

Dress code similar in all high schools: spokesperson

MDHS male students wear tank tops to protest rigid enforcement

BY JESSICA ROWLANDS
Special

The dress policy that sparked a protest at Markham District High School earlier this week is similar to those at secondary schools across the region, said a spokesperson for the York Region District School Board.

The code — which, on Tuesday, caused about 25 male MDHS students to wear girls' spaghetti-strap tank tops

and 50 to skip classes — is determined by each school.

But they are "virtually similar," said public affairs officer Ross Virgo.

MDHS vice principal John Tsourounis said, "We don't want to see bare midriff, backs, plunging necklines, and no underwear or bras exposed."

He noted students have not been punished for not complying, only given a T-shirt to cover up.

Such enforcement hasn't necessarily happened in the past, and Mr. Tsourounis believes this is why students found the change shocking.

He said while all points of view on the code will be heard, so far, "all feedback has been positive. I think they (the protesters) just wanted to communicate."

Grade 11 student Shae Ayerhart, 17, was pleased with the administration's openness but is "still unsure with how

this will play itself out".

Mr. Ayerhart organized the protest and noted he is not looking to change the dress code — he just wants less enforcement.

As a result of his action, Mr. Ayerhart assumes a suspension will be handed down. "But the cause is worth it," he noted.

Bill Crothers, chairperson of the York Region District School Board, said protests will not cause a change in policy because "there has to be some determination on what is acceptable".

To resolve this issue, Mr. Crothers explained there needs to be a discussion between the school council, the student council, the principal and staff to establish a what attire is acceptable.

"People want to dress comfortable on a hot day," maintained Mr. Ayerhart, adding there is no air conditioning in classrooms and wearing a tank top makes a significant difference.

"We understand it is hot in the main school," said Mr. Tsourounis. "But we don't want students to expose large amounts of skin."

Dress code protests will continue, according to Mr. Ayerhart, until there is a response from administration.

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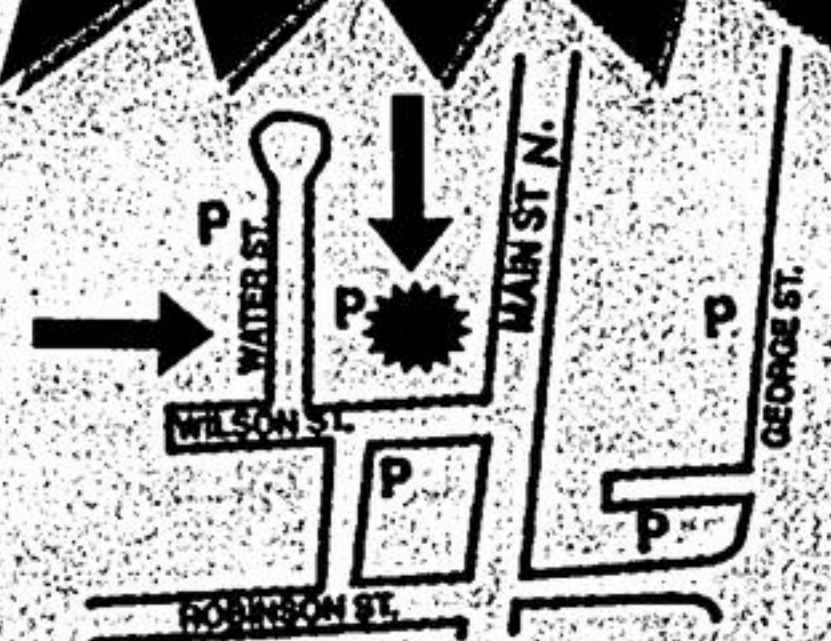
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