

# Public high school teachers alone on 'strike watch'

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money is available for salary increases. "My hope is that the government does put some money in for negotiations this year," he said. "We've heard inklings in the past from (education minister Elizabeth) Witmer and (Premier Ernie) Eves, but then again they could do a right-hand turn and say they're going to wait until the next calendar year."

While Mr. Harrison says a walkout is possible, he hopes several boards will reach deals with their teachers after the report is released.

"Once that happens, there's no need for a province-wide strike because obviously there's room to maneuver," he said.

It is unlikely York Catholic District School Board teachers will join any walkouts since their contract is in force until Aug. 31, 2003.

Wendy van Straten, the head of the York Region chapter of the Elementary Teachers' Federation, says her colleagues agree funding for education is "deplorable," but

declined to say whether elementary teachers would follow the OSSTF's lead.

She did say, however, the province has put all teachers in "an untenable situation."

"The province is saying all teachers have to have a contract that expires in 2004," she said.

*'You just put on your Pollyanna hat... You hope for the best, but prepare for the worst.'*

"They haven't given us any indication what the funding will be for the 2003-4 year, but we're expected to make a collective agreement, which doesn't make a whole lot of sense."

Despite this, both say their unions are continuing to talk with the board.

"You just put on your Pollyanna hat and hope for the best," she said. "You hope for the best, but prepare for the worst."

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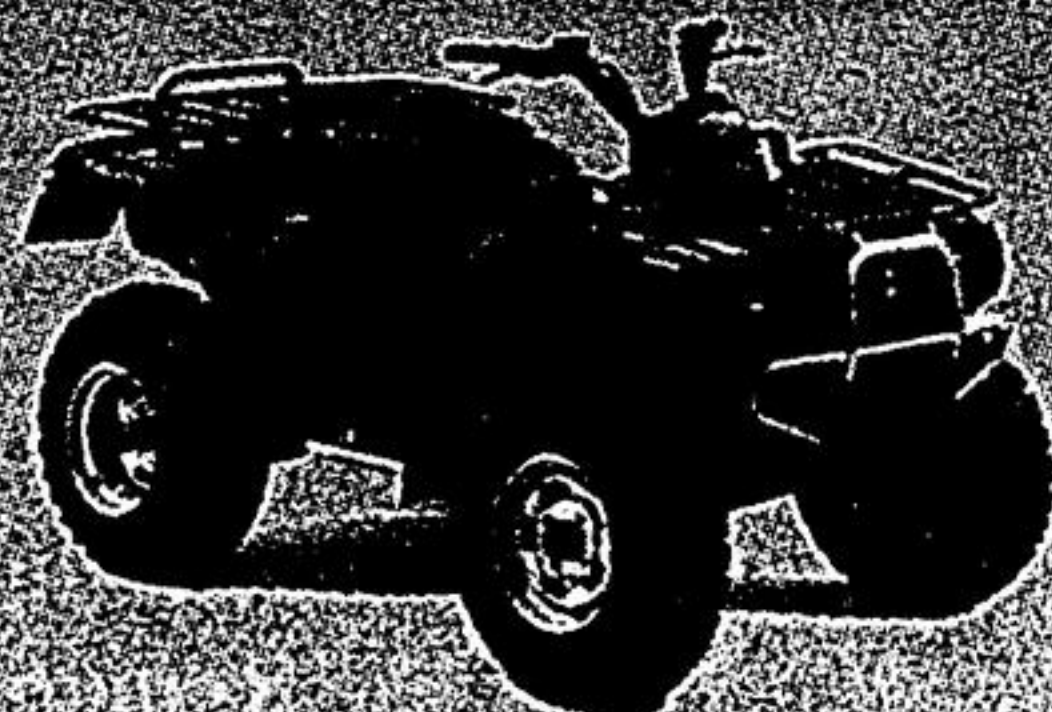


