

## Halton District School Board

# Reducing delegation time shot down from the start

By DENNIS SMITH  
Special to The Champion

The door seems tightly closed on reducing delegation speaking time at Halton District School Board meetings.

There's no possibility of the issue being returned by the current board, bylaw review committee chair Debbie Marklew said Thursday.

"It's up to the trustees to decide and I doubt if they would. I don't foresee it happening," said the Oakville trustee. "There's not enough support to reduce delegation time to five minutes."

Currently, public delegations are allowed 10 minutes to speak and a recent proposal suggested cutting this limit in half. In both cases, trustee questions of delegates must be included in the overall time limit.

Other proposals included requiring delegations to provide 20 copies of presentations to the board by 4:30 p.m. on meeting day and limiting delegations to one speech per month on the same topic.

Combining committee recommendations and reports in the agenda was also suggested.

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DEBBIE MARKLEW

At last week's board meeting, the recommendations were returned for information, but not brought forward for a vote.

"Why table something if everyone is going to shoot it down anyway?" said Ms Marklew, who added early criticism of the proposals ruined their chances.

Ms Marklew was absent from the December 15 board meeting when an information update was provided on the recommendations.

"There was not a chance to present the rationale behind them," she said. "They killed this before it got out of the starting gate."

Reduced time for delegations was suggested to speed up board business, not to censor people, she said.

"Trustees get 1 to 2 minutes each at election time to speak to parents' meetings," said Ms Marklew. "Why should delegations get 10 minutes to tell me how lousy I am?"

As for delegations providing speeches before meetings, the aim was to review them and warn speakers if any statements were untrue or slanderous, she said.

But deadlines for 20 copies and reduced time limits and frequencies for delegations were criticized by some trustees and the public.

At last week's meeting, a man said proposed reduced time limits and appearances are aimed at stifling public participation in debate.

"This really means that your minds are made up and you don't want anyone bothering you or the media with what may be alternative views and dissent," said Tom Muir. "That's dictatorship, not democracy."

As for delegations speaking on the same topic during the same month, Mr. Muir said they want to participate further in the debate and it's their only chance.

"They have something else to say, new ideas and the agenda item itself being the same doesn't change this fact," he noted.

## Board looking for funding

The Halton District School Board is contacting Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh to determine if it will receive another \$2.7 million in funding.

Recent correspondence from Mr. Chudleigh indicated the board could be getting the additional funding, said Milton Trustee Erica Andrew.

Ms Andrew said a letter dated December 8 stated the numbers weren't final, but "it is my understanding the Halton District School Board will receive an additional \$2.7 million with increased allocations in every area of operation."

The board decided to seek a meeting on the issue with Mr. Chudleigh.

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