

Declining enrolment problem

Declining enrolment in future years in Halton region may make it necessary and economical to bus students to schools in order to utilize existing facilities, according to Robert J. O'Brien, chairman of the Halton Separate School Board.

In an inaugural address to the Board, Tuesday, Jan. 31, Mr. O'Brien stated the problem of declining enrolment appears to be some years in the future "for our Board... but if the situation occurs the Board may well find it more economical to make use of existing facilities by means of busing."

In his review of 1977, he noted several projects accomplished by the Board, including the commencement of construction on St. Peter's School, Woodward Ave., Milton.

The school scheduled to be completed by September 1978 will relieve overcrowding at Holy Rosary, and provide a school for many students within walking distance of their homes.



ROBERT J. O'BRIEN

The first Catholic High School in Halton area was opened in the school formerly known as St. Joseph's in Burlington, in September with 265 grade 9 students in attendance, O'Brien said.

While the school provides adequate accommodation at this time, the site is too small for future expansion, he continued, adding that a larger site has been approved by the Ministry and purchased by the Board. Construction is expected to start late in 1978 or early 1979.

Further openings included the new St. Joseph's School in Acton in September 1977 with 115 students in attendance.

"Presently housed in the old Stone School which was vacated by the Board of Education, this new school completes the provision of Separate School education throughout the entire district," he stated.

The Board is also planning expanded French language instruction, and has established a French language school in Oakville. The school is scheduled to open with a projected enrolment of 130 students in September on the site of the present St. Mary's School, which will close due to declining enrolment.

Mr. O'Brien also expressed concern for students from "broken homes, who have special needs that might well only be met in the atmosphere of the school."

1978 will also see the introduction of special education programs, "that will benefit those struggling with the basic skills as well as programs that will benefit the gifted child," he told members.

"One of the prime concerns of a Catholic School Board must be a curriculum that places great emphasis not only on academic excellence, but on the value of a strong family unit."

He further recommended additional meetings for the committee to suggest alternative methods of dealing with Board business.

Hike in desert

If you seek a vacation with a difference try one of the Bruce Trail Clubs March expeditions. From March 16 to March 27 a backpacking hiking trip is planned through the Sonora Desert, Arizona, including a two-day stay at the Gulf of California, Mexico.

Community college staff lobbying for settlement

Teachers from Ontario's 22 community colleges have undertaken a province-wide lobbying campaign to convince members of the Legislature that the government should intervene to resolve a contract dispute between themselves and the Council of Regents.

The 6,000 teachers, members of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, have already appealed to Colleges and Universities Minister Dr. Harry Parrott to intervene in the dispute.

Roger Johnson, R.R. 1, Acton, is the chief steward for the Sheridan college local 244. Several faculty members live in this area, he says.

The teachers have been working under an expired collective agreement since August 31. Mediation talks between the two parties broke off January 18. Major issues standing in the way of a settlement are teachers' work load and a new management-proposed short term

sick leave plan still to be spelled out in detail to the union.

Union President Charles Darrow said that the union is seeking a settlement to the work load issue through an impartial arbitration board in order to avoid any disruptions in the college system.

On the proposed sick leave plan, the union wants a joint union-management investigative committee set up to examine and compare the present sick leave plan and the proposed plan and report back no later than December 31, 1978.

The teachers are also attempting to get overtime pay for teaching in excess of prescribed weekly hours. The present system, which was awarded by Mr. Justice Willard Estey in a 1975 arbitration, sets limits on three elements of teachers' work loads — teaching hours per week, teaching hours per year and teaching days per year.

Teaching hours are calculated on a "rolling average" which includes breaks like Christmas and holidays. Although the Estey award implied compensation for overload assignments on each of the three elements, the present agreement specifically provides over time compensation only when there are excessive teaching days per year.

Management now claims it does not have to compensate teachers who are assigned to teach in excess of the weekly or annual hours and refuses to negotiate any changes to the work load clause of the agreement.

Under the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, should the parties not reach a settlement, the last management offer can be put to a vote of the membership. If the membership rejects the offer, then a strike vote can be held. If the majority of the membership favour strike action, a legal strike can be called after the union gives manage-

ment five days notice of its intention to walk out.

Union president Charles Darrow said that the manner in which the Council of Regents has attempted to negotiate, specifically raising the question of sick leave at a late stage in negotiations, is tantamount to bargaining in bad faith.

Reject offer

Halton Separate school teachers have overwhelmingly rejected the board's final offer.

Talks are stalled again since the board expects the teachers to come back with an offer now and the teachers want trustees to improve the offer they rejected Friday.

Two weeks ago teachers applied to the Education Relations Commission to have a vote taken of their membership on the board's last offer. At the same time board negotiator Hartley Sherk interpreted this as a move towards a strike.

However, teachers said this was not true. Now the board is going to complain to the Education Relations Commission because the vote was taken during school hours on Friday and caused class disruptions.

Most of the teachers turned down the board's 8.06 per cent wage hike offer, excluding increments. Teachers say increments shouldn't be included and the AIB doesn't include increments.

The board maintains increments must be included and when added to the wage hike represent an 11.7 per cent pay boost.

Over time for hours worked beyond the prescribed amount.

"It appears to me that the Council of Regents are so unsure of their position that they do not believe it would withstand scrutiny by an impartial third party."

Darrow said that whatever course of action the membership is forced to take, the entire resources of the 60,000-member union will be available to the teachers.

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