

Students rally to support teachers

Continued from page 1

"We wanted to do something to lift their spirits before March Break. Everyone was smiling, we were so happy," she said. The girls had lots of help from friends and other students and several offers for financial support for the event.

Some students at Georgetown and District High School had planned to hold a walk out at 11:30 a.m. Friday, when they intended to leave their classes and block Guelph St. in front of their school, said Dana Lesko, a Grade 12 student. However, Student council president Kate Blyth asked the students not to participate. Many students throughout the afternoon, some with placards, protested on both sides on Guelph St., but did not block the highway. The fire department and police responded to an incident in the school, which was not confirmed at press time.

"We're advising them yes, we're going to take action but hold on for a

minute and think of the rational thing to do," Blyth said. She hopes her school will join with others in the region and take positive action, but there are no definite plans yet. Blyth said she thought the teacher appreciation breakfast was a good idea, but there was not time left to plan it before March Break.

Deanna Nodwell, Robert Little School principal said "it sincerely hurt me right to my core" to give the bad news to seven of the 15 teachers at her school.

A notice was sent home to parents, and some parents told their children, but no announcement was made. Nodwell said there were tears during individual meetings as well as staff meetings, and she has no idea how the school will operate with such drastic reductions.

While Nodwell has worked hard at building staff morale, those who have been laid off have had to keep their feelings to themselves because their

students are too young to understand.

"They're professionals and when you're engaged by children, all the other things that prey on your mind, there's no time for them. In private time, they may have some difficulty, but it's not obvious within the classroom," she said.

Layoffs are effective at the end of June.

"I've heard a little from parents, mostly from the parents of the special needs students," she said. Two instructional assistants at the school, who work individually with students, have also been laid off.

Nodwell doesn't have much hope for things to start looking up in the future.

"I have a feeling this is just the tip of the iceberg," she said.

The Halton Board of Education is anticipating a \$10 to \$15-million shortfall in funding from the province and planned accordingly said Linda Glover, board chair in a press release issued Tuesday.

Given notice

School	Teachers	Asst.	Lunch	Other	Total
Brookville	4	2	11	0	17
Centennial	4	2	7	2	15
Kennedy	3	1	14	3	21
Glen Williams	0	2	8	0	10
Harrison	2	0	5	0	7
Gibbons	1	0	6	1	8
Limehouse	2	2	9	0	13
McK-S-Bennett	7	4	11	2	24
Park	1	1	3	1	6
Pineview	1	2	4	0	7
Robert Little	7	2	6	0	15
Stewarttown	0	1	1	0	2
Acton High	13	3	0	1	17
Georgetown High	29	9	0	0	38
Total	74	31	85	10	200

Trustees claim 'tool kit' empty

By JANET BAINE
Staff writer

The provincial government's "tool kit" won't do anything to help rectify the Halton Board of Education's budget problems, said Georgetown trustee Dick Howitt.

"(John) Snobelen (Education Minister) has just wimped out. He made us all these big promises and it just does nothing to help us," he said.

On Tuesday about 1,500 teachers and public school board staff were laid off, with high schools the hardest hit: about a third of the teachers at Georgetown and Acton high schools were given notice.

The Halton Roman Catholic School Board has no immediate plans for similar layoffs, according to public relations officer Chris Jewell. Layoffs may be inevitable at the board but no decisions have been made yet, he added.

Among other things, the government's tool kit puts a moratorium on new school construction, orders boards to share services and cut costs in administration, transportation and maintenance. The Halton board is already doing many of these things, Howitt said.

The layoff notices were given out because labor law requires that 16 weeks notice needs to be given in the event of a layoff and the board contends this was necessary.

While the flurry of pink slips may raise alarm bells, "we're not just doing it for that reason, we're compelled to do so under labor relations legislation," Howitt said. "We didn't take this action very lightly, but in order to meet the legal requirements, we had to move ahead."

The school board is now waiting for word on their grants from the provinces which will determine just

how many of the staff are laid off permanently.

Acton/Esquering trustee Ethel Gardiner said she spent a couple days visiting all seven schools in her ward and personally spoke with each of the teachers and teaching assistants who have been laid off, either face-to-face or on the phone.

"I just wanted them to understand that I knew that there is a face behind these numbers; I know it's very difficult for them," she said. "I feel so deeply for the people and yet you have to be responsible to represent the taxpayers."

Gardiner is hopeful that some of the people who have received layoff notices will retain their jobs but, like Howitt, she doesn't find any hope in the provincial "tool kit."

"It's terrible, they're devastating numbers. This is the absolute worst case scenario. As a trustee, I put the responsibility squarely on the provincial government," Gardiner said.

Gardiner would advise parents to call Halton North MPP Ted Chudleigh and keep in touch with the schools and trustees. She hopes people won't over-react and advises that there can be lots of mis-communication in situations like this.

However, Chudleigh tells the school board to look at the tool kit for solutions.

"I'm not going to get involved in a debate in public or in the press with the Halton Board of Education," he said, when told that trustees are saying the tool kit empty.

He reiterated Snobelen's statement that savings can be achieved, it can be locally implemented and the province will give the board "as much time as possible."

"The tool kit allows them to take some actions. They were hoping we would make them," Chudleigh said.



D. HOWITT



E. GARDINER

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