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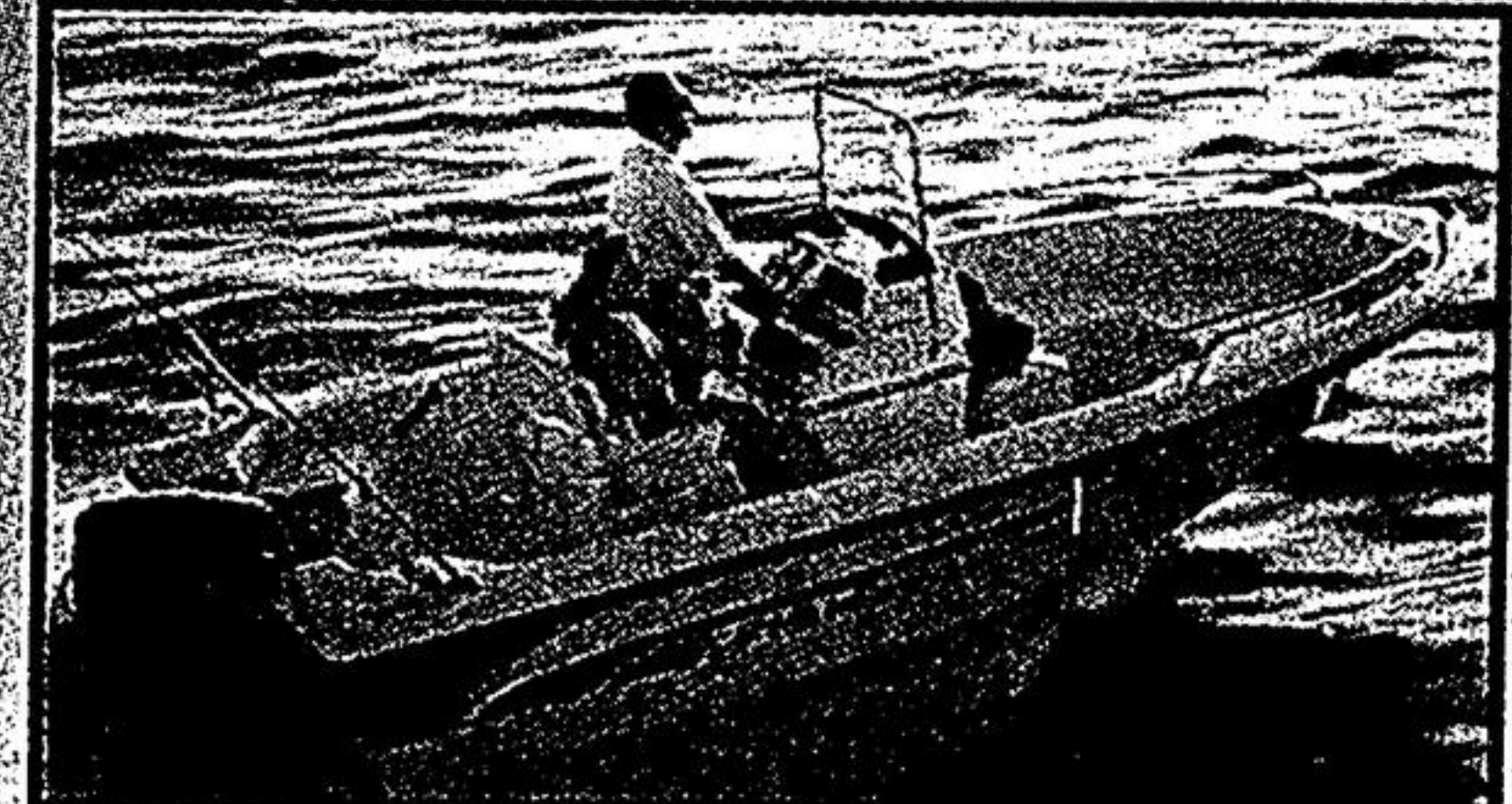
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