

HDSB to block pornographic sites network wide

VERONICA APPIA

vappia@metroland.com

Trustees meeting on June 6.

When it comes to internet access on school grounds, the Halton District School Board has made a recent decision to try to keep things a little more PG across the network.

The board is currently working with a vendor on a firewall and a filter, which will block entry to pornographic sites to anyone who accesses the board's WiFi or hardwire network.

A few years ago, the board made a decision to add the filter for students in kindergarten to grade 6 only, as the technology being used at the time made it impossible to differentiate between pornographic websites and other sites dedicated to topics such as gender identity and sexuality, which may be beneficial for older students to access, superintendent Gord Truffen said, following the Board of

Trustees meeting on June 6. Now, he added, the filtering technology has the ability to be much more specific in terms of the types of content it blocks out, which was the deciding factor in the board's decision to extend the filter across the entire network. He said additional expenses will not be incurred as a result of the extension.

The decision was announced at both the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and Board of Trustees meetings last week, and was met with mixed sentiments.

At the SEAC meeting on June 5, superintendent Mark Zonneveld told the committee that the decision to extend the filter comes after several instances of students accessing inappropriate sites on school grounds, but also due to occurrences where students innocently type key words into search bars



iStock/photo

The Halton District School Board has announced it will be blocking access to pornographic sites across the entire network.

online that, to them, are completely innocuous, but due to the lack of filter, are fed inappropriate content.

But SEAC chair Jason Bartlett remained seemingly unconvinced.

"The idea that you are protecting the students from anything is delusional and facetious. They have cellphones ... you can't wrap them in a mattress and carry them in a sound-proof box from home to school and back again," he said. "A little bit now and a

little bit then is a lot better than all of it later."

Bartlett added that even with the filter in place, those who truly want to get access to porn during school hours will be able to do so.

"If you have a half dozen high school students who just simply have to view porn on school grounds, one of them will pull out their phone and turn it into a hotspot," he said. "As far as I'm concerned, there's no effective way of filtering

this information out."

SEAC vice-chair Denise Nacev said she worries that adding the filter will prevent students from being able to search for information for school projects that may be a little bit outside the box, such as an investigation on pornography addiction - a project she said her son was responsible for, as a student in the International Baccalaureate program.

At the Board of Trustees meeting on June 6, Truffen

addressed this issue saying that the amendments to the filter will not impede students' ability to conduct research projects.

"That's not what the filter does," he said. "Staff and students will be able to access information on sexual orientation, gender identity or digital addition with no problem whatsoever."

On the Halton District School Board's website, the board uses the filtering venue's definition of pornography: "Mature content websites (18+ years and over) which present or display sexual acts with the intent to sexually arouse and excite."

Truffen added that in the event that a legitimate site is being blocked by the filter, the board has the ability to remove the block and will do so in a timely fashion.

For further information on HDSB's internet filtering, visit www.hdsb.ca/parents.

TAX DUE DATE haltonhills.ca

TO HALTON HILLS TAXPAYERS

The first instalment of the 2018 Final Tax Bill is due on June 27, 2018.

PAYMENT OF TAXES

- Payment must be received on or before the due date

WHERE?

- Service Halton Hills, Town Hall (8:30 – 4:30 Monday to Friday), or
- Payments may be left at the Halton Hills Hydro Office (no receipts issued)

AFTER HOURS?

- Drop Box located next to main entrance of Town Hall available 24 hours

HOW?

- By CHEQUE or CASH
- CHEQUES POST-DATED for the due date or earlier
- INTERAC - in person at Town Hall
- By TELEPHONE or INTERNET - Check with your bank for further information
- PRE-AUTHORIZED PAYMENT PLAN: For details please call Corporate Services Department at 905-873-2601, ext. 2242
- PLASTIQ.COM third party online credit card provider

LATE PAYMENTS?

- A late payment charge of 1 ¼ percent will be charged on the first day of each calendar month until taxes are paid

FEES?

- Returned cheques (NSF) \$45.00
- Ownership change per property \$35.00
- Past Due Notice \$5.00 (charged automatically to any account with a balance outstanding of \$150 or more)



NO TAX BILL?

- Bills were mailed May 30, 2018. Failure to receive a Tax Bill does not excuse the Owner from responsibility for payment, nor relieve him/her from liability for late payment charges. Please contact the Corporate Services Department if you did not receive yours

NEW PROPERTIES?

- Newly built properties are likely to have tax bills related to their land value assessment only until full assessment is applied and supplementary taxes are billed. Owners are responsible for taxes billed and should make provisions for the future billing of supplementary taxes

SENIOR'S TAX GRANT?

- To qualify for the Senior's Tax Grant applicants must be 65 years of age, own and occupy property in the Town of Halton Hills for one year and be in receipt of the Guaranteed Income Supplement. Applications are available from the Corporate Services Department and will automatically be mailed to those who qualified last year

NEW – epost SERVICE

- At the Town of Halton Hills, we've teamed with **epost™** – the safe, secure and free way from Canada Post to receive, manage and store your bills online. Sign up today at epost.ca to receive your Town of Halton Hills property tax bill delivered to your own digital mailbox. Visit our website for more information

QUESTIONS?

- If you have any questions concerning realty property taxes, call the Corporate Services Department at 905-873-2601, or check our web site at www.haltonhills.ca
- For assessment related questions, please call the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation at 1-866-296-6722 or check their web site at www.mpac.ca