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# Book not a closed case

■ By Tim Whitnell  
SPECIAL TO THE BEAVER

A veteran Halton Catholic school board trustee says he hasn't read *The Golden Compass* and will wait to see what a staff committee review of it produces, but a former teacher is outraged by its temporary removal from schools.

Burlington trustee Bob Van de Vrande said he hasn't read the book, but isn't jumping to any conclusions about its merits as an educational tool.

"As is appropriate, this is normally handled at a staff level for review. We have a committee to do that and if anything further is rec-

ommended it would come to the trustees," for possible removal from the approved reading list.

"We encourage open discussion and debate, but at an appropriate age level. If, and I emphasize if, it is something that is inappropriate because the students haven't received enough training or education to be able to do their own critical analysis of it, then it may be appropriate that it not be presented at that level."

The head of the Halton-Peel Humanist Community, a non-theistic, non-religious group, says she hasn't read *The Golden Compass*, but doesn't like the position taken by the Halton Catholic school

board to review its use.

"I can't tell you how angry I am," said Oakville's Elka Ruth Enola, president of the Halton-Peel Humanist Community.

"I was a teacher and one of the reasons I taught in the public system was because I have a strong conviction about freely accessible public education. I didn't care what the kids thought, I cared about how they thought — if they had critical thinking skills. That's why I always had (student) debates," said the retired elementary and high school educator who taught in Montreal and North York.

■ See Humanist page 13

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