Money came from school fundraisers

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after a complaint by the Halton District School Board that irregularities had been discovered in the school councils' accounting practices.

Pickering was charged in February of last year.

Kerr told the court that as treasurer for the school councils, Pickering was largely responsible for money collected from fundraisers.

Pickering was treasurer of the school council at J.M. Denyes from 2003 to 2004, the court heard.

Suspicions were raised when a yearend report was provided months late after Pickering was repeatedly pressed for the document. When it was produced, the document indicated the council had \$21,000 in its account, but bank records revealed there was only \$158, Kerr said.

Auditing revealed Pickering had been writing cheques to herself and her husband from the account, the court heard.

Between 2002 and 2004, Pickering was also treasurer of the school council at W.I. Dick. Once again, she wrote cheques to herself and her husband, causing a shortfall that was discovered.

Pickering became council treasurer at Stewarttown in 2004 after her time ended at J.M. Denyes; she obtained money through similar methods there, Kerr said.

At one point, Pickering tried to repay stolen funds from one school to another, Kerr told the court.

In the end, the final amounts agreed upon that Pickering stole from the schools were about \$10,000 from J.M. Denyes, \$5,500 from W.I. Dick and almost \$9,000 from Stewarttown, Kerr said, which resulted in a restitution order of about \$24,000 to the Halton District School Board.

Pickering has already come up with \$11,500 and is supposed to pay the remainder early next year, Kerr said.

Darroch told the Champion he didn't want to comment on the case until after sentencing, which is scheduled for sometime in March of next year. The exact date will be nailed down at a court appearance January 11 at Burlington court.

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Art of interest

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Excavation for an underground link between the buildings is underway.

Reynolds reported the large plywood boards that have been installed around the construction site have garnered a lot of interest now that local artists have started painting them with scenes depicting Milton's past.

"That's been a really good community partnership project," she said. "We get a lot of people walking by looking at it."

The \$24.2-million expansion of the Town Hall is expected to be ready for occupancy by fall 2008.

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