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# GEORGETOWN

*Reflections of a Small Town*



JOHN MARK BENBOW ROWE

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# Trustees in line for big pay hike

**TIM WHITNELL**  
Special to The IFP

A citizens' advisory committee has recommended Halton public school board trustees get maximum retroactive pay and that future trustees get a significant raise, in accordance with new guidelines established by the Ontario government.

The decisions of a six-person citizens' group, were announced at a Halton District School Board meeting last week. A special board meeting to vote on the recommendations will be held tonight (Wednesday).

The sextet—consisting of three parent representatives and three community reps, all of whom serve on school councils—have recommended back pay that would give each current trustee \$8,153 to cover the retroactive period of Sept. 1, 2005-Sept. 1, 2006, as set out by the Ministry of Education. An additional amount of \$1,882 would be paid to cover Sept. 1-Nov. 30, 2006, the end date for trustees' current term of office.

As for a trustee's regular pay, called an honoraria, the group recommends it be bumped to \$13,159 per year for the new four-year term starting Dec. 1, 2006 and ending Nov. 30, 2010.

As in the past, the ministry is retaining a provision that gives the trustee who is elected chair of the board an extra \$5,000 per year; the vice-chair gets an additional \$2,500. There is also an extra student enrolment component and the local committee is recommending the chair and vice-chair get an additional \$2,290 and \$1,145 respectively.

That leaves the new annual recommended pay at \$20,475 for the board chair and \$16,830 for the vice-chair.

A series of formulae were provided by the government to come up with trustees' potential retroactive pay and increases to their annual honoraria.

Trustees' annual pay has been \$5,000 since the Conservative government of Mike Harris changed the pay scale in 1997 to a flat-rate system for the 72

school boards in the province. Previously, trustees set their own pay, which, depending on the board, could be 2-10 times higher than the current \$5,000. In 1996, Halton trustees received \$12,252 annually while the board chair got \$18,372.

One potential pay increase the local citizens' group rejected was a maximum \$50 for each meeting attended by trustees as a member of a couple of specific sub-committees. They recommended no pay to attend those meetings.

A new policy on trustee pay needs to be passed by the board before the citizens' committee recommendations are enacted. A special board meeting will be held before the next committee-of-the-whole board meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 4.

The ministry expects boards to have established the new pay scale by Oct. 31. While some trustees expressed some uneasiness that trustees are being asked by the ministry to approve their own pay increases, board chair Paul Tate countered those remarks by saying most publicly-elected officials set their own pay.

"I don't think most of us are in this for the money," he said.

Tate added that the approximately \$77,000 in additional annual costs to the board is almost negligible in context of the board's \$380 million annual budget.

"The people that I've talked to (in the public) about this thought we should get paid more but they didn't think we should get paid for attending committee meetings, and I agree with them."

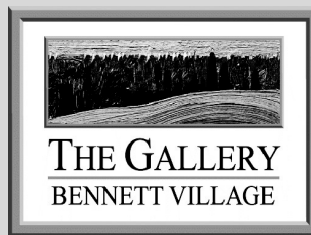
Board superintendent of finance Steve Parfeniuk told trustees he expects the increased trustee pay to be covered by the ministry eventually.

"If the ministry of education doesn't provide the additional funds we will have to look to within our non-classroom (funding) envelopes; it will not come out of the classroom. (But) I expect as we move forward that the government will pick up that cost," he said.

As for the \$88,683 in trustee retroactive pay, Parfeniuk said that will be absorbed by the board.

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