

# Chair calls \$600,000 deal 'fantasy'

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In a response dated May 24, ministry office spokesperson Christine Ovcarić stated, "Either I or another minister's office staff member will contact you to let you know whether Minister Kennedy's schedule will permit a meeting in the near future and, if so, when."

Mr. Papke's original contract, signed in 1997, stated if provided six months notice for termination, without cause, Mr. Papke would receive two year's salary and 15 per cent of benefits. It was negotiated that Mr. Papke would get a \$100,000 retirement gratuity in addition to his salary and benefit to avoid having to go to court.

"That (the settlement cost) is actually less than they would to have pay if they ended up having to go to court," the board source said.

At an in-camera meeting May 18, trustees voted to accept Mr. Papke's decision to resign. The deal was ratified in public session, under a personnel matter, during a school board meeting. It was decided by a 6-5 vote margin.

Board Chair Paul Tate said he couldn't comment on the settlement package, but disputed the number of \$600,000.

"I don't have any comments on his severance whatsoever, and I don't think what you just told me is remotely true," he said. "I think the sources that you're getting it from are absolutely mistaken. That's not what I understand to be those arrangements."

"I think there are some people there who are clearly trying to be disruptive and not positive on this issue."

When The Post told Mr. Tate it would be publishing a story about the \$600,000 severance he replied: "I can't react to what's fantasy."

Last month, Peter Lauwers, from the firm Miller Thomson, was hired by Mr. Tate and Vice-Chair and Burlington Trustee Peggy Russell to provide his legal opinion about the validity of policy governance at a special board meeting May 16.

Policy governance — which underwent major changes during a raucous board meeting May 18 — was introduced to the board about four years ago. Within that model, trustees set broad strate-

gic targets for staff under the management of the education director. It has been a contentious issue among some trustees who strongly felt it limited their decision-making abilities.

Mr. Tate at that time said he became aware that the board might be operating illegally under policy governance and believed an opinion was needed as quickly as possible.

Lauwers attended the May 16 and 18 meetings. Mr. Tate told The Post following the May 18 meeting that the \$10,000 fee for Lauwers' work would come from the board's \$500,000 legal fees fund.

A court reporter — whose costs have not yet been publicly revealed — was also retained to cover the two meetings.

Policy governance was drastically altered at the May 18 board meeting and, later that night, Mr. Papke announced he was resigning. Mr. Papke said the board was heading in a new direction that he didn't feel comfortable leading.

Ms Chapin said she has seen the contract and is dismayed by the extra money that's to be paid to Mr. Papke. She said she's speaking out because the money for the settlement will have to come out of the board's budget, and to find that amount of cash won't be easy.

"(These are) highly irresponsible actions of this board," Ms Chapin said. "If we are going to go into deficit — and this decision does put us into deficit position — I would rather go into deficit to buy the services of teachers and EAs to serve the needs of the students. This decision does not serve the needs of students."

"It's a sad, sad situation."

Ms Gardiner said the money, to be found in the budget, could require some tough decisions to be made.


"I think its critical taxpayers of Halton understand that this money will not be coming from teachers' salaries, transportation, heating and lighting bills. It will be coming from what we're able to provide to classrooms, and that's the sad part of it."

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