

Report shows parents want to be kept in education loop

BY CAROLINE GRECH
Staff Writer

Parents want their voices heard when it comes to their children's education.

That is the unmistakable message they sent to the Education Ministry earlier this year when asked about their role in their child's education. While school boards advocate parental involvement, how do educators draw the line between involvement and interference?

Education Minister Gerard Kennedy appointed a panel of 22 parent representatives this year to clarify parents' role in their children's schools. They filed a 31-page

report called the Parent Voice in Education Project.

Among the messages in the document is parents want their schools to keep them in the loop and allow them to share their opinions, including having a forum to give advice to the director of education. But while there are many ideas to get parents more involved, apathy could be the biggest problem in the system, said Heidi Kreiner-Ley, chairperson of the St. Theresa of Lisieux High School council, a Richmond Hill school.

"It's fine to ask for what they want, but when they are asked to help, parents have to realize they have to do the

work," Ms Kreiner-Ley said, adding that some nights she is up until 2 a.m. doing parent council work. "If no one is stepping up to the plate none of the good ideas get done."

While parents are more than willing to come to a monthly meeting, once tasks start to be delegated, interest in doing the work wanes, the Richmond Hill resident said.

Often one or two parents end up taking on all the work.

As a veteran of parent councils, Ms Kreiner-Ley believes parents have a positive impact on the school system, but they don't want to run the school.

There are, however, issues where parents want to get

involved. At St. Theresa, for example, the parent council helped choose a healthier menu for in the cafeteria.

One York Region principal has made a point of meeting weekly with parents.

Thornhill Public School principal Yvonne Gilinsky wanted parents, particularly those new to the country, to not only get information on what is going on at school, but also to become informed about the community.

"When parents know what's going on in a school, they're more involved and it makes school more important to the children," Ms Gilinsky explained.

But when personal issues

arise, it shouldn't be handled at a weekly meeting.

If there is a problem with a teacher, for example, Ms Gilinsky asks the parent to sort it out with the teacher first and if that doesn't work, it becomes a matter for the principal. And there are times when parents just have to step back.

"Parents need to take a back seat sometimes and parents sometimes want to protect their children from problems. If you keep solving problems for your kids, they don't have the resilience they need to solve problems in the future," Ms Gilinsky said. "We all want to protect our children from getting hurt but

we're not really doing them a service by dealing with the problems for them."

For Richmond Hill couple Nick and Veronica Martin, getting involved in their son's education is just as much a need as it is a want. Their son, Jory, is going into Grade 3 this year and is hearing impaired. While school officials have recognized he would benefit from an extra quiet hour at the end of the day to do his work, they can't provide the resources to allow this.

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Durham/York Residual Waste Study

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

TRANSPORTATION & WORKS DEPARTMENT

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regional Municipality of York seeks public input into a Study to find better ways to manage the waste remaining after diversion.

Residents are invited to attend one of three Public Workshops being hosted by York Region Transportation and Works Department to discuss and obtain input on how the public and stakeholders are to be consulted during the Environmental Assessment (EA) Study. This series of workshops is a follow-up to the two previous sets of workshops in which residents participated in discussions on how to choose a preferred waste disposal technology(ies) to manage post-diversion residual wastes and how to identify a preferred site for a long-term residual waste processing facility. The Region is conducting these workshops as part of the joint Durham/York Residual Waste Study and feedback obtained from residents will be used to develop an EA Terms of Reference.

Workshops will include presentations and opportunities for facilitated discussion. Interested residents are encouraged to register for one of the following Public Workshops:

Workshop Series 3

How should the public and stakeholders be consulted during the EA Study?

Tues., Sept. 13, 2005

York Region Administrative Centre
Newmarket
17250 Yonge Street
Seminar Room
Main Floor

Wed., Sept. 14, 2005

Town of Markham
Radisson Hotel
50 East Valhalla Drive
Boardroom #3
2nd Floor

Thurs., Sept. 15, 2005

City of Vaughan
Le Jardin Special Event Centre
8440 Highway 27
Versailles Room
Main Floor

Agenda: 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. Introduction/Presentation
7:30 p.m. - 9:15 p.m. Workshop
9:15 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. Workshop Wrap-Up

- Best ways of informing the public about the Study
- Best ways to gather feedback from the public on the Study
- Participants in the study - who should participate?
- Methods of enhancing public participation in the Study

Public Information Sessions on the Draft EA Terms of Reference to follow on October 18th, 19th and 20th, 2005.

The exact times and locations to be announced at a later date.

To register call Teresa Liu at:
905-830-4444 ext. 5724 or email: teresa.liu@york.ca

Regional Municipality of York Transportation and Works Department

17250 Yonge Street, Newmarket, Ontario L3Y 6Z1
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