

SCORA

Southwest Central Oakville
Residents Association

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May 2, 2011

Chair Alice Anne LeMay
Halton Catholic District School Board

Re: Parking Lot Lights at St. Thomas Aquinas Secondary School

This is a request that you implement more sensitive management of parking lot lights at St. Thomas Aquinas in the interest of both environmental and fiscal responsibility and the well being of the neighbourhood.

- a) That parking lot lights be turned off on weekends and holidays when the school is not in use.
- b) That on other nights when there are no (or low- attendance) activities at the school, parking lot lights be controlled by zones with the more distant higher-intensity poles near neighbours turned off.

Lights operation has not been consistent over the past couple months which is understandable during startup mode. Lately all parking lot lights have been on until midnight Monday to Friday in spite of the fact that very few, if any, cars are parked at the school after 7pm. When a few cars are present in the evening they are usually parked close to the building. While lights have been off most weekends during March and April, they have been on over the past two weekends, including the long Easter weekend (Friday to Sunday), in spite of the fact that the school and parking lot were empty. (see picture attached)

HCDSB is sensitive to the environment according to a news release in 2010: "*The Halton Catholic District School Board is firmly committed to environmental stewardship in all of our educational programs and activities. This initiative complements other environmental programs that our Board is undertaking to mitigate our impact on the environment and to reduce the energy footprint of our own facilities. It teaches all of us that by working together we can and do make a positive difference.*" (says Giacomo Corbacio, the Board's Superintendent of Facility Management Services. March 26, 2010 Press release with Union Gas)

HCDSB was a significant contributor to the development of the Ontario Eco-School Energy Conservation Guide. A key tenet of this guide in the Lights and Equipment section was to ensure "Lights are turned off when not required. If students and staff in 1000 classrooms turned off their lights for three hours per week the school board would save \$5,618 per year and reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by 44 tonnes.* <http://www.google.ca/search?q=hcdsb+and+electric+energy+conservation+projects+&hl=en>.

We ask that you apply these same commitments in the operation of the parking lot lights at St. Thomas Aquinas and send a message to your students that you practice what you advocate.

In addition the impact of needless light pollution on the environment, there are significant health implications to the neighbourhood that should be considered. Artificial light has been found to affect animal and human behavior and biochemistry. Darkness cues our bodies to perform repairs after a strenuous day. Without a dark period of several hours our physical and mental well-being are affected. Intrusive lighting also reduces the production of melatonin, a beneficial hormone related to the rates of breast and other cancers. More progressive cities are initiating programs to protect of our dark skies. We ask that HCDSB take a leadership role and likewise review its operational practices in this regard.

To date the only response we have had from your board to our neighbourhood concerns is the following statement: *“The board’s electrical engineering consultant is in the process of certifying that the conditions of site plan approval with regard to the school’s lighting have been satisfied. The board will be providing that certification to the Town of Oakville as confirmation of compliance.”* This basically says to us that you have the right to build to site plan specification and that you will do so apparently regardless of any concern for or impact on the neighbourhood. Your words and action have not been that of an organization that stands for compassion and a love of neighbours.

We would welcome an opportunity to meet to discuss ways to mitigate the impact of these lights on the neighbourhood specifically through the hours of operation, zone lighting, and ways to eliminate direct glare light trespass from fixtures to adjacent homes.

We ask that you be a community leader by exercising your stated environmental stewardship.

Yours sincerely

Charles Johnston
President – SCORA
Southwest Central Oakville Residents Association
905 849 4850

Cc: Board members: Pauterm@hcdsb.org; vianae@hcdsb.org; lemaya@hcdsb.org; maraip@hcdsb.org; corbaciog@hcdsb.org; dankoa@hcdsb.org; iantomasia@hcdsb.org; mattersj@hcdsb.org; Vandevrandeb@hcdsb.org; palmierir@hcdsb.org; kosos@hcdsb.org; hermanj@hcdsb.org; dalyp@hcdsb.org; info@scora.ca