ml of blood, and fail

to remain at the scene of an accident is Barry Agnew, 51.

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A 14-year-old boy suffered a broken leg when he lost control of his snowmobile at Blue Springs Golf Club Friday evening and crashed into a tree.

The accident occurred about 6:40 p.m. Halton Hills firefighters in their trucks or paramedics in the ambulance could not reach the boy due to the deep snow, so they went to him with their equipment on snowmobiles. Firefighters helped EMS personnel transport the youth back to the waiting ambulance.

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