

January 2009 Student Trustee Report

Vithushan Jeyakumaran

STUDENT TRUSTEE REPORT

At this time, Student Trustee Vithushan Jeyakumaran made the following remarks.

“Good evening Madame Chair, Mr. Director, Trustees, Staff, Ladies, and Gentlemen:

In the secondary school environment, the month of January is arguably the busiest month in the school year. Students must prepare for exams and teachers must write and mark these exams. Students in the twelfth grade must also prepare their applications for university or college. Administrators have to organize the exam schedules and enforce sound, fair examinations. For the majority of the secondary schools that operate by semester, students have to ensure their timetables have the right courses. As a Student Trustee, I have to look for change in the system, and I have to be cynical. However, the month of January demonstrated to me how difficult it is to find things wrong with our system, and it indirectly expressed to me how great our education system really is. In the case of January, there is one often-forgotten group of people who keep the show running; the guidance departments.

Every secondary school has, on average, four or five guidance counselors. During the past month, these four or five brave individuals have to assist hundreds of students with their university or college applications while ensuring that every single student has the courses they need and want in the next semester. Furthermore, many schools' guidance counselors have to visit feeder schools to make a presentation about course selection and high school in general. So before I continue, I'd like to call for a round of applause to all of the guidance counselors whose efforts are sometimes overlooked.

Next, I'm going to talk to you about the system of exams. Currently, a majority of schools enforce an exam system that maximizes efficiency during the first two or three of the five exam days. This way, students can, for the most part, finish their exams earlier, and can have more time to recuperate. However, this system takes quite a toll on student performance during exams. In my case, I had four exams, Politics, Chemistry, Physics and Calculus in three days, the last two being on the same day, one after another.

We discussed this at the last York Region Presidents' Council meeting, and many students expressed the same dissatisfaction with the examination system. However, the representative from Langstaff Secondary School expressed his satisfaction with his school's exam system. The system at Langstaff, which is

also being introduced shortly to Milliken Mills High School and Thornhill Secondary School, sets each exam day as the exam for the corresponding period during the day. For example, day one of examinations would consist of period one examinations only, and so on. Both systems have their benefits and pitfalls, and Ariya and I will be conducting further research to examine the satisfaction of the students, teachers, and administrators with each system.

If anyone has any comments regarding the exam system, please do not hesitate to talk to or email Ariya or myself after the meeting. Examinations are a pivotal part of the education and evaluation processes, and through the inspection of our exam process, we can further strive for betterment.”

Director of Education B. Hogarth thanked Student Trustee V. Jeyakumaran for his insightful comments.