

Teacher strike continues as new mediator sought

MIKE ADLER
Staff Reporter

York Region's public school board is still waiting for a provincial mediator who can restart talks with its striking

high school teachers before the end of the month.

It's "unacceptable" that Tom Bastedo, appointed by the Education Relations Commission, should be on holidays until after Sept. 2, when school

begins, said Karen Barker, the board's chief negotiator.

"I believe they should have been prepared," Barker said yesterday.

But at press time yesterday, there was no news of a replacement for Bastedo, making it more likely that the strike, which began quietly on Monday, will disrupt the start of the school year.

The board maintains that Aug. 27, "a pivotal date for us," is the last day a deal can be reached in time to open schools Sept. 2, Barker said.

The president of the striking teachers said preparations for the scheduled opening could be done in less time, and promised that union negotiators would work through the Labour Day weekend if necessary.

"We're more than willing to go back, literally any time, provided the board is willing to negotiate," said Lynn Johnston of Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, District 11.

"We can roll this around in 48 hours if we have to."

On Tuesday, the board started a telephone message line at 1-800-546-0709 with updated infor-

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mation on the strike.

Both Barker and Johnston this week said they were seeking a two-year agreement close to the previous contract, but both were still disappointed with the results of a meeting Sunday.

At it, the board presented what it thought of as a "major concession," a promise not to require teachers to teach more than six out of eight daily periods, said Barker, adding she is "baffled" the union thought the offer was a waste of time. "Ask them what the issue was that they took their strike vote on."

Johnston, however, said the board negotiators "seemed to be very flippant" and avoided the main issue in the dispute — the increased class sizes and staffing changes the board wants in order to save \$9 million over two years.

"We're not going to roll over on the \$9 million. Period," warned Johnston. "If they don't budge on that, the strike's going to go (on)."

AIDS committee to meet Sept. 15

The AIDS Committee of York Region will hold its third Annual General Meeting Monday, Sept. 15, from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at Green Acres Home for the Aged, 194 Eagle Street in Newmarket.

The AIDS Committee of York Region is a volunteer, not-for-profit charitable agency that provides education, support and advocacy for people affected by HIV/AIDS.

It is seeking individuals for positions on the board of directors, and for working sub-committees. Vacant board positions include secretary,

office coordinator, and member at large. Committee vacancies exist in fundraising, support group facilitation, home visiting, and public speaking. Most positions require a commitment of about four hours per month. Input and participation from people affected by HIV/AIDS is actively encouraged.

If you are interested in participating as either a board member or as a volunteer, or would like further information please call Cheryl or Reccia at 1-800-243-7717 by Sept. 10.



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