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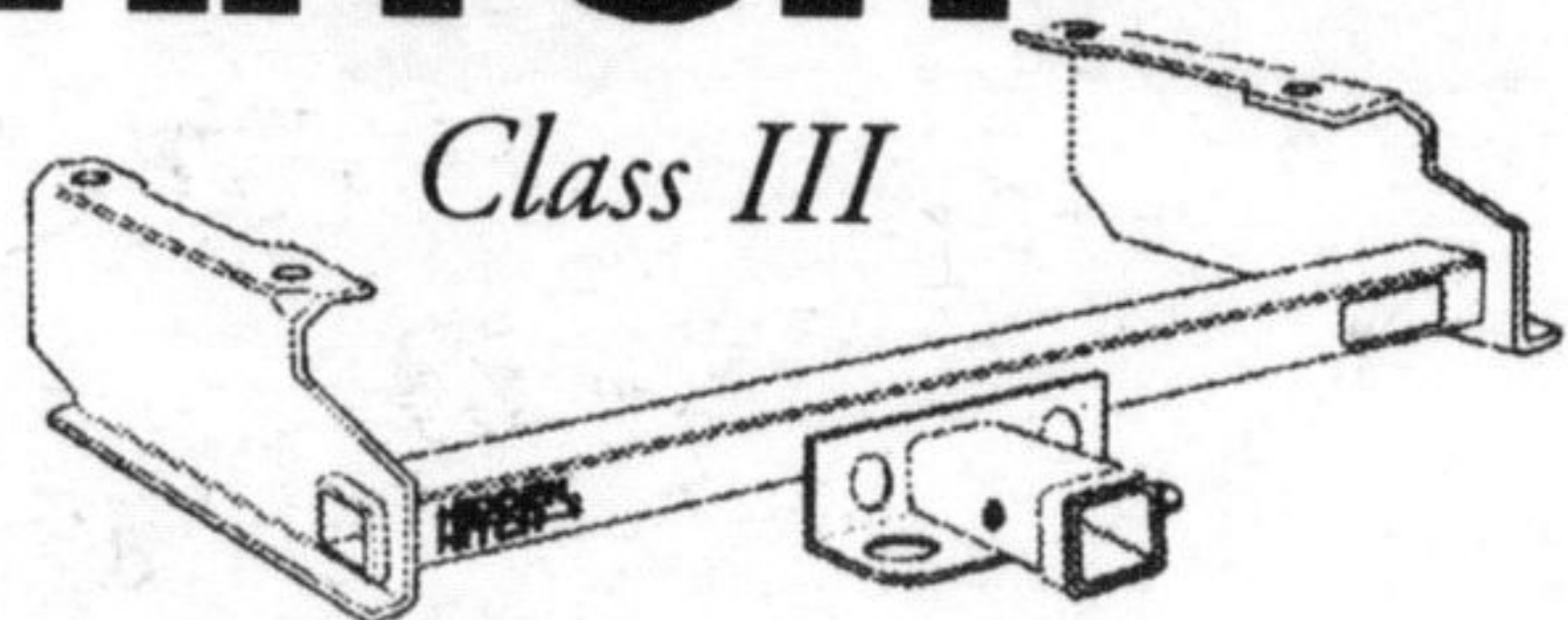
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Teachers worry:

Contract could be 'stripped'

By **TIM WHITNELL**
Special to The Champion

A top official with the region's elementary teachers' union said there is reason for her members to worry since they have no contract and the Halton Board of Education is in a position to 'strip' its existing agreement.

Lack of a new deal with the public school board, following trustees' rejection of a proposed agreement last week, and news of the Simcoe County board 'stripping' their teachers' contract a few weeks ago, is cause for concern, said Erica Andrews, president of the Halton Elementary Teachers' Association.

"That is very definitely an option," noted Ms Andrews. "They could unilaterally 'strip' our contract," she said of the Halton board. "They could look at any part of the (old) collective agreement, salaries, staffing (benefits, etc.), and do what they want."

However, Halton board Chair Linda Glover, who confirmed the board has been in such a position since May 25, indicated it doesn't make any sense to take such drastic steps since the board recently requested a mediator be appointed in talks with the elementary teachers.

"If we're going to mediation, that's not being considered," Ms Glover said of contract 'stripping'. The board chair, who added, "It's destructive not to have a deal", said a provincially-appointed mediator could be named within a couple of weeks.

In the meantime, the region's 1,750 public elementary teachers engaged in a vote Thursday to determine if the association should seek assistance from its provincial federations.

Ms Andrews expected the vote to pass easily, as well as a subsequent vote by the Ontario federations' executive committee.

It means a revamped negotiating team consisting of up to 11 members culled from the local association



"It might be easier to say the government did it, but that's the chicken's way out."
.....
- **LINDA GLOVER**

and the provincial federations could be in place soon for mediation.

Ms Glover, who said she was in favour of a proposed deal with the elementary teachers, one that died for good last week when trustees voted not to reconsider the issue, indicated more monetary concessions from the teachers is the reason some trustees scuttled a tentative deal with the elementary association.

Trustees decided to seek \$5.5 million in reductions to board employee salaries and benefits, some of which they have achieved through deals with some of its non-teaching groups.

But Ms Glover speculated some trustees might prefer to have someone else do their work for them.

Education Minister John Snobelen is rumored to make an announcement next week about the status of collective agreements with teachers. This week legislation was introduced by the provincial Conservatives which might prevent municipal workers from striking for two years.

"They could be waiting to see what the government has to say," Ms Glover said of some trustees. "(But) I don't see what good it (proposed legislation) would do.

We won't be able to make any changes at the local level. It might be easier to say the government did it, but that's the chicken's way out."

