

Separate board asked to 'get off butts'

... or union threatens to exercise September strike mandate

PATRICK CASEY
Staff Reporter

York Region's Catholic teachers will strike in September if the school board changes their current contract.

District union president Ihor Baczynsky made that pledge at a news conference yesterday morning after he slammed the board for refusing to negotiate without Ontario Labor Relations Board conciliator Bruce Janisse present.

The contract for the region's 2,700 ele-

mentary and secondary teachers expires Aug. 31 and local members of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association gave their union a 93-per-cent strike mandate earlier this month.

Baczynsky said teachers will exercise that right after Labor Day if the board makes changes to their agreement, including increasing classroom time for secondary instructors and a reducing preparation time for all teachers.

"It was made perfectly clear to the teachers when they voted that if the board makes changes to the agreement by

September, we will exercise our mandate," Baczynsky explained outside a boardroom at the Radisson Hotel.

"And as of September, if the proposal of the board is unacceptable, then the strike mandate will become valid. It is a situation we don't want to be in as of September, but we have been backed into a corner."

Talk with us

"That's why we are here today and, hopefully, we can get the board off their butts and start talking with us."

Janisse, who was appointed at the union's request, is to reconvene the two

sides at the bargaining table this morning after nearly a month of inactivity.

Working session

He wasn't available yesterday but the union wanted to negotiate without him. The board offered to hold a working session but no formal negotiations.

Board vice-chairperson Elizabeth Crowe said the union opened the door for changes to the agreement when it asked that a conciliator be appointed. If Janisse declares an impasse in negotiations, the board can change the agreement two weeks after he issues his report.

Although new provincial legislation on class sizes effectively forces teachers to spend more time in the classroom, Crowe said the board would not make changes unless it was absolutely necessary.

"However, we haven't even discussed each of our proposals yet," said Crowe.

"Staffing requirements still have to be done for the schools and transfers are ongoing. But that doesn't mean we can't negotiate. We want to meet but it is already the end of June. Let's get some dates for July."

Extend agreement

Baczynsky said the union asked the board to extend the current agreement until Sept. 22 to give both sides more time to negotiate but was turned down.

"We asked for Sept. 22 in order to get the schools open, in case we were still at the negotiating table," he said. "It was just a short period of time but they refused."

"If they had not, there would have been no need for us to take a strike vote."

But Crowe said the only reason the union asked for an extension was to avoid a spur-of-the-moment June strike vote.

"Instead of rushing into one in June, they wanted more time to get organized," she said. "They wanted the ability to call a strike vote in September."

Talks broke down on June 9 after just two meetings when Baczynsky became incensed with a board proposal that stripped 31 pages out of the current 75-page collective agreement. The proposal included a lower salary grid for new teachers, changes to benefits and a no-transfer policy.

Wage hike

The teachers' first proposal included a 7.5-per-cent wage hike over the next two years that would raise the salary of the highest-paid teacher to \$71,767 a year.

Negotiation dates have been established for August but Crowe said the board will seek additional days in July.

Baczynsky countered that establishing meetings has been difficult because of board negotiator Paul Rouleau's schedule, a charge that Crowe denies.

"Paul Rouleau is in France on a family holiday that has been booked for months. We will have Margo (Blight) there," stated Crowe.

"If she couldn't be there, we would have continued and found somebody else to be a spokesperson. We have a team approach and it is important that the entire team makes the decisions."



FRANK'S

Hardware

HOME HARDWARE IS AN ALL CANADIAN COMPANY... OWNED AND OPERATED BY A MEMBER OF YOUR OWN COMMUNITY.



NEIGHBOUR SALE ENDS

Thursday, July 9, 1998



SPECIAL

257

PACK OF 40

MARK 1 GARBAGE BAGS
26" x 36" size
4440-420-104



THERMOS

SPECIAL 16⁹⁷

THERMOS 27 LITRE COOLER
With carry handle. Hunter green colour.
6450-949



SPECIAL

179

EACH

TPI WATERING CAN
2-gallon capacity. 5012-087-124

SPECIAL

5⁹⁷

EACH

HOME GARDENER 50' GARDEN HOSE
5038-719-64

PERKINS 477-8810

HOME HARDWARE

8650 WOODBINE AVE., MARKHAM





SPECIAL

237

EACH

RIVER TRAIL PROPANE
For barbecues, lanterns, heaters, etc. 16.4 oz.
6332-328

YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD HARDWARE STORE™