

Public teachers to hold mass rally tomorrow

A mass rally high school teachers are dubbing Education in Crisis is being staged tomorrow afternoon in the vicinity of the Halton District School Board's administrative offices in Burlington.

The gathering, scheduled to begin at 4:30 p.m. at the corner of Upper Middle Road and Guelph Line, is to be the focal point of high school teachers' plans to step up their job action.

The second phase of sanctions will be unveiled there by members of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF). District 20 represents about 1,200 full and part-time high school teachers within the Halton public board.

The current job action, which began Feb. 20, involves teachers not attending staff or

department meetings after school hours. They are showing up for class and staying after class for just 15 minutes in each case.

Teachers voted 95 per cent in favour of a strike mandate; they have been in a legal strike position since Feb. 17. OSSTF District 20 has been without a contract since Aug. 31, 2002. There have been no contract talks for several weeks.

The president of OSSTF District 20 said the time has come to apply more pressure.

"This protest will demonstrate the increasing frustration felt by the teachers and illustrate their broad support for the negotiating team.

Our members want to accelerate the sanctions and that's what we are going to do," said Harwood.

Groups aim to supply needy families with nutritious foods

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hopefully have money, and get it at the end of the month," she said, adding, "We're a small but mighty group."

A 2000 report on child poverty in Halton done by the Halton Social Planning Council showed that 8 per cent of all Halton families live in poverty, and 21 per cent of single parents in the region live in poverty.

The consultation included presentations by a number of food-related organizations working to help ensure people get enough of the right foods.

From Milton was Sherri Parkinson of Milton's Meals on Wheels program. Milton Meals on Wheels started in 1974 with one program. It now has six, and serves more than 100 people Monday to Friday — providing seniors and those who're physically or mentally disabled with a hot entree, soup and salad.

"We want to provide nutritious meals they can easily afford. We want to eliminate tea and toast meals," Ms Parkinson said, adding that Milton Meals on Wheels also provides some respite care for care-

givers and medicine for the soul — social interaction with a friendly volunteer.

Food for Thought, an organization dedicated to developing and promoting healthy food programs in schools, also presented. Gayle Cruikshank, Food for Thought's coordinator, said the organization is working with both Halton school boards to implement nutrition programs.

Paul Bousfield, a Milton farmer with an organic farm, attended the consultation and said family farms need local residents' support to adequately play their part in food security.

For family farms to exist, people need to start buying more local produce, he said. If people feel like eating strawberries in January, they should go to their freezers and pull out local fruit they've frozen instead of heading to the supermarket, he said.

For more information on the Halton Anti-Poverty Coalition or the Food Security Committee, which is looking for new members, call (905) 632-1975.

Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

Board cancels international school trips

International security concerns have prompted the region's public school board to cancel all remaining international trips by students and staff.

The Halton District School Board issued a press release Thursday stating it has taken the position due to "the continuing conflict in Iraq and heightened security worldwide..."

All trips, including those to the United States, are affected.

"We know students, parents and staff will be disappointed at the cancellation of these trips, however our first priority is the safety of our students and staff," said education director Dusty Papke.

"We recognize that while the war is localized at the present time, the outcomes may have far-reaching effects," he added.

Principals were to inform students, staff and parents of the decision. Board officials are investigating cancellation insurance policies and the possibility of refunds from travel agencies. The Halton Catholic District School Board has not yet announced any trip cancellations.

Board communications administrator Chris Jewell said three currently planned spring excursions will be discussed at tonight's board meeting.



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