

# Schools are still open

By JOHN STEWART  
Times staff writer

Peel Board of Education trustees decided late last night that they will not close Peel's 126 elementary schools despite the day-old teachers' strike.

After a three-hour in-camera meeting, the board announced it would not lock out teachers and will instead seek help from parents and volunteers to keep schools open.

The board said that it would provide no educational programs but would operate day care and recreational activities in the schools.

The board reported that 10 of the 2,600 teachers reported for work Tuesday morning and that 5,260 students of a possible 51,000 attended school.

A group of parents announced last night that it would stage a rally to urge an end to the strike on Thursday at 11:30 a.m. in front of the board offices on Dundas Street near King Street.

The key issues keeping the sides apart are the question of dealing with surplus teachers created by declining enrolment and how that issue should be settled.

The sides met for four days of mediation from Thursday to early Monday morning with a special task force of three mediators from the Education Relations Commission (ERC). But like the preceding 18-months of negotiations it ended in charges by each side that the other is unwilling to significantly revise its position.

The teachers presented a new proposal on surplus teachers, which the board says amounts to tenure for teachers.

Salaries, retirement benefits and teacher-pupil ratios are among the other outstanding issues.

Teachers oppose the board's attempts to introduce merit rather than seniority as a criterion for laying off surplus teachers. They are also upset that the board refuses to allow a third-party, binding settlement through arbitration.

The board says it won't allow the decision to be made by an outsider.

In other strike developments: Peel secondary teachers announced they would try to establish a \$1 million strike fund for their elementary colleagues.

principals and vice-principals who are required by law to be in schools, donated their salaries during the strike to the teachers' federations.

## Strike a 'painful decision'

It was Monday night. The caterer had just arrived to feed the 50 or so late registrants for the Peel teachers' strike at strike headquarters in a small Malton industrial plaza.

Bob Sinclair, a member of the teachers' strike team, was in a sombre mood. "The strike was a painful decision for many people; it's something teachers searched their souls about," said Sinclair, a shop teacher at Erin Mills Senior Public School. "But you have to put it into historical perspective. Teachers have been without a contract for a year and a half."

"The kids in my class are the same as my own kids," said Sinclair. "I feel they respect me. It's painful to say as of 8:30 I'm going to stop teaching you. It goes against my whole being."

Reta Smith, a special education teacher at Earncliffe school, put it in a different perspective.

"If you don't have contented teachers," said Smith, "will you have contented pupils? It's like kids whose parents are going through a divorce. They carry the misery with them."



Students at Tomken Road and Cherry Hill schools watch teachers picket

# MPP wants strike ended

## 2,600 elementary school teachers walk out

By TOM MALONEY  
Times staff writer

A spokesman for Mississauga North MPP Terry Jones says Jones intends to urge the Ontario government to force striking Peel public elementary teachers back to work.

"He's definitely in favor of legislating teachers back the second they go out," Jones' special assistant Gord Venner said Monday. Jones was on vacation and unavailable for comment.

Peel's 2,700 elementary school teachers went on strike yesterday morning after four days of negotiations proved fruitless.

Mississauga East MPP Bud Gregory, regards legislation as a last resort, saying that the responsibility of both sides to the students should lead to "common sense. I don't think teachers want this on their conscience."

A spokesman for Minister of Education Dr. Bette Stephenson said the government will move on the recommendation of the Education Relations Commission "as soon as (the strike) jeopardizes studies."

Mississauga South MPP Doug Kennedy declined comment yesterday morning saying he did not want to jeopardize "11th hour negotiations." After being told the teachers were picketing schools, he voiced concern

but said he had no option but to follow provincial procedure.

The Ontario Education Relations Commission will discuss the Peel situation today and may exercise its opinion to recommend to the province that school studies are in jeopardy. Teachers can then be legislated back to work. The Peel strike bears resemblance to the 1978 Edmonton strike, which was ended by government legislation after two weeks.

In Edmonton teachers considered public support crucial to their stand, as do Peel teachers. Edmonton vice-principal Marilyn Young, in charge of press relations during the Edmonton strike, said the public supported the teachers when legislation forced them back.

But Phillip Cox of the Alberta Teachers Association disagreed.

"By the second week there was a marked turn of attitude among parents calling us," said Cox. "There was a general feeling of support in the first week. However, in the second week, they thought if the teachers were being stubborn, they were sacrificing the welfare of the children."

"Emotions ran high during the strike, many teachers said at meetings they resented being forced back to work. But in conversation, quite a few said, 'thank God they ordered us back.'"

# Students, parents join pickets

By TOM MALONEY  
and DEBORAH IRVINE  
Times staff writers

"The four of us just made the girls' soccer team; now there's no soccer team."

Allison, a Tomken Road Senior Public School student who requested her last name not be used, watched as teachers marched in front of the school, their signs of protest held up to the overcast sky.

Her feelings on the teachers' strike was typical of most students' reactions, which ranged from bitterness to disappointment. Very few expressed happiness at the unscheduled holiday.

Neither parents nor students established their own picket lines at Tomken Road. But at Tecumseh and Burnhamthorpe public schools, small groups of students picketed the teachers.

"We'll bomb out in grade nine

when we go in with only nine-tenths of our education," said student Donovan Sequeira. "It's taken them two years already. They're not going to settle it in a day."

Students and parents joked about with the study guides produced by the Peel Board of Education, which the board points out is not intended to replace teachers during the strike.

It suggests students tour Toronto by helicopter; visit Mt. Pleasant Cemetery to see 50 different kinds of trees or take a trip to the African Lion Safari. "I'm really disgusted," said Mrs. Leslie Scott, of Williamsport Drive, "I'm not that well educated and I could do better than this." The language arts section suggested that parents keep a family bulletin board to record original jokes.

The board's math guide suggested "the student should investigate the properties of arithmetic operations

**Whose side are you on?**

Let the striking teachers and Peel school board know how you feel about the issues. Fill out this coupon and mail it to The Editor, The Times, 2300 South Sheridan Way, Mississauga, L5J 2M4. The Times will try to publish all replies that bear a writer's name and street and can be verified by telephone.

Should Peel elementary school teachers be paid as much as secondary school teachers? ..... Yes No (Circle one)

Should the teachers be forced back to work and the contract dispute settled by an independent person? ..... Yes No (Circle one)

If the school board has to lay off teachers, should jobs be protected on the basis of seniority, merit or both? ..... (circle one)

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

(commutative, associative and distributive) in simplifying numerical expressions. Ask the student to demonstrate the various properties by writing numbers."

"My father asked me to explain this," said Tomken student Densil Pinnock, "but I couldn't."

"The teachers will be the ones to suffer if we all fail," said student Sandy Brown. "I think the parents and government will force them back."

Teachers got some unexpected support for their picketing of school board offices yesterday from mothers and children.

Wearing signs around their necks saying "I want to learn" and "My education is at stake," children ranging from three to 12 marched in front of the King Street offices munching apples and cookies.

Although teachers were happy to see the unexpected pickets, parents emphasized that they weren't supporting the strike but favored the teachers' stand on arbitration.

Claire Madge, a mother with three school-aged boys, said the group of 30 mothers and children were hoping to pressure the province to outlaw the strike. Believing that it was an unnecessary action, they vowed to continue to picket the board offices for an hour every day until arbitration was agreed upon.

"We're not on the board's or the teachers' side," summed up Madge. "We are concerned about the children. They are the real losers in these negotiations and we don't want our children being used as a test case. We are hoping the board will start considering the children and agree to arbitration."