

Halton board wants change to sick leave provisions

By KATHY YANCHUS
Special to The Independent/Free Press

The 20 sick days per year allowed teachers is "too generous" according to trustees of the Halton Board of Education.

"It's generous relative to the number of sick days in private industry," said Oakville trustee Neil Reid.

Last year, the Halton Board of Education paid out \$2.8-million in employee retirement gratuities to 125 staff members — an average of \$22,400 per person.

On Thursday night, the Halton Board of Education approved a recommendation from Reid to request the Ontario Public School Boards Association (OPSBA) lobby the provincial government to reduce the annual sick leave provision in the Education Act.

The average absentee rate at the Halton Board of Education, including long-term and short-term

absences, is 6.1 days for elementary and 5.3 days for secondary teachers, said Reid.

"The absentee rate is very good in this board," he continued.

"Twenty days is excessive to the actual needs," said Reid. "The public perception is that's it's excessive."

'Twenty days is excessive to the actual needs.'

Neil Reid, trustee

Under the collective agreement, unused sick days can be accumulated to a maximum of 400 days. One half of those accumulated sick days can then be cashed in for a retirement gratuity up to the equivalent of one half of the teachers' annual salary.

While sick days are mandatory for boards, retirement gratuities are suggested, but not required, by the

Education Act.

The Halton Roman Catholic Separate School Board allows cumulative sick days, but they cannot be cashed in upon retirement.

Boards that do have retirement gratuities have been faced with strike threats at any suggestion of removing them. Last week, Sally Rewbotham of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Foundation (OSSTF) described gratuities as "...the issue that most galvanizes teachers, almost more than any issue. Teachers say that to take it out would be contract-stripping and there's nothing of equal value they could get in return."

Halton Board of Education chair Diane Leblovic indicated it would likely require provincial legislation to eliminate retirement gratuities.

OPSBA's annual general meeting is April 6th at which time the board's request will be considered.

Chip wagon owners query violation notices

Two men operating vehicles selling fries, Papa's Fresh Fries on 10 Sideroad and Frenchie's Fries on Guelph St., appeared before council recently asking why they had both received notices of violation.

Bylaw enforcement officer Bob Ustrzycki said shelters have been


constructed so that the businesses can operate year-round. This permanent structure means the operators come under a more stringent set of regulations and should apply for a snack bar/restaurant permit and begin paying business taxes.

When questioned, Ustrzycki said

that Canadian Standards Association (CSA) approved awnings attached to the trailers wouldn't contravene the bylaw.

Town staff will report back to council on this issue later.

Owners Claude Morissette and Bill Cox have been given until April 1 to remove the shelters.

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