

Parents fed up with Catholic school stalemate

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Following the Christmas break, students will have only one month remaining in the semester to make up the missed time in order to gain full credits.

Teachers have refused to discuss a plan for making up the time until a collective agreement is in place, said Mr. Sherlock.

"We thought there was a pretty strong case for the ERC to make a ruling of jeopardy," Mr. Sherlock told Catholic trustees at a board meeting Tuesday night. "But at this moment, they feel there is still time to make up the time."

"We feel the top priority is to make sure none of our students lose credits because of the sanctions."

Angry parents and students flooded the school board meeting, expressing frustration at the lack of progress in negotiations.

"Over the past 11 months, after 29 negotiation sessions, what has been agreed on?" asked Paul McDougall, chair of the school council at Bishop Reding Secondary School.

"Our impression is that there has been little, if any, agreement on anything," he noted. "The enormous effort and waste of money to achieve as little as has been achieved should be a source of shame for both sides."

Mr. McDougall, who spoke on behalf of the school councils at all five Halton Catholic high schools, also asked teachers and students to abandon a casual dress protest.

Following a decision by teachers to wear casual clothes to class, many students abandoned their school uniforms as well.

"The moral authority of a teacher enforcing a uniform code is put at risk when they are wearing less than profes-

sional attire, and the breakdown in discipline at the schools is becoming increasingly apparent," said Mr. McDougall.

With many parents forced to remain in the hallway outside the board room, due to a shortage of seats, tempers quickly flared during Mr. McDougall's presentation.

Angry shouts from the hallway demanded the board cancel the meeting and move it to a location that could accommodate everyone. Other people demanded to know when the situation would be resolved.

During a break, parents and students were vocal in expressing their frustration with both the board and the teachers.

Bill Pettey, who has a son attending Burlington's Notre Dame high school, said he places blame equally on the board and the Halton secondary unit of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association

(OECTA) for the breakdown in negotiations.

Another Notre Dame parent, Grant Mace, described himself as "more than a little pissed off," adding that trustees "need to take their heads out of the sand and realize they have to negotiate."

But both Mr. Mace and Mr. Pettey agreed they were unwilling to shoulder higher taxes in order to pay for a settlement with the 350 teachers.

"The board has enough money to manage the system appropriately," said Mr. Mace, who has actually attempted to have a portion of his education tax refunded because of the situation.

Students were equally vocal about the strike, with several saying they wouldn't be returning to school uniforms any time soon.

"We'd like to have sports, too," shrugged OAC student Ryan Hayward, "but this is the

way it's going to go to the end. There are not going to be any uniforms tomorrow."

Another OAC student expressed her anger directly to trustee Miriam Van de Vrande.

"I would have thought you would have more important things to talk about than whether we are wearing uniforms," said Tia Duke pointedly.

Outside the meeting, where dozens of teachers carried placards and marched up and down the sidewalk, union head Joe Pece placed blame directly on the board.

"Right now the teachers are waiting for them to call," he said.

Mr. Pece added that teachers want a negotiated settlement, but believe the board is stalling on negotiations until the result of an arbitration settlement in Hamilton-Wentworth is released in January.

As for returning to dressier

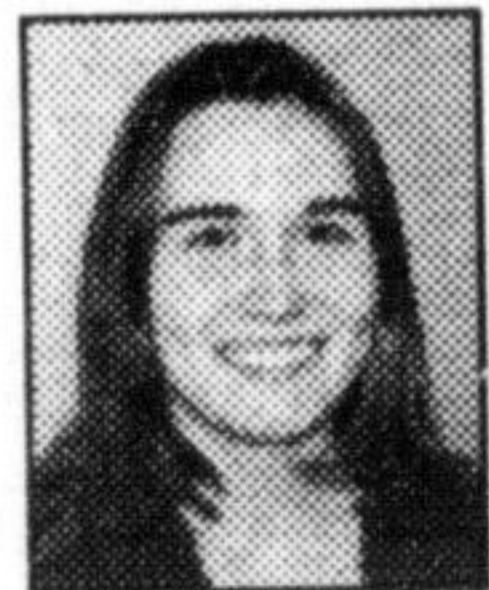
classroom attire, Mr. Pece said he would take the suggestion to the OECTA sanctions committee, but wasn't optimistic teachers would be donning ties any time soon.

"Quite frankly, an alternative would be worse than this visible sign of our resolve," he said.

The main stumbling block in negotiations between the teachers and the board continues to be the requirement under Bill 160 that high school teachers increase their instructional time by 22 minutes per day.

The Catholic school board has interpreted this requirement by telling teachers they must teach seven of eight classes over two semesters, rather than the six of eight they have been teaching since 1989.

In addition to dressing casually, teachers have been refusing to provide supervision required for extracurricular sport and club activities.



Jacqueline Bass

GRADE "A" NEWS AT MILTON DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL ADVERTISEMENT

Grade "A" News at MDHS

By Jacqueline Bass and Marissa Cheskey

Christmas is only seven days away and we are glad to say that there is no school for two weeks. Unfortunately, this means that you will not be hearing from us again until the New Year. We would like to congratulate all of the students and staff at Milton District High School for their wonderful contributions to the Christmas collection boxes. It is very nice to see the whole school working as a team to do something good for the community during the holiday season. The final touches were put on the boxes on Wednesday, December 16th. We're sure that they will be appreciated on Christmas Day.

The past week has been very festive at M.D. Thursday was Santa hat day, which is a day for everyone to show their Christmas spirit and have a little fun by wearing a Santa hat to school.

On Wednesday, M.D. had the annual Christmas door decorating contest. Congratulations to Mr. Orton's class who won!

Also on Wednesday, the Jolly Fat man himself made an appearance at the school to have the students of M.D. sit on his lap. For only \$1.50 per person, students could have their pictures taken on Wednesday and pick them up on Thursday. HO, HO, HO!

Attention all Senior Friends! You need to get Police Checks in to Mr. Vella A.S.A.P. If you hand in your Police Check with the receipt, your \$15.00 will be reimbursed, so hurry.

Some good news from the school store: Soon the school store will not only be selling candy and other sweet stuff but also hacky sacs, beanie hats, necklaces and other funky stuff. Wow!

Well, it's time for us to say goodbye for the next couple of weeks. Enjoy the holidays. Have a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Marissa Cheskey

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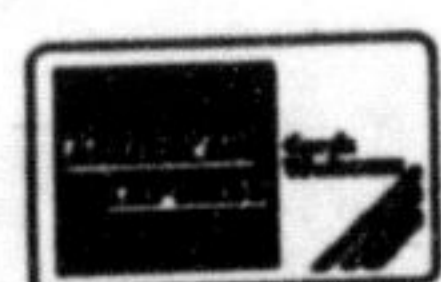
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