

Province-wide teachers' strike looms if new bill introduced

Teachers' unions were keeping a nervous eye on Queen's Park this week, expecting a bill they say could shake the education system and provoke a province-wide strike. When this legislation is introduced, the Ontario Teachers' Federation, an umbrella

group for teachers' unions, has a battle plan that "involves an escalation of responses," said Ihor Baczynsky, local president for York Catholic Teachers. "I don't know how far it's going to go."

A province-wide strike "may very well happen. It hasn't been spelled out yet," he added last week.

Baczynsky admitted an illegal walk-out "would be rather repugnant" for York Region teachers.

"But if there's no other way of focusing this government's attention on that, that they can't — they shouldn't — proceed (with this legislation), then it's a last resort," he added.

Local leaders expect the OTF will call all presidents to a meeting soon after the legislation is introduced.

"Right now, it looks horrible," said Lynn Johnston, president for local public high school teachers.

"I've heard everything from rotating strikes and work to rule, culminating in a full withdrawal of services" to protest the bill, he added.

What will actually be in the legislation isn't certain, although unions which held talks with the education

EDUCATION

ministry this month warn teachers' right to strike is in jeopardy, and that school boards could get more control over teachers' working conditions, including class sizes.

Non-certified teachers may soon be allowed teach some courses, and school principals and vice-principals might lose their union memberships, they say.

Also, the powerful Education Improvement Commission recently suggested lengthening the school year by 15 days — "just more oil on the fire" for "maxed-out" teachers, Johnston said.

Teachers haven't given up hope in a negotiated compromise with the government, said York Region Women Teachers' president Pam Gillan. "These are fairly drastic measures and they (the unions) would like to have some input," she said Tuesday.

—Mike Adler



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Some say, "change is inevitable!"

But I believe that if we don't manage change, change will manage us! That's what is inevitable!

We're at the crossroads in Markham. The vision we had ... the vision that brought most of us to Markham ... had us buy homes and raise our families here, is in danger of going out of focus! Worsening traffic congestion, crowded schools, massive development schemes, disappearing green spaces, on-going confrontation between ratepayers and Council, and deteriorating relationships with other senior levels of government ... all are troubling problems.

Whenever any Council is caught up in the process of rapid growth, there is a real danger that the resulting pressures pit them against the very people they were elected to serve. To some degree, there are those that believe that just such a thing has happened in Markham.

For my part, I am returning to public life to run as a Regional Councillor in the upcoming municipal election ... not because it's a job (I already have a great job) but because it's time to *re-focus the vision* that made our Town the very best in Ontario! If we get busy now, it's ours to keep ... not lose. But just as surely, if we continue on the current path, the Markham we know and love, will disappear.

As part of my campaign to re-focus and listen to our residents, I will be holding community forums starting in mid-October. There will be an opportunity for frank discussions with ratepayers, business leaders, educators, seniors, the handicapped, and men and women from all walks of life. I hope that this type of dialogue will help us reach a consensus as to what direction you want Council to pursue in shaping the future of this wonderful town. For my part, I will listen very carefully.


The process of stopping and listening must never be ignored! I believe in the adage that time is not "found" ... it is "made" Existing residents must be listened to ... not argued with.

With your support, I will fight with every ounce of energy to re-focus the vision.


Sincerely,

Frank Scarpitti

Candidate Regional Council




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