

**DECISION OF THE INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE
OF THE ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TEACHERS
IN THE MATTER OF**

**A COMPLAINT SUBMITTED BY THE REGISTRAR
REGARDING SARAH KATARINA HARPER**

PANEL: David Somer, Gord Hough, Iain Munro

On June 5, 2003, the Ontario College of Teachers (the "College") received notification from the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board, (the "Board"), about its employee, Ms Sarah Katarina (Beth) Harper, (the "member"), pursuant to s. 43.2 (2) of the *Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996*.

During the school year 2002-2003, the member accepted the responsibility for organizing the Grade 8 year-end trip to Toronto and fundraising activities required to finance the trip.

At the request of the school principal, a parent, who is an accountant, inspected the records in late April 2003, and produced a financial statement, which he believed to be incomplete due to missing information.

When confronted with discrepancies in the information gathered, the member tried to avoid responsibility for the missing funds by saying that she had paid for events and that refunds would be difficult to obtain. The principal made contact with the various venues regarding refunds, and discovered that the member had not paid for the events, as she had indicated. When confronted with this information, the member made reimbursement to the fundraising account.

During the first week of May 2003, cheques for \$4,700.00, \$855.00 and \$692.00 were drawn on the account of the member. Further, the member made an additional payment in the amount of \$860.00, subsequent to the Board's investigation.

In total, the member repaid \$7,107.00 to the fundraising account. The Board accepted the member's resignation effective May 22, 2003.

On August 5, 2003 the complaint against the member was assessed as suitable for the College's Dispute Resolution Program. On August 6, 2003, the parties indicated that they were amenable to participating in dispute resolution.

In November 2003, the parties signed a Memorandum of Agreement (the "MOA"), which, in their opinion, resolved the issues raised by the complaint. The MOA is attached for the consideration of the Investigation Committee.

Allegations

The Registrar alleges that Sarah Harper, while employed by the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board, acted unprofessionally, in that she misappropriated funds raised by students, designated to finance a grade 8 year-end trip, or removed funds from the grade 8 trip account without authority and for her own purposes.

Documents Considered by the Committee

- Request for Ratification
- Board's notification letter
 - Confidential Personnel Report to the Director of Education
 - Copy of status update of trip
- Letter from C.A. Beaudoin to the Manager of Intake and Hearings, dated June 12, 2003 re: enclosing board information
 - Copy of C.A. Beaudoin's notification letter
 - Letter from C.A. Beaudoin to the member, dated May 28, 2003 re: record of employment
 - Page 2 of Minutes - In-Committee Board Meeting, dated May 14, 2003
 - Letter from Sarah Harper to Dr. Cecile Somme, dated May 22, 2003 re: letter of resignation
 - Letter from Cecile Somme to the member, dated May 26, 2003 re: acknowledgment of receipt of resignation
 - Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board - Policy - Fundraising in Schools
- Memo from the Registrar to the Investigations and Hearings Co-ordinator, dated June 27, 2003
- Request to Initiate Investigation - Registrar
- Letter from the Registrar to Sarah Harper dated July 4, 2003
- Memo - Telephone conversation with member
- Letter from the member's lawyer to Peter Jordan dated July 18, 2003 re: Complaint of the Registrar & Chief Executive Officer
- Memorandum of Agreement signed by the parties

Decision of the Committee

On December 19, 2003, a panel of the Investigation Committee considered this complaint and, in accordance with the provisions of 26(5)(d) of the *Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996*, the

Investigation Committee ratified the attached Memorandum of Agreement. This is based on the opinion of the committee that the terms of this Agreement resolve the complaint in the public interest.

David Somer

Gord Hough

Iain Munro