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# Trustees support review of privacy Act

By ANGELA BLACKBURN  
 Special to The Champion

In a 9-8 vote Halton Board of Education trustees last Thursday supported a Guelph woman's bid for a provincial review of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOI) to place more restrictions on public access.

Trustees also agreed to seek additional support from other school boards and large municipalities.

The narrow vote followed Milton trustee Bob Clarke's call to support a report to the Ontario Cabinet filed by Guelph resident Lorie Jocius, a former key communicator.

With some trustees leery of supporting the report's contents, Oakville trustee Penny Siebert successfully changed Clarke's motion so it would support only the recommendations of Ms Jocius' report. Trustees heard administration would pro-

vide an executive summary of the report to go with the board's letter to the province.

Burlington trustee Diane Leblovic called for Clarke to report back in January, 1993 on responses received by other school boards and municipalities while Scheel called for the board's recorded vote to be sent along with the letter to the province.

"As a citizen of the province of Ontario, I strongly support the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. However, I am concerned that, in its current legislative form, it is subject to possible abuse of process by members of the general public and the media," said Ms Jocius in a June 25 letter of board education director Bob Williams which accompanied a copy of her report submitted to the province.

"If you support this what you're doing is supporting a draft by Lorie Jocius requesting the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act be looked at. It doesn't mean it's going to be drastically changed. Maybe it will mean a small rewording or maybe a better education for the public. The main reason behind this really is to curtail abuse of process," said Bob Clarke.

But Oakville trustee Linda Lane said she spoke to Ms Jocius and read both Ms Jocius' report and the Act and said, "It (Ms Jocius' report) espouses a very dangerous concept."

"Democracy is not cheap. We pay for it, but others pay with their lives to achieve the same rights," said Ms Lane. "All levels of government exist to serve the public."

Ms Lane said individuals shouldn't have to justify requesting information.

"Governments and their

bureaucracies must justify withholding information, that's the whole reason for the Act," she said. "Many institutions put their own interests ahead of the public they're supposed to be serving. I urge you to uphold the principles of the democratic process."

Burlington trustee Diane Leblovic requested input from the public at large, the media and ratepayers groups before the board threw its support behind one individual's concerns.

"The lack of objectivity of this motion is glaringly obvious. Where is the administration's analysis? Where is the opinion of our qualified Freedom of Information co-ordinator? Where is the viewpoint of other interested parties, or the press or of the individuals named in the submission?" charged Oakville trustee John Scheel.

"There is no legal opinion

provided by the author on the allegations she makes in her submission, nor could there be any consideration by this board, to obtain a legal opinion on her behalf, at the expense of the taxpayers, on a matter between private citizens," said John Scheel.

Ms Jocius' request is based on the controversial Key Communicator issue which became a centre of controversy earlier this year.

Key communicators were participants in a board communications program designed to get feedback on the board and education issues from community members.

The program drew controversy when it was revealed Key Communicators were to show positive support for the board and when the board refused to reveal their names at the request of an Oakville resident and Oakville-Trafalgar High School relocation opponent.

## Information seminars for separated couples

The Canadian Mental Health Association, Halton Region Branch, is offering "Seminars for the Separated", a 10-week lecture series and self-help group for people going through separation and divorce.

Topics covered include: stages of separation — from grief to growth; communication with your ex. — breaking out of old patterns; legal aspects; parenting after separation; rebuilding self-esteem and life after divorce.

This is the third year this program has been offered in north Halton and it has been very well received, according to feedback from the participants.

Through the group and the lectures, they learn to what degree their reactions, denial, anger (rage), depression, in some cases, euphoria, are normal. They learn what to expect and how long the recovery usually takes. Through the self-help aspect of the program, they have the opportunity to help and support each other and to form new support systems.

The Monday evening sessions begin November 23 and continue to February 1, 1993. All seminars take place between 7 and 10 p.m. at the Optimist Centre, lower level, 311 Commercial Street, Milton. To register, call Valerie Fitzpatrick at 845-5044.

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