

Trustees will now have hand in hiring

By ANGELA BLACKBURN
Special to The Champion

Halton Board of Education trustees have approved a plan that will see elected representatives have some say in the hiring of board personnel.

Two weeks ago, Ward 3 Oakville trustee John Scheel told trustees he'd be seeking their support for administration not to hire any staff "of any kind" — without providing rationale and obtaining prior approval of the board.

But Mr. Scheel began the May 7 meeting saying he'd spoken to trustees and administrators and had changed his motion.

This time it read, "With the exception of adult and continuing education, the hiring of all non-PTR (pupil teacher ratio) for new positions and positions of added responsibility is to be reviewed by the board."

Mr. Scheel said his reason for amending the motion was that he didn't intend to "control" hiring as defined in the dictionary, that accountability was the word he had in mind.

But, despite the change, Mr. Scheel said the motion "accomplishes essentially the same thing" — to let the public know the board is working together, that anything relating to a change in the board's strategic direction will involve trustees. "That there aren't going to be any surprises," he said.

But Burlington trustee Marg Bullock challenged board chairman Dave Coons' ruling that indeed the motion was the same.

"This is new and I need to do some more research," said Ms Bullock whose challenge eventually lost.

"This is watered down a lot," said Burlington trustee Lynda Schreiber.

Trustees heard that the non-PTR staff hiring to be approved by trustees include consultants and co-ordinators who aren't instructional consultants, management staff who aren't on teaching contracts as well as support staff.

But in a recorded vote two Oakville trustees were the dissenters against Mr. Scheel — Ward 2 Cheryl Reid and Ward 4 trustee Penny Siebert.

"With the way it's (the motion) changed, it's what's already in place," said Reid, chairman of the board's salary committee.

"We're already doing what we can as far as accountability," said Ms Reid.

"This has changed quite drastically," said Siebert of the motion.

"I was not hired to be a line manager or a chief executive officer. We have professionals who do that," said Siebert, noting it's up to

trustees to set general policy guidelines, monitor staff actions but not "pre-empt their decision making power."

The trustees said trustees should get out of staff's way and let them do their job efficiently and effectively.

But others had different ideas.

"In my seven years on the board, certain positions, not many, have come before the board after hiring has happened. I would have placed an ad locally, with Halton staff, within the province or within Canada rather than going out of country on one occasion. These things have gone by without trustee input and shouldn't have," said Burlington trustee Anne Barbu. Anything dealing with personnel is handled in confidentiality by the board administration and the board acting as a committee of the whole.

Mr. Scheel said his motion was in keeping with the board's intention to retain all present staff and with the board's intent of retaining control over contractual agreements.

The trustee said his motion honors administration's commitment to do everything in its power not to effect layoffs.



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Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Someone else's closet

Someone's wardrobe cast-off can be another person's treasure. That's the idea behind a new business called 'My Sister's Closet'. Sisters Renee Voskamp (left) and Betty Berends offer a selection of designer labels and other up-to-date fashions at the Bronte Street shop. They accept items on consignment and say many pieces are brought into the store by women whose weight and dress sizes change

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