

TO: Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board

TOPIC: **Notice of Motion – Trustee Letter to Editor**

INITIATOR: Verna Shackleton, Trustee / Equity and Diversity Committee
Chairperson

BACKGROUND

1. On Wednesday, February 13, 2008, a letter from Trustee Gordon Gilchrist was published in the Port Hope Evening Guide (Appendix A). Although Trustee Gilchrist did not sign the letter as a Trustee of the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, in the eyes of the community and public, there is no distinguishable difference.

STATUS

2. In sending this letter to the Port Hope newspaper, Trustee Gilchrist has been in direct violation of items under two specific policies, Board Policy No. B-3.2, Equity and Diversity, and Board Policy No. ES-3.10, Ethnocultural Equity and Anti-racism.

Board Policy No. B-3.2, Equity and Diversity (Appendix B), includes the following items:

- The Board's aim is to create a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of each person.
- Principles of Equity
 - valuing diversity
 - inclusiveness
- It is the desire of the Board to achieve equity and to eliminate stereotyping and its inherent effects.
- Equity and Diversity Objectives
 - to provide students with positive role models and to eliminate the perpetuation of stereotypes
 - to liaise with the diverse community that the Board serves including, but not limited to aboriginal/native and racial/ethnic communities.

Board Policy No. ES-3.10, Ethnocultural Equity and Anti-racism (Appendix C), includes the following items:

- In accordance with Ministry of Education and Board policies and procedures and the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board makes a clear commitment to recognize and value cultural and racial diversity.
- It is the policy of the Board to promote harmony and respect among students, staff and the community it serves . . .
- The Board acknowledges the systemic nature of racism . . .

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- Recognizing that silence promotes racism, the Board “will not condone and refuses to ignore” any expression of racial, ethnic and/or religious bias in any form by its students, employees and trustees.
 - It is based on the recognition that racism exists in the system because it exists in society, which includes all aspects of our school communities.
 - Ethnocultural Equity and Anti-racism Policy Rationale
 - The measure of racism is its impact on individuals rather than the intent of individuals, although intention is important in defining consequences of behaviour and/or strategies for addressing racism.
 - Racism can be conscious as well as subconscious and is a learned behaviour.
 - Action against racism is the responsibility of everyone. There is a need to address the systemic elements of institutionalized racism.
 - The Board recognizes that achieving equity is an evolving process of introspection, understanding, critical analysis and action.
3. Trustee Gilchrist has acted contrary to the approved vision and values of our Board (Appendix D) as follows:

Our Vision

We are a dynamic and responsive educational community that inspires joy in learning, excellence in teaching, and the development of character. We respect the diversity and uniqueness of all learners, employees, and community members. We create pathways for success in life.

Our Values

- We value equity, diversity, inclusiveness and the dignity and humanity of each individual in our policies, practices, programs and interactions.
 - We are accountable to the public we serve.
4. Trustee Gilchrist’s letter does not demonstrate the character traits that have been duly approved and adopted by the Board of Trustees: respect, fairness, empathy and integrity (Appendix D).
5. Trustee Gilchrist has demonstrated conduct unbecoming of a trustee by his words and is therefore in violation of Board Policy No. B-1.2, Code of Conduct (Appendix E), Sections 3.2, 3.3.1 and 3.3.3, and is subject to censure by the Board of Trustees (Appendix F).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Trustee Gordon Gilchrist of the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board be censured for conduct unbecoming of a trustee, and by violating policies of the Board and being in direct contradiction of the values of the Board.

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2. That Trustee Gordon Gilchrist of the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board be removed from the Expulsion Committee as a result of violation of policies of the Board, and as a result of same, his perceived inability to make judgements without prejudice.
3. That the Notice of Motion – Trustee Letter to Editor Report, dated February 28, 2008, be received for information and action.

Verna Shackleton
Trustee / Equity and Diversity Committee Chairperson