

EDUCATION: Teacher's union says extra-curricular activities could suffer first

# Teacher demands out of reach: board

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instruction per week.

"We simply can't afford to maintain the last contract, given our funding allocation from the ministry," said Karen Barker, chairperson of the board's negotiation advisory committee.

Barker says there is room to manoeuvre in the language of the agreement and the benefit package, but that has to be done in negotiation.

Harrison says he holds out hope for a last-minute agreement.

"Our argument is (that) the money is there," said Harrison. "This isn't over — the day of telling will be (today)," Harrison said. "If this is their final offer and we're told to take it or leave it, don't be surprised if we take action. That doesn't necessarily mean a strike, but we'll have to decide what to do on the first day, the first week and the first month."

While he hasn't ruled out a full-fledged strike, Harrison says, extra-curricular activities could suffer first.

"Metro said their teachers won't be involved in extra-curricular

activities. It's something we have to consider. The classroom has to come first."

That kind of threat worries students most, students say, especially those who look to sports as a ticket to university scholarships and a means to balance out the intensity of academics throughout the year.

**This isn't over — the day of telling will be (today)**

Public high school teachers in Bradford have been on strike since Aug. 20 and began walking the picket line Tuesday when students arrived for the first day of school.

Talks between Simcoe teachers and the board broke off at 3 a.m. Tuesday morning and no new negotiation dates have been scheduled.

Simcoe is viewed as a test case because it is one of the few boards in Ontario that starts school a week earlier than most, explained teacher Sandy McInnes, as she walked the line in front of Bradford District High School Wednesday morning.

"The big issue is they've taken our prep time away. Technically we still have half a prep period, but it's supposed to be used for other duties," said McInnes.

The math teacher says she spends hours marking at night and on weekends.

"I hope to get my prep time back, so I can prepare for my job properly. I know a lot of people think we're lazy, but I work hard. I'm up early, Sunday morning and often stay marking until four in the afternoon," she said.

"The board says they're following Bill 160 and they don't have the money," she said. "But there are ways of interpreting any Bill."

McInnes looks to tentative agreements reached in North Bay and Parry Sound as reasons to remain positive.

"As soon as there is a crack in the wall with a deal of six out of eight, it makes it more hopeful for the rest of us and some boards are going back on one-year deals," she said.

And even though some argue the northern boards don't have the same financial demands, Simcoe and York Region face, McInnes says the money can be found.

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"Simcoe got more money under Bill 160 and we've downsized since 1992 and worked with 25 to 30 per cent less teaching staff, and we've taken unpaid days with flattened benefits," she said, predicting the

walkout in Simcoe could go on for some time.

"I think it's going to go on for a while. People are not happy," McInnes said. "Some people were quite shocked at their own behavior when they were out for two weeks last fall, but they were upbeat and determined. But this time it is less upbeat and they're saying, 'Here we go again, how many times do we have to do this?'"



STAFF PHOTO/JOAN RANSBERRY

Design Tech Ltd. of Markham puts the finishing touches in the council chambers at the town's new Sandiford Drive location.

## Region's elementary students may not return to school Tuesday

BY JENNIFER BROWN  
STAFF WRITER

York Region's 50,000 elementary students may face an extended summer holiday as talks between the public school board and its teachers broke off Tuesday night.

And with no further talks scheduled, the action prompted local elementary union officials to call a meeting with members last night to consider their next step — a strike vote.

"The situation will be explained to them and we will go from there," said local elementary teachers federation president Pam Gillan.

On Monday night, the board announced it would not change the terms and conditions of the elementary teacher's current contract, based on a recommendation by the mediator.

The two sides held three mediation sessions and settled on a number of contract language issues, but Gillan said they couldn't reach an agreement on preparation time and staffing and talks came to a close.

"It was not entirely unproductive. It's not been contentious, there hasn't been any shouting or fighting. But when the board requested the no-board report, we realized their intention was to change terms, which I suspect will happen," she said.

**We don't feel pressure to do this — obviously it is to everyone's advantage to get a deal.**

Karen Barker, chairperson of the board's negotiations committee said every effort was made to continue talks, but the board had nothing else to offer.

What remains now is the official word on when an elementary strike could begin.

The union is now using the assistance of provincial negotiators and the decision about when a walkout will occur is unknown.

"These aren't decisions we'll be making locally," Gillan said, but

she added there hasn't been pressure from provincial union officials to move toward a strike.

"We don't feel pressure to do this — obviously it is to everyone's advantage to get a deal," she said.

The main issue in the elementary dispute revolves around preparation time and the amount the board has proposed for the next collective agreement.

Gillan says the board has offered less than the amount suggested by the province's Bill 160.

"In the last year or so, we've gone from 200 minutes to 100 minutes to 160 minutes on a weekly basis, with the use of four PA days. Now the board is offering 120 minutes, and the Bill 160 funding averages 150 minutes. This puts us substantially below that," she said.

Barker declined to comment on details surrounding preparation time, indicating only that "the funding is very different" now and she has hopes the two sides will reach a deal before school starts Tuesday.

"I am hopeful York Region ele-

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individual off-suite washrooms with stand-up shower stalls.