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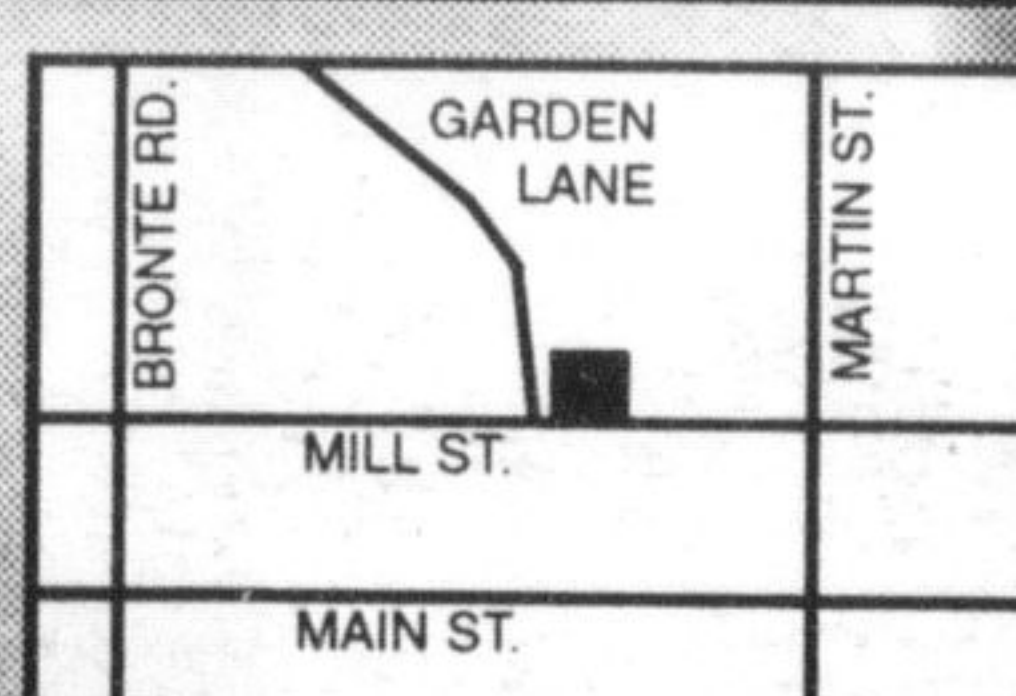
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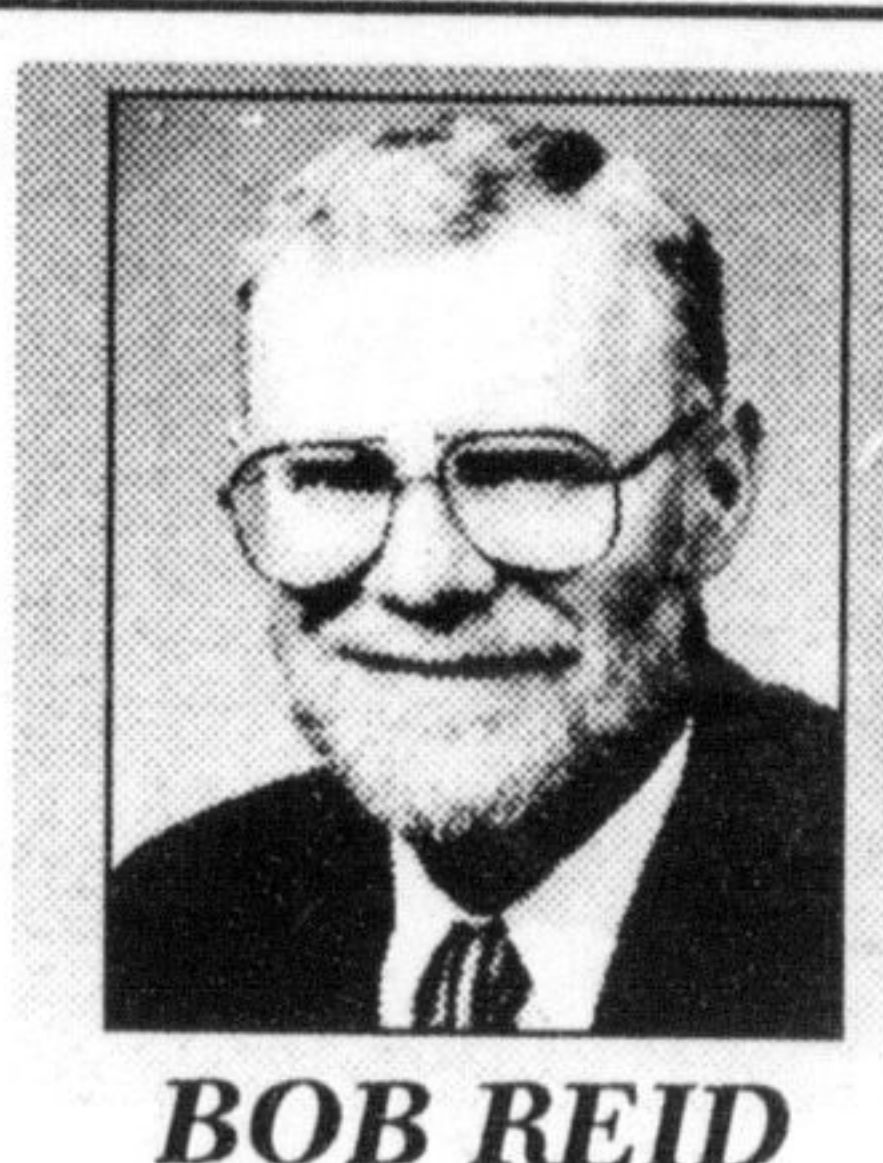
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