12 Independent & Free Press, Wednesday, November 23, 2005

Hike in copyright fees may cost school board \$500,000 licensing agency that works to eliminate unlawful photocopying has filed an applica-Lation to hike annual copyright fees that could cost the Halton District School Board as much as an extra \$500,000 a year.

Access Copyright, a not-for-profit copyright licensing agency, has filed a request to the Copyright Board of Canada for a new copyright tariff charged to school boards to photocopy materials, such as for teaching lessons. It would cover 2005-2009.

Currently school boards are charged \$2.38 per student per year, but Access Copyright wants to raise it to as high as \$12— representing a five-fold increase. That would mean the Halton public board would have to pay an additional \$500,000 to accommodate the increased fee.

Access Copyright's five-year licence expired in August 2004.

Negotiations to decide a new fee broke down

between Access Copyright and Ontario school boards and provincial education ministers across Canada, except Quebec. As a result, public hearings to set a new tariff are scheduled to begin January 23, 2007 in Ottawa.

"It's the first time we were unable negotiate at the table," said Maureen Cavan, Access Copyright's executive director.

She said the organization is in the middle of conducting a 12-month study that will determine what is being photocopied, and how frequently, to get a realistic view of what the fee should be.

"It's going to be well into next year before we are aware of the number."

Creators of materials, like publishers, get compensation for re-productions.

Peggy Russell, vice chair of the Halton District School Board, said at a recent school board meeting that the more school boards voice their concern about the potential rising fee, the better the chance to fight it.

"This money, more than likely, will come out of the classroom," she said.

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association sen a letter to Education Minister Gerard Kennedy in Apri stating that a \$12 tariff per student would have a "crip pling effect" on a school board's budget for learning materials.

The Halton public board endorsed a letter that asks the education ministry to increase funding to match the new copyright rate if it changes.

Claude Majeau, secretary general for the Copyright Board of Canada, said Access Copyright would state their case for a tariff and present evidence through witnesses. That will be subject to cross-examination by two parties- dozens of Ontario school boards and provincial education ministers from nine provinces and three territories, excluding Quebec. They are technically referred to as objectors, said Wanda Noel, legal counsel to the objectors. She said two weeks of hearings have been set aside. The Copyright Board of Canada would determine when a tariff would take effect, she noted.

The copyright board can agree to a tariff but decide the fee and length of the fee's license, Majeau noted. If the application is denied, Access Copyright can request a judicial review by the Federal Court of Appeals.

-By Jason Misner, special

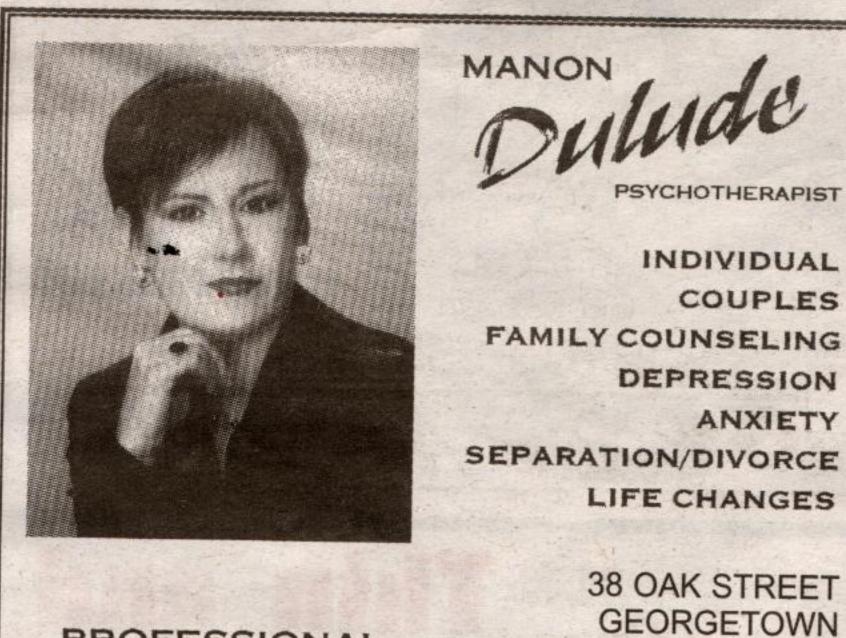
House fire damage estimated at \$20,000

alton Hills firefighters were called to Stewart MacLaren Rd. in Georgetown Wednesday evening for a house fire.

When they arrived they found the homeowner had contained the fire in a bedroom using a portable fire extinguisher.

Crews extinguished the remaining fire and ventilated the home. Damage was estimated at \$20,000.

It's believed the fire started because combustible materials that had been piled on top of a power bar in the bedroom ignited.



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