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NEWS

Teachers upset about concessions wanted by the Province

By Tim Whitnell
Metroland Media Group

Halton District School Board and Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) Halton chapter officials have met several times with more meeting dates set for May and June.

ETFO in Halton represents close to 2,900 teachers, serving almost 40,000 pupils.

ETFO requested a provincial conciliator attend the April 17 contract talks meeting, where the union asked for the issuance of a No-Board Report. On April 24, ETFO received its No-Board Report.

A No-Board Report allows negotiations to continue but permits job sanctions by the union, or a lockout by management, 17 days after the issuance of the report — hence the May 11 possible strike/lockout date.

“The board remains committed to continuing to talk and bargain in good faith at the local level with its elementary teachers in order to reach a local agreement,” states the Halton board’s letter.

The president of ETFO Halton said they have had a good working relationship with the board historically, and continue to do so, but noted

many of her members are not happy with what is being asked of them at the provincial level of negotiations.

“What I’m hearing from my members are (concerns about) their working conditions and concessions that are on the table,” said Marg Macfarlane.

She said it is the concessions sought by the province that are the most upsetting to teachers because she says it took years to achieve their gains. Macfarlane wouldn’t discuss specifics.

Halton’s public high school teachers have been in a legal strike/lockout position since April 17. Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF) District 20 Halton represents 1,300 permanent full- and part-time high school teachers at the HDSB.

The local level of contract talks are centered on non-monetary issues.

Monetary contract items are being bargained provincially at a central table. It is the first time a two-tiered bargaining process has been used in Ontario.

The provincial government has said there is no money in its budget for raises in the public sector without savings being found elsewhere in the province’s budget.

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