

# Audit released for separate school board

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A provincial audit of the York Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board showed areas where the board could increase its revenue and cut spending.

But the report released to the public by the board is far different from the actual report released from the office of the provincial auditor last winter.

The cited inconsistency between the official report and the board's interpretation is being used by separate school board trustee candidates as part of their campaigns. But the board said its summary was intended for internal use only and as a reference document by staff.

The provincial probe found "that purchasing procedures were not adequate, in particular the awarding of school bus contracts" and "some ministry grants were not spent for the purposes intended."

The audit, kicked off in November 1989 and lasting eight months, attributed much of the board's financial burden to the strain placed on the system by explosive growth in York Region where student enrollment has doubled since 1984.

Even so, auditors uncovered areas where improvements could save millions of dollars.

### ✓ PURCHASING

In checking 52 purchases from the 1988 and 1989 fiscal years to test for compliance with board policies, auditors reported staff did not comply with 27 and, additionally, staff did not document why price quotations were not obtained.

Public tendering was not done on 14 purchases over \$25,000, four of these computer purchases totaling \$335,000. The board summary states "concerns were expressed over the fact that some purchasing decisions were not documented sufficiently to demonstrate compliance with board policies."

### ✓ SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION

According to the auditor's report, the board did not award

busing contracts based on the lowest tendered prices. In fact, some tenders okayed were priced as much as 20 per cent higher than the lowest price.

Of the 823 routes, 83 were reviewed and if the board had given the contract to the lowest bid, \$55,000 would have been saved.

"The board did not award bus contracts based on the lowest tendered price," the board's summary states.

"The difficulty we have in tendering is we're dealing with seven bus companies," board spokesperson Don O'Shaughnessy said. He explained that tendering process could lead to the one company able to cover all routes in the region handing in the lowest tender which could effectively put other smaller companies out of business, therefore erasing any competitive bidding. The board chooses bus companies on based on their history of responsibility and vehicle maintenance. "It is a worthy investment for the safety of the children that the tender that may not be the lowest is contracted."

Overpayments to six bus companies from September 1989 to March 1990 was uncovered, totalling \$71,000 which the board was aware of in October 1989. As of March 1990, \$16,000 had been uncovered with a promise to recover the outstanding overpayments with interest.

The board's summary states "overpayments to six bus companies totalling \$71,000 were made by the transportation department." A board response says this error will not be repeated.

The audit found that \$380,000 could have been saved on seven bus routes by eliminating unnecessary buses that were not fully utilized. At a board meeting earlier this week trustees voted to implement an empty seat policy to make sure all seats on all buses are used.

### ✓ MINISTRY GRANTS

According to audit findings, ministry grants were not spent as approved.

In 1989, the board asked for \$791,000 for computers in elementary schools and \$266,000 for secondary schools. Instead, \$245,000 was spent on computers at the elementary level and \$812,000 at the secondary level.

If the ministry had received correct information, the board would have received \$400,000 less in grants. And of the 25 portables bought by the board in 1989, six were installed at schools not approved by the ministry, one of these at a school specifically declined by the ministry.

The board was not entitled to \$125,000 provided by the government for these six portables.

The board's summary states that ministry grants for microcomputers and the purchase of portables were not spent according to terms provided by the ministry.

The board said that in future, computer grants will be spent according to ministry guidelines.

The board said the portables were placed where needed to house students, and that the government formula for allocation of portables "is hopelessly outdated."

The areas of payroll transactions and the capital planning process did not receive negative reviews.

Comments by director of Education Frank Bobesich and Board chair Joseph Virgilio, on an information sheet attached to the board summary of the report, both give a positive impression of the provincial probe.

"I think we did well in this audit. As a matter of fact, I think it is a good report," Bobesich said.

"I am both satisfied and pleased with the audit," said Virgilio, a Markham trustee for the Milliken area.

He added that the areas needing improvement will be addressed. "It is a fair reports and we intend to use it in a constructive manner."

Almost all the areas cited to be deficient and inefficient have been addressed, O'Shaughnessy said.



Mayor Fran Sainsbury and Councillor Wayne Emmerson squared off at the Chamber of Commerce breakfast last Tuesday.

## Sour economic conditions force York Brick to stop producing line

Tough economic times are forcing York Brick to shut down part of its operations.

