

Cross-country first victim of teachers' job action

Halton's public elementary school system has lost, for the time being, one of its most popular sports.

The cross-country running season for eight-13 year-olds, scheduled to begin Sept. 29, has been postponed after a vast majority of schools reported they would not be sending a team.

The person who first received the bad news, and made the decision to postpone the season, was Sue Amos, instructional leader of health and physical education for the Halton District School Board.

"The reports of 'no' was overwhelming," Amos said of the response from schools. "This has been never happened before. It's very disappointing. I could hear it in the teachers' (who called) voices that they are disappointed, too."

The decision means nearly 4,000 youths won't be scurrying over trails during the next two weeks.

The Sept. 29 cross-country meets for junior and senior runners in Burlington, the Sept. 30 meet in Oakville, the Oct. 1 meet for north Halton schools and the Oct. 6 championship meet are now delayed — at the very least.

The annual Georgetown Legion cross-country meet was held Thursday at Cedarvale Park and Halton Hills elementary students participated for their individual schools.

Other school activities also in jeopardy because of job action

Thousands of youngsters will be unable to participate in their favorite music, drama, social and sporting activities for an indefinite period following the removal of volunteer services by Halton's elementary public school teachers.

The provincial takeover team with the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the group handling stalled contract negotiations with the Halton District School Board, announced last week they were taking the step of advising their 1,500 teachers in Halton to refuse coaching and supervisory duties for after-school activities.

Halton's secondary teachers have

avoided extra-curricular activities since the Sept. 8 start of school.

The elementary development puts a halt to student pursuits like singing in the school choir, volleyball and all clubs. It also jeopardizes seasonal sports like cross-country running, which attracted 5,758 runners last year.

Volleyball for boys and girls, scheduled to start the second week of October, has already been postponed, said Sue Amos, instructional leader of health and physical education for the Halton District School Board, a decision that affects more than 600 Halton students.

ETFO provincial negotiator Bill

Martin didn't see much hope for extra-curricular activities in Halton in the short term since mediation talks involving the union and the school board don't resume until Oct. 8.

"We cannot tell them (teachers) not to participate. However, I think most will be abiding by the recommendation," he said.

Halton education director Dusty Papke said the removal of extra-curriculars is unfortunate.

"I understand the wish of the federation to place added pressure on the board and ministry, but these activities play a big part in the life of students."

—By Tim Whitnell, special

What's happening in Halton classrooms



Halton District School Board

Elementary

Teachers in class but are refusing all extra-curricular work. Negotiations planned for Oct. 8.

Secondary

Teachers in class but are refusing all extra-curricular work. Have threatened rotating strikes.

Halton Catholic District School Board

Elementary

Teachers in class. Tentative agreement reached Friday.

Secondary

Teachers in class but are teaching only three of four scheduled classes and are refusing all extra-curricular work.

However, local teachers refused to assist in the event which was run by Legion members and parent volunteers.

Several factors will have to mesh, and soon, if the season is to be saved, said Amos— good weather, an end to the teachers' job action and the minimum two weeks' notice so training can resume.

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