

Papke's resignation stuns board

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Some trustees wept and some of the roughly three dozen people sitting in the public gallery expressed shock when Papke, 54, announced his decision.

He was given a standing ovation.

Fighting back tears, Halton Hills Trustee Ethel Gardiner said the board is "losing a man of honour and dignity."

Trustees and other senior staff wouldn't comment on why they think Papke is leaving the board. Papke said in his speech that, "to trustees, let me say I have worked with many different boards over the years and they're all very different. Some showed great courage and tenacity in their quest to improve student learning. Others, I feared, floundered because their focus wandered to issues that were more political and less about the growth of students.

"So let me challenge all of you, to individually search yourselves to find your own motivation, to renew your commitment to the guiding principles passed on from your predecessors, and to always, regardless of the issues or self-interests that will arise from time to time, strive to maintain an honest, unshakeable focus on students as the only reason for our existence as an institution."

'This has nothing to do with kids and learning. Make no mistake—this is about power and control. This is a very sad day for Halton kids.'

Halton Hills Trustee Ethel Gardiner



Papke—who earned the highest salary among the board last year, making \$195,694—also commended senior staff to principals to educational assistants for their leadership and focus on advancing student education.

Altering powers over board operations came under intense fire as trustees debated why it should and should not change.

On numerous occasions insults were thrown, voices were raised and comments were cut short by the chair as inappropriate. The chair also chastised trustees for making unfounded allegations about other trustees. In addition, the public gallery was warned about outbursts.

Following about two hours of

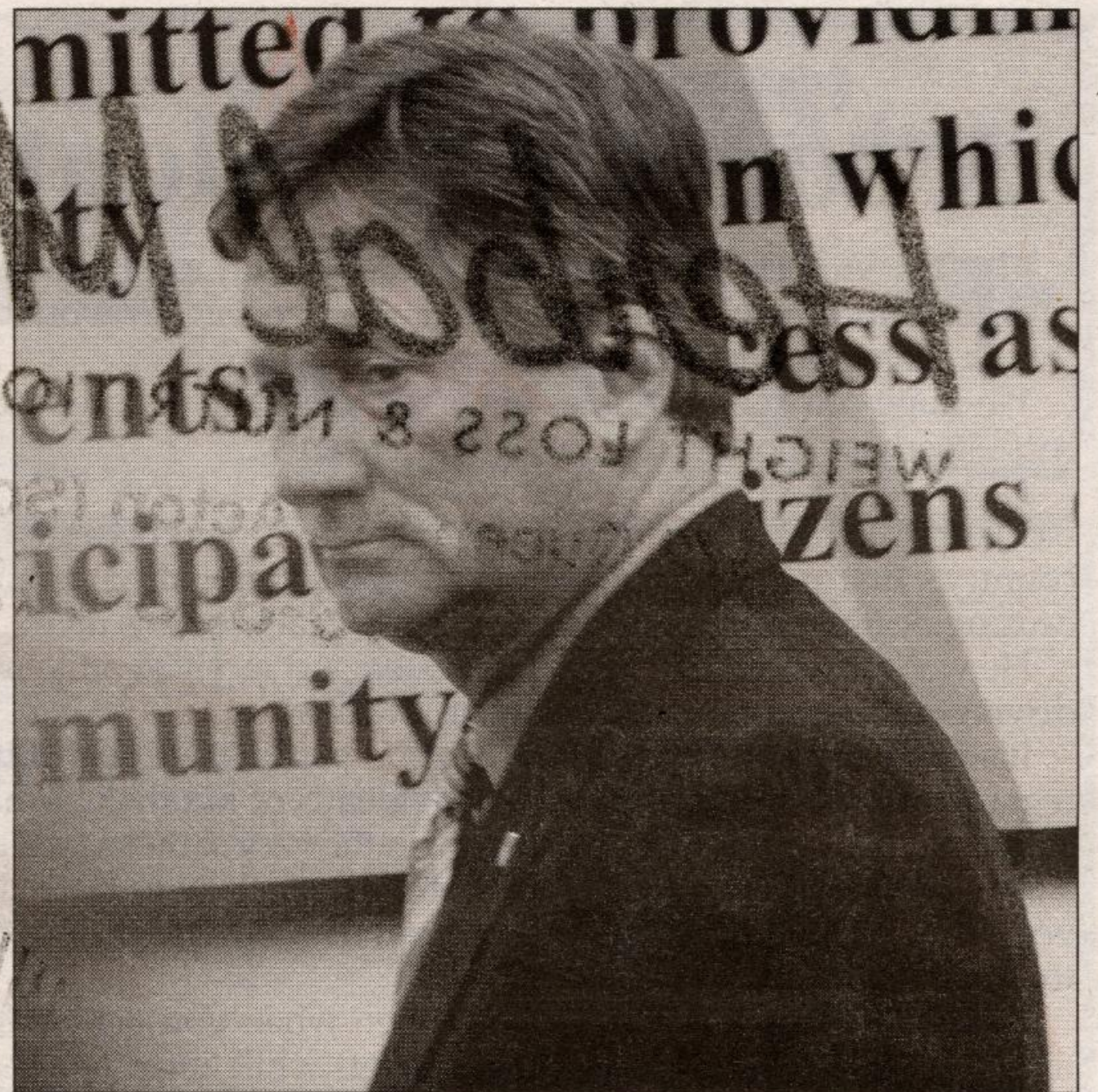
debate, the policy governance changes and bylaw amendments passed 6-5. Those voting for the changes were Tate, Jennifer Hlusko (Burlington), Wes Pulling (Burlington), Peggy Russell (Burlington), Bruce Jones (Oakville) and Susan Shepherd (Oakville).

Those voting against the policy governance changes and bylaw amendments were Gardiner, Debbie Downs (Burlington), Janie Hames (Burlington), Kelly Amos (Oakville) and Mary Chapin (Oakville).

The notion to change policy governance was before board trustees Wednesday following a special meeting Monday where, in the legal opinion of Peter Lauwers, from the firm Miller Thomson, the board had been operating unlawfully by stating two-thirds of a vote be required on decisions that are revisited rather than a majority.

At a cost of around \$10,000, Tate and vice-chair Russell, retained Lauwers' legal opinion. Tate later said payment would come from the board's \$500,000 legal fees fund.

Those against policy governance changes raised the spectre that the board of trustees has become clearly divided and alleged that the balance of power has shifted to a particular group of trustees.



A downcast Dusty Papke moments before he resigned as director of the Halton District School Board Wednesday.

Photo by Peter C. McCusker

Ten-year trustee and former chair Ethel Gardiner urged the public to contact the Ministry of Education to appoint a supervisor to take control of the board.

"This has nothing to do with kids and learning," she said. "Make no mistake—this is about power and control. This is a very sad day for Halton kids."

Two paid-duty Halton Regional Police detectives attended the entire four-hour meeting to "keep the peace as a

result of the anticipated resignation of Mr. Papke," said Burlington Det. Sgt. Joe Barker in a later interview.

Barker said Tate contacted police about officers sitting in on the meeting for safety concerns.

Tate said he expressed safety issues to the deputy police chief earlier this week about the Wednesday meeting, but did not specifically ask that any officers attend.

—By Jason Misner, special

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