

EDUCATION: Ministry, Catholic board at odds over plans to make up lost time due to strike

Ministry scraps Catholic board calendar plans

BY PATRICK CASEY
STAFF WRITER

It's back to the chalk board for York Region's Catholic school officials after the Ministry of Education scrubbed the board's plan to make up lost instructional time from a three-week teachers strike.

After an exhaustive consultation process with parents and school council executives, trustees ratified a revised school calendar on Oct. 6 that recouped 10 days of classroom time for the region's 45,000 elementary and secondary students.

But in a letter from the ministry on Thursday, Assistant Deputy Minister Norbert Hartmann criticized education directors at the eight school boards affected by strikes and lockouts for failing to claw back more of the lost time.

"Although the proposal had a number of common elements, there was also a significant variance in the number of days to be made up and the means for recovering them," the memo stated. "A higher correlation between the days lost and the days to be recovered was also anticipated."

Closer congruence with the results of the consultation process was expected. The plans also raised a number of policy issues, which needed to be addressed on a consistent, province-wide basis.

However, Catholic chairperson Tina Rotondi Molinari slammed the ministry for issuing a blanket letter to all

eight school boards, especially when it only deals with the secondary school issue.

All of York Region's Catholic elementary and secondary teachers took part in the 15-day strike last month.

"I find the memo offensive when they do not consider the individual plans submitted," stated Molinari. "Our submission was a joint proposal with the teachers union and it was one of the few that had agreements from both parties."

"We thought our calendar was a no-brainer. We took into consideration the fact

parents and students said they did not want to go to school on Saturdays and into July. I am trying to understand where the ministry is coming from, but that will never happen."

The government's back-to-work legislation did not dictate how many days should be made up, but Hartmann's memorandum said high school students must receive 176 instructional days and allocate at least five teaching days from their professional activity and examination days.

The separate board already used three of its professional activity days as part of its

original plan, but under the new guidelines, high school students would gain two more days in class at the expense of their exam days.

"It wasn't easy coming to an agreement that everyone could live with. Now the government tells us to give them our plan and if they don't like it, they will just write new rules. It's really disappointing how the government bullies school boards, parents and teachers by just making new rules," Ihor Baczynsky, district president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association said.

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