

OPINION

More than just the book may be under review

With all due respect, we think the Halton Catholic District School Board has a backward approach to vetting which books are acceptable for its elementary school libraries.

In a move that has garnered global attention, the school board recently decided to pull 'The Golden Compass' — and two other titles from the same fantasy trilogy — off elementary school library shelves following a complaint about the British author's openly-atheist views.

First published in 1995, The Golden Compass is an award-winning book that is listed as recommended reading for Grades 5 and 6 by Burlington's public library and was named the best children's book of the past 70 years by a worldwide audience of readers.

While the book is not yet banned, it will not be on display at the Catholic board's school libraries until a committee has completed a review of its content.

Wouldn't it have made more sense for the board to review this book first before making it available to schoolchildren?

Since the board's schools are permitted to purchase library materials independently, it's not clear how many copies of the book were in circulation at Halton Catholic schools, or for how long.

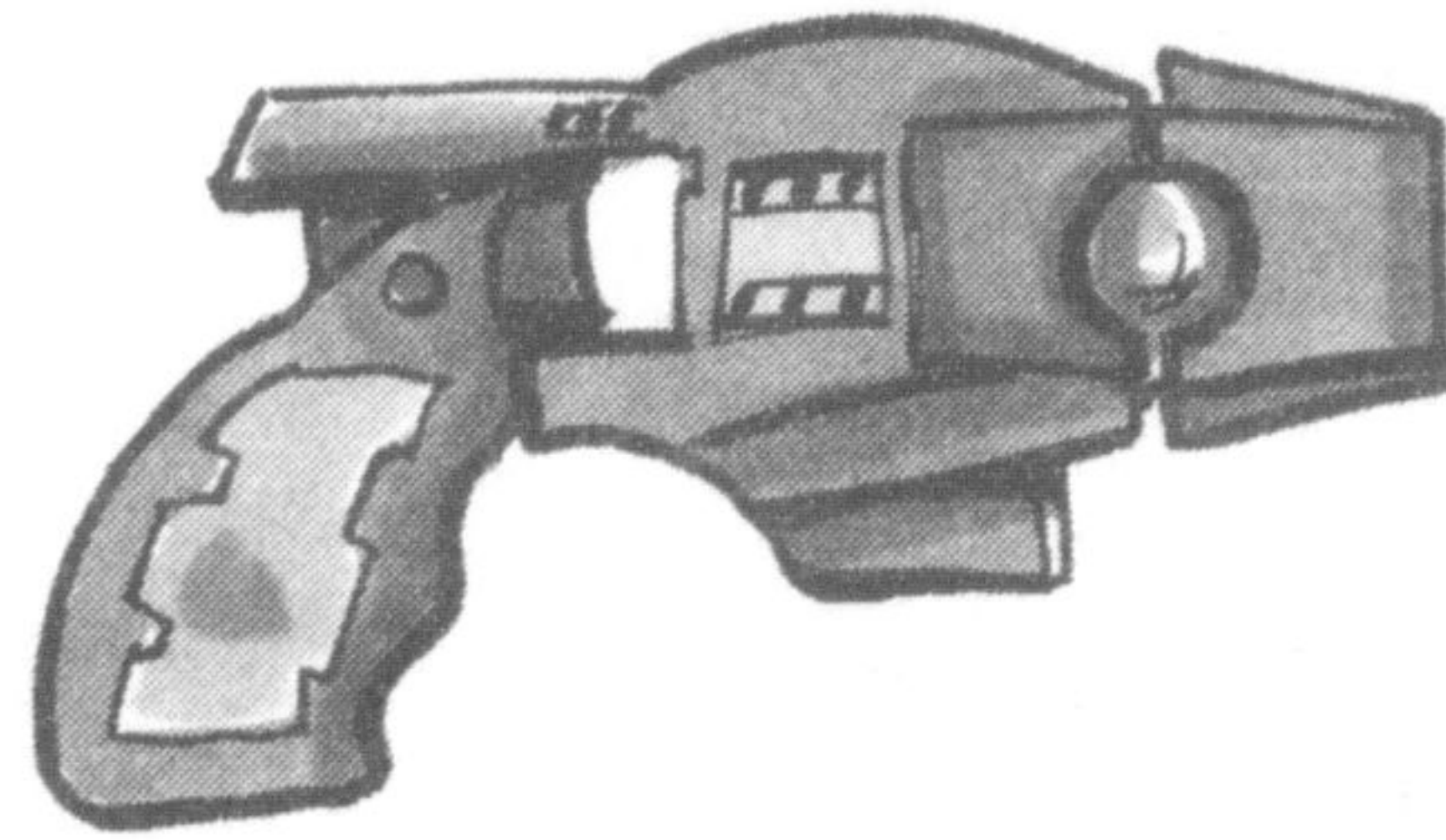
With many of author Philip Pullman's most-often-quoted controversial remarks having been made in interviews that took place between 2001-03, it would seem there's more at work here than a concerned citizen's discovery of offensive literature.

