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Education

Parents, students to have say on sex-ed

By MIKE ADLER
 Staff Reporter

York Region's public school board will hand-pick a group of parents, students, and staff to be special advisors on sex education policy, a board official announced last week.

"We hear all your concerns and we are listening," Sharon Craigen, the board's new superintendent of curriculum, told concerned parents and students who crammed into the board's chamber in Aurora or were watching on closed circuit television.

Board teachers are not allowed to discuss abortion or sexual orientation with students, but changes — now in its second draft — are proposed which allow that above the

Grade 6 level.

But instead of starting this fall, Craigen announced, the board won't introduce any of its proposed policy changes to schools until April, 1997.

It will also appoint an advisory council of parents, teachers and students which will advise the committee responsible for the guidelines.

The advisors will represent all of the different views presented to the board, Craigen, who will chair its meetings, promised.

Craigen maintained all sides can still agree on a curriculum — once they get past their emotions. "We're looking for the same outcome," she insisted.

Such common ground was hard to see when board

trustees heard the latest delegations on the subject last Monday.

Parent Bert Walker said he and his wife have a traditional family, but added the couple also have a lesbian daughter. In saying so, Walker was responding to other parents who say discussing homosexuality in schools will threaten "traditional" beliefs in children.

Bill Kinney doubted this would lead students to make the right decisions. "Do you believe that sound, responsible decisions include choosing homosexuality and abortion as an alternative to family values?" he asked.

But Walker said his daughter is a lesbian because she was born that way.

"Nobody can be taught to be gay!" he insisted, wondering who would choose to be gay, even if they could, and face discrimination and abuse.

Walker said he never guessed his daughter wasn't straight until she was in her 20s, but by then it was too late to help her

through a difficult youth.

"Nobody wants you to teach homosexuality," he said, "they want you to teach understanding." He paused to shake hands with Conny Wong, Monica Tran, and Nur Muhammed-Ally, students

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Outdoor education centre planned

By CHARLENE McCUE
 Correspondent

A proposal for an outdoor education and training centre including a school, dining hall, sleeping accommodation, and infirmary will be presented tonight at a public hearing.

The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA), along with Trails Youth Initiatives (TYI), an educational camp for inner city youth, is undertaking the proposal as a joint venture on a long term lease basis. Located at Pangman Springs on Warden Avenue, the initial phase of the project will include a 40-seat dining hall

along with kitchen facilities, food storage, washrooms, lounge, office and a classroom for 20 people.

Also included are cabins for males and females, staff and cook cabins, an infirmary and a director's cabin. They hope to add on a school building to accommodate 120 individuals in about five or 10 years.

The proposal indicates LSRCA would benefit from reduced operating costs and could take advantage of the centre for research purposes and training workshops. As well, along with TYI, they could profit from renting out the centre to schools and other groups.

Mobility Transit expects good news

The 240 users of Whitchurch-Stouffville's Mobility Transit are expecting good news today (Tuesday). The agency which provides special taxi service is scheduled to receive a \$11,025 municipal grant to help offset the cost of the service.

Local council met today to hand out some \$43,640 earmarked for special groups.

Last year, the local transit group escaped the provincial government's funding cuts.

While some handi-transit groups were forced to alter services because of the provincial government's cuts, the province approved more than \$16,000.

Another year has passed. Now, Mobility Transit is waiting to find out what position the province will take for this year.

The total operating budget for Whitchurch-Stouffville Mobility Transit is about \$35,000.

Mobility Transit contracts a local taxi company to provide the service.

On average, clients make between 200 and 250 trips a month.

— Joan Ransberry



Happy Earth Day

Annabelle Nursery donated trees to Dickson Hill Public School for the school's Earth Day tree planting Monday. Here, Nina Vitopoulos and Trista Humfries prepare one of the trees for planting.

Photo: STEVE SOMERVILLE

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