

**EDUCATION:** Return to school on hold for thousands of separate board students

# Rhetoric adds fuel to strike's bitterness

*'Students will suffer if we bend,' local union president insists*

BY PATRICK CASEY  
STAFF WRITER

The war of words began to boil over on the first day of a Catholic teachers' strike that has closed 72 elementary and secondary schools in York Region.

While their counterparts in the public system greeted students for the first day of school, the region's 2,700 Catholic teachers shut down Bloomington Road with a three-hour protest at the separate board offices in Aurora.

Speaking into a megaphone, Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association district president Ihor Baczynsky slammed the board for posting private security officers at the entrance of Academy Drive, keeping teachers away from the front entrance of the board headquarters and the adjacent Cardinal Carter Catholic High School.

"If there was any doubt what this board is all about, you can see it now," Baczynsky shouted to a cheering mass of teachers.

"The major problem here is that the students will suffer if we bend," he said.

Standing at the top of a hill in a cornfield overlooking a throng of teachers, Baczynsky was joined by Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation vice-president Jim McQueen, OSSTF local president Gerry Harrison and OECTA president Marshall Jarvis.

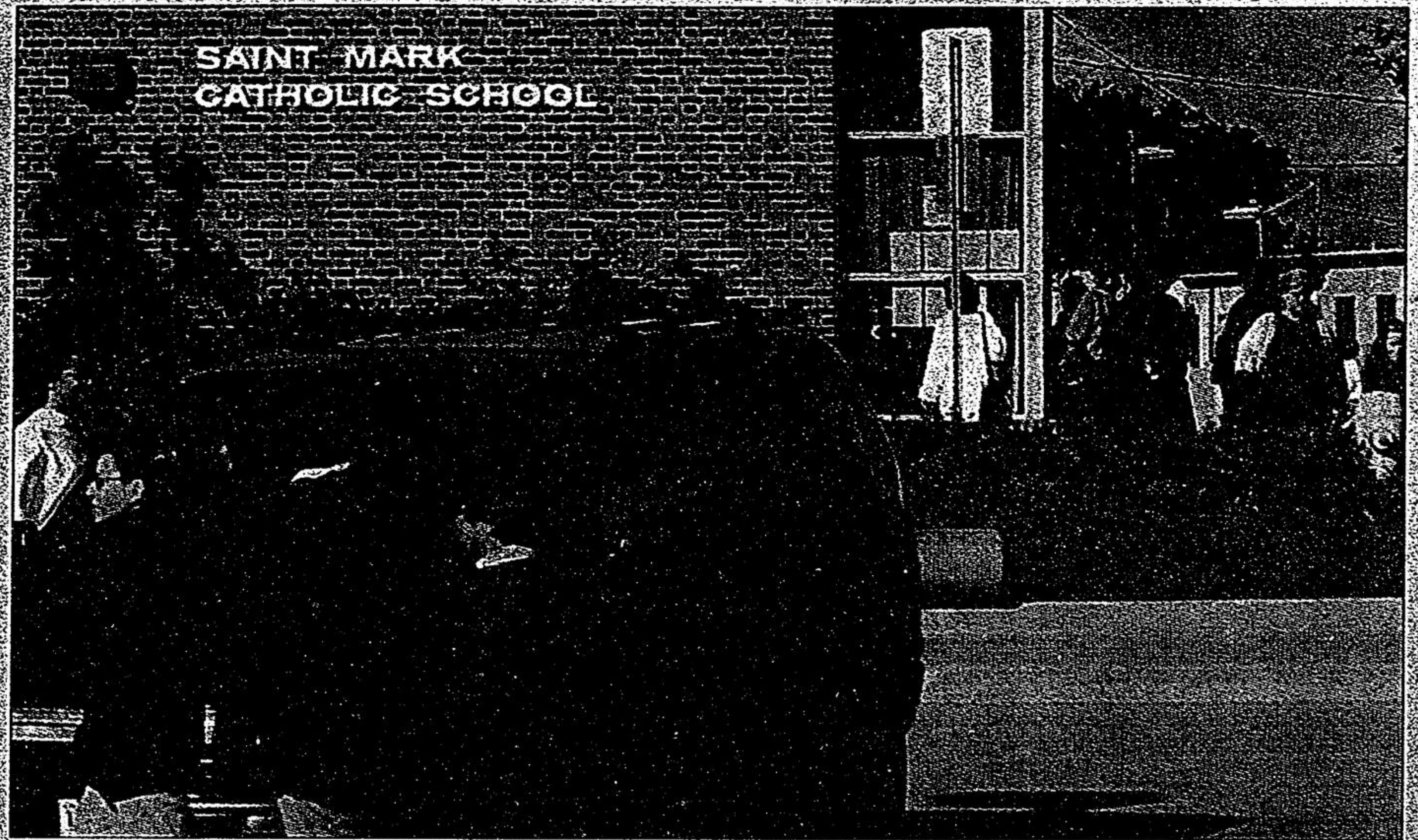
Jarvis called the board's actions deplorable, adding the situation is a far cry from his days as a teacher at Newmarket's Sacred Heart Catholic High School.

