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## Trustee pushing for review of board's purchasing policy

Ward 3 public school trustee John Scheel who is angry that the Halton Board of Education doesn't have to tender large consulting contracts, has absolved himself of expenditure responsibilities until the matter is debated November 12.

Despite failed attempts to get an energy savings program's consulting fees tendered by the board through a purchasing policy review request October 8, Mr. Scheel is still making his concerns felt at the board table.

"As a result of personal legal advice, I am hereby reaffirming to the community-at-large that I am not accountable for certain expenditures of this board," said Mr. Scheel, reading from a letter he submitted to board chair Dave Coons at the October 22 board meeting.

The board's purchasing policy states it "recognizes that competitive bidding yields lowest prices." However its accompanying "administrative procedures" allows board administration to "sole source" or by-pass tendering large consulting contracts, as well as legal and architectural fees.

Mr. Scheel said it means trustees don't approve the expenditures and can't be accountable for them.

The trustee has taken particular exception to \$2.9 million worth of consulting fees going to Tamblin Energy Services for its part in Phase III of a board energy savings program. That program will see Tamblin contract out, under public tender, a potential \$6 million worth of lighting replacement work in its schools across Halton.

The program was frozen by board administration when Mr. Scheel raised his concerns earlier this fall.

However in a 10-5 vote October 8, trustees nixed a policy review and any further delays to Phase II of the energy savings program.

Trustees were concerned savings in the order of \$80,000/month were being lost in the delay while Mr. Scheel still maintains that overall, "Ontario taxpayers will be spending well in excess of what needs to be spent" on the program.

The Ontario Hydro sponsored energy savings program, is expected to see the public school board recoup its costs and more (\$80,000/month in savings) through utility savings.

At an October 20 board property committee meeting, board administration presented a report to trustees indicating Phase III would be moving ahead in two stages, the first being a feasibility study and then the potential \$6 million worth of lighting replacement.

"At this point we'll proceed only with the feasibility study," said business superintendent Jerry Jenkins.

That \$471,000 study, of which \$235,000 will be contributed through Ontario Hydro grants, will make recommendations on what the board should do in the area of energy management savings, said Mr. Jenkins.

On October 8, trustees heard assurances that the board's auditors had no concerns about the board's purchasing policy. That policy was reviewed and re-approved in November 1991. At the time, education director Bob Williams said he believed a review would be a make-work project that the board didn't need.

While Mr. Scheel said Ontario Hydro recommended 25 firms which could do the job for, the board, specifically three to four, other trustees said sole sourcing wasn't an issue when only two firms could do work for a school board and only one, Tamblin, had experience with the same.

Mr. Scheel said he wasn't accusing anyone at the board of wrongdoing, nor was he against saving money on energy costs however he advocated savings to be made should be used by the board not paid out to consultants who could charge in the range of \$60 to \$140 per hour.

"I regard what has transpired with Phase III of the Energy Management Program as a blatant insult to our open market process. The reality of the situation is that in industry, a remedy would have been in place within 30 minutes," said Mr. Scheel who said he welcomed public concern and input into the matter.

Mr. Scheel put forth two notices of motion on the issue that will come up for debate November 12.

The first, calls for the "board's purchasing and tendering policies to be reviewed and updated as necessary within 30 days to assure the public that public tendering is being practised to the fullest extent possible and that trustees are fully and formally accountable for all board expenditures."

Despite a supportive attempt by Burlington trustee Diane Leblovic to wave the rules to deal with the matter at the meeting, the matter didn't get supported by all trustees.

Mr. Scheel also served notice that he'll be asking that under the Energy Management Program's Phase III, Part A, the consulting contract be required to complete specifications for Part B of Phase III and that open tendering will be called for.

## Country craft show coming

Its organizers are calling Homefest the "biggest little craft show in the country".

The annual event sponsored by the Nassagaweya Women's Institute takes place Saturday, Nov. 14 at the Nassagaweya Community Centre in Brookville from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. This 11th annual Homefest will be highlighted by the presentation of a piano to the community by the Institute at 2 p.m.

Each year the Women's Institute assists the community in the funding of special projects including the piano purchase. In the past, provincial flags were donated to Brookville Public School and more than \$6,000 was given to the building of the new community centre.

Homefest provides funds for the Institute through the sale of homemade soups, sandwiches and pies. It's the home cooking that helps draw visitors "who make Homefest an absolute must each year," according to Institute member Katharine Garwood.

## Sandy Martin new manager

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Increasing Chamber membership and improving benefits to members is one of her immediate goals, said Ms Martin. About 400 of Milton's 1,400 merchants are members of the organization.

Through her new position, she said she plans to ensure Milton keeps its identity as a place "where people want to live, do business, and raise their families."

She said she also looks forward to helping the Milton business community adapt to expansion of the town over the next 15 years.

Ms Martin said she will continue to serve on a number of committees related to the betterment of Milton.

She is involved in the Milton Farmers' Market, Milton Visitor Association, the Good Neighbours program, and a committee striving to improve the Mill Pond area.

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