

Catholic school talks

Salaries, class sizes, labor relations are key issues

By BEN DUMMETT
the Herald

Bargaining between the Halton English Catholic Teachers Association and the Roman Catholic School Board will probably centre around salary increases, class sizes and a worsening labor management relationship when the two sides meet this week.

These issues were identified as lying at the heart of the dispute in an Education Relations Commission's fact finding report submitted to both sides Oct. 30. The report was made public Friday.

The ERC appointed Fact Finder, Carleton University Professor Gene Swimmer, recommended in the report that the teachers' salaries increase by 4.8 per cent. He also agreed with the teachers' demand for a one-year agreement instead of a two-year agreement that the board had wanted. But he sided with the board's request that at least for this contract a reduction of class sizes shouldn't be considered.

Since negotiations began in February the teachers have requested that class sizes be reduced in accordance with the smaller class sizes found in the Halton Public School Board. But Mr. Swimmer argued the board couldn't afford both this demand and the teachers' demand for a salary increase.

"Smaller classes generate more jobs for teachers but simultaneously eat up dollars that would ordinarily go to salary," he wrote.

According to Mr. Swimmer only when the Catholic board's residential and corporate tax base becomes more in line with that of

the public school board will the board be able to consider reducing class sizes.

Currently the Catholic board has 20 per cent of the public board's residential tax base and .04 per cent of its corporate tax base. But he points out that in 1990 government legislation requiring commercial assessment to be split based on each of the boards' residential tax base will take effect.

This will mean more money for the Catholic board and a greater chance to hire more staff, Mr. Swimmer said. For this reason he recommended that the two sides only sign a one-year agreement.

But Mr. Swimmer stressed that in the long run the two sides' worsening working relationship could potentially be more serious.

The association's chief negotiator Jerry Keyes said earlier this month the rift stems from the board's move to unilaterally lengthen each class period from 72 minutes to 78 minutes, last May. The board's senior administrator for human resources Steve Balough said the board doesn't discuss contract negotiations until after a settlement is reached.

When the two sides meet this week they will do so under the guidance of Hank Skinner, an ERC appointed mediator. The teachers association requested the mediator because, according to Mr. Keyes, "one is needed if we're to have a shot at working out a deal."

Neither Mr. Keyes nor Mr. Balough will comment on any part of the negotiations until after they have met with the mediator.

Negotiations are planned to extend through the weekend.



Christmas choir

The Georgetown Choral Society held a dress rehearsal at the Knox Presbyterian Church in Georgetown Nov. 13 for their upcoming performance this Saturday night at the church. Judging from the intensity of conductor Dale Wood, audiences are in for a real treat. (Herald photo)

Two shopping spree winners

Alice Staton and Pat Zubacs, both of Georgetown, are the first two winners of the Downtown Georgetown shopping spree, Business Improvement Area manager Margaret Vint says.

The shopping spree, sponsored by the Downtown Georgetown Business Improvement Area, runs for three weeks.

Each winner will be given 100 downtown Georgetown dollars to bespent at any business within the Business Improvement Area.

Halton wants money to pay for growth

Despite objections from Acton Councillor Norm Elliott, a program to get increased funding from the provincial government to subsidize Halton's growth was passed at Halton Hills council meeting Monday night.

The joint program infrastructure report that involves Halton's four municipalities and two school boards needs approval from each member before it can go to the provincial government.

The report details Halton's needs to the year 2000 with a projected cost of \$848 million and includes bringing a lake-based water system to the Town of Milton.

Coun. Elliott who voiced disapproval for the infrastructure study says it does not allow for Acton's growth and he is opposed to asking the province to fund the Region's

growth. "I'm all for planning but... in this report there are things like the big pipe from Lake Ontario," he said, referring to the proposed goal for Milton's growth.

"Wake up and smell the coffee," Mr. Elliott said, "all this (report) is saying is we're going to the province. We all know that the province is bankrupt."

The councillor said Lake Ontario's water has poor quality and could be "unfit" to bring to Milton in 10 years.

But rural Halton Hills Coun. Joe Hewitt said the infrastructure study would benefit the Region.

"I think it's a great plan and it's something the province needs to address its long-term needs in the future."



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