The move from Civic Avenue will begin tomorrow morning and take place over the three-day holiday weekend. The downtown office will close at noon Friday, while afternoon calls will be transferred to an alternative temporary switchboard.

The town will open for business at 37 Sandiford Drive at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, Mayor Emmerson said.

In mid-June, council agreed to spend between \$160,000 and \$175,000 in furnishings and awarded the contract to Combined Offices Ltd., after a nine-member committee visited neighbouring municipalities.

Through a five-year lease agreement, the Imperial Centre will house the 80-seat council chamber, administration offices, including the mayor, clerk's, planning, engineering, building, treasury and public works.

The recreation department, however, will remain at the Stouffville Recreation Complex.

Last year, the council chambers was moved out of Civic Avenue after a staff report indicated the building was unsafe. Council meetings were held in various locations in town, including churches and Latham Hall.

The public did not support a proposal to house the town on top of a planned library expansion.

The fate of the existing Civic Avenue building will be known soon. While many people expect the old town hall will be converted into The Clock Tower, a music and theatre facility, the town is presently accepting proposals from development companies, community groups interested in relocating in this historic and prestigious location in the heart of the community.

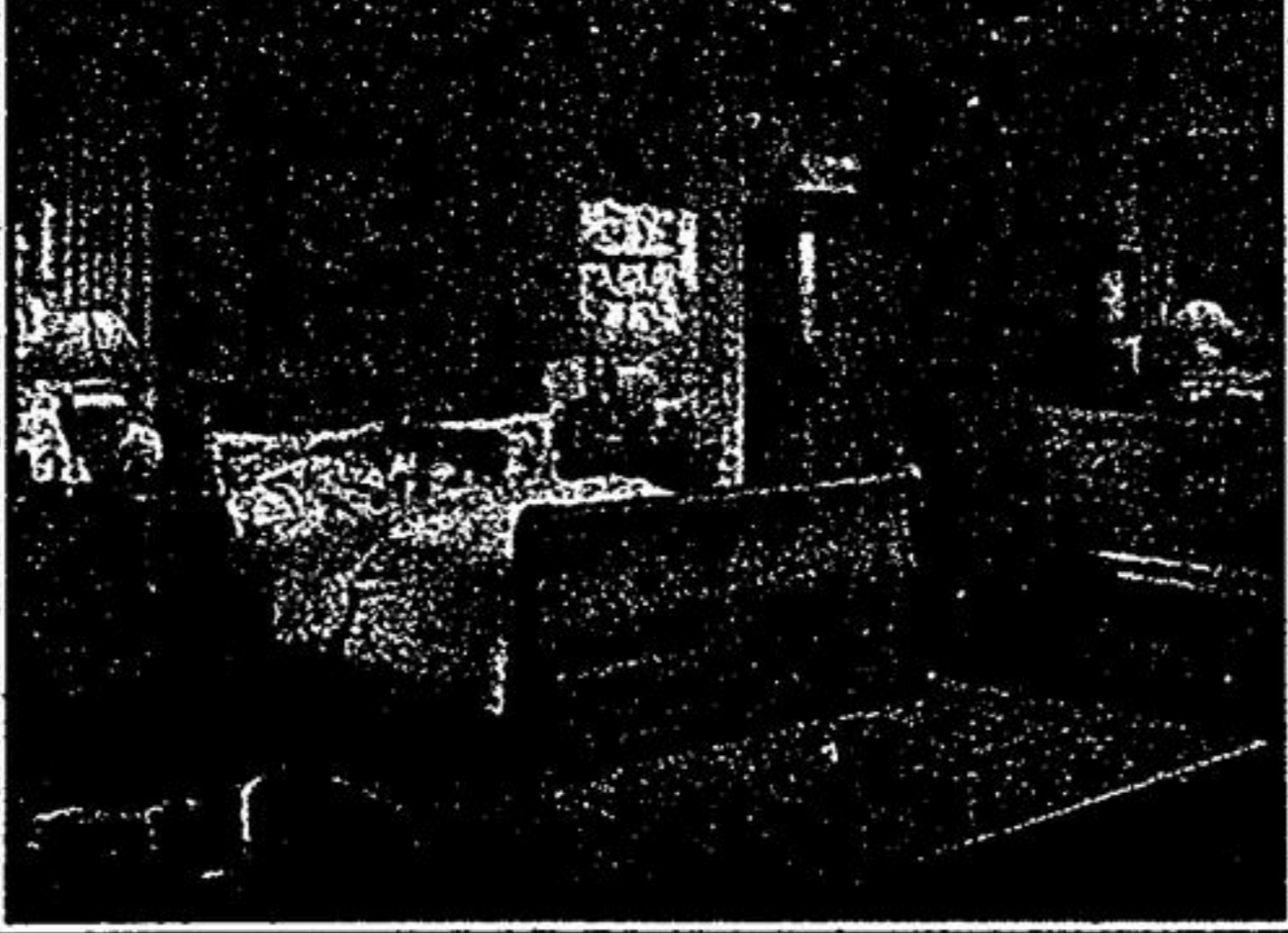
A few developers have toured the building as well, said Emmerson. "Yes, there is some interest," he said.

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