The Teachers of Markham District High School Oppose Bill 160

HERE'S WHY...

Transfer of Power

Bill 160 takes all power away from voters and their school boards and gives it to Mike Harris and his Minister of Education.
All decisions will be made in private without public participation.

Bill 160 says that orders from the government on educational issues "are final and shall not be reviewed or questioned in any court".

Control of Funds

The Ontario government will have complete control over local funding. Our local school board will no longer be able to obtain the revenues needed for our students' educational needs. In the last 5 years, Ontario's ranking of per pupil expenditure in North America has fallen from 24th to 49th out of 63 provinces and states – this is before the 700 million cut that is the "goal" of this government.

Unqualified Teachers

Bill 160 makes provisions for replacing many teacher positions with unqualified instructors - a simple way to cut costs and destroy programs. These people will not be trained in teaching methods, curriculum implementation or class management. These people will not be subject to the College of Teachers' standards and discipline.

Threatened subjects include all of the arts, physical education, computer studies, technical studies, library and guidance. There are no assurances that this list will not grow.

Instructional & Prep Time

Increasing teachers' class time (reducing prep time) does not increase the amount of learning time for students as the government claims. In fact, reducing prep time will increase the number of students seen by a teacher since teachers will be teaching an extra class.

In the spring of 1996, teachers in York Region were timetabled to teach an extra class in the new school year. Before this Board initiative was reversed by the Education Relations Commission, Markham lost 19 teachers. The net effect of reducing our prep time was simply to increase the remaining teachers' workload while laying off teachers with absolutely no improvement to instructional time for students.

Class Sizes

In the past, it has been teachers who have continually negotiated for lower class sizes, not the government! Do not be fooled by the figure commonly known as the PTR (Pupil Teacher Ratio). When we started the year at Markham, our blended PTR (includes principals, vice-principals, librarians, consultants, guidance counsellors, special education and special needs teachers as well as any other support teachers in the calculation), was 16.1. This figure translated into an actual average class size of 34 students in grade 9 with numbers reaching as high as 42!

WE BELIEVE...

As teachers at Markham District High School, we truly believe in our system of public education that provides equal access and opportunity to all students. The massive changes proposed by the Harris government will certainly eliminate this equality.

It is with great difficulty and concern that we are participating in the province-wide political protest. The Harris government has left us with no other choice. This protest is our only defence in the battle for the future of quality education in Ontario schools. Without our protest this bill would be enacted with almost no public awareness or input.

We sincerely ask for your support, your understanding and your voice. Please tell the Harris government to scrap Bill 160 and allow us to begin working together for a truly improved system.

For more information visit our website

http://www.inforamp.net/~csd/bill160

Paid for by Teachers & Administrators of MDHS