In the United States the Catholic League has accused Pullman's trilogy of attacking Christianity and promoting atheism to children. The same religious group is actively encouraging parents to boycott a Hollywood adaptation of The Golden Compass starring Nicole Kidman when it opens next month.

Is it purely coincidental that the board would receive a complaint about Pullman's books at precisely the same time that this protest south of the border is reaching its climax? We don't think so.

Is it possible that Pullman's character and controversial statements are the real subjects of this review — not the content of his books? We certainly hope not.

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ReadersWrite

E-mail your letters to miltone@haltonsearch.com.

Politicians should have been included

DEAR EDITOR:

I thought the Milton Santa Claus Parade was very successful. Kudos to the organizing committee.

However, I believe the decision to bar politicians from the parade was unfortunate. Politicians are a key part of our community and it's important that they be involved, be seen and be approachable.

I recommend that if the organizing committee wants to streamline the

number of entries in the parade, they should start by creating some guidelines as to what's an acceptable float. A vehicle with a single season's greetings banner or garland across the side shouldn't be allowed in the parade.

With regard to the politicians, perhaps they could have been asked to work together on a single float, in which all the politicians were present.

DAVID WOLDER
MILTON

Theviewfromhere

Many local seniors could use visit from Santa Claus, too

I know Milton is a very generous town. Whenever anybody has a cause, Miltonians are the first ones there helping out or making donations.

So I was surprised to receive a call for help last week from Tom Chuchmach of Home Instead Senior Care, which organizes the local Be a Santa to a Senior program.

The initiative ensures that seniors in the Halton area who may not have a lot of visitors or family receive gifts at Christmas time. All local residents have to do is take a paper ornament bearing a local senior's 'wish list' off one of the Christmas trees located at stores throughout town, buy the specified gift and return it unwrapped to any tree location along with the ornament.

Chuchmach told me that very few ornaments have been picked up, and the day the presents are supposed to be wrapped by vol-

unteers is quickly approaching (December 8).

Maybe people aren't totally in the Christmas spirit yet because there hasn't been much snow, or maybe people just aren't noticing the trees.

Regardless of what the reason is, I'm encouraging residents to please slow down for a second the next time they're rushing through a store and grab an ornament.

These seniors aren't asking for much. Some just want a CD, while others would like a blanket or a sweater. They're all very basic requests, but they'll definitely make a big difference to those seniors come Christmas morning.

As someone who took part in the program last year, I can tell you that it's so rewarding

to know the gift I purchased would've put a smile on a senior's face on a day when everybody should be smiling and feeling loved.

And I'll definitely be participating again this year. While I may not personally know who I'm buying presents for, I'm still looking forward to scouring local stores for the perfect gift that fulfills everything on a senior's simple and endearing Christmas wish list.

Ornaments are available at Zellers, Royal LePage Meadowtowne Realty, Wal-Mart and A Country Mile.

There's only one week left, so don't forget to add a special senior to your Christmas shopping list — for all their generation has given to us, it's the least we can do.



Melanie Hennessey

The Canadian Champion
Milton's Community Newspaper Since 1860

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Classified: 905-875-3300

Circulation: 905-878-5947

www.miltoncanadianchampion.com

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