

School board ordered to inspect portables

Halton Medical Officer of Health Dr. Robert Nosal has come down hard on the Halton District School Board in its handling of the mould problem in school portables.

An order issued to the board Tuesday states that, "While several portables have been inspected to date, the program of inspection has slowed to a point where the Board's commitment to completing the inspections in a timely manner is unacceptable to the Medical Officer of Health."

Although the board may request a hearing on the matter, it must immediately comply with Nosal's order that a schedule of inspections be delivered to him by Friday (April 24), and all portables are to be inspected starting tomorrow (Monday) at the rate of 14 per week. The inspection protocol to be used must also be approved by Nosal.

The board must provide inspection reports within 48 hours of each inspection, and Nosal

will then determine if the amount of contamination is sufficient to warrant removal of students from the structures.

The presence of *Stachybotrys atra*, a toxigenic mould, has been identified in portables at several Halton schools and the document notes that exposure to the spores "over a prolonged period of time may cause irritative and potential allergic health effects, predominantly affecting the respiratory system."

The order also states that in Nosal's opinion, "a health hazard exists in portables owned/occupied by the Board," and that "the requirements specified in the order are necessary in order to decrease the effect of or to eliminate the health hazard."

Nosal feels his order has no bearing on a board resolution to limit spending on portables to \$3,000 per unit, and the time being taken for inspections was the catalyst prompting the order.


—By Merle Reedhead, special



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