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# Education

## Call to abolish school boards

A 36 per cent pay raise for Scarborough trustees has sparked talk of abolishing school boards.

Education Minister Tony Silipo criticized bureaucracy-heavy boards after the Scarborough board responded to public outrage after trustee voted themselves a 64 per cent pay hike by rolling it back to 36 per cent. Silipo is also considering of setting up a task force to delve into an overhaul of the education system.

York Region Roman Catholic Separate School board chair Terry Ryan said the provincial suggestion "gives a false impres-

sion that there's a cost saving" to cancelling school boards.

He admitted the board could survive with fewer trustees, but said there's a price to be paid with a move a centrally-governed system. According to Ryan, trustees provide local input and community involvement.

Ryan said beside the inflexibility of a provincially-run system, Catholics have the constitutional right to govern their own systems. "Bob Rae can't arbitrarily take that away. That's not negotiable."

Bill Crothers, chair of the York Region board of Education, said the issue was initially sparked by a dissatisfaction with the outcome of Canadian students on international tests, and implies that the fault lies with local board of education.

"There are an awful lot of people and parents who have concerns about the standard of education, but it's directed at the ministry, Crothers said, adding abolishing trustees "would be the roof.

Quality Education Network president Barb Smith said her watchdog group needs something in writing before commenting. "Anything to reduce bureaucracy is great, but at what expense?" Smith said yesterday from her home. "If parents have even less representation than now, then we're not going to be in favor."

She said she's "nervous" about any new ministry proposals in light of recent objectives that are currently shaking up the education system. "I'm a little skeptical considering what other government plans have been proposed."

Smith said at the very least, the ministry should take a stronger leadership role in the management of education. In 1988, York Region Board of Education trustees voted themselves a 45.8 per cent pay raise to boost salaries from \$12,342 to \$18,000. That same year, the Toronto Board of Education, with Silipo as a trustee, voted in an 86 per cent increase.

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