According to manager Mike Grace, a downturn in the construction industry is behind the move cease brick production.

A few employees will be laid off while others will be transferred to other plant operations at the Stouffville

facility.

"We're just stopping production of the brick line," Grace pointed out. An upswing in the economy could easily result in brick production being restarted, he added.

Production is scheduled to close down within the next two weeks.

## Emmerson, Sainsbury square off

There was little debate, but the heat was put on Whitchurch-Stouffville mayoral candidates last Tuesday at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce breakfast.

Held at Angie's in the Farmer Jack's plaza, the meeting between Mayor Fran Sainsbury, Councillor Wayne Emmerson attracted a crowd of 75 residents.

Following statements by the candidates, moderated by Chamber president Larry Rogalski, volleys of questions were lobbed at the two politicians, mostly concerned with the state of the economy in town.

Emmerson said it was disturbing that "Markham, Richmond Hill, Aurora and Uxbridge have prospered while Stouffville have depleted our growth in many areas."

Over-taxing was another concern

he said, and he would work to stabilize the business tax base.

He also pledged to upgrade roads in the town, and devote "good management practices" to the operations of the town.

He said he would meet with business leaders once a month and vowed to not bow down to regional council.

Sainsbury presented her platform based on her record.

She stated that Stouffville was not being taken seriously at the regional level where the town has one seat, and added someone with experience must maintain the position so as not to lose ground.

She noted that she has always shopped Stouffville and didn't even know the way to Tonawanda.

The mayor explained some of her past work and her immediate goals.

## Plant never contemplated

At the mayoral candidates breakfast Tuesday, candidates fielded questions on why Stouffville turned down a "million dollar pipe plant" to be built by Standard Aggregate. The plant is now being built across the town line in Uxbridge. Both candidates said the application to build the plant was never brought to council. However, Wayne Emmerson said there may be the possibility of Standard building two other plants in the town.

According to Brian Buckley, a spokesman for the company, the only reason the plant was located in Uxbridge was because it was the only parcel of land in the area with enough depleted land, a full 25 acres, to build the pipe plant.

Stouffville was not contacted because the company established the land was not suitable.

## Police seize drugs, money in Main St. bust

A Friday night drug bust at a Whitchurch-Stouffville house netted police marijuana, hashish and money.

Two residents were arrested by York Regional Police after a narcotics control act search warrant was carried out on Main St. Stouffville at 8:15 p.m. Oct. 25.

Police seized four ounces of hashish, six grams of marijuana,

a five foot marijuana plant as well as \$4,580 cash. A 26-year-old man received two narcotics possession charges and one for possession of drugs for trafficking.

A woman, 32, was charged with two counts each of narcotics possession and possession for the purpose of trafficking and a charge of living off the proceeds of crime.

## Candidates meet to address Ward 2 issues

(From page 2)

row," said Lyons. "You're not a hydrologist, or Merlin the Magician."

Sainsbury was grilled as to council's response to the Musselman Lake pollution problem.

One questioner asked her how she proposed to get assistance from the Ministry of the Environment when the ministry wasn't even aware of the problem until recently. Sainsbury replied that several viable solutions have been proposed, but that the cost factor had to be considered.

"Where are we going to get the money?" asked Sainsbury. "I have every hope (the problem) can be corrected. But

it's a 40-year-old problem. Just as we were pioneers in our dump fight, hopefully we can be pioneers in the Musselman Lake clean up." She warned though, that council had to be prepared to provide the same remedial treatment to all seven lakes within the boundaries of Whitchurch-Stouffville, and couldn't fix just one. Sainsbury responded to several questions regarding council's perceived inactivity by insisting council was doing the best they could, but that their hands were tied.

"Yes, we realize people are angry. But transfer payments from the province have been cut, and there's just not the money we require. But we have started

to fix things.

She added that only 21 cents out of every tax dollar stays in town. "You can't even buy a chocolate bar for 21 cents."

Sainsbury suggested the region was responsible for the lack of residential and industrial growth in town. With the region refusing to allow the town access to the Big Pipe, while at the same time scuttling potential industrial sites, the situation has become one of frustration, she said.

Emmerson echoed his campaign contention that he would use a more conciliatory approach when dealing with the region. "I feel I can work with the people at the region, not against them."

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