

# Halton teachers support Hamilton pension rally

Almost half of Halton's 3,600 teachers demonstrated against rising pension contributions at a rally in Hamilton Saturday.

Copps Coliseum was "filled to the rafters" with 18,000 teachers from all over Ontario. Another 8,000 demonstrators waited outside the building.

"We had between 1,500 and 2,000 teachers from Halton," said Dianne Veckemans, president of the Halton Elementary Teachers Federation. Only 900 Halton teachers were expected to attend

the rally. The rally itself was expected to attract only 10,000 demonstrators.

"As late as Friday afternoon, people were still calling and saying 'can I get on the bus.'" Halton teachers were provided with 17 buses to Hamilton for the two-hour rally.

Teachers and their supporters were contesting the proposed one-per-cent increase in their budget contributions. The increase would cost an average \$400 per teacher per year. But teachers were also rallying to gain control of their

pension funds for the purpose of investment.

Premier David Peterson, scheduled to speak to the protesters, did not attend the rally. He was speaking at a nearby convention centre.

The rally attracted Education

Minister Chris Ward and Ontario treasurer Robert Nixon.

"Nixon was not well-received... we didn't like what he was saying," said Mrs. Veckemans.

Mr. Ward did not speak to the crowd.

The Ontario Secondary Teachers Federation has already agreed to

stage a one-day wild cat strike this spring if their demands are not met. Mrs. Veckemans said she expects the Ontario Elementary Teachers Federation to also vote to strike.

For now, the teachers are "basking in the glow of strong support," said Mrs. Veckemans.



Public speakers

Georgetown District High School students Damian Stuart-Hagge, Lisa Bradbury (back row), Michelle Smith and Michelle deBraux (front), took trophies in a recent Lions Club public speaking competition. (Herald photo)

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