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121st Year - No. 17

Wednesday, October 19, 2022

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Wind gust blows through Taste of Valley



Saturday's high winds and torrential rain created havoc for the outdoor vendors at the Taste of the Valley in Cobden as canopies flew across the lot, tents collapsed, and products were scattered everywhere. No one was injured, although some producers had their products scattered and damaged, forcing some to go home early. For more, see Page A11.

Board official wants report on students who identify as animals

By Leader Staff
Eganville – There may not be litter boxes in some schools across Renfrew County, but there are several students who identify themselves as animals, according to the vice-chair of the Renfrew County District School Board.

"That is not a secret," David Kaiser said on Monday. "It is known throughout the board we do have students who identify as animals."

There has been a great deal of interest – and backlash on both sides of the issue – in the last several weeks since a letter was published in the *Leader*, expressing concern about "seven children in the Renfrew public school system who identify as animals."

"Details are hard to find, but it has been confirmed that one student

identifies as a frog in one public school and another public school has a litter box in the washroom for a student who identifies as a cat," the letter writer, Rae Stanley of Barry's Bay, wrote.

In response, the school board issued a joint release last week with the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board denying there were litter boxes in the schools.

"Please know that the Renfrew County District School Board (RCDSB) and the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board (RCCDSB) do not have, and have never had, litter boxes in any of our elementary or secondary sites.

"Further in the provincially-mandated collection of demographic data, questions of identity are specific to gender," the release stated.

"We do not collect any data regarding animal identity, and we do not recognize such identities.

"The RCDSB and the RCCDSB recognizes, values, accepts and nurtures all students and staff regardless of their gender identity or expression," the release concluded.

Following the statement from the school boards, the original letter writer again reached out, again confirming there are students who identify as animals in area schools. Mr. Kaiser confirmed this as well to the *Leader*, although he did note he felt the issue was being sensationalized.

"This is a controversial issue," he noted. "Our board is being transparent but the privacy of these students is very important."

He also confirmed there was a request to provide a kitty litter box

in one school, but the request was denied by the board.

He said he did disagree with some comments which have been attributed to him about the issue of students identifying as animals.

"I have never implied that there is 'more to this issue'," he said. "Only that I was informed there were seven students in the county who have self-identified as animals."

While the board is being transparent about this issue, he said to protect the privacy of these students no further information is being divulged.

Mr. Kaiser is requesting a report on this situation so the board has some facts as well as to know what procedures the board had in place to deal with the situation.

"We need our equity and inclusivity officer to report to the board,"

he added.

There is a difference of opinion on how this should be handled, he admitted.

"The kitty litter was a rumour," he stressed.

Mr. Kaiser said while he has heard from two individuals and the media on this issue, he has not spoken to any concerned parents.

"My last point, and I have shared this with my board colleagues, is that I do believe that these students need some type of support from the board," he said. "However, before we can get to this point, we need to better understand why this is occurring and how the board is currently dealing with students."

Board meetings are open to the public and he said he hoped the equity and inclusivity officer would report

to the board this fall, although he did not know the date this would happen.

Mr. Kaiser, who was just acclaimed to the board, has 22 years of experience as a trustee.

None Identified In Catholic Board

Bob Schreder, chair of the Renfrew County District Catholic School Board, said the board is not aware of any student who attends Catholic schools in Renfrew County who may identify as an animal.

"I am also aware that we do not collect any data regarding animal identification and do not recognize such identities," he said. "The Renfrew County Catholic District School board is an inclusive Catholic learning community called to love unconditionally and educate the hearts and minds in the way of Christ."

NAW ballots are not being misdirected due to postal code

By Debbi Christinck
Staff Writer
Eganville – Some eagle-eyed North Altona Wilberforce (NAW) ratepayers noticed an apparent discrepancy in the postal code for their mail-in ballots and were concerned enough to notify the township and the *Leader*, fearing their ballots would go astray.

However, NAW Clerk-Treasurer Michelle Mantifel confirmed the ballot return envelopes were printed correctly and are coming in steadily.

"Because we are doing business reply mail that is the postal code that has to go there," she explained.

Some township ratepayers were troubled to see the unknown postal code K0J 9Z9 for the return of the

ballots to the township mailing address on Shaw Woods Road, which normally has the K0J 1T0 postal code. A search for K0J 9Z9 showed there is no such postal code listed. All K0J postal codes are in the smaller Renfrew County communities and rural areas in the county.

Ms. Mantifel noted if people look above the bar code on the return printed envelope, the K0J 1T0 is there. She stressed the ballot is reaching the township office the way it should and the post office is able to deliver them properly.

"That is the way we had to do it," she confirmed.

As well, ballots were coming in at a steady pace to the township on Monday morning, a week before the

election. Some people are mailing them in and others dropping them off. On Wednesday the township will start the process of opening the outer envelope with the declaration form and checking those names on the voters list.

Former NAW councillor Dave Plumb was one of the individuals who was very troubled to see the ballots with the wrong postal code on them. Although retired from politics, he still maintains a keen interest in the municipality and did not want to see any ballot misdirected, he said.

"I'm just very concerned the election process will work the way it is supposed to work, and it is fair to everybody," he said.

While ballots which are hand delivered to the township office would be fine and perhaps even ones mailed locally, he questioned what would happen to ballots mailed from even somewhere as close as Ottawa.

In his own case, he was not aware at first when he received the ballot there was anything wrong, he added.

"It was brought to my attention," he said. "I had not noticed it."

Mr. Plumb said with two people running for mayor and five people running for the four councillor seats, people want to have their votes count. As well, the last election had a recount and a request for a second recount because of the closeness of the result for two candidates for council.

"I don't want to see a repeat of what happened last time," he said.

As far as his own ballot, he made sure it was delivered, he noted.

"I dropped it off at the township office," he said.

Election Night In NAW

Ms. Mantifel said the only way people can vote this election is through the mail-in ballots. Those who received the mail-in ballots should already have them in the mail last week to ensure they will arrive in time to be counted.

While NAW is not having a traditional poll as in the past, people have until 8 p.m. on Monday, October 24, to drop off their ballots at the township office. She said ballot counting at the office will begin then.

"The secrecy envelopes will be opened on election night," she said.

As in the past election, the Golden Lake Community Centre will be open for candidates, family and friends to see the election results coming in. The ballots will be counted at the township and staff at the community centre notified as the ballots are counted. Results will be posted throughout the evening.

Township Name Wrong

Admaston/Bromley Township is also using the mail-in ballot system and on the return address, Admaston is spelled Adamston. However, that will not affect the return of ballots in the mail since the 911 address is correctly shown.

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