

Trustees wary of business foothold in schools

By CAROL BALDWIN
Special to The Champion

How much influence should corporations wield in the modern-day classroom?

Despite nine months of research and public debate by a committee, the Halton Board of Education was not able to come to grips with that thorny question recently.

As far as most trustees were concerned, a draft policy on corporate partnerships, sponsorships and donations raised many unanswered questions.

Instead of accepting the draft developed by a committee of trustees, school principals, parent association members and business representatives, trustees referred it to a new committee. Some trustees were uncomfortable in adopting the draft when they were still receiving public presentations on the subject.

They admitted their decisions had been affected by a presentation that night from teacher Brenda Dolling.

"If you adopt this policy, I believe you will be compromising the integrity of education and aiding the colonization of the school system by the corpo-

rate sector," Ms Dolling told the trustees. She used the U.S. as an example, where, she said, brand-named products are introduced in every corner of the schools.

"Are we really prepared for Burger King Schools?" she asked. "It is very naive to believe that these logos, product names, and corporate sponsors do not affect children's choices now, or in the future."

She even held up a conference package titled "Kid Power: Creative Kid-Targeted Marketing Strategies" in which, she said, companies were given advice on how "to maximize their in-school presence..."

Ms Dolling said such corporate intrusion into schools, which was once prohibited, is now being encouraged. "Today's policy is a reversal of that former responsibility. Economics may have changed, but the minds of the children have not."

In her presentation, Ms Dolling suggested that a foundation be established for donations, so that the money could be equally distributed among the Halton schools.

A few of the trustees mentioned that possibility when

they spoke to the issue.

Burlington Trustee Sandy Van Harten told Ms Dolling, "I felt like standing up and cheering, during your presentation."

Ms Van Harten said she shared many of Ms Dolling's concerns, which is why she had five amendments on the agenda. However, only two of them were passed by the board. One requested that "school councils prepare their own guidelines and practices on the display of corporate logos and thank-

you's, and place them with a board registry prior to June, 1997"

The other amendment urged that: "Sponsor/partnerships/donations ... not entitle any person, business or corporation to have direct access to students for marketing purposes."

Those changes did not allay the concerns of many trustees.

Oakville Trustee Linda Lane was not convinced it was legal to give principals the authority to approve deals worth as much

as \$50,000.

Burlington Trustee Diane Leblovic agreed with both of them. "I'd like to see that we can keep our principals out of court and our board out of court," she said.

When Ms Leblovic suggested more discussion or revisions were needed, Burlington Trustee Joe Pavelka responded, "The committee spent over nine months developing a policy. Give it a chance to breathe and see the light of day or else

it's going to die like everything else around here."

Ms Siebert, who chaired the committee, said if other trustees were not satisfied with the draft policy, it should be referred to a new committee of trustees.

The board acted on her suggestion, and a new committee of trustees was formed consisting of trustees Lynne Clark, Anise Docherty, Ethel Gardiner, Linda Lane, Diane Leblovic and Sandy Van Harten.

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Fight is simmering over upkeep of roads

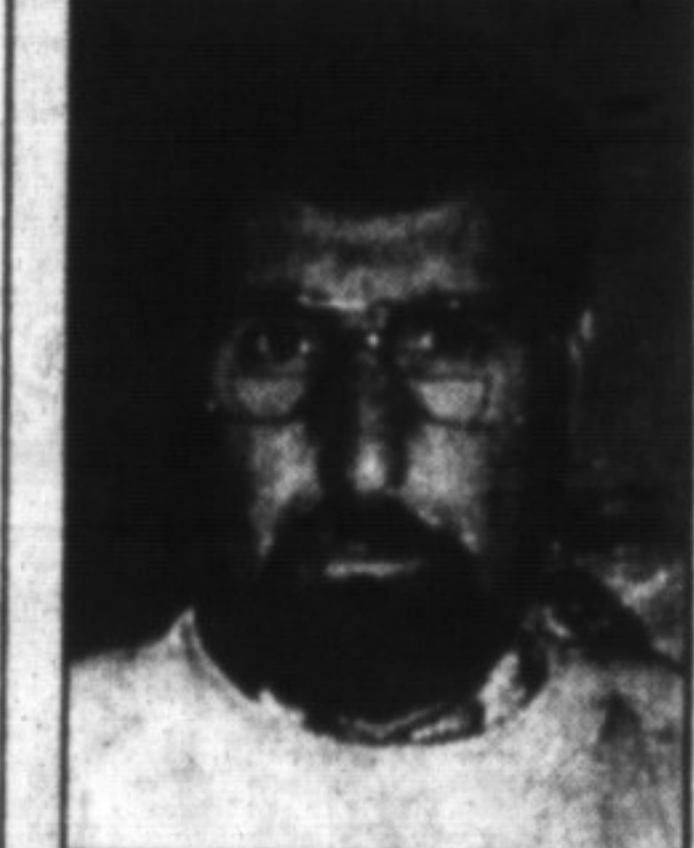
By BRAD REAUME

The Champion

Some regional councillors want a single authority for roads across Halton.

Currently some roads are under local jurisdiction, while larger ones are under regional or provincial control.

Changes in jurisdiction have been talked about for years, but with the province cutting back on road grants the issue has moved to the forefront. Secondary provincial highways, such as Highway 5 and Highway 25, are likely to become regional roads as the province pulls back further.



"It seems as if the region is trying to dump road responsibility."

— Barry Lee
MILTON COUNCILLOR

However, regional roads themselves may be phased out, depending upon which rationalization plan is chosen.

"I have no problems with one authority for roads," said Milton Councillor Barry Lee. "It seems as if the region is trying to dump road responsibility. It also happens to be the most bleak section of responsibility, given the reduction of road grants from the province."

Art Leitch, Halton's commissioner of public works, said there has been an additional \$250,000 cutback in road grants since the 1996 budget figures were announced.

"If I said things were bleak before they are worse now," Mr. Leitch told the regional planning and public works committee recently. "We are

attempting to stretch shrinking dollars. At present roads are tax-supported but taxpayers have said loud and clear they don't want to pay more taxes."

Mr. Leitch said whoever is maintaining the roads will gain any funding associated with maintaining them. Mr. Lee was quick to point out those maintenance dollars are rapidly shrinking.

"Burlington took over Cedar Springs Road knowing the region could not possibly maintain it to the standards acceptable to Burlington," said Burlington Councillor Barry Quinn. "There are a lot of regional roads that are local and they make no sense as regional roads. Under the current definitions, Lakeshore Road should be a regional road."

The additional maintenance associated with having provincial highways turned into regional roads also must be included, according to Mr. Leitch.

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