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Schools to remain open if strike called

MIKE ADLER
 Staff Reporter

Schools will stay open and school buses will be running during a province-wide teachers strike as long as it is safe, area school boards said yesterday.

A spokesperson said the Catholic board "will continue to monitor developments closely and will act decisively if the safety of students is in jeopardy."

If the board is "unable to ensure student safety, parents will be advised to keep their children at home and buses will be cancelled," said Chris Cable.

The public board has drawn up contingency plans, but a strike has not been announced and local teacher federations have not declared they will participate, said public affairs officer Brian Jamieson.

"The protest is not directed at us, so we don't want to aggravate the

situation by making people more anxious than necessary," Jamieson added yesterday.

A strike, or another form of mass protest by teachers appeared closer yesterday, after talks between union leaders and provincial Education Minister John Snobelen reportedly broke down.

It isn't clear when a strike might be called over Bill 160, the Education Quality Improvement Act, which moved through second reading Tues-

day night, local federation leaders said.

Provincial officials have promised two days between an announcement and a strike, but local teachers are clinging to the hope that the government will change the bill, they added yesterday.

One York Region teachers' union president, Dean Bodkin, said his members are concentrating on getting information on the bill out to parents.

"Some sort of a walkout is absolutely the last thing that we want," said Pam Gillan, president for local women teachers in public elementary schools.

But Lynn Johnston, representing public high school teachers, said the bill, which would give the government power to control class sizes and cut preparation time, must be amended to keep those issues part of contracts negotiated between boards and teachers.

Bradley hangs up hat

JOAN RANSBERRY
 Staff Reporter

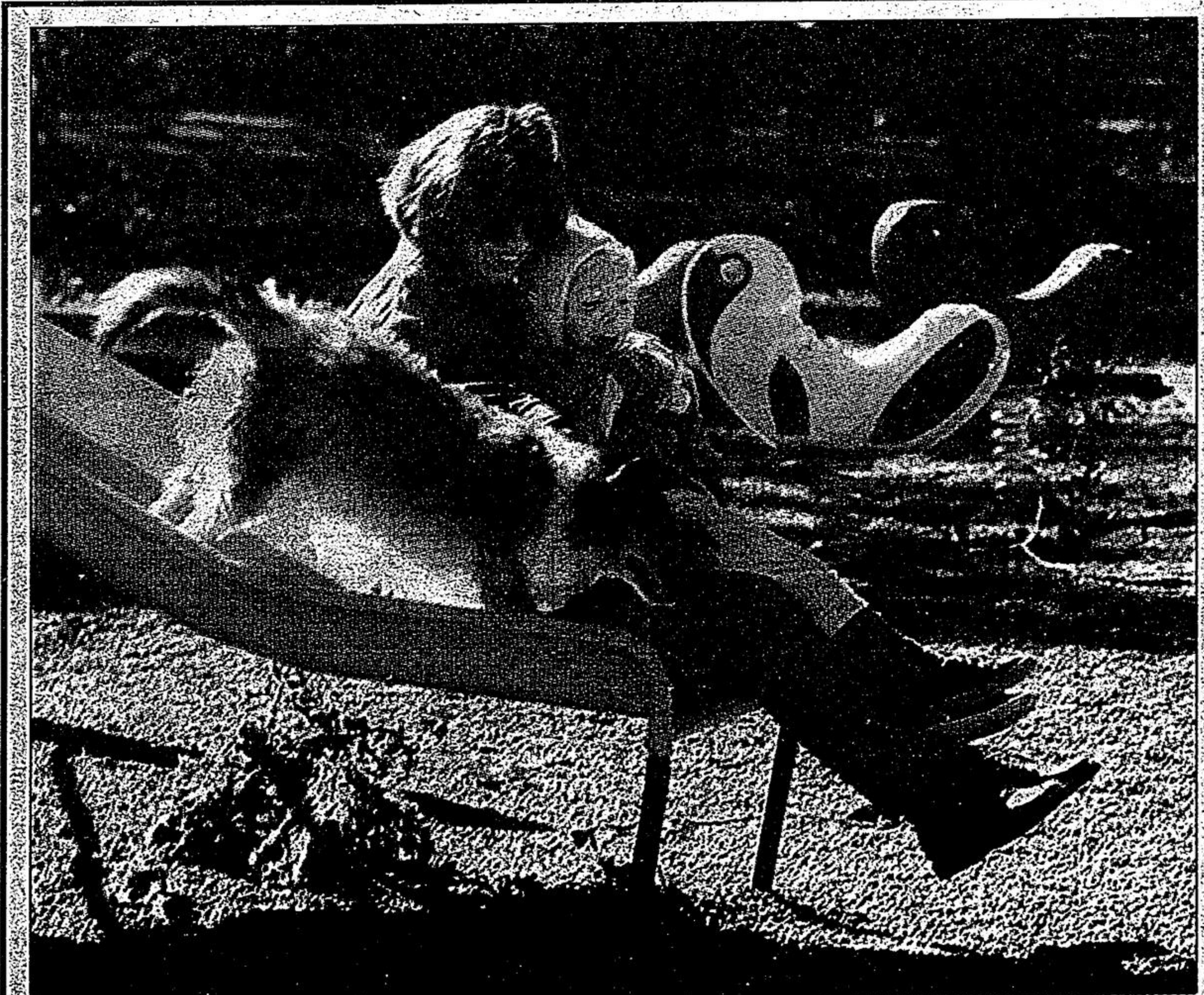
Will she or won't she? The guessing game is over: Ward 1 Councillor Ivanka Bradley will not be seeking the mayor's job in the Nov. 10 election.

Instead, Bradley said she's throwing her full support behind mayoralty candidate Mike Watson. Last week, the Ward 2 councillor

announced that he's challenging incumbent mayor Wayne Emmer-son. And withdrawing from the mayoral race is Musselman's-Lake resident Charlene Jones, who said yesterday she's also backing Watson.

In leaving the political arena, Bradley said it's the people she'll miss. "I would like to thank the people in our community for giving me the privilege to serve them for six

■ Please see page 6 ■



HEAD FIRST: Mickey the sheltie joins in the fun during playtime at the parkette off Stouffer Street with Karen Guest and her daughter Emma, 4, last week.

Photo by LISA DIAMOND

@random

Board news

A provincial agency is sending a former labour ministry mediator to assist stalled contract talks between York Region's Catholic school board and its teachers.

Olive Chester was a mediator with the ministry's office of mediation for 18 years, the Education Relations Commission said as it announced the appointment last week.

"She has been involved in

assisting negotiations in a large number and wide variety of labour relations contexts," the commission said in a release.

The York Catholic Teachers and the board are deadlocked over salary increments frozen during Ontario's Social Contract years.

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