

Education

Moving not wise move: RC board

JULIE CASPERSEN
Staff Reporter

The decision to move into a \$22 million building while holding a \$35 million deficit was "not a wise one" for a York Region school board, concluded an investigative report.

The York Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board started planning in 1986 to amalgamate employees from three buildings under one roof. Administration and most trustees have long touted this as a money-saving initiative.

A fact sheet produced by the board in February 1992 said the move will not be made on the backs of ratepayers.

"This new facility will not result in any increase in the mill rate levied on the taxpayers or pose any further burden on the operating budget."

However, an independent review team that probed the board's books last month said the high annual lease cost of the new centre is contributing to the deficit to the tune of \$1 million a year.

Board chair Terry Ryan maintains the education centre is still beneficial.

"I don't agree that this was a mistake. There is significant benefit to the system of having everyone under one roof," Ryan said at a press conference last Thursday.

The board was counting on selling off properties in Richmond Hill and Gormley soon after the move in August.

The board was hoping to sell both for more than \$10 million, but the properties are still on the market.

The former headquarters in Richmond Hill is connected to St. Mary Immaculate Roman Catholic Church by a parking lot which was shared by the two buildings. The board recently obtained a zoning change to divide the Gormley site for easier sale.

The review team of two educational bureaucrats formed a plan to keep the near-bankrupt board afloat.

The men slammed the board for going ahead with plans to lease the new building in Aurora on a long-term basis.

"The decision was made at a time when the board already had a significant deficit on its books and the future did not provide any relief," he said.

"However, an examination of the lease contract does not provide any relief."

York University is occupying a portion of the new building on Bloomington Rd., paying the cost of maintaining its space, and the review team suggests the board find additional tenants to help pay the mortgage.

Trustee Lorenzo Rossi said the payment schedule has been "backloaded" for the first 12 years of the 30-year lease. "They're borrowing against the lease and increasing the length of the lease," he said. "The real payments

start in the 13th year."

Rossi said the problem started six years ago when the current administration took over and trustees became "rubber-stamping agents."

Rossi said the board approved his suggestion that a lawyer specializing in con-

tracts be hired to find a way to break the lease.

Rossi said he made the recommendation at a Dec. 7 meeting when trustees approved staff and program cuts totalling \$9 million and set a 1994 tax hike of at least seven per cent.

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3. Sister Act 2 (new)	★★	PG	Comedy	None	Mild	None
4. Geronimo (new)	★★★	PG-13	Adventure	Much	Some	None
5. A Perfect World	★★★	PG-13	Thriller	Much	Much	Some
6. The Three Musketeers	★★	PG	Adventure	Some	None	Mild
7. Adam's Family Values	★★★	PG-13	Comedy	Some	Mild	Mild
8. Carlito's Way	★★★	R	Thriller	Lots	Lots	Much
9. The Piano	★★★	R	Drama	Much	Mild	Lots
10. My Life	★★★	PG-13	Drama	None	Some	Mild

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- Sun., December 26** - "Statutory Holiday" service.
- Mon., December 27** - "Saturday" service.
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