

No wrong-doing by public board found; trustee who made accusations resigns from his position

By **ROBB SWYBROUS**
Special to *The Champion*

Mike Ellis is resigning from his position as Burlington trustee for the Halton District School Board.

Mr. Ellis' decision to quit comes in the wake of board Chair Ethel Gardiner asking for his resignation during Wednesday night's board meeting. However, Mr. Ellis insisted the decision is his alone.

"They can ask for my resignation until the cows come home. I am not going to quit just because she wants me to quit," Mr. Ellis said.

"But I will be resigning, not because they asked me to, but I have said all along that somebody needed to go (and) obviously, it needs to be me."

Mr. Ellis added he feels he can no longer be an effective trustee and has no other choice but to quit.

"That's why I got into the trustee thing four years ago," he said.

"I've been pretty outspoken. I've probably bent a number of rules and I've got people action where the board wouldn't respond. And, if I am not in a position to continue on like that, if I am just going to get blackballed by the rest of the trustees and administration, then it wouldn't be fair to the community (for me) to continue on."

Chair asked for trustee's resignation

Ms Gardiner asked for Mr. Ellis' resignation after delivering a report clearing board members of any wrongdoing.

Mr. Ellis' allegations prompted an internal audit conducted by risk consulting company Kroll, Lindquist, Avey.

Ms Gardiner addressed the issue by reading from a statement prepared by the board's legal counsel.

"It is quite clear from the report that there is no evidence of any financial wrongdoing, misconduct or impropriety on the part of any trustee, employee or other representative of the board," Ms Gardiner read.

Following the meeting Ms Gardiner added, "I think it's very sad the board has had to go through this, but when allegations of that particular nature are made, it's incumbent upon the board to assure the public that funds are not being misallocated."

Specifically, Mr. Ellis contended the board presented incomplete information to the public regarding school closures. He also said he believed the board improperly approved an extension to the personal service contract of Director of Education Dusty Papke.

Mr. Ellis said Mr. Papke's new deal will ultimately cost taxpayers too much money and that the minutes approving the deal from a meeting in May somehow disappeared from the official board records.

"There are 20 minutes missing in the final approved minutes. If she (Gardiner) is saying there is no wrongdoing I'd love to see how they've got away with there being nothing wrong with that," Mr. Ellis said.

"Where did those 20 minutes go from that pri-

vate session meeting that they knowingly approved on the director's contract? They've got it (the May meeting) finishing at 11:30 p.m. when I didn't even leave the meeting until 11:45 p.m."

The chair, however, stands by the audit report and dismisses Mr. Ellis' claims.

Mr. Ellis didn't attend Wednesday's board meeting. He has received special medical permission to participate from home via telephone.

When the board called Mr. Ellis Wednesday at about 8 p.m. no one answered.

The trustee said he was out of town, dealing with his medical condition. "That's specifically why I did ask for a medical leave," he said.

Trustee not done with his concerns

Mr. Ellis didn't say when he'll make his resignation official, but indicated the issue of alleged improprieties isn't over as far as he's concerned. He said he plans to take the matter to local MPP Ted McMeekin with the hope of getting the provincial government involved.

