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## Alliance acclaim Martin as candidate

Members of the Canadian Alliance party for Halton riding recently acclaimed Dean Martin as their candidate for the next federal election, expected to be called sometime next year.



DEAN  
MARTIN

Martin, who is a Campbellville resident, is the president and CEO of Melmart Distributors, a multi-million dollar wholesale flooring distribution company located in Mississauga.

"We are blessed to live in a democracy, and every four or five years we are given a choice. Over the coming months, I hope to motivate folks in Halton to explore the issues of leadership, integrity, and policy, and I'm confident that the Canadian Alliance offers the clearest and freshest choice in each of these areas. The choice of roads has never been clearer," Martin said in his acceptance speech.

Martin is married with four children.

## EAs walk off the job

Continued from pg. 1

negotiator, Dawn Beckett-Morton, as well as the sending home of some EAs by principals at several schools on the same day, prompted her to announce the strike action.

In response, school board officials, led by education director Dusty Papke, held a press conference Monday afternoon to say they were still willing to negotiate with the EAs. In the meantime, the board said it is focusing efforts on keeping in school those students who rely on EA support.

The board serves about 1,500 special education students around the region with varying degrees of emotional, physical and academic need.

That number does not include pupils in primary grades or large classes in elementary and high schools who also get the help of EAs. Brenda Kearney, a superintendent of education with the board, indicated there is a significant cluster of students who would be immediately impacted by the strike.

"I believe there is in the neighbourhood of 100 students with extraordinary care (needs) who won't be there", at school, on the first day of the strike, she said.

Kearney said some parents of affected children may be allowed into classes to help, provided they already have or have applied for a mandatory police background check. She also noted the board has notified Halton Region of the situation and is hoping to receive some help from various social service agencies, like Children's Aid and Transitions For Youth, for parents of special needs students who can't be

accommodated at school during the strike.

As for contract negotiations, Gurzi said the board offered to tack on a third year to a new deal that would pay the EAs three per cent in each year while increasing the paid workshift to six hours from 5 1/2, which the EAs want.

However, Gurzi says the latest offer still isn't enough.

"We have a (contract) configuration of three per cent in September (2002) and 1 1/2 per cent more in January (2003) and the same in the second year—and we would still be last in the GTA" in terms of pay among EA groups in the area, she said.

The group is also looking for improvements in sick day benefits for its large contingent of contract workers, said Gurzi.

Beckett-Morton said she did not receive a new offer from Gurzi on Friday and that she has never received an offer from Gurzi, formal or informal, to take negotiations to binding arbitration. She said the board's latest offer would amount to a total increase of 19.2 per cent over three years, when benefits and the extra half-hour of paid work per day is considered.

"This means the average salary of an educational assistant in the final year of the contract (2004-05) would be \$20.63 per hour, comparable to salaries for EAs in neighbouring boards."

Information on the EA strike will be updated regularly on the board's Web site at [www.hdsb.ca](http://www.hdsb.ca) or by calling 905-335-3663, ext. 3419, and pressing 4.

—By Tim Whitnell, special

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