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EDUCATION: Spring vacation days eaten up by teachers' labour dispute

No break for Catholic students this March

BY DAWN LIERSCH
 STAFF WRITER

Two days for March break isn't enough for York Region's Catholic high school students.

The separate school board has slashed some of students' holidays, including Christmas and March break, to make up for time lost during the teachers' strike last fall.

So, while public school students are enjoying a week off, Catholic students are to be back to class on Wednesday.

But some students are making other plans.

Some, like Michael Montesano, will be vacationing. The Grade 10 student from Cardinal Carter High School in Aurora will be at Horseshoe Valley Resort, north of Barrie.

Montesano has been looking forward to the vacation ever since his aunt won the trip last year.

"I'm going away on a ski trip for the week. I've got permission (from the school)," he said.

"I know I can catch up, I don't think I'll miss much, because all my friends are doing the same thing."

Michelle Tremblay isn't as lucky. The

Grade 10 student from Sacred Heart Catholic High School in Newmarket hoped to go skiing in Whistler, B.C. until she learned classes were scheduled this week.

"I can't miss those three days," she said.

Tremblay said most of her friends will be cutting classes to go away on pre-planned holidays.

But she worries about missing too much school.

Maral Masoodi also fears she'll miss something important at school. The Grade 11 student at St. Robert High School in Thornhill would like to take more time off, but she's already skipping Wednesday to attend driving lessons.



MARAL MASOODI

Fear of missing test prompts attendance

"It's ridiculous ... If I don't come, I might miss a test," she said.

"They shortened our holidays at Christmas but a lot of students didn't go to school. This time, teachers are saying these are regular school days."

Some teachers have even scheduled tests to ensure students don't cut classes.

Cardinal Carter student Jason Harman said he has no options.

"I have a report due on Wednesday and I have a test on Thursday," he said, adding he hopes to reschedule his test so he's free the rest of the week.

Although he was supposed to work all this week, Harman has given up his hours and is concerned about losing money.

"I would have been working 10 hours a day, at \$9 an hour, so it adds up. I'm going to show up (at school) on Wednesday and see how it goes. I hope to be able to work on Thursday and Friday."

For students, the spring break is usually an opportunity to earn some extra money.

Marc Volante, a Grade 10 student at St. Robert, plans to skip classes so he can work with his father.

"I'm taking the week, I don't care. I've got to get away from school, I've been cramming so much already because of the strike," he said, adding he doesn't expect his classmates to show up either.

"Teachers already know we're not going, they asked us how many would be there and no one raised their hand."

At St. Robert, Maryam Biglou's teachers have assigned homework for the week because they expect empty classrooms.

"Teachers don't want to be there either," said the Grade 11 student. "It's not fair, this is the time we're supposed to catch up on projects and study for mid-terms. We didn't ask for the month off in September."

Another St. Robert student, Natalie Guerni, said she thinks teachers understand the students' frustration.

"Teachers are saying, 'We're not going to tell you not to come — but...'"

— With files from Rosemarie Rucella



MARC VOLANTE

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