

Editorial

The only solution

Last week's release of a feedback report from Halton District School Board Director of Education, Wayne Joudrie, concluded that trustees must see beyond past conflicts otherwise, "this board will not flourish and be the best board it can be."

At the same meeting, a heated verbal exchange between board chair Paul Tate and Oakville trustee Mary Chapin— over published comments made by Tate in a letter to a Halton newspaper— confirmed that the bad blood between these elected officials runs deep.

Since the defeat of the board's policy governance model last May, trustees have remained divided 6-5 on most issues— the exception being their unanimous support of Joudrie's appointment.

Policy governance was a 2003 municipal election issue that catapulted several Halton trustees into office for the first time. Since its defeat, the board has been in the spotlight for all the wrong reasons.

First, well-respected educator Dusty Papke stepped down, taking with him a controversial \$600,000 severance package. Within days of that announcement, two other senior staffers resigned.

Late last fall, a leak of sensitive board documents revealed more than \$54,000 was spent on an outside lawyer hired by Tate and vice-chair Peggy Russell without board approval.

While we agree with Joudrie's assessment that this school board could do greater things for education in Halton if trustees could get along, we also concur with Chapin that the divide between them is so wide, a truce among this group is unlikely.

However, another solution is on the horizon. On Nov. 13 Halton residents go to the polls in a municipal election that will determine the 11 people who will serve public education through 2009. We won't know which of the current trustees are seeking re-election until nominations close on Sept. 29.

After that, the power to force a resolution to the conflict will be in the hands of those who support public education through their property taxes.



Letters to the editor...

Parents urged to voice concerns to board

Dear editor,

I am writing to you in hopes of raising awareness and of getting the public more involved in what is

currently being proposed by the Halton District School Board (HDSB).

The new draft capital plan being put forth by the Board could potentially have a tremendous impact on the residents of Georgetown. Many Georgetown schools, especially Silver Creek, are painfully overcrowded. As a result, children living in the Four Corners are currently being bused to other schools throughout Georgetown rather than attending a school in their own neighbourhood, as will the children whose homes are yet to enter the building stage in the subdivision off Miller Drive at Main Street.

The Board is proposing that this particular subdivision be permanently diverted to Stewarttown and Pineview, even though they are within throwing distance of Silver Creek.

The issue of overcrowding at schools needs to be addressed, and this cannot be done without looking at changing the school bound-

aries. There are so many issues that concern Georgetown residents, and while trustee Ethel Gardiner has done a tremendous job advocating for Georgetown on our behalf, it is now our turn. Ethel is only one voice on a Board of 11 trustees, where we can be hundreds of voices. It's time that we are heard.

Please join a group of parents as they present a delegation to the HDSB on Wednesday, February 15 at 8 p.m. at the J.W. Singleton Education Centre in Burlington. Among the issues that will be addressed are the need for a new school, the renovation of GDHS, and the need to overhaul the current boundaries to alleviate overcrowding once a new school is built.

In the meantime, visit www.georgetownneedsschools.com where you will find up-to-date information, form letters and contact names and addresses, as well as directions to the HDSB meeting.

Marnie Carey,
Georgetown

Firefighters 'clarify' Bill 206

Dear editor,

There has been an incredible amount of misinformation associated with Bill 206—the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement Systems (OMERS) Act, 2005. We feel it is important to clarify the matter of costs as they relate to "optional benefits" as described within the Bill for police, fire and paramedic sectors.

To begin, Bill 206 was amended to limit the number of benefits available to three areas— increased accrual rate, retirement factors and better averaging salary formula. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario still insist to count on a wide variety of costly benefit scenarios that are now prohibited within the legislation.

Accessing these benefits will not even be a reality until 2008, should the Bill be passed this spring. Further, Bill 206 limited the parties to negotiating only one benefit every 36 months. It is also important to note that the employee will be responsible for 50 per cent or the same cost associated with the benefit as the employer, thereby limiting the desire due to our own financial restrictions.

With the reality of this Bill clearly before us, it is our hope that this council will no longer support the Association of Municipalities of Ontario's attempts to mislead the public regarding the financial effects of this legislation.

IAFF Local 3327,
Halton Hills Firefighters Association

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.

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