

Excluding non-Catholics on councils unfair: Official

By CAROL BALDWIN
Special to The Champion

Non-Catholics should not be barred from sitting on Halton Roman Catholic school councils, says the president of the regional Catholic Parent Teacher Association (CPTA).

Insisting that all members of Halton Roman Catholic School Councils be Catholic is divisive, promotes exclusion and is unenforceable, Rose Garritsen told separate school trustees recently.

"Why should someone's religion have any impact whatsoever on their fundamental right to participate as a parent?" asked the president of the Halton CPTA. "Please do not divide our parent community."

Ms Garritsen's plea was in response to the eligibility criteria in the board policy for school councils, which recently passed second reading. A stipulation is that all parent members of School Councils be Catholic.

A member of the CPTA at Oakville's St. Vincent's elementary school, Ms Garritsen told the trustees, "We work side-by-side with non-Catholics all the time and we've never encountered any difficulty. And, I've been involved with the system for eight years."

Ms Garritsen said many children in that system have one Catholic and one non-Catholic parent.

"There are many cases where the non-Catholic parent has values that are much more Catholic than the Catholic parent," she said, adding that taxes from that family support the Roman Catholic school board.

"Let's find ways to make our faith more visible in the schools by embracing the whole school community."

Burlington Trustee Miriam van de Vrande said the intent of the criteria was not to be divisive but to "strengthen the values" of the Catholic religion.

She compared non-Catholics in the Catholic education system to residents of Canada who are

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ROSE GARRITSEN
President of the
regional Catholic Parent
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not Canadian citizens.

"You need it (citizenship) to vote," she said. "If they (non-Catholic parents) really believe in Catholic values, we will welcome them with open arms (into the church)."

Stressing the mixed marriage scenario where the more involved parent in a child's education may have agreed to raise his or her children Catholic, and may value the Catholic education system but may not want to convert, Ms

Garritsen said, "There will always be a gatekeeper and always be a division in every school. It will be divisive."

Comments and concerns have been solicited from Halton ratepayers, and said Fred Sweeney, director of education, "We have received 32 letters so far and the majority of them are on this issue."

The plan is scheduled to go before the policy committee on Monday, May 13 and the full board on Tuesday, May 28.

Man needs mental help, court hears

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During cross examination by Ms Stevenson, Dr. West said she believes Mr. Hayden knew setting fires was wrong, contrary to the stipulation in the criminal code.

And the Crown pointed out that Mr. Hayden showed an appreciation for the nature of his crimes. During his confession he asked police if his wife would find out, because he was afraid she would divorce him.

"The (police) video is the best evidence we have of Mr. Hayden's mental state," Ms Stevenson said.

But the doctor insisted that the former firefighter didn't appreciate the consequences of his actions to the extent that he would have before he suffered brain damage.

Dr. West testified before Judge John Takach that she believes Mr. Hayden belongs in a psychiatric hospital, not a prison cell.

Since Mr. Hayden was admitted to Brockville Psychiatric Hospital, court heard, he's suspected of starting fires there and has shown an inability to control other impulses.

The former firefighter's mental condition has deteriorated further since he committed the arsons and will continue to do so, Dr. West said.

The trial will proceed on a date scheduled to be set in court today. The defence is expected to call a second psychiatrist, Dr. Angus McDonald, to the stand before the case wraps up.



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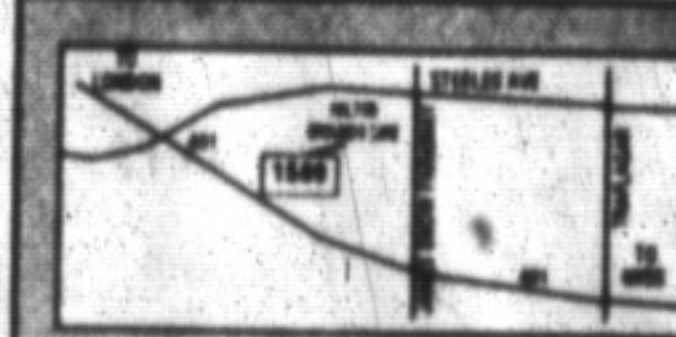


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