

Halton Catholic trustee censured for violating code of conduct

Burlington trustee Jane Michael has been removed from the discipline committee and the board's search for a new director of education.

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A Halton Catholic District School Board trustee who has been disciplined for her behaviour says she wishes she could explain what happened, but is bound by confidentiality rules.

At a private meeting on May 8, trustees determined Burlington representative Jane Michael (Wards 3 and 6) had breached the board's code of conduct.

At the board's public

meeting May 15, vice-chair Paul Marai read a motion announcing the sanction and stating the penalty: Michael is barred from attending two board meetings, removed from her position on the discipline committee and excluded from the search for a new director of education "from the beginning to the end of the hiring process."

The board's director of education, Paula Dawson, announced her retirement earlier this year. Her retirement date is set for Aug. 31.

The discipline committee handles high-level student issues such as expulsions.

Trustees declined to explain the nature of Michael's offence, citing Ontario Education Act provisions that govern private meetings. Those state that trustees may discuss the following topics in private: the security of board property; the disclosure of intimate, personal or financial information; the acquisition or disposal of a school site; negotiations with employees; and litigation.

Michael has accepted the censure. She declined to comment when asked if she thought it was fair.

"I would love to share, but I can't share a thing," she told Metroland Media on May 16.

The reprimand may not seem like much, said fellow

"I would love to share but I can't share a thing,"

- Jane Michael, trustee

trustee Anthony Quinn, but it's the strongest sanction available to the board under the legislation.

"Our board has not had to censure a trustee in the memory of current trustees," he wrote in an email. "I am personally vexed and disappointed to have to go through this process. But it is important to do it, so as to show our stakeholders that we take breaches in our code of conduct seriously."

During the May 15 meeting, Quinn attempted to amend the censure motion so Michael would effectively be barred from an addi-



Metroland file photo

Halton Catholic District School Board Trustee Jane Michael

tional board meeting. Chair Diane Rabenda did not allow Quinn's motion, saying the proper procedure was simply to publicly confirm what had happened in the private meeting.

"You want her to be away June 19 ... I know exactly what's happening," charged Rabenda, in one of many heated exchanges between

trustees during the meeting.

June 19 is when the board's final 2018/2019 budget will be approved. The board's controversial "Sanctity of Life" policy, which stopped schools from donating to charities that violate Catholic principles, is also expected to resurface around that time.

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