

# Catholic trustees uphold stringent school fundraising guidelines

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Halton Catholic trustees have upheld their decision to ban board donations to charitable and nonprofit organizations which violate church teachings.

At the Jan. 16 board meeting, Oakville trustee Helena Karabela's motion to disallow donations to any group that supports, either directly or indirectly, abortion, contraception, sterilization, euthanasia or embryonic stem cell research, passed.

Halton Hills trustee John Mark Rowe, who initially voted in favour of the motion, asked for it to be reconsidered at the Feb. 20 meeting, where the motion was defeated, then reinstated.

"At a time when taxpayers expect very little from politicians, it is refreshing that some Catholic trustees chose to promote the Catholicity of the Catholic institution and students under their care," commented Karabela.

In response to trustees who felt the policy would deny funding to groups which may violate these moral beliefs, but otherwise provide good services, Karabela said it is always the right time to do the right thing.

"We must not be bystanders to today's gross violations of human life.

This motion ensures that as a Catholic institution we will vet our charities and nonprofits to ensure they are compliant with a fundamental tenet of our faith, the sanctity of

life in all stages and the fundamental right to life."

Rowe voiced his concerns about the "nebulous" nature of the word 'indirectly' in the motion, and that constituents he heard from were confused as to how that word would be interpreted.

Students are particularly concerned about schools having to abandon charities and nonprofits (such as WE) that provide a sense of community in schools and with which schools have deep rooted traditions, commented student trustee, Ingrid Schwecht.

Much discussion ensued about a "blanket motion" that would tie students' hands in helping people less fortunate through high profile charities; would students be al-

lowed to fundraise for a hospital's child and youth mental health program if the facility performed tubal ligations, for example.

There were suggestions that a letter from the board accompany donations to ensure funds raised would not end up in the hands of a subsidiary group that supported abortion.

The reality is once the money is given, it would be impossible to control and its destination not guaranteed, said Burlington trustee Susan Trites.

Trites added that Karabela's motion was "commendable and courageous and sets a precedent for other Catholic boards and other Catholic institutions."

The motion fills a void in the moral criteria of the

board's guidelines and is needed for fundraising and financial transparency, said Karabela.

"To fund pro abortion groups with donations gathered via the Catholic school system undermines the Church and the school system," said Oakville trustee Anthony Danko.

"This is such a major violation of our principles, it boggles the mind we never had a policy before today," said Danko.

Oakville trustee Paul Marai urged his fellow trustees to "either approve the motion today or defeat it," after it was suggested discussion be postponed.

It was Marai who brought the motion forward for the second time at the same meeting, for

reconsideration, and it was subsequently approved.

"I felt the motion originally passed was a reasonable interpretation of our mission as a system. The motion provides greater clarity as to where we hope we can target our charitable efforts. This is certainly a responsibility of the board of trustees."

The board's decision prompted an immediate response from some students.

"Our school celebrates our ability to help others and has taken pride through participating in initiatives such as WE and Relay for Life, making a significant difference," said Bishop Reding Catholic Secondary School student representative Ashwini Selvakumaran.

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