"This is not the school board I remember," Jarvis said. "We are standing out here on behalf of teachers across Ontario and we are prepared to return to the negotiating table and settle this dispute. But the board has to come outside of the building off the mountain and through its security to talk to us."

Separate board vice-chairperson Elizabeth Crowe said striking teachers should be prepared to stay off board property. "We were partially sympathetic last year during the Bill 160 protest and let them up Academy Drive. And things just stayed that way during the contract strike," Crowe said yesterday.

With more than 45,000 Catholic students out of school across the region, Thornhill Junior Kindergarten teacher Yolanda Bordignon said she'd rather be teaching than holding a picket sign, but cuts to preparation time will affect student learning.

However, the explanation is not enough for Stouffville parent Charlene Mason, whose three children are missing class time from St. Mark elementary school. "Everybody just keeps saying, it's not in our hands to do anything, and parents keep getting the runaround," she said.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Striking separate board teachers meet in front of St. Mark Catholic School in Stouffville Tuesday morning after contract talks with board negotiators broke off at 3:30 a.m. last Friday. For more on the education crisis, see pages 4, 6.

## Stouffville Catholic parents fed up with squabbles

BY JOAN RANSBERRY  
STAFF WRITER

Catholic parents in Whitchurch-Stouffville are fed up with the constant squabbles between teachers and trustees. "Enough is enough," said Loula Bigioni.

As the teacher's strike affecting St. Mark Catholic School and 70 other separate schools across York Region drags on, Stouffville parents are cautious about taking sides.

But regardless of which side, if any, parents are taking, the message seems to be clear.

"We're completely fed up," Bigioni said.

*"They waited until the first day of school to hurt my children and any support I had for them is gone."*

The mother of three is pointing an accusing finger at members of the negotiating team.

"They went to the cottage all summer and left our kids high and dry. Our (St. Mark) teachers don't want to be out. Our kids' brains are turning to mush. The worst part is, they're not even at the table. Talks broke down," she said.

Markham parent Heidi Claffey agreed the talks seem strategically planned to affect students heading back to school in September.

"What I'd like to know is, if the teachers were so concerned about the children, where were they all summer long?" she asked. "Why weren't they picketing in July and August and storming Queen's Park then?"

They waited until the first day of school to hurt my children and any support I had for them is gone.

All of Bigioni's children attend St. Mark. "They watch their friends from Summitview (Public School) walking to school in the morning and here they sit," she said.

Yesterday, Bigioni joined hundreds of parents in a protest at the separate school board office in Newmarket.

Two of Lesley O'Connor's three children attend separate schools in York Region, one at St. Mark and another at Brother Andre Catholic High School. Because of the strike, neither are attending school. The one O'Connor child getting an education these days goes to an art school in Thornhill. Nevertheless, O'Connor is trying to keep an open mind.

"Of course, there are two sides to every story," she said.

"I'm not choosing sides. But, because they're not even talking, this is getting very frustrating. When they're in the classroom, our teachers teach conflict management. Now our kids are witnessing adults who can't solve their issues. What are we teaching them now?"

— with files from Kathleen Griffin

## Get to class, teachers told

FROM PAGE 1

556 non-classroom teachers in programs such as special education, guidance, library and English and French as a second language.

The rhetoric that's being tossed from both groups is too much for Stouffville's Sara Marsala, who joined more than 300 people for yesterday's question-and-answer session at the board office.

She called the strike a political action between unionized employees and the provincial government that should not be waged on the students' time. "We don't care what the issues are, we want the kids back in the classroom," she said.

When several teachers said they wanted to be back in school, parents angrily told them to forsake the picket lines for the classroom and take another strike vote.

Baczynsky said he will discuss that option when the teachers hold an information meeting today.

Many parents have been urging elementary teachers to return to work while the contentious secondary school issues are bargained. But OECTA first vice-president Claire Laughlin said all union members must stick together.

"This board wants it all and they want it on the backs of the teachers. That's why we are striking today and nobody is going to give it up without a fight."

**Flyer Inserts For Thursday, September 10, 1998**

Business Depot	Markham Skating Club	Ristorante Luna
Sears	Advanced Fashion Direct	Dolphin Cove Pools
The Bay	Allan Hobbins	Beaver Lumber
Today's Homes	Manhattan Hair	Home Hardware - Nwkt
Neumedia - Sunny Dellon	Double Double Pizza & Chicken	Sears - Nwkt
Coupon	Geomedla - Kert Body Wash	

MARKHAM

**ECONOMIST & SUN** • Stouffville Tribune

**WE'RE FIRST IN DISTRIBUTION**

We've delivered 38,955 8 1/2 flyers door-to-door so far this year.

For further information on how we can deliver your flyers, call your local advertising sales representative at:

Markham (905) 294-8244 Stouffville (905) 640-2100

**AND OPENING SALE**

Sept. 12 - Sept. 20

**PS PHARMASAVE Health Centre** would like to invite you to the Grand Opening of our new pharmacy in UNIONVILLE.

Enter Our Grand Opening Draw To Win One Of Many Prizes And In-Store Giveaways

20 Fred Varley Drive, UNIONVILLE, 944-8800