

PUBLIC INPUT INTO THE 2014-2015 OPERATING BUDGET

Presentations or written submissions are welcome

WHEN: During the Regular Board Meeting on Tues., May 27, 2014 or Tues., June 17, 2014 at 7 p.m.

WHERE: Catholic Education Centre, 320 Bloomington Road West, Aurora

HOW: To register to speak or arrange to submit comments, call 416-221-5051 or 905-713-1211, ext. 13615, or email marysolimine@ycdsb.ca, by May 16, 2014.

Budget information is available at www.ycdsb.ca

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COMING UP: CEO addressing prayer breakfast

Prisoner advocates bring offenders, victims together

BY SANDRA BOLAN
sbolan@yrmg.com

Justice is not punishment and vengeance leads only to the ill health of the victim and community, according to Prison Fellowship Canada.

The organization's CEO and executive director, Stacey Campbell, will speak at this year's Whitchurch-Stouffville Prayer Breakfast, May 15 at Station Creek Golf Club in Gormley.

Prison Fellowship Canada is an interdenominational organization that seeks to bring reconciliation into the lives of prisoners, offenders, victims and their families.

"We are very much for incarceration," Ms Campbell said. However, "we warehouse people until these people are released."

But restorative justice and rehabilitation are needed.

"They are coming back to our community. How do we want them? Personally, I want them rehabilitated," she said.

Part of that process involves fellowship volunteers working with inmates to take responsibility for their life choices and to get to the root of what got them imprisoned in the first place.

"It's not informational work. It's transformational," she said.

Recidivism is approximately 70 per cent, but when inmates participate in Prison Fellowship Canada programs while incarcerated and following their release, it drops to between 10 and 20 per cent, Ms Campbell said.

Since 2010, Ms Campbell has been working with the inmates at Vanier Centre for Women in Milton and Kitchener's Grand Valley Institute for Women.

Prior to venturing into these correc-

tional facilities, Ms Campbell admitted she had some trepidation and the preconceived notion "these people deserve to be where they are" and they got there because they were irresponsible, socially inept, violent and selfish.

'They are coming back to our community. How do we want them? Personally, I want them rehabilitated.'

Once she went inside, Ms Campbell realized these women got where they were because they were simply trying to feed and clothe their children the only way they knew how because that's how their mothers did it.

"There are people in jail who had good parents but not the majority," she said.

Part of the rehabilitative process also includes working with victims of crime.

Prison Fellowship Canada is conducting a pilot project in which the offender and victim come face to face, in a controlled environment. This not only helps the offender understand the impact of his or her crime, but it aids in the victim's healing, she said, noting the mediated session are always initiated by the victim and move at their pace.

In New Zealand, no prisoner is released without first going through this program, she said.

Tickets to the 13th annual Whitchurch-Stouffville Prayer Breakfast are \$20 each and available at Candlelight and Memories or by calling 905-642-3632.

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