

Halton's elementary teachers still without a contract

BY DONNA DANIELLI

Students may be back in school, but it isn't business as usual in Halton's elementary schools. Halton's elementary teachers have been without a collective agreement since August 2002, and talks between the Halton District School Board and its 1,500 elementary teachers reached an impasse on August 25.

Halton is the only one of the province's 31 Boards of Education to be without a collective agreement with its elementary school teachers. The Halton Branch of the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) voted to sanction the school board by pink listing it in June. Under this sanction, no union member could apply for any position with the Halton District School Board (HDSB). While the teachers were in class on opening day, September 2, they did not attend any staff meetings. This second sanction will be followed by more sanctions being imposed on a weekly basis until a collective agreement has been reached. "Principals won't be able to meet with their staff to share information and direction," says Dawn Beckett-Morton, Executive Officer of Human Resources for the HDSB. "That communication piece will be missing."

The elementary teachers are seeking a three per cent a year raise and improvements in working conditions. A deal was reached earlier this summer with the secondary school teachers for three per cent raises in each of two years. Halton ETFO President, Maureen Weinberger, explains, "Historically, we've had parity with our secondary school counterparts."

Ms. Beckett-Morton of the HDSB argues: "Our costs are going up three per cent in the 2002-2003 school year. If you look at all the percentages at the end of the contract year in August 2004, the teachers will realize an eight per cent

raise in the salary grid. They were also given restoration of part year experience retroactive to September 2002, and that is another one per cent."

It is that part year experience figure and the way it is being paid out that is stalling the negotiations. "When the Board talks, it is talking about end rate dollars," says Ms. Weinberger. "When we talk, we are concerned about dollars in pocket, not end rates. The first year rate is only 2.1 per cent with the .9 per cent part year grid increment included. The end rate looks like three per cent, but it's not money in our pockets. The Board has received money for that part year grid. They want us to pay for that part year grid even though they have received funding for it."

The HDSB maintains that the increase to teachers will be nine per cent after three years, however it is broken down. Ms. Beckett-Morton explains: "Our costs at the end of the contract will be higher than we are funded for. We have tried to be fair and equitable but our reality is that we have limits on our funding."

One thing both parties can agree on is the need to keep contract negotiations from affecting the students. The HDSB vows to monitor schools to ensure student safety while talks continue. The teachers' union is also anxious to keep disruptions to the students at a minimum. "We have made it a point to say that we will stay as far away from that teaching relationship that we value with these kids as possible," says Ms. Weinberger.

Talks are expected to resume around the second week of school, but more sanctions will be imposed on a weekly basis until an agreement can be reached. "We're trying to move forward, but we need that access to staff, and we need an ongoing dialogue," concludes Ms. Beckett-Morton.

Provincial Green Party candidate running in Halton

BY GLORIA HILDEBRANDT

The Green Party is the fastest growing party in Ontario," says Matt Smith, a candidate for Halton's representation in the provincial election. "We have good and reasonable ideas and are good leaders for our future. We are the only worldwide party that will be running in this election."

Provincial issues that concern Mr. Smith are the protection of forests, farmland and small communities. To control waste, the Green Party would encourage reduction, reuse and repair, and encourage green industries. Education and healthcare are other areas that need attention,

according to Mr. Smith. "There were 27 smog advisory days last summer," adds Smith, "yet we have a government that was opposed to Kyoto."

Mr. Smith, a resident of Oakville, lives with his parents. He would like to have children one day but says, "Before I do, I'd like to secure a better way to live." He enjoys biking, hiking, canoeing, camping, rock climbing, stargazing and playing music.

"The Green Party is set for success because it realizes that everything is connected throughout our social, economic and natural environments," he explains.

TALK of the TOWN

A monthly feature from the Town of Milton

Electronic voting equipment is here!

Milton residents can look forward to casting their votes during the Municipal Elections on Monday, November 10, 2003 with a new electronic system.



For the very first time, the Town of Milton will be using optical scanning equipment to tabulate residents' votes. This new system will return voting results much faster than before and reduce the municipal cost of running an election by assigning fewer election personnel and voting station locations.

The optical scanning system is easy to use:

- Obtain your paper ballot and secrecy folder from election staff.
- Proceed to a voting station and use the ballot-marking pen provided to fill in the oval to the right of the candidate of your choice.
- Place your marked ballot in the secrecy folder.
- Give the secrecy folder containing the ballot to the operator at the optical scan unit.

Then, watch as the ballot is inserted into the optical scan unit and your vote is tallied. All numbers are stored until the polls close.

Make sure you are on the Voters List

You cannot vote if you are not on the Voters List. Please check the Voters List in advance of Election Day to ensure that you are listed correctly or make the arrangements to be listed correctly. Starting September 2, 2003 you may view the Voters List during regular office hours at the following locations:

- Milton Public Library, 45 Bruce Street
- Seniors' Activity Centre, 500 Childs Drive
- Leisure Centre, 1100 Main Street East
- Town Hall, 43 Brown Street

Alternatively, you may call the Town Clerk's Office at 905-878-7252 (Extensions 2133, 2137, 2132 or 2130) for your Voters List information and verification.

Changing or adding your information to the Voters List

Application forms to change your information or to be added to the Voters List are available from Town Hall, Clerk's Office, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. If this is not convenient, you may also fill out the same application form on Election Day at your voting location.

The deadline to make an application to remove another person's name from the Voters List is September 26, 2003 and must be completed at the Town Hall.

If you cannot vote on Monday, November 10, 2003

Advance Voting Days will be held at the Milton Mall using a Touch Screen Voting System. When you are out doing your shopping, we encourage you to take a few minutes to stop by our kiosk to cast your vote.

Advance voting days are scheduled on:

- November 1 (10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.)
- November 5 (10:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.)

Voters can cast their votes by touching target areas on an electronically generated ballot. An important facet of this system is that it allows visually impaired people to vote independently using an audio ballot function as opposed to requiring assistance to fill in a paper ballot.

Please visit our website at www.milton.ca and use the optional search feature to find further Election 2003 information such as how to apply for an election position, where voting locations are, how to vote if you are not able to vote at the advance or regular polls (proxy voting), and who is running in the elections.



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Visit our Web site at

www.milton.ca



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