

Teachers, school board still talking

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eliminating extra-curriculars even before the announcement came late Friday.

Braving bone-chilling winds, the students held signs that read "Work together, sort out your problems," and received honks of support from passing cars.

Their displeasure was directed at union and board negotiators, who have been unable to reach a deal.

During negotiations, teachers have gradually stepped up their job action. Their first move was refusing to attend staff or school committee meetings, complete Ministry of Education forms or place comments on students' report cards.

Students have not received their reports, as the board refused to approve them with only letter grades.

Laura Title said she was supposed to receive her marks more than a week ago. "We do not even know if we are going to get them," the 13-year-old said.

Laura, who also played music at school after class, said her parents encouraged her to take part in the protest.

"It's really important we do our best and get the best education (possible) this year," she said.

Liz Zuk, who has two children at Willowbrook, said she had reasons for supervising the protest.

"I just wanted to make sure they understand why they are out here but on this cold day, I'm sure they know why they are out here," she said.

Zuk said she blames the stalled talks on the provincial government's demands for bigger workloads without sufficient pay.

Negotiators have not met in a month and Zuk echoed students' concern over the lack of movement between teachers

and trustees.

Board spokesperson Lucia Cascioli said the two sides have been talking despite the impasse.

"We are just having informal discussions," she said.

But Phyllis Benedict, president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, said there have been no informal talks.

"It would appear for all purposes that they are not taking the elementary teachers seriously," she said.

The withdrawal of extra-curriculars includes clubs, sports and any activities likely to extend beyond a regular school day.

Teachers in various boards, including

York Region's Catholic board, have reached agreements but Benedict said that does not place extra pressure on her members to reach a deal.

"If anything, it should be putting pressure on the board to get back to the table," she said.

The board's latest contract offer includes guaranteed pay hikes of 2 per cent in each of the next three years.

The teachers, who can earn up to \$68,000 a year and have gone without a salary hike for eight years, say their average salary ranks 12th out of 31 comparable groups in Ontario. They want a 3.9-per-cent raise over one year.

The two sides are to meet Wednesday.

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Spirit team collects toys, hosts skate for needy

Stouffville's Junior A hockey team is collecting toys and food for the needy at Christmas this month at special events.

The fourth annual Skate with the Spirit free public skate takes place on Sunday, Dec. 17, from 12 noon to 2 p.m. on the main ice pad at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Recreation Complex.

Admission is a donation of food (or money) for the Whitchurch-Stouffville Foodbank. Skaters can meet the Stouffville Spirit players for 2000-2001. There will be draws for door prizes.

Children can get in free to the Spirit's two home games before Christmas at the Recreation Complex by bringing in a new or nearly-new toy.

Toys will be donated to needy children by the Lions Club of Stouffville.

The Spirit host the Markham Waxers on Thursday and the Parry Sound Shamrocks on Dec. 21. Game time is 7:30 p.m.

Please call the Spirit offices at 642-2123 for more information.

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