

# DETAILS RELEASED ON TRUSTEE CODE OF CONDUCT INVESTIGATION

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A previously confidential 110-page investigation report on Halton Catholic school board trustee Helena Karabela's code of conduct violations was released to the public on Oct. 11 following an Oct. 4 vote by trustees.

The report documents a series of email newsletters sent out by the Oakville trustee from February to July 2022.

The emails touch on a wide range of topics and include titles like 'Take Action Today to Remove Student Mask Mandates' and 'The Vote Against Abortifacient Contracep-

tion is Tonight!'

The report claims that these emails violated a number of aspects of the Trustee Code of Conduct policy, including Section 4, which states: "A trustee may not make disparaging remarks about another Trustee or group of Trustees in expressing such comment or disagreement or speculate on the motives of a trustee or group of trustees."

When asked for comment, Karabela said she believed the release of the report — at the time — was an attempt to influence the results of the municipal election.

"My colleagues are interfering with the elec-

tions in the way they handled the Trustee Code of Conduct allegations, and even worse, with the delay in sharing the details of the report with the public. They decided to release the report the week before election week," said Karabela.

Representatives from the board disagree with the argument that the release of the report was connected to Karabela's re-election campaign.

HCDSB Chair Marvin Duarte said the decision was made following several requests to do so by ratepayers and in the spirit of full transparency with the public.

"If you look at the time-

line, a normal thorough process was followed and there was no 'intentional delay' as being perpetrated and the trustee's re-election outcome was never a consideration in releasing the report. It should be noted from the evidence in the complaint that the frequency of Trustee Karabela's newsletters to ratepayers had ramped up in the months leading to elections, which led to a Code of Conduct complaint and investigation during this period," said Duarte.

In one email Karabela titled 'Democracy is under Attack in the Halton Catholic District School Board,' sent out on July 2,



HCDSB photo

HELENA KARABELA

2022, the trustee argues that her motion to ban fundraising to organizations that support direct sterilization was ruled out of order for "biased and faulty reasoning." She goes on to speculate on the motives of the trustees who opposed the motion.

"Every authentic pro-life person would be happy to vote for my pro-life

motions, yet the pattern of voting by the trustees has shown that not only are they anti-life, but they are anti-democracy," reads the email included in the report.

Karabela said she believes she has the support of her constituents.

"I am confident the taxpayers of Oakville will vindicate me on election day with my re-election.... I look forward to the only poll that counts, the voting of the electors on Monday."

Board meetings of the HCDSB over the last term have repeatedly included outbursts, interruptions and trustees being removed from the meeting. A 2021 report from a third party on the board's conduct highlighted multiple examples of factionalism and dysfunction around the board table.

The full code of conduct investigation report on Karabela is available on the HCDSB's website.

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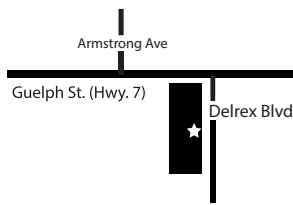


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