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## Catholic board shutting out parents, says high school teachers' union boss

In the wake of a memo urging school councils not to meet with Halton's Catholic high school teachers, the head of the local union says it's more imperative than ever for parents to attend this coming week's information forums.

According to Joe Pece, president of the Halton secondary unit of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association (OECTA), all the councils, save one, have been reluctant to meet with teachers.

The reason, he says, is the memo by Director of Education Fred Sweeney which states: "Under no circumstances should OECTA Secondary be given permission to meet with parents on school property ... Furthermore, the names of School Council members and School Council chairs are not to be released to J. Pece or any other members of OECTA."

Says Pece: "Without debating the infringements on constitutional rights and the rights of school councils to determine their own agendas, I can only wonder why Mr. Sweeney is afraid to allow parents to be more informed. This board and this administration is accustomed to dictating and imposing their demands on teachers, now they expect to do it to parents and taxpayers."

To avoid setting foot on school property, the teachers will stage their Oakville information meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 28 at Knights of Columbus Hall, located at 1494 Wallace Rd., starting at 7:30 p.m.

A Burlington meeting will be held Tuesday, Oct. 27 at the Polish Hall, 2316 Fairview St., at 7:30 p.m.

Pece says parents have been "misled" by the board on a number of issues which the teachers wish to clarify. Fortunately, he says, the St. Ignatius of Loyola school council— which invit-

ed Pece to speak while aware of the memo— held a meeting on Wednesday night.

"The teachers feel that there must be something this board is trying to hide, therefore we have begun the process of requesting detailed information through the Freedom of Information Act," said Pece. "This information is readily available to all taxpayers and may give us a better understanding as to why this board wants to restrict the flow of information to parents."

Despite the apparent hard feelings on both sides, the board and the union are scheduled to continue negotiations on Monday and Tuesday.

In the latest of their five proposals to the board, teachers offered to agree to a "fair and unfettered" arbitration process under Section 40 of the Labour Relations Act.

Board chair Jim Sherlock, however, says the board's counter-offer would make way for a mediation/arbitration process that could possibly resolve every issue in dispute.

One main stumbling block in negotiations has been the requirement under Bill 160 that teachers' workloads be increased to 1,250 minutes per week. The board has interpreted this by telling secondary school teachers they must teach seven out of eight classes, instead of the current six of eight like past years.

Teachers who had been timetabled to instruct four periods in the first semester had been teaching only three and were on strike for the fourth.

On Oct. 13, the teachers resumed instructing the fourth assigned class they refused since the start of school. Department heads also returned to teaching their third assigned period.

At present, Halton's 375 Catholic high school teachers are still refusing to engage in any extra-curricular activities at school.

—By Howard Mozel, special

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