

Unsustainable

Sustainability has become a familiar word in Ontario's classrooms.

Most students have learned about sustainable development, communities, transportation, energy plans and consumption. And Ontario teachers were among the first to understand the need to accept and promote sustainability in all facets of society.

Their union leaders, however, seem to be following a different textbook when it comes to developing a sustainable educational system. How else do you explain the recent backlash from teachers and their unions after the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) announced a new two-year deal with the government?

The agreement includes a two-year wage freeze, three unpaid days and loss of sick days. It was quickly denounced by union leaders representing other teachers and CUPE education workers.

We can't blame them for objecting to a pay freeze. No one likes that. But many employees in the private sector have seen their wages frozen—or worse, cut—in recent years. Many have lost their jobs.

We have difficulty accepting the argument that the agreement will somehow hurt students. The deal cuts costs by turning three previously-paid professional development days into unpaid holidays for teachers.

We don't see how this hurts students.

In their previous contract, Ontario teachers enjoyed a 12-per-cent wage hike over three years. It's unrealistic to expect these types of wage hikes to continue. It's simply not sustainable. So, too, is an outdated sick pay system that rewards teachers with costly unused sick day payouts upon retirement.

Ontario Education Minister Laurel Broten is giving school boards and teachers' unions until the end of August—when the majority of current collective bargaining agreements expire—to sign new contracts. She's calling for boards to use the ministry's agreement with the OECTA as a road map with other unions. We agree with the unions that the timeline for new contracts does seem unreasonable.—it took the ministry and OECTA five months to negotiate a deal.

But, as school boards are facing more and more financial pressure, especially in growing Halton, urgency does exist to reach agreements.

If the Province can't find ways to curb rising education costs through contract negotiations, it will be forced to remove the money from programs. And *that* would be bad for students.

WEB POLL RESULTS

(Go to www.theifp.ca)

How would you categorize Canada's showing at the Olympic Games in London?

- A little disappointing (46%)
- A good, if unspectacular, effort (41%)
- A borderline disaster (13%)

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Letters to the editor

Youth's unique bicycle stolen

Dear editor,

On July 23 I rode my bike to see my friend at his new house on Taners Drive in Acton.

My pal and I had a great time riding around and then it was time for supper, so I left my bike in their driveway between the family's cars. Having eaten supper and watched a movie I went outside at 10 p.m. to return home on my bike.

Alas it had been stolen, along with my helmet.

My bike, a silver 21-gear Specialized Junior Extreme, is odd as I got it in England and the front brake is on the right and the rear brake on the left—these settings are reversed on bikes sold in Canada. So should you see a rider getting very wrong with the brakes please let me (519-853-4060) or Halton Police know.

Tobin Milner, 13, Acton

Food for the soul

Dear editor,

"Look, mommy, look" the little girl in the row across from me said proudly as she pointed to a handful

of big fat blueberries in the bottom of her small pail.

"That's great, honey", mommy replied. "Let's see if you can fill up your pail. Lift up the branches and you will find the berries grow bigger in the shade underneath."

That was a sure sign of a veteran picker. The same thing applies for the raspberries, which were also amazing in the last few weeks.

The scene was at Andrew's Scenic Acres on 10 Sideroad.

It was a hot day, but a light breeze cooled things off nicely. Birds warbled in the trees, but I did not recognize some of the songs.

How fortunate we are to have such a terrific place right in our backyard where we can pick fruits of all kinds and enjoy nature's bounty in our lovely Halton Hills countryside.

On the way out, I saw owner Bert Andrews favourite sign on the barn: "Farmers Feed Cities" and I thought: you not only feed our stomachs but also provide rest for our souls. Thanks Bert.

Laurent Thibault, Georgetown

Look both ways!

Dear editor,

Look both ways before crossing the road. It's one of the first things we

learn as children. We need to remember this simple rule while driving too.

Far too many times I have witnessed, or have myself, almost been hit by a vehicle making a right-hand turn, because the driver only looks to the left for oncoming traffic.

Just this morning, in fact, I was running the path along Eighth Line, as I and many other people do on a daily basis. As I approached the intersection at Argyll Rd. a woman making a right-hand turn did not even notice that I was standing there, in a fluorescent pink shirt, waving at her to pay attention to me.

The extra two seconds it will take out of your day to look both ways could save someone's life!

Georgetown is a very active community, please help keep it safe.

Cathy Bergsma, Georgetown

Send a letter

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