

Huisman not optimistic decision will favour him

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appear too optimistic about the chances of it being kept out permanently.

"This book was approved by the Halton Board of Education so it's really a regional matter, but I've been told this (in-school review) is the proper procedure so I had to go this route," said Mr. Huisman, who addressed committee members during the first meeting October 28, but did so under protest.

He talked for 45 minutes and was accompanied by fellow PACT members Rev. Campbell and Robert and Ruth Smith. "The majority of the committee members are paid employees of the school board, and among the same group of people who approved the book, so I think there's a definite conflict of interest here."

"I'm still hopeful that the book will be permanently removed, but right now I feel they're just going through the motions. If the in-school review comes out in support of *Foxfire*, we'll be able to take our concerns to the board, although I've been told it's highly unlikely they would overturn the decision."

Mr. Huisman also believes teachers are soliciting support for *Foxfire* from the student body, when in fact Ms Rankin and Ms Singleton agreed the students would not be involved in the review process.

"That's absolutely not true," responds Ms.

Singleton, who added discussions during in-school review meetings have been confidential.

One Halton trustee who has admitted opposition to *Foxfire* being read in the classroom is Oakville's Debbie Marklew, who said she foresaw a problem with the book when it was first brought forward as potential reading material.

While she knows of some trustees who did not read the book before approving it, she said she is not sure she was the only trustee who did read it — as Mr. Huisman says she relayed to him.

"All I said was that I was the only trustee who requested a copy of the book, which doesn't mean to say I was the only one that read it," said Ms Marklew, whose main objection to the novel deals with a particularly disturbing rape scenario. "Another reason I'm opposed to *Foxfire* is that it's loaded with profanity. If a student uses the F word with a teacher they are suspended and yet this book is being studied in the classroom. This is sending a double message to students."

Fellow Oakville Trustee Penny Siebert said

she's not sure if she in fact read the book prior to approving it, but says she has since read it and that decisions on acceptable reading material are often made on the basis of a staff rationale.

"This book is being studied in grade 12 and OAC classes, and I'm prepared to approve a lot for 17 and 18-year-olds," Ms Siebert said.

"Our list of signatures in opposition to *Foxfire* being taught in the classroom is growing each and every day, but the school board isn't taking us seriously," said Mr. Huisman.

School's out at Drury High School due to fire

By STEVE LeBLANC
Special to The Champion

E.C. Drury High School students aren't likely to forget this past Remembrance Day, after a garbage fire forced an evacuation and early end to classes.

Milton firefighters were on the scene at 1:36 p.m., Monday minutes after receiving a call that a pile of garbage bags was ablaze in the school's front entrance stairwell. The fire was discovered by custodian Andrew Szwed, who was quick to respond with a fire extinguisher and helped keep it contained until the fire department arrived.

"I had reduced it (the fire), but there were still

flames going when the fire department arrived," said Mr. Szwed. "There was some debris flying around as well. The garbage bags are placed near the front entrance by the weekend cleaning staff and normally picked up on Monday, but weren't this week because of Remembrance Day."

He added that he noticed a male figure exiting the building amid a cloud of smoke when he first discovered the fire. "The front part of the school is used as a smoking area by many students so I initially thought it was just some guy going out for a smoke. He was tall and wore a blue checkered coat and baseball cap."

Captain Don Stewart, who headed the fire

department response team, said the flames took only a few minutes to extinguish but that clear plastic burning caused toxic smoke, thus requiring his team to ventilate the building and send students home early. "The fire was contained to the front entrance stairwell area," he said.

Students within walking distance of the school were sent home immediately while bused students were organized outside until drivers could be notified and respond to the sudden change in schedule.

Principal Brenda Kearney commended Mr. Szwed's quick actions, which she said may well have prevented serious damage and saved lives. "He gets the gold star for the day," she said.

Laura Berry

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