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## Education

# Teachers reject board's final offer

By **MIKE ADLER**  
 Staff Reporter

Elementary teachers voted down a school board final offer on Thursday, a day before their twin federations began new talks with York Region's public board.

But after a day of meetings with a new provincial mediator, the teachers say they left disappointed.

"It looks like the board's forcing us to take a strike vote," said Joan Heeler, president of women teachers, declared yesterday.

Unlike their high school colleagues in December, elementary teachers did not couple their final offer vote with a strike vote, and none has been scheduled.

The federations started two scheduled days of talks with the board Friday at a Thornhill hotel. Mediator Kevin Burkett, however, adjourned the session that afternoon instead of extending it into Saturday.

The unions said 91 per cent of teachers who cast ballots in the schools last week rejected the two-year offer.

Teachers cast 2,608 votes against the deal and 249 to accept it, Heeler said.

This year, the board pushed half of teachers' 200 minutes of

weekly preparation time outside the school day. It was offering Heeler's union and the smaller mens' federation a 1-per-cent raise this year and 20 more minutes of prep time during school next fall.

The unions had asked teachers to reject the offer, arguing that 120 minutes "between the bells" isn't enough.

Because the board didn't have to hire teachers to cover for half the prep time, full-time specialists like librarians and guidance counsellors are sometimes unavailable because they are being forced to teach classes part-time, Heeler said.

"We need them to help the children," she argued, adding class sizes in elementary schools have also increased.

The federations are grieving the unorthodox shift of prep time through a provincial agency, and Heeler said both sides may finish arguments to an arbitration board at a Feb. 24 hearing.

"A month would be quick to get the ruling," she conceded. "It could well take three or four months."

The secondary school teachers' federation has agreed to meet the board on Feb. 19 to 21. Secondary teachers' president Lynn Johnston said his federation was encouraged by

the board's willingness to demand less in savings from elementary unions. The board

previously maintained it needed \$11 million, but acknowledged in its offer it no longer

expects it will lose all of its remaining provincial grant money this year.

## Budget will be delivered March 18

Whitchurch-Stouffville taxpayers will get a "green" budget in honor of St. Patrick's Day. Fol-

lowing two days of planned deliberation, local council is scheduled to deliver the 1997

municipal budget on March 18. Local mayor Wayne Emmerson continues to insist that it will be a "good news" budget: taxes will not go up nor will the quality of services go down, Emmerson stated.

Last year, a \$12.2 million budget meant the average homeowner in Whitchurch-Stouffville paid \$521 for the local portion of the three-way (municipal, regional and school boards) tax bill. The only major challenge facing local council this year is how to deal with the fact that less money is expected to come from the province in the way of transfer payments, said Emmerson.

"We'll have to put money away in reserve until we know what the province does," he said. Emmerson continues to express an interest in having a new town hall as part of the new library expansion. Also, on the mayor's wish list is an indoor swimming pool and more road improvements. "I'd like us to give extra attention to local streets and roads," he said.

