

INSIDE: Opinion 6
 Issues 18
 Sports 23
 Classified 24

18 The first in a series studying growth in York Region and where it's headed in the future.

Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library

ARTS & CULTURE CALENDAR

EVENT: Historical society annual Fall Walking Tour

WHEN: Sunday, Oct. 4 at 2 p.m.

WHERE: meet at library parking lot

10 Volunteer Joan Grass acts as a greeter at York Central Hospital

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Stouffville Tribune

50 CENTS INCLUDING GST / 48 PAGES

SATURDAY, OCT. 3, 1998

TO REACH US: (905) 640-2100

TAXES: Province will force York Region to use tools provided

Teachers won't strike until end of month

Still lots of time to meet with board, union says

BY JENNIFER BROWN
STAFF WRITER

Public elementary teachers in York Region say they will give negotiations one more try and won't go on strike until the end of the month.

Talks are planned for this week and their union is hopeful a settlement can be reached before a walk-out is necessary.

"We're putting the call out to the board to meet again," said Phyllis Benedict, president of the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario.

"It gives us lots of time. Unless things go absolutely nowhere, there's no point drawing a line in the sand. It's not usually a tactic boards respond to very well."

Last week, 81 per cent of the region's 2,800 elementary teachers voted 77 per cent in favour of a strike.

"This board is playing fast and loose with negotiations," Benedict said in a written statement following release of the vote results.

Among other things, it is trying to pit the teachers against their leaders. Plainly, the teachers didn't find the board's recent advertising campaign credible or helpful in resolving this crisis.

The union is determined to get back 40 minutes of lost prep time — time stripped away last month when the board staffed schools under the province's new funding formula.

They also want stronger language protecting their salary grid and job security.

But board spokesperson Karen

See TEACHERS, page 3.

Rebate a bad idea: MPP

BY LISA QUEEN
STAFF WRITER

York-Mackenzie MPP Frank Klees will call on the province to take unilateral action against York Region if councillors don't provide relief for businesses facing hefty tax hikes.

The region could be forced to soften the impact using tools provided by the province such as

phasing in tax increases and decreases for up to eight years and creating new classes of properties to ensure the tax burden isn't shifted to small business.

"If, in fact, municipalities refuse to address the underlying problem, there may not be any other option for the province (than) to act unilaterally to implement some of these tools," Klees said Friday, a day after the region's

finance committee agreed in principle to rebate a portion of business tax hikes.

The region's plan provides a refund to businesses whose taxes have increased by more than 25 per cent; if the increase is \$1,500 or more. The rebate would be capped at \$25,000.

It would only apply to property assessed at less than \$1 million. The owner of a property assessed

at \$2 million would receive a rebate only on the first \$1 million.

Klees called the rebate plan a "Band-Aid solution," adding Ministry of Finance staff has assured him the province's tools would mitigate the effects of tax increases.

However, regional treasurer Sandra Cartwright and financial

See FINANCE, page 7.



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

SWEET FAIR FARE

Getting a healthy start to this year's Markham Fair are, from left, Sherise Cromwell, Crystal Balsingham and Christine Ward-Billingham who chomp down on delicious candy floss — a fair staple. The Markham Fair runs all weekend.

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