

School board, teachers bury hatchet after bitter contract dispute

MIKE ADLER
Staff Reporter

Three months after the public school board and its elementary teachers were enemies ready to fight, the hatchet has been officially buried.

Teachers, parents, administrators and board officials on a special task force issued a report this week urging all sides to work together more closely, "establishing and strengthening positive relationships."

Doing this, and celebrating accomplishments of teachers and students, will counter "negative publicity" from this year's bitter round of contract talks and build confidence in public education, the task force concluded.

The group recommended setting rules on releasing information from the board or the two elementary teachers' federations during negotiations, and said a "common understanding" should be reached on teachers' responsibility to volunteer for the extra-curricular activities of students.

"The whole process was one of full collaboration and agreement," said Jaimini Randev, a board superintendent who chaired the group which was formed after teachers' unions came within hours of a strike in March.

In the future, task force members agreed, negotiators should avoid "a confrontational and adversarial bargaining mode" and try a "more collaborative style" for contract talks.

The report says a variety of people told the

group information they received during the talks seemed unreliable, "negative" in tone, or contained "posturing and propaganda."

"There was a great deal of misinformation (during the talks). There was a great deal of confusion," said Randev this week.

The report suggests setting an information "protocol" for use in negotiations. "We would like to work together on releasing information," said Pam Gillan, a task force member and incoming president for local women teachers.

Another group member, Stouffville trustee Harry Bowes, said it isn't fair that teachers at some schools chose not to help with extra-curricular activities, when those at other schools did. "Even though they can legally do it, it

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hurts a lot of students," he said. The union representing the board's high school teachers — in arbitration with the board this month after warning it may launch a strike in September — was not involved in the project.

Catholic school board gets new director

York Region's Catholic school board has chosen one of its former superintendents to be its new chief executive.

Susan LaRosa will take the director of education post from Frank Bobesich on August 1, the board announced this week.

A human resources superintendent with the Lanark, Leeds and Grenville separate board in eastern Ontario, LaRosa had a similar job at the York board from 1988 to 1990.

The bilingual LaRosa runs the Lanark board's French as a Second Language program and once served as a provincial vice-president for the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association.

"Susan LaRosa is well qualified through academic and professional experience to assist this board to meet the challenges and issues which it will face," York board chair Tina Molinari said in a release.

Bobesich, education director for nine years, resigned six months ago. The former principal of two Markham Catholic schools has said he will retire from the board in 1998.

~Mike Adler

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