## School board trustee's proposed code of ethics idea sent for review

By Tim Whitnell SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Halton District School Board Trustee Peggy Russell was disappointed that her attempt to retain a professional to help the board develop a code of ethics was referred to one of the board's subcommittees at a meeting last week.

The Burlington representative proposed using the services of York University ethicist Susan Dimock to work with trustees and senior administrators on an ethical code that would be used as a framework for all decisionmaking at the board.

However, a 6-5 vote sent the idea to the policy bylaw and governance committee for further review.

Near the end of the almost fourhour board meeting, Russell expressed frustration with the decision.

"I was disappointed with the referral of my motion — I was disappointed with the speed of the referral."

She told fellow trustees that in order to "build a team" more patience and courtesy from them would be helpful and that "it's a two-way street."

Russell said the board is supposed to

develop an ethics code. With the board beginning discussion about an updated strategic planning process, she believed Dimock could be brought in near the end of the talks to give her analysis and recommendations.

"We are going to be making a lot of important decisions. We're going to be making decisions on budgets and (student) accommodation. I struggle to put a price tag on ethics," she said.

Education Director Wayne Joudrie guessed that the services of someone with Dimock's qualifications would cost about \$1,200 to \$1,500 per day.

## Trustees want more choice

Some trustees had trouble with the potential cost of an ethicist and whether Dimock would be the only choice.

"There are ethicists and there are ethicists. In my training different ethicists meet different needs. I am not comfortable with the choice," said Burlington Trustee Jennifer Hlusko, adding she wasn't impressed with Dimock when listening to a presentation she made to the board.

While not against the idea of utiliz-

ing an ethicist, Hlusko said, "I would not support a recommendation dictating a (specific) hire."

Russell relented somewhat.

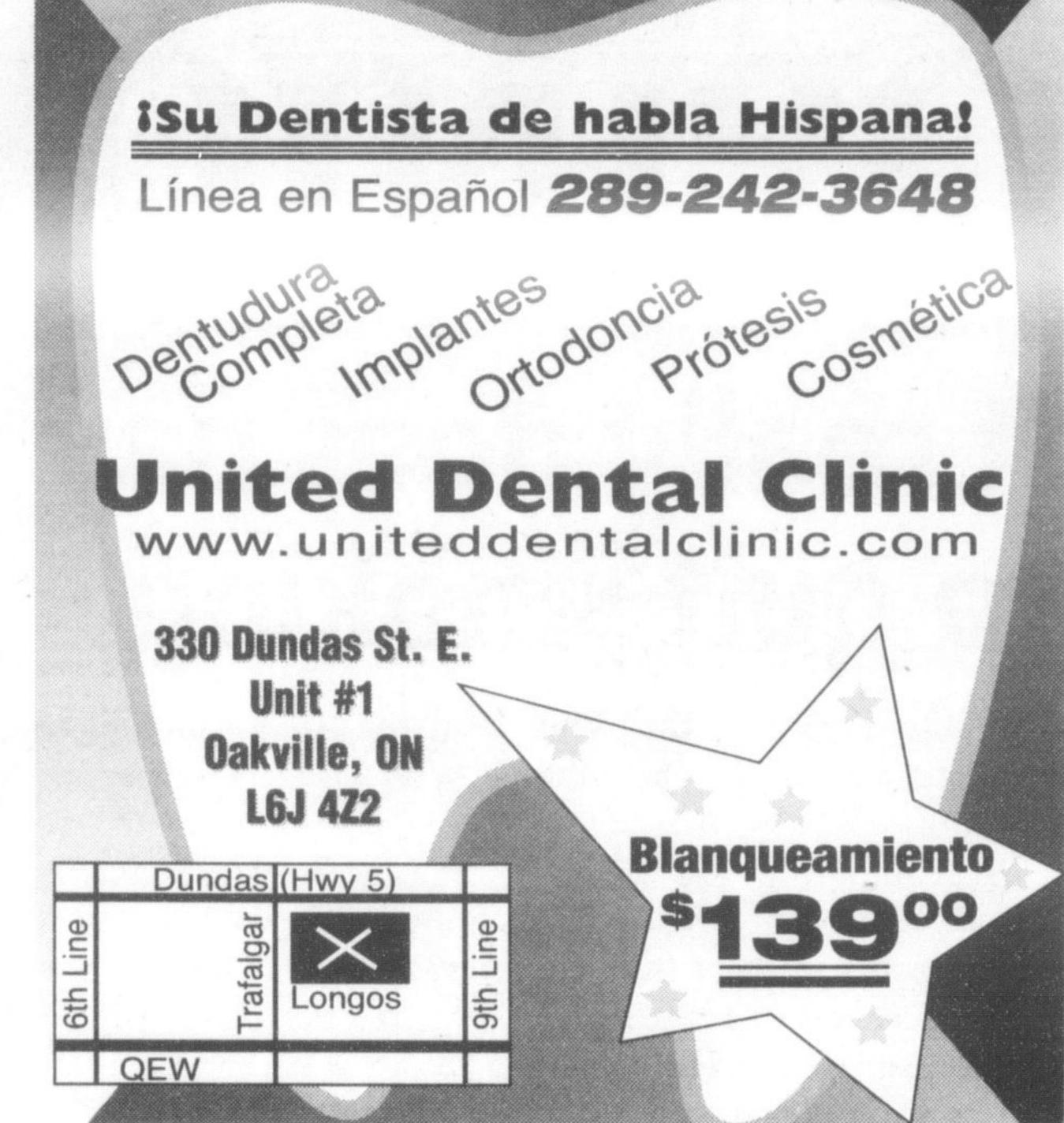
"Whoever this board decides (on using) is fine by me. If it's not this ethicist, that's fine, so long as we do it."

Board chair Gillian Tuck Kutarna said the facilitator the board will use in its strategic planning talks has said he will touch on ethical issues, but the extent is unknown.

Russell based her rationale for using an ethicist on her experiences at the board.

"In the previous six years, decisions the board reached left me feeling compromised as an individual and as an elected public official," she said.

"I believe if we as a board had taken the opportunity and time to consider developing a common framework for all decision-making (including ethical, legal and financial) we may have had some different outcomes. Certainly, we would have improved the comfort level of trustees with the decision-making process," she said in a report to the



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