



Photo/CELIA BRONKHORST

Gifts from Santa

Ashley Gaudet receives her gift from Santa Claus, a toy dinosaur, during the Christmas party held Saturday at the Claremont Community Centre. The party was hosted by Pickering firefighters.

Education

Secondary teachers vote in favor of strike action

JULIE CASPERSEN
Staff Reporter

After rejecting their employer's final contract offer, York Region high school teachers voted in favor of a strike.

The York Region board of Education tendered a last offer to its 1,700 secondary teachers who turned it down in a vote Tuesday.

The offer was rejected by 78 per cent of the voters belonging to the local unit of the Ontario Secondary School Teacher's Federation, according to federation president Lynn Johnston. A vote to strike was passed by 70 per cent of the voters.

But Johnston said he hopes to avert any strike action. "Let's get back to the (negotiating) table," he said. "We're urging people to be calm about this."

Public high school teachers have not gone on strike since 1974 when 667 teachers resigned in protest. The union has asked the province for a mediator to step in and hope to get back to bargaining by mid-January.

Rumors that teachers will walk off the job in early January are not true, Johnston said. If the union decides to strike or work to rule it must first hold a meeting of all members then a meeting of the negotiating team before giving the board five day's notice. "In a worst-case scenario the soonest would be mid-January, and I'm not looking at the worst-case scenario," he said.

And the only action that would prompt the union to walk out would be if the board stripped the contract and tried to impose salary roll-backs or stripped the teachers' benefit package. The board is allowed to redesign a contract offer 60 days after a fact finder's report is handed in. This report was filed Nov. 1.

Johnston accuses the board of abusing its obligation to the Social Contract Act by cutting beyond what is necessary under the legislation.

The act calls for the removal of 84 teaching positions to save money for the province, but Johnston said the board violated the social contract by holding back 77 teachers last September. "We're saying enough's enough. Be serious and respect the agreement."

Board chair Bill Crothers said the board and the federation will continue to work out a deal and avert a strike. "The board is very hopeful that the negotiations will proceed reasonably," he said.

Crothers said he is not aware of what the teacher's concerns are, although the fact finder's report said the teacher's disagreed with the board's recommendation to raise the pupil/teacher ratio by one. This increased PTR would require 115 less teachers for a savings of \$7.5 million. Classes will resume as planned on Jan. 3 and students will not lose credits due to any strike action on the part of teachers.



Photo/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Newest Pathfinders

The Stouffville Pathfinders recently inducted five new members. They are (from left) Natasha Giuffre, Melissa Benish, Lara Jackson, Gillian Jones, and Elaine Drickens, in foreground.

Repairing roads to cost \$1.5million

TRACY KIBBLE
Staff Reporter

The town needs to spend \$1.5 million to repair and upgrade six roadways next year according to staff's updated priority list presented to officials last week.

Public works director, Paul Whitehouse presented officials with an updated capital road construction priority list, outlining which projects should take front row in a long line of needed repairs.

Although the town needs \$1.5 million in repairs, there is only \$350,000 sitting in the municipal coffers to complete the work.

That means officials have some decisions to make - decisions which usually are cause for much debate and wrangling.

The report lists the following priority repairs recommended be undertaken during 1994:

- \$62,000 to remove and replace a deteriorated box culvert on a .2 km stretch of Bethesda Road east of the Ninth Line;

- \$288,000 to widen and add curbs along a .8 km stretch for a connecting link from Main Street to meet width restrictions;

- \$258,500 to spot repair sewers, curbs and pavement for a 2 km stretch from the Tenth Line to the Ninth Line on Main Street;

- \$308,000 for an engineering design and environmental assessment for a 1 km stretch on Main Street from the Ninth Line to the westerly limit to meet width restrictions;

- \$177,500 for a base drainage and granular lift (phase I) for a 2 km stretch on Warden Avenue from Aurora Road to St. John's Sideroad because of structural deficiency;

- \$25,000 sewer replacement on Somerville Street from O'Brien to the creek east of Market Street to replace a broken storm sewer.

Officials, however, were not prepared to approve the updated list until further consultation with Whitehouse.

New meeting schedule tested

Stouffville town council will test its new meeting schedule on a six-month trial basis before deciding whether or not the new system works.

Despite Ward 6 councillor Ken Prentice's attempts to have the schedule remain as it is, majority council voted last week to meet every second and fourth Tuesday night at 7 p.m. where discussions will be voted on and finalized in the same night. Prentice's theory that the new system robs officials of a one-week grace period to re-think issues was shot down by Ward 2 councillor Stephen Bellerby. Bellerby said the new system will allow officials the opportunity for two weeks to re-think votes instead of the one week waiting period available now.

Bellerby added that the new

schedule will also make officials prioritize issues more carefully, preventing items of little importance from showing up on agendas week after week.

And Mayor Fran Sainsbury said the new schedule is necessary with the town's efforts to "right-size" its staff and provides a cost-savings to taxpayers in paper, staff time and mailing expenses.

"People can't expect business as usual if they want to keep taxes down," the mayor said.

Bellerby added the new system does not "shut down public input" because agendas will now be available on Friday afternoons instead of Monday mornings. "I just hope the new schedule does not come at the cost of the effectiveness of this municipal council," Ward 1 councillor Ivanka Bradley said.

Services cut next week

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day including ambulatory care, day surgery, diagnostic imaging, diagnostic cardio respiratory, outpatient laboratory, outpatient mental health, rehabilitation services, social work and surgical assessment clinic.

The emergency ward will operate on a 24-hour basis as usual and on-call surgical teams will respond to urgent or life-threatening cases. Inpatient wards will be staffed at a weekend level as well.

Service will also be cut next week for three days. On Dec. 27, 28 and 31 the hospital will run on a weekend level because of the Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day statutory holidays which fall on weekends.

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