

Student progress reports may be done Elementary teachers reach deal with Province

By Tim Whitnell
Metroland Media Group

Ontario's public elementary teachers Monday agreed to a tentative contract at the central bargaining table with the provincial government and the public school boards' association.

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) has told its members to suspend work-to-rule action in light of a tentative agreement that has been reached with the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) and the government.

ETFO members have been without a contract since Aug. 31, 2014. ETFO represents 78,000 elementary public school teachers, occasional teachers and education professionals including about 2,900 in the Halton public board.

"This round of bargaining has been exceptionally lengthy and difficult but in the end we achieved a tentative agreement that ETFO believes is fair

and meets the needs of our members," ETFO President Sam Hammond said in a late afternoon press release.

An ETFO all-member vote on the tentative agreement among teachers and occasional teachers will be conducted, with the results of that vote expected in mid-November.

Many public school boards in Ontario weren't producing student progress report cards in November as part of job sanctions, but ETFO's Halton chapter president Marg Macfarlane said her members would be filling out marks and levels and submitting them to the board.

However, the Halton District School Board issued a letter to parents Monday saying ETFO wasn't producing report cards.

In light of the tentative deal with the province, Macfarlane said Monday, "We are waiting for direction from ETFO Provincial about what is expected now," in terms of report cards.

Chong embraces new power role given to MPs as new term begins

By Kathryn Boyle
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The House of Commons has seen some big changes and more are on the way.

With the Liberal party taking a majority at the Oct. 19 election, Conservatives shifted into the role of Opposition. Now, interim leaders for each party are being discussed, and Halton Hills Member of Parliament (MP) Michael Chong isn't interested in taking on that role. As for party leadership, Chong wouldn't disclose his decision.

"We'll have to wait and see," he said. "Right now, I'm just focused on these Reform Act rules and making sure the 338 members of Parliament understand them and brace them in a way to strengthen our democracy."

According to Chong, the new rules under the Act, which he spearheaded through Parliament last term in a Private Member's Bill, include MPs for each party voting on adopting four



MP MICHAEL
CHONG

important aspects to running a stronger government.

"It's a real opportunity for us to rebalance power in Ottawa," Chong said. "It's no secret that in recent years, power has become unduly concentrated in party leaders, particularly the Prime Minister's Office, and this is the first time in generations that MPs will have the opportunity to rebalance that power and strengthen people's representation in the House of Commons."

MPs would receive power in deciding the following: who gets to expel an MP from a party or caucus, who selects the caucus chair, the decision on the formal procedure for MPs to review and remove any party leader, including the Prime Minister, and the election of an interim leader should

the party leader leave the position by removal, death or resignation.

"These are significant powers and I hope the MPs from all party caucuses embrace these newly found powers as a way to strengthen the people in the House of Commons," Chong said.

As for the next four years, now being in the role of Opposition, Chong holds the values of Halton Hills residents at heart and to work towards keeping the majority government transparent.

"First and foremost, to represent the people of Halton Hills in the House of Commons," Chong explained. "Make sure that their views are being heard in the House of Commons and to make sure their interests are being represented."

"My other goal is to serve as the Official Opposition in the House of Commons. Being an MP is not just about serving a government as a minister, but it also involves holding the government accountable."

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