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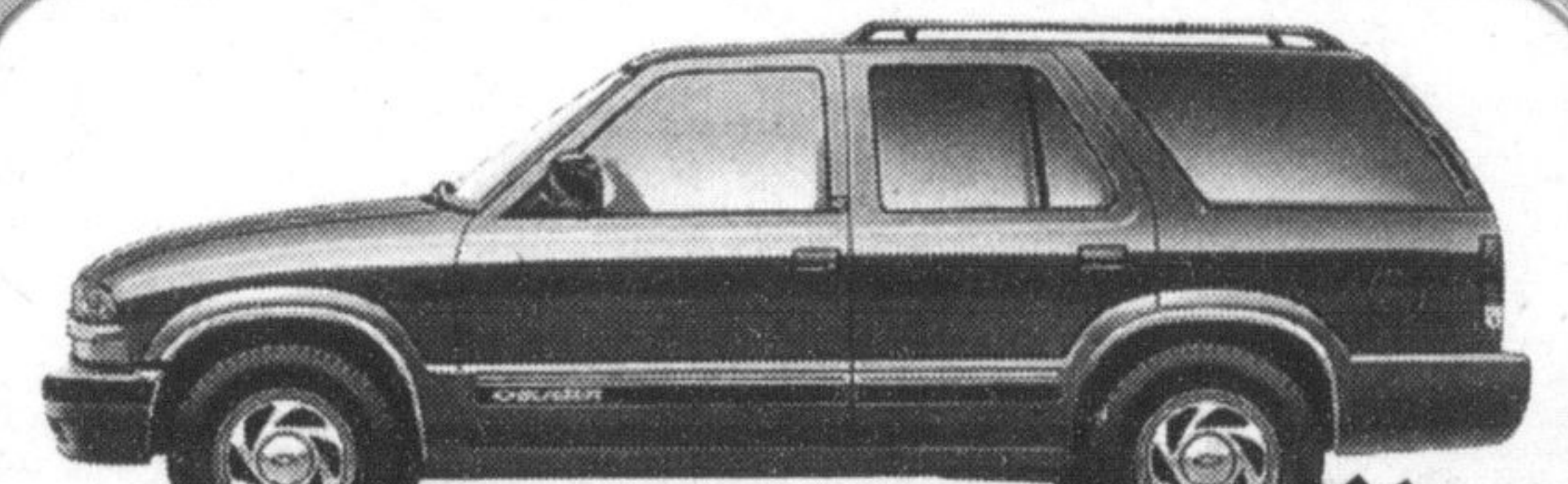
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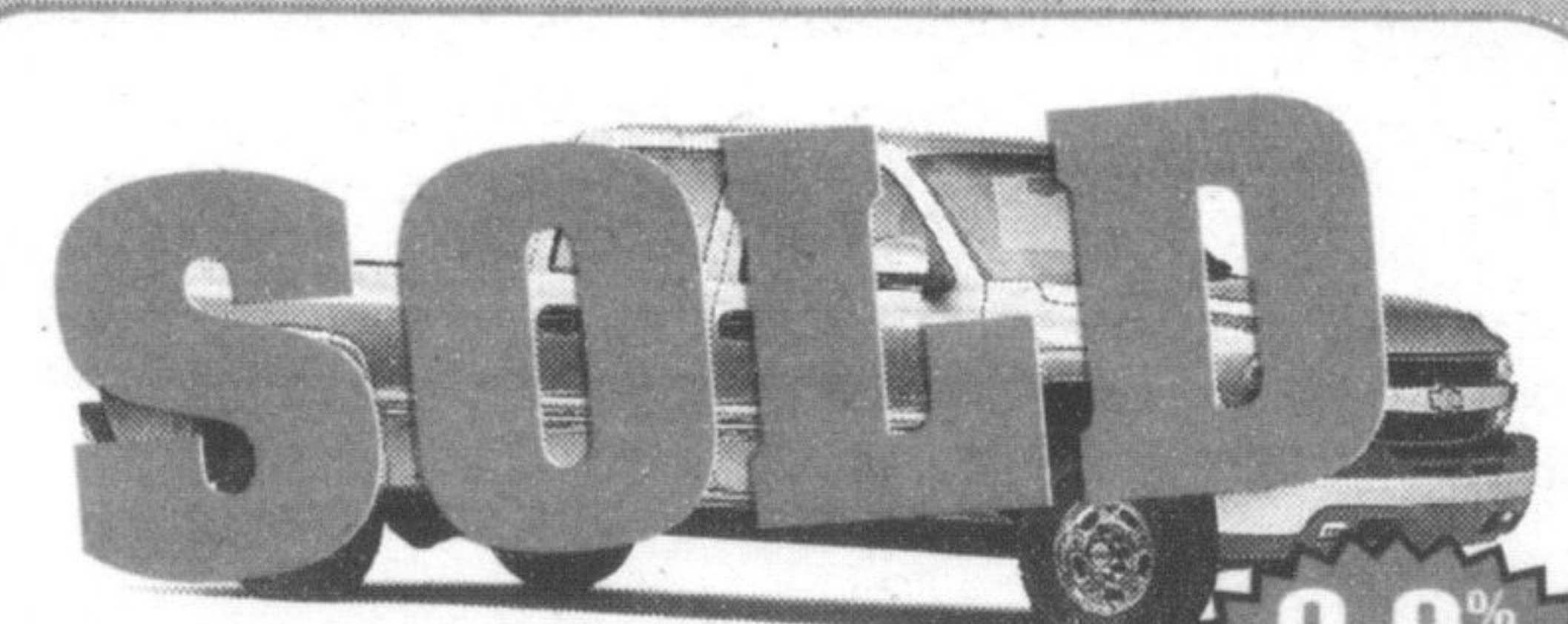
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