

S.S. teacher strike looms

A separate school teachers' strike is looming on Halton's spring horizon.

Thursday night about 200 placard carrying teachers demonstrated for half an hour at Halton Separate School Board headquarters on Drury Lane, Burlington.

Teachers protested the latest in a long series of contract talk breakdowns. Negotiations for a 1977-78 contract have been limping along since last spring.

Recently teacher negotiations went to their approximately 360 federation members asking for a mandate to apply to the Education Relations Commission for a supervised strike vote.

Peter Murphy, a teachers' provincial federation negotiator, revealed the vote on March 14 was 74 per cent in favor of an official strike vote. He informed the press following the demonstration.

Murphy claimed the board negotiators, including chief negotiator and Halton Hills Trustee Hartley Sherk, stalked out of a marathon bargaining session Wednesday morning at 3:45 a.m.

He criticized mediator Jane Devlin and the board's assistant from their trustee federation for advising board officials to break off talks especially since teachers had a proposal on the table.

Murphy said he hopes current teacher action will lead the Education Relations Commission to appoint a new mediator. He claimed Miss Devlin, a Toronto lawyer appointed as mediator by the Education Relations Commission back in December, was more concerned with her personal business than with negotiations.

He emphasized the picketing teachers behind him, "want a settlement, not a strike."

Teachers carried signs saying "Give us AIB guidelines, Let's settle soon, Parity with Halton public, Give us the cost of living and Don't dictate—negotiate."

Following the demonstration while trustees were in the board building, Murphy asked teachers to take their signs home with them noting they may need them again soon. This remark was greeted with chuckles.

Education Relations Commission Friday to apply for a supervised strike vote April 7. Separate schools across Halton could close shortly after the April 7 vote Murphy acknowledged, predicting more than 74 per cent of teachers will support a strike if necessary now.

Murphy said teachers aren't very happy with the way the board has been negotiating or in fact haven't negotiated. They claim the board is trying to force teachers to accept their offer and refuse to improve it.

The board is still offering the teachers less than six per cent raise despite months of exhaustive bargaining, Murphy declared. He added the AIB has already said the teachers can have eight per cent and the teachers need nine per cent to have parity with Halton's public school teachers. Murphy pointed out inflation is running at more than nine per cent and teachers feel inflation's pinch the same as everyone else.

He said after the next vote teachers will try and negotiate some more but warned there will likely be a strike if the board doesn't start changing its stance.

Teachers want either a negotiated settlement or an arbitrated agreement. The board refuses to send the outstanding issues to arbitration, Murphy claimed.



PLACARD CARRYING Separate School teachers demonstrated at the board's offices in Burlington Thursday night.

School professional activity days may be cut from nine to six

At the moment Halton Board of Education is planning to allow its teacher's nine days next year for professional activities but later this month an Oakville trustee will ask the board to trim the number to six.

A few weeks ago the board ordered the administration to examine the cost-benefit ratio of professional activity days since the board spends so much in teacher salaries. It is felt by some the board would receive more benefit for these days if teachers were teaching. Children are off from school on professional activity days.

Thursday, the board reviewed reports from the administration dealing with professional activity days

and next year's school calendar.

Trustee Jim Clelland is bringing a motion to the next meeting calling for professional activity days to be reduced to six next year. He says taxpayers are concerned with the number of days for professional activity and the resultant loss in instructional time. It isn't the first time Clelland has suggested a reduction in professional activity days.

Superintendent of Instruction John Bolch said surveys in the past show parents "generally" supportive of professional activity days but they want to know more about them. He observed there is more and more public attendance at professional activity day seminars and workshops.

He said most are successful but admitted a few do "bomb out", despite careful planning.

High school teachers don't really have professional activity days in the traditional sense, he noted.

since most of their time on those days is spent on school administrative work.

He said a time analysis study is underway and predicted the examination of professional activity days will prove "interesting" to trustees.

There is much confusion between professional activity days and professional development days, Director of Education Em Lavender declared. Many things take place on professional activity days including professional development but things such as reporting parents and administration also go on.

189 school days planned for 78-79

Halton students will have 189 days of school next year if Halton Board of Education accepts the administration's planned 1978-79 calendar. School would begin September 5 and end June 29, according to the plan.

Christmas holidays would be from December 23 to January 2 and mid-winter break from March 19-22.

Other vacations include Thanksgiving on October 9, Good Friday April 13 and Easter Monday April 16, and Victoria Day May 21. Pupils would not miss a day of school for Remembrance Day, November 11, since it is on a Saturday this year.

Students would also be off nine days when teachers have professional activity days. Pupils school year wouldn't start until September 6 since September 5 is for staff orientation.

November 27, January 28, March 5 and June 28 and 29 are also professional activity days for elementary teachers, according to the administration proposal. For

elementary teachers in the north October 27, February 12 and May 14 are also professional activity days.

Besides September 5 and January 28, high school teachers also have a number of other professional activity days. January 29 and 30 are professional development days in semestered schools as are June 25 to 29. June 21 to 29 are professional activity days in non-semestered schools.

Trustees were told the administration hopes the separate schools will have the same days of no school next year and the school calendar has been kept as similar to this year's as possible.

Superintendent of Special Services Ron Chapman said professional activity days are important for staff development and directly effects students.

Trustee Bill Herd said since Halton has a very experienced and highly qualified staff the number of professional activity days should be reduced. Because of years of

experience and qualifications the board pays its teachers high salaries.

Chapman said reduction in the number of days wasn't in the best interest of the Halton system.

Trustee Judy Alexander said professional activity days should be grouped around school vacations. She suggested having some of these days soon after vacations annoys parents.

Trustee Edna Robinson said with summer jobs scarce parents are upset because Halton pupils get out later than any others in Ontario.

Chairman Garry Morton said the answer to that was

simple. Other boards are cheating on the number of days pupils must be in school each year under the Education Act.

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Board equal to Region Lavender tells members

Halton Board of Education is equal in authority to Halton Region and trustees and administrators alike want to be sure the region understands that, too.

Thursday, trustees reviewed the board's response to the Region's draft official plan.

Part of the board's response says the Region isn't the supreme government in Halton.

Director of Education Em Lavender noted the Region's draft official plan sets out goals and objectives for Halton and several of its objectives refer to education.

"While the Halton Board supports the desire for elimination of duplicated services, it does not intend to allow a possible misunderstanding of responsibilities to exist," Lavender declared.

He said it is possible to "infer" from the draft official plan that "its authors see Halton Region government as the supreme governing authority in Halton."

Lavender suggested the region may view other governing authorities like the public and separate school

boards as "sub-committees" operating under the region.

He said it is necessary that all who read the draft official plan realize the school boards "have their own discreet and equal status and responsibilities and are equally accountable to the voters through the electoral process."

Lavender's comments were endorsed by trustees without comment as part of the

board's official response to the Region.

Trustees did discuss some of the other administration comments on the draft official plan with Trustee Ivan Armstrong warning that the board make sure the Region doesn't try and pass on responsibility for costly day care centres on to the board. He said they should be added to schools only if the Region will pay the costs.

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