

Weekend emailing to be reduced at Peel Board

By Bill Rea

Some new restrictions are in place on the emails Peel District School Board teachers and staff get from their superiors, but board officials are stressing they won't be too rigid.

The aim is to allow employees more down time over weekends.

Trustee Stan Cameron reported Director of Education Tony Pontes had discussed it with the Board.

Caledon's representative on the Board also stressed there will be no change in the way parents and students are able to send emails to teachers now.

The plan now is to prevent principals from sending emails to vice-principals over weekends, or from vice-principals to teachers or from managers to staff, etc. These restrictions will be in place from 6 p.m. Fridays until 7 a.m. Mondays.

The idea, Cameron said, is to allow them to have their weekends.

He added there was no call for this, but it reflects the idea of helping balance their work and family life.

He added exceptions will be allowed in an emergency, or if the email is urgent.

"This is a move, a decision out of the Director's office to help people balance things a bit during the school year," Cameron commented, adding it should have no impact on parents or students. "I think it's a very good idea."

Pontes commented this is not unique to Peel.

He added the advances in technology for things like emails have proven helpful. But he said the downside is the presence of hand-held devices means people are never far from work.

Pontes said a superintendent might send an email to a principal, or a principal send one to a teacher when there is no real urgency.

"There is still a sense of pressure," he said, adding the person receiving the message can get the feeling that something needs to be done right away. "It creates anxiety."

"Let people be with their families and friends," he said. "Let them rejuvenate."

Pontes also said this is being put in place on a six-month trial. If it seems to be working he said it will continue. If not, it can be revisited.