

# Looking for a compromise on lunch supervision

By TIM WHITNELL

Special to The Champion

The Halton Board of Education's removal of its lunchtime supervision policy may be hard to swallow for some, but individual schools will still receive direction on the thorny issue.

At last week's first board meeting of the new school year, all but one of the board's 18 trustees, Milton's Tim Kingsbury, voted to rescind a policy stating there should be a minimum of one adult for every 60 students during lunchtime in Halton's elementary schools.

But not wanting to leave schools, specifically students, in the lurch about lunch, trustees voted unanimously to support a pair of recommendations on the subject, forwarded by Oakville Trustee Debbie Marklew.

Trustees agreed with Ms Marklew's belief that temporary guidelines should be put in place until a committee investigating the status of lunchroom supervision in individual schools reports its findings to the board on Dec. 12.

The board recommended schools be encouraged to implement a minimum 60:1 student/teacher ratio at lunchtime, and also that the Halton Council of Home and School Associations (HCHSA) be allowed to set up training sessions on the Heimlich maneuver, at no cost to the board.

Paul Anthony, the board's superintendent of staff services who recommended rescinding the policy, warned trustees to be careful of the direction in which they were headed.

The Education Act does not declare a ratio —

it is silent. We are moving toward a ratio, which has legal implications," said Mr. Anthony, who noted further discussion of the matter should be done in-camera.

Lily Cooper, president of the HCHSA, had made a presentation to the board earlier in the evening in which she stated, "We believe a ratio of 60 students to one supervisor is barely adequate as a standard for supervision of children eating lunch and playing on the playground, but at the very least this should act as a minimum requirement for all elementary schools."

The board removed all funding for its 564 paid lunchtime supervisors during its 1996 budget deliberations this past spring. The saving to the board is estimated at \$300,000 in 1996 and \$750,000 over the '96-97 school year.

However, the board has reaffirmed its commitment to providing lunchroom supervision to special needs students, according to each school's needs.

Oakville trustee and board vice-chair Penny Siebert had voiced her preference to defer the matter until the December update report is submitted, a position agreed to by Burlington's Diane Leblovic, but others disagreed.

"If you have a policy on the books you either abide by it, rescind it before the school year begins on Tuesday, or we suspend it," said Burlington Trustee Lynda Schreiber.

Director of education Bob Williams noted the board's budget would supersede any policy that allows principals to come to the board for lunchroom supervision funding.

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