

# Catholic teachers want 7.5% raise

**PATRICK CASEY**  
Staff Writer

York Region's Catholic teachers union has called a strike vote for June 22, meaning 2,700 teachers could be on the picket lines as soon as September.

Wednesday's decision to seek a strike mandate came one day after the union filed for conciliation with the Ministry of Labor, following two meetings with the board's negotiating team Monday and Tuesday.

A conciliator, who will act as a third-party mediator, will be appointed by Wednesday and is to bring the board and the teachers, who are seeking a 7.5-per-cent raise over two years, back to the bargaining table before the end of June.

Ihor Baczynsky, district president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, said last week's rapid action was necessary because the board's contract proposal included significant changes in staffing levels for English as a second lan-

guage and core resource teachers.

The offer also called for timetable and staffing changes, as well as a review of school librarians' responsibilities in September.

"We are hoping that the board gets a wake-up call and think of what they are doing," said Baczynsky.

"We had a meeting with our staff reps and they just couldn't believe what was coming from the board. We are prepared to live with the current collective agreement and work at trying to establish another one."

"We are prepared to work into the school year under that situation, but if they change the terms of the agreement in September, there could be major problems in the system," he added.

The region's Catholic elementary and secondary teachers signed a new two-year agreement in November, following a 14-day strike.

"We just went through a strike and nobody wants to go through

a strike again. The negotiating team at the board is willing to meet all summer to avoid that possibility and we want to sit down and talk," Separate board vice-chairperson Elizabeth Crowe said.

"If the union feels we can get somewhere quicker with a third person, that's fine."

The teachers are asking for a 4-per-cent raise this year and another 3.5 per cent in the second year, plus the cost of living.

That would raise the salary of the highest paid teacher from \$66,673 to \$71,767, while the pay for entry-level instructors would jump from \$27,959 to \$30,095.

Crowe said preliminary figures estimate the wage hike would cost the board about \$7 million a year, on top of the \$8 million it is spending to restore salaries frozen under the NDP's social contract.

"I'm optimistic that we can get together and make some progress," added Crowe. "As long as there's progress, there will not be a strike."



GETTING RIGHT INTO IT: Student Daniel Proper cheers on competitors at the York and Simcoe regional track and field meet for special needs high school students at SDSS Wednesday.

Photo by STEVE SOMERVILLE

# Teachers end talks

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majority of its teachers in front of students for a least one more class a day.

The board is staffing classrooms for next year under new regulations set out by Bill 160 that demand classrooms have a ratio of 22 students to one teacher and that students receive 1,250 minutes of instruction per week.

"It's the same old issue," Johnston said.

"We thought we were making progress but they are hiding behind Bill 160."

The union proposed to have teachers in the classroom for six of eight periods and use attrition to achieve student-teacher ratio of 23 to one by the end of Octo-

ber.

But the board wants guidance counsellors, teacher librarians and diagnostic resource teachers to work 7.5 periods out of eight, while others will be staffed at almost seven periods out of eight and some at six periods out of eight.

According to Barker, scheduling completed on Thursday proposed that 600 high school teachers will teach six periods out of eight, 900 be assigned to seven out of eight and 200 guidance teachers and librarians will be appointed to 7.5 periods out of eight.

Those teachers who are required to teach six classes will supervise cafeteria duty and assume extra-curricular activities,

Barker said.

"Certainly there are new realities with regards to working conditions," Barker said. "We have to look at the delivery of curriculum that requires 1,250 minutes per week and a class of 22 to 1 and we've been able to do this and protect all of our people."

To date across Ontario, only Toronto's separate school board has reached a tentative deal to have its secondary teachers in class for six of eight periods with the mandated student-teacher ratio.

But it must still be approved by the Ministry of Labor.

Currently, 35 other school boards and unions in Ontario have applied to the province for a mediator.

# Student photographs on display

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Art patrons will be delighted to learn that James Bessey, a highly respected local artist and long-time supporter of the gallery, will be featured in one of the upcoming exhibitions, which will run Sept. 23 to 27.

Latham Gallery association is currently accepting registrations for children's summer art classes. Acclaimed area artists Judy Bear Campbell and Margaret Grandison will conduct the July sessions, which will be held at the Stouffville train station.

Subjects will include drawing, painting, sculpture and print-making and gallery members are eligible for a 15 per cent discount on the cost of each course.

To register, or to enquire about becoming a member, call 640-8954.

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