

Board gets 'F' grade from \$15,000 report

JULIE CASPERSEN
Staff Reporter

The York Region Board of Education finished the school year with a failing grade in communication.

A consultant was hired to find out what's wrong and what's right with communication inside the York Region Board of Education.

The responses "exposed a deep vein of cynicism about the board administration. Entire schools returned their forms unanswered in protest against the board's use of funds for an outside consultant," the report says.

"We needed experience and manpower and we wanted honest answers," said board spokesperson Ellen Chenux, defending the consultant's bill.

Despite the boycott by teachers at a Markham school, which the board would not name, 80 per cent of teachers replied. However, the majority of responses are not flattering and many centre on the substantial amount of paper used to communicate.

For \$15,000 the board learned teachers and secretaries don't feel they are consulted in spite of an onslaught of notes, memos and other pieces of information stuffed in their mailboxes.

"Despite the tidal wave of paper flowing into the schools and offices, too many people within the board voiced concern that they did not know much about how the board arrived at decisions or that

they were learning of major board decisions after the fact," said consultant Dan McEwen.

Areas of discontent cited by staff include:

- computer systems are not consistent school to school and cannot be integrated;
- schools want fax machines;
- staff feels it is not listened to and want the opportunity to express opinions;
- managers and administrators should meet high standards in communication skills before being promoted.

The report urges the board to become open and consultative, starting with trustees and senior management, including "full disclosure of all its policies and procedures concerning all facets of the operating of schools, employee relations (including employment agreements with all employees).

Director designate Bill Hogarth who joined the board July 1 regards the report as helpful in determining just where changes should be made, such as in the area of duplication of jobs and materials.

Hogarth said he has a very pro-active stance on communication both within and outside the board and would have reviewed the way people and departments communicate anyhow.

The report was received by trustees last month, and staff will review the findings and report back to the board in the fall.

A communication action plan has been tabled until October.



Ready and ripe

John Hall, an employee at Mangione's Strawberry Farm in Stouffville shows off baskets full of ripe strawberries. The berry picking season is in high gear with numerous farms open.

Hospital opens meetings to public

Starting this September, Markham Stouffville Hospital board meetings will be open to the public.

The meetings will be held in the hospital auditorium and times and date will be publicized in advance. Residents attending will have an opportunity to ask questions following the meeting.

"It is our intention to conduct as much board business as possible in the presence of those who are interested in attending," said chair Glenn

Crosby. He added some legal, patient and personnel matters will be dealt with in private sessions.

Felcher Park mail box location "makes sense" says Canada Post rep

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delivered with their mail earlier this week.

Craig said Canada Post had placed its mail boxes for service to the area on private lands at the plaza on a temporary basis until a permanent location could be found.

Placing the boxes in parks, right-of-ways and other public-owned lands are common in towns across the region, he said.

"This is no different than in many, many other instances. It makes sense to place the boxes on lands in parks. We have a mandate to deliver these peoples' mail," Craig said.

He said the area needed would amount to a 10-foot by 15-foot concrete slab to be situated along the fence-line of the three-acre park.

"This won't block the view of the park or hinder activities. Common sense dictates this," Craig said, adding the move would improve service to the area, making it more convenient and central to residents.

And Craig said the only people making conditions dangerous for children would be residents of the subdivision.

"This would not bring hundreds of cars from outside the subdivision. The only people using these boxes are neighbors in the area," Craig said.

Crawley told the crowd that nothing has been approved by staff yet and assured the residents that the location would be scrutinized carefully.

Public works director Paul Whitehouse said he doesn't understand why residents are kicking up such a fuss.

He said he didn't see a problem with the site, but added if residents are opposed, perhaps the plan would be re-assessed.

-Tracy Kibble

Crime

Man charged

A Whitchurch-Stouffville man who rolled his truck last month has been charged with drunk driving.

A driver was hospitalized following a June 6 crash on Bethesda Rd. near McCowan Rd. where he lost control of his GMC Jimmy. The eastbound truck hit the north shoulder of the road, veered into the oncoming lanes and flipped over, landing in the north ditch. The driver was tossed from the vehicle and suffered back and head injuries. He was alone in the truck.

York Regional Police charged a 48-year-old Rupert Ave. man July 6 with impaired driving and having a blood alcohol content over the legal limit.

Lumber stolen

Police are seeking public help to find the thieves who made off with \$70,000 worth of merchandise from a Gormley lumber store.

On June 24 between 6 and 10 p.m. thieves disabled the alarm at Ratcliff Lumber on Woodbine Ave. and smashed a hole in the door to get inside.

"The culprits virtually cleaned out the entire contents of the store," York Regional Police said. The goods were loaded into a 1989 GMC van with Ratcliff Lumber printed on both sides. Anyone with information is asked to call 887-5877, ext. 513 or Crime Stoppers at 222-TIPS.



Photo: LORI EMMERSON

Tasty treat

Taylor Bruce enjoys a tasty treat of dad Mark's strawberries and cream on Main Street Stouffville recently.

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