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NEWS

Education minister calls on board to 'pause' ban's implementation

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"Our school has a big issue with the cancer society being on the (banned) list," the 17-year-old said, referring to the Canadian Cancer Society.

She noted that last year her school held its first Relay for Life with the cancer society benefiting from the more than \$20,000 raised by the event, which many schools participate in.

Chan said she intended to be co-chair of this year's Relay for Life at Reding but the board's fundraising ban resulted in the June event's cancellation at the school.

She said she and others are forging ahead with organizing an off-school Relay for Life on June 2 near fellow Milton Catholic high school, Jean Vanier.

"You can shut it down here but we're still going to support (banned) organizations. I am planning on attending it and to stick it to the board," said a defiant Chan.

"I'm not Catholic but I do believe in giving back," she said.

She said a board fundraising ban for SickKids hospital, related to stem cell research, also bothers her as she was treated there as a youngster for asthma and eczema and has a friend with chronic nerve pain who received regular treatment there.

Chan said she understands to a point why the board has taken the stand against fundraising for some groups or purposes but thinks it's too far-reaching. "I see where they are coming from.

Obviously they (board) are pro-life but we are not supporting charities because they are pro-life. We are doing this because my

grandmother has had it (cancer) twice and beaten it," she said.

Grade 12 student Ryan Attew said students should voice "our own opinions and our individuality."

"I see where they (board) are coming from, but it's the wrong place. It's subjective. It (infringes) on our freedom of speech. What about the whole separation of church and state?"

The chair of the Halton Catholic board of trustees issued a statement about the student protests. "Fundraising at the school level is an integral part of the educational experience for our students, and we know that many of our students are upset with recent amendments to our board's fundraising policy," said Diane Rabenda.

"We are proud of our students for choosing to express their concerns in a peaceful manner. All stakeholders, including students have an opportunity to share their feedback on these amendments through the policy consultation process, currently underway. In the interim, we continue to encourage our students to participate in fundraising efforts in accordance with our policy."

Last week, Ontario Education Minister and Halton MPP Indira Naidoo-Harris sent Halton Catholic trustees a letter encouraging them to "pause" implementation of the charitable ban policy and continue with consultation to ensure opinions of the school community are heard and considered.

Stakeholders will have until 11:59 p.m. on Friday, June 1 to submit feedback at <https://bit.ly/2HE8pak>.

— with files from Nathan Howes