

OPINION

Raise too high

We don't envy the position Halton District School Board trustees will find themselves in next week.

At a board meeting this Wednesday, elected officials will face recommendations to increase trustee honorariums by an eye-popping 163 per cent starting December 1, give each current trustee one year's retroactive pay of \$8,153, and pay current trustees an additional \$1,882 for the three-month period ending November 30.

The recommendations come from a citizens' advisory committee that was convened to re-visit trustee remuneration after the Ministry of Education decided to allow trustee raises for the first time in a decade. Now, less than six weeks before a municipal election, these elected officials are facing a damned-if-they-do, damned-if-they-don't proposition.

If they approve an increase of the base trustee stipend from \$5,000 to \$13,159 and/or approve the other two recommendations — effectively paying themselves an additional \$10,000 each for the period of September 1, 2005 to November 30, 2006 — there could be political hell to pay from anyone who believes education spending belongs in the classroom.

If trustees don't pass the recommendations, they come off as heroes to ratepayers' groups, but find themselves stuck with the same pay trustees earned back in 1997.

Further complicating matters is a ministry-imposed deadline of October 31 for school boards to approve new pay scales. It leaves local public school trustees squirming over establishing a pay raise within weeks of their re-election bids.

Board Chair Paul Tate is fooling himself if he believes parents and taxpayers won't mind an additional \$77,000 a year added to the board's \$380-million operating budget. The proposed raises could purchase a significant amount of pencils, paper or textbooks for Halton students.

Still, a counter argument can be made that "you get what you pay for." In the last 10 years, the annual stipend for Ontario's school trustees has been a pittance. At \$5,000 a year, it's no wonder residents aren't lining up to contest trustee positions in this November's municipal election. It could be argued that in the ensuing 10 years, the pendulum has swung too far in the opposite direction, making a school trustee position not worth the effort, financially.

If we place any value on the work school board trustees do for education, perhaps it's time their remuneration started to reflect it.

But while it would be difficult for us to oppose an annual increase to trustees' pay after such a long freeze, a leap of 163 per cent in one year is too much, too soon.



ReadersWrite

Send your letters to miltone@haltonsearch.com or drop them off at 875 Main St. E.

Participation for downtown sidewalk sale disappointing

DEAR EDITOR:

We saw in the August 29 Champion that there would be a sidewalk sale downtown from August 30 to September 2.

We decided on Thursday morning, August 31, to do a little shopping at Zellers and then spend some time walking the Main Street and enjoy the

sidewalk sale. It was a great disappointment to say the least.

On both sides of the street we found two shops each with a rack of sale articles out on the sidewalk and heard later there was one more. Good for them for going along with the planned event.

A door being held open with a can hardly counts as a sidewalk sale. If the

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Youthperspective

Let's work together as a team to put an end to bullying

Are we doing everything we can to keep our schools safe in Milton? This is becoming a growing concern as it seems more cases of bullying are occurring across the country.

Statistics from the Canadian Red Cross Society, which runs anti-bullying program RespectEd, show one in five children are bullied. And since it's likely many cases go unreported, that number could be even higher.

To some people, this behaviour may be seen as just kids being kids, but others including myself see a much more serious threat. While some cases of bullying may seem like innocent name calling, what kind of effect does it have on the victims?

Perhaps some children can shrug it off and continue with their day, but others may carry the scars of those names for the rest of their lives. In one extreme case, a 14-year-old boy from Halifax named Emmet Fralick took

his own life after being bullied by a 15-year-old girl.

There have also been several horrible shooting incidents by people who were bullied to a point where they felt completely isolated and were consumed by revenge — such as might have been the case in the September 13 shooting at Dawson College.

When does it turn from child's play to something far more deadly and how can we identify the issue before it goes too far?

In my opinion, parents and our local schools need to work as diligently as possible to identify bullying, not only on the playground and in the classroom, but also on the Internet. Cyber bullying is something that's reasonably new, but I myself see it growing

tremendously. The saddest part about it is children can be victimized in the security of their own homes.

I have only been attending school in Milton for a short period of time, but I have found it friendly and welcoming.

But I think no town is without some degree of bullying and Milton is no exception.

If we as a town can make everyone feel comfortable enough to speak up when they witness an act of bullying or feel

as though they themselves have been victimized, then we can take the appropriate action.

Hopefully together we can make bullying a thing of the past.

Jeneva Walsh is a co-operative education student from Bishop Reding Secondary School.



Jeneva Walsh

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