## Bingo here

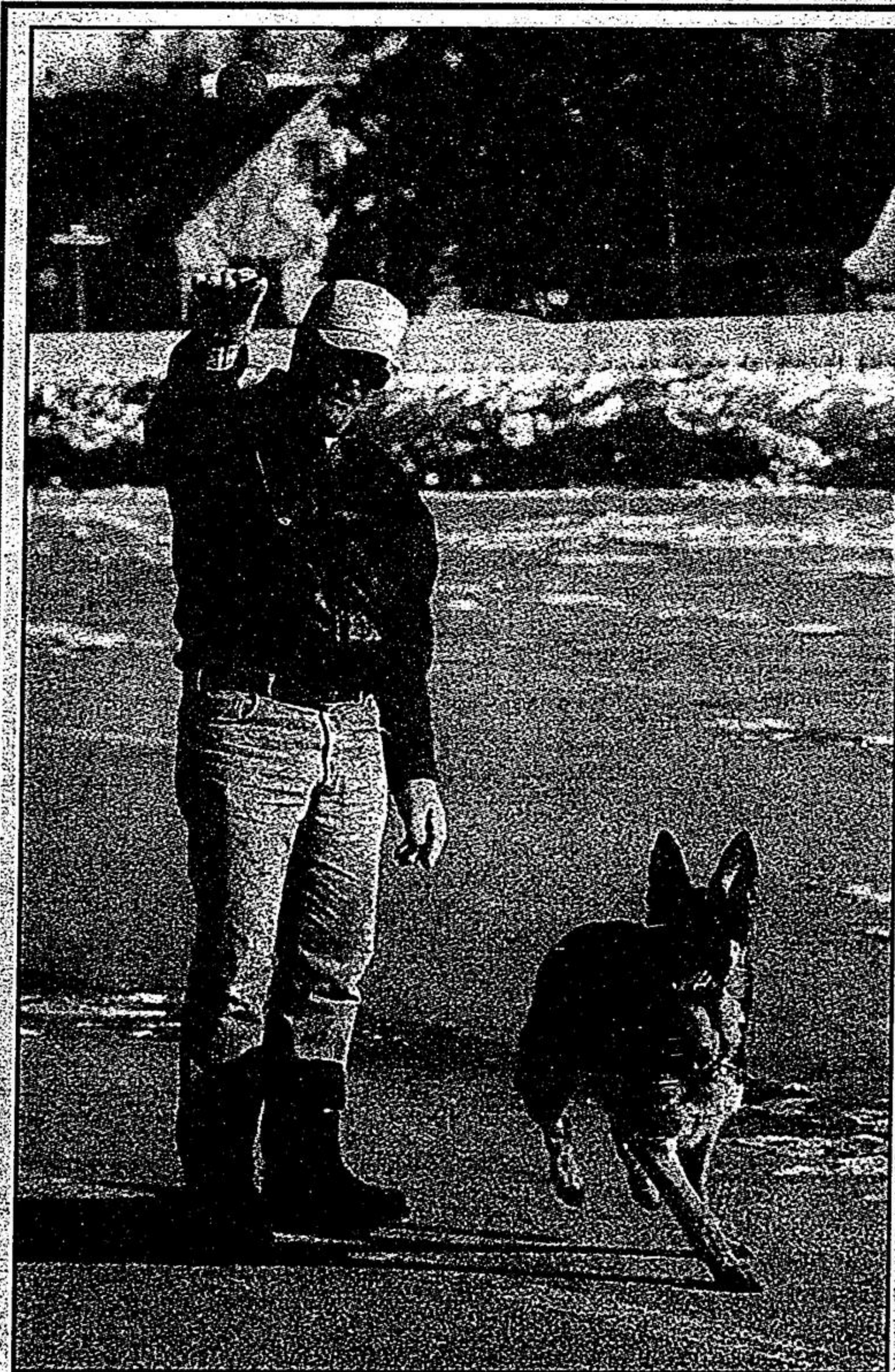
A 600-seat bingo hall will open in Stouffville in the spring.

Rob Shannon, manager of the Stouffville Country Market confirmed Friday that the province has approved a gaming licence paving the way for a maximum of eight bingos a week.

Shannon said the company will start with four and hopefully work its way up.

Prizes are expected to be as much as \$5,000.

The bingo will be located at the market on 10th Line.



### Fetch, Buddy!

Roger Running plays with his dog Buddy in the parking lot at Memorial Park on Saturday. Running is the new owner/operator of O'Neill's Funeral Home.

Photo/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

## Man appears Friday

A Stouffville man facing criminal charges in connection with Canada's largest gun bust returns to a Scarborough court Friday.

Arnold Attenborough, 60, of Stouffville and Anthony Clayton of Newmarket were told to return to the Scarborough court on Friday. The judge is expected to set a date for a preliminary trial.

Attenborough, a gun collector and dealer, was arrested six weeks ago after the Canadian military was called in to remove weapons, including live hand grenades and bazookas from his property on Bethesda Sideroad.

News of the arrest shocked residents living in the rural neighborhood.

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