



Opening Doors

Mayor Russ Miller was on hand to help the Open Door celebrate its 8th anniversary Saturday at St. George's Church in Georgetown. On hand for the event were (front row, from left) Bridget Rosser, Cindy Lawrence, Kathleen

Haywar (United Way), Mayor Miller, Ann Scheepers-Nevins (executive director Open Door, Cathy Oomen, Sheril-Lyn Roy. Back row are David Meyler, Nick Leoni, David Leach and Bill Riddle. Photo by SYLVIA GALBRAITH

Flexible fitness program in schools

Public school board trustees want daily fitness programs in Halton elementary schools but they're not willing to direct staff to do it - unless staff agrees.

They'll only encourage it. "In North America, 40 per cent of all five to eight-year-old children can be classed as obese," said information provided by Burlington trustee Lynda Schreiber who brought the issue to a recent school board meeting.

QDF is a planned daily fitness program designed to enhance the overall fitness of students. It is a flexible program in which 10 to 20 minutes of aerobic exercise is provided on days when students wouldn't normally participate in formal physical education classes or in addition to those classes.

Despite Schreiber's information that 48 of Halton's 68 public elementary schools are now in the process of planning such a program, Burlington trustee Don Cassidy blocked the path of a motion that directed schools to implement QDF programs unless all board staff was first consulted.

Schreiber, who said her motion was only to give formalization of a movement already in the schools agreed to soften the language of her motion.

"I've talked to a few teachers but not 3,000," said Schreiber.

That wasn't good enough for Cassidy who wanted the motion referred to a committee for study and teacher consultation.

"If one teacher in the system would be to implement this without having consulted, it's not good enough," said Cassidy.

The trustee said he had no quibble with the philosophy but wanted staff consultation involved.

Cassidy took exception to the motion wording that said the board should "recognize the need to enhance student fitness levels through the implementation of QDF."

"It's like directions on a bottle of 19th century snake oil. I can't support a policy that makes a promise that cannot be kept," said Cassidy.

Oakville trustee Linda Lane said she supported referral to a committee since principals in her area schools were concerned about QDF implementation and if it might be done at the expense of something else.

Halton Hills trustee Dick Howitt agreed that unless the board could get staff to buy into QDF, it wouldn't get them to do it.

Oakville trustee Cheryl Reid said she saw no need for referral.

"We're not talking hand springs and tucks, just getting the old cardiovascular system going," said Reid.

The board turned down Cassidy's bid to refer the motion to a committee, but agreed to Schreiber's motion which was amended to say the board would "encourage" QDF instead of "implement" it.

Schreiber brought the issue of QDF to the board in the wake of a trial project at three public schools last year, one of which was Pilgrim Wood Public School in Glen Abbey.

The three schools were recognized for their efforts by the board and the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation.

"The correlation between cardiovascular fitness and health is direct," said Schreiber.

"There is positive correlation between cardiovascular fitness and activities and issues related to enhancing self esteem, social skills, cognitive development, positive behavior patterns, attentiveness to academic tasks and to decreasing absenteeism, stress, mild depressive symptoms, anxiety and aggressiveness," said Schreiber.

Her information package noted that 40 per cent of Canadian children have at least one risk factor for heart disease, reduced fitness due to an inactive lifestyle.

Schreiber said the Canadian child watches more than 26 hours of television and spends up to 30 hours sitting in school each week.

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