

Secondary teachers may curb extracurricular work

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He questioned the government's motives for increasing instructional time. "Their real agenda is to reduce the number of teachers."

OSSTF president Earl Manners said last week union strike mandates will be put on the shelf for now.

But he warned teacher support for school extracurricular activities will erode. Manners predicted teachers will no longer transport students, schedule or referee games, or assist fund-raisers for extracurricular activities.

The Halton District School Board's negotiating committee chair was more optimistic about secondary teachers' participation in extracurriculars.

Michael Ellis said a quick and informal survey of some schools showed sign-up sheets for extracurriculars were being taken.

"It's not necessarily in every school, but it looks like it will be business as usual in Halton high schools, which is a good thing," he said. "That possibly might have something to do with the excellent relationship we do have with federations here in Halton."

Ellis said non-teaching activities could be a sticking point and will have to be defined. He said an informal meeting about the issue may be held before the next bargaining session.

The 1,000-plus member Halton union recently voted 92 per cent in favour of a strike. The secondary teachers' contract expired yesterday (Thursday).

While visiting Burlington last week, Ontario's Opposition Leader said declining teacher morale is big problem in the education system.

Dalton McGuinty said the Education Ministry "has made it high fashion to attack teachers during the last five years."

He said Bill 74 means teachers will have less time to provide extra help for students or to coach.

McGuinty said community standards should prevail, with school trustees having more say on education issues. "It's micro-management gone mad," he said of the provincial government's influence on education.

It is being accepted in good faith that extracurricular participation won't be an issue for teachers, said the Education Ministry press secretary.

Rob Savage, said teachers' unions indicated this earlier after the Ministry shelved a proposal to make extracurriculars mandatory for secondary teachers.

"Unions said the current system works well," he said.

He said the amount of extracurriculars provided can vary from board to board, depending on factors like weather.

"Everyone involved in education expects students to be in the classroom," added Savage. "We don't feel there is any issue worth disrupting students' education."

The classroom teaching requirement will make Ontario consistent with the national standard and was previously established in 1998, he said.

"We've clarified that," said Savage. "There were loopholes that existed before."

He noted there were some cases where one teacher covering for another was counted twice as instructional time.

"But only one class was being taught, so it does count, but only once," said Savage.

—By Dennis Smith, special

Little damage in two kitchen fires

Halton Hills firefighters responded to small kitchen fires over the past few days.

About 5:15 p.m. Tuesday they were called to a basement apartment on Mountainview Rd. because there was a fire in the stove. A plastic lid in the oven had ignited.

Firefighters removed the stove and ventilated the apartment.

There was about \$1,000 smoke damage.

About 5:30 p.m. Thursday firefighters were called to May St. after an area resident spotted smoke coming from a neighbour's house.

Something had been left burning on the stove. Firefighters had to break the window in the front door to gain entry because no one was home. Damage was minimal.

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