



Perturbed pooch

Pet owners like Gladys Baker, right, may have appreciated the North Halton Veterinary Association hosting its annual low cost rabies immunization clinic Saturday, but Baker's dog Gypsy wasn't the least bit impressed. Dr. Stephen Hess was among the veterinarian staff on hand at Acton Arena to immunize pets for \$10.

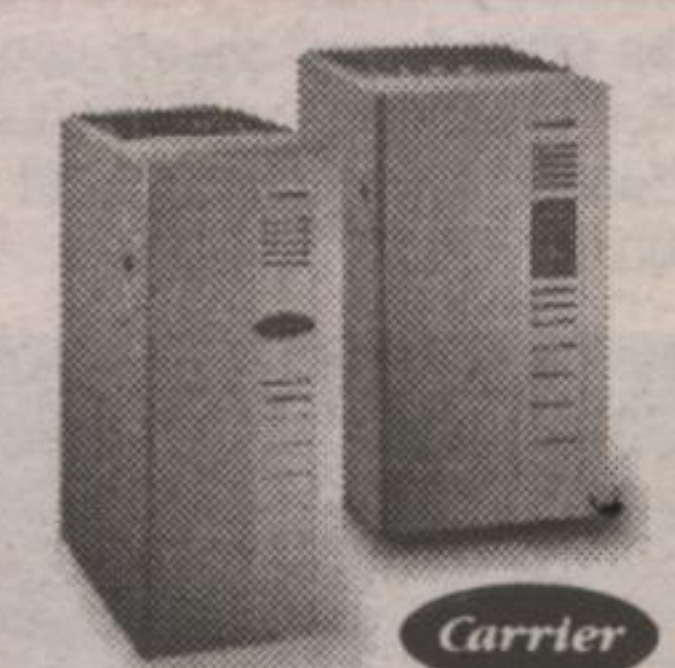
Photo by Eve Martin

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