

Editorial

Province must step in

We fear Education Director Wayne Joudrie may have bitten off more than he can chew when he accepted the most senior staff position at the Halton District School Board.

Two months ago, when Joudrie officially took over the board's top administrative role, he announced four goals—including a plan to bring unity back to a bitterly-divided board of trustees driven apart by unfounded accusations of assault, the overturning of the board's policy governance model and the shocking resignation of education director Dusty Papke.

"My challenge will be to create more opportunities for this board to show unity and to take advantage of the fresh start," Joudrie said in his inaugural address to trustees last month.

We find the education director's 'fresh start' approach extremely naive given the fractious and volatile history of this board.

While he may exude a "play nice" attitude, some trustees appear to be dismissive of Joudrie's approach.

Responding to the director's remarks, board chair Paul Tate said, "Unity, from my perspective, is a difficult concept. I think some dissension isn't bad."

Added former chair Mary Chapin, "I think (Joudrie) may find he might want to moderate his expectations in that regard ... that there is no way this board can ever really work as a unit."

It seems Joudrie chose to ignore these ominous warnings from two of the trustees at the vortex of a growing political storm.

Today, the education director faces the toughest challenge of his brief tenure— an internal leak of confidential information. The senior administrator's reaction to news of the leak suggests he lacks experience in dealing with such dysfunctional behaviour at the school board.

With his board appearing to exhibit signs of coming apart at the seams, Joudrie lashed out at the Burlington Post (The Independent & Free Press' sister paper), questioning its journalistic ethics and accusing it of "hiding behind the public's right to know."

We voraciously defend taxpayers' rights to be informed about how their hard-earned dollars are being spent. For nearly six months, this newspaper (and others in Halton) have questioned whether the hiring of outside law firms by individual trustees— at significant expense to the board— sets a dangerous precedent.

If Joudrie wants what's best for public education in Halton, he should be looking inward instead of blaming the local media for this board's failings.

We respectfully submit a fifth wish for the education director's list: that Education Minister Gerard Kennedy finally put an end to this board's shenanigans by intervening in what is now a rapidly disintegrating situation.

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor must include an address and daytime telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published.

Letters should not exceed 200 words and may be edited.

Letters can be submitted by:

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Letters to the editor...

New trash service another tax grab

Dear editor,

Waste not, want not means a lot to many, except possibly not to Halton Region, when it comes to garbage collection services that many taxpayers don't use, nor want.

In the next while I'm sure we'll be hearing about how more taxes will be added to our already hefty tax bill to cover new garbage services, such as the pickup of wet organics (green cart) and bulk materials. Isn't it wonderful that all of us will pay for the few who will actually use the service? Is this truly fair and is it democracy in action? No, it's a plain old tax grab, nothing less.

With water, sewage, electricity and fuel consumption, the more we use, the more we pay, but not with garbage pickup because it's part of our property tax bill, and it just keeps going up and up.

If they want citizens to reduce consumption, or as in the case with garbage, to reduce generation, they'll need to have a user-pay process for what's placed on the curb for pickup, rather than just having it as part of property tax evaluations. Does the Region actually believe that because you have a higher-end property assessment you produce more garbage than others? Under the current assessment method, I guess they do. Is this really fair to those who generate very little waste?

We all want options and we are willing to pay for those conscious choices. If we want bulk materials removed, we can call a scrap removal company. For organic wastes, we might install a waste disposal unit or physically compost outside, but the choice and the cost will be up to us.

Shouldn't it be our choice?

We should let our town and regional councillors know how we feel about this totally unfair and not reduction-focused method of paying for garbage pick-up. If we don't want it nor use it, why should we have to pay for it? Doesn't the Region know that we are not just a captive group of quiet taxpayers willing to pay more and more for something we don't really want or use? It's time to move forward with an honourable waste management policy that treats citizens as customers with choices, not just as taxpayers.

Clearly, "waste not, want not" is a phrase that means a lot to taxpayers, especially when they're taxed for services they don't really use.

Bob Beyette, Campbellville

The Independent & Free Press

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