

Trustee turf wars erupt over school closures

Board hears specific amendments to its Renewal Plan

By **TIM WHITNELL**
Special to *The Champion*

The public has gotten a glimpse into the mindset of some Halton public school board trustees on the subject of widespread changes.

At last Thursday's regular board meeting, several trustees forwarded specific amendments to the most controversial aspect of proposed radical changes found in the so-called Renewal plan — school closures.

Burlington Trustee Cheryl Craig submitted an amendment calling for the removal of Lakeshore Public School from the closure list. It is one of six elementary schools in the region that may be closed next September on the recommendation of the Accommodation report. Milton's Percy Merry is another.

Trustee Sandy Van Harten put forth a motion that added another eight elementary schools to the Accommodation debate.

Among the sites she mentioned were Martin Street of Milton.

"I have a lot of questions about a lot of schools with low enrolment right now. Why were they not mentioned in the school's report?" Ms Van Harten wondered. "We have not been able to question administration about this in public."

Vice-Chair Penny Siebert's motion referred to the future status of Aldershot High School. Since representatives of the Aldershot Family of Schools have apparently changed their minds, and now do not want grades 7 and 8 students put in the west Burlington high school, Ms Siebert suggested, if nearby Fairfield elementary is not closed, Aldershot H.S. should be closed.

Burlington Trustee Diane Leblovic countered with a motion calling for an investigation into the possibility of students at the overcrowded Waterdown High School coming to Aldershot to keep it a viable facility.

But if Burlington Trustee Lynda Schreiber gets her way, talk of closing any operating schools won't proceed. She put forth a motion calling for the closure of only the five non-teaching buildings operated by the board, sparing the six schools with students from the closure debate.

All of the trustees' notices of motions and amendments will be debated as early as the Dec. 9 special meeting on Renewal.

There are a bevy of public board meetings this month as Renewal enters the stretch drive and the election of the board chair and vice-chair looms. Here are the dates for the gatherings, all of which will be held at the board offices beside M.M.

Robinson High School on Guelph Line in Burlington:

Dec. 5 — School Programs/ Accommodation delegations, 7:30 p.m.;

Dec. 9 — First phase of trustees' debate on Renewal options, 7:30 p.m.;

Dec. 12 — Regular meeting; election of chair/vice-chair, 7:30 p.m.;

Dec. 16 — Renewal debate continued, 7:30 p.m.;

Dec. 19 — Possible final debate on Renewal and decisions, 7:30 p.m.

As well, trustees have a special Dec. 2 morning meeting with Halton Region's four members of provincial parliament to discuss education reform.



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