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# Some say new school council rules overdue, others fear power struggles

BY GIANNI COLAVECCHIA  
Staff Writer

As much as he wants to believe new rules for school councils will eliminate problems between parents and principals, Dan Paluzzi has to be realistic.

The co-chairperson of Maple's Michael Cranny Elementary School council feels some principals in York Region will be threatened by a regulation that forces them to consult school councils on major issues.

"Some will respond to it and some will give it friction. There are some out there who would not have any input and run their own ship," Paluzzi said.

When school councils were first formed in 1996, there were no rules forcing principals to consult with parents on any issue.

In a move Tory MPP Frank Klees conceded was long overdue, the Ontario government has brought down a regulation that requires principals to consult with their school councils when carrying out a variety of tasks. Those include:

- Reviewing the suggestions of the Education Quality and Accountability Office, an independent body that ranks the results of province-wide tests for students;

- Implementing the government's code of conduct and deciding what criteria should be used to fill job vacancies left by principals and vice-principals.

Under the regulation, a principal will have to inform a school council — composed of parents and other community volunteers — how he or she took its advice into account in reaching a decision.



STAFF PHOTO/ROB ALARY

Dan Paluzzi, co-chairman of an elementary school council in York Region, thinks some principals might feel threatened by new provincial guidelines forcing them to consult councils on major issues.

For years, councils complained about an undefined mandate and regularly disagreed with principals over how individual schools should be run.

Parents such as Paluzzi say the regulation forces principals to be more accountable but does not set rules around the operation of councils or the interconnection between them and principals. Other parents fear the new regulation could lead to power struggles between principals and parents.

Marg Chenoweth, the former chairperson of Aurora's Light of Christ Catholic Elementary School council, believes the regulation is a bad idea.

"You don't want to set up, as some people have suggested, a power struggle

between parents and the administration of a school," the 45-year-old mother of two said. "I don't think that parents should be making these decisions."

Mary Cosentino, principal of Thornhill's St. Elizabeth Catholic High School, agrees the new rules create the potential for power struggles.

"Perhaps there is the odd time in which parents would want their own agenda to come forward," she said.

But Cosentino doesn't foresee the regulations causing widespread animosity.

"I don't think it's the same as in the olden days when principals used to rule the roost," she said. "We have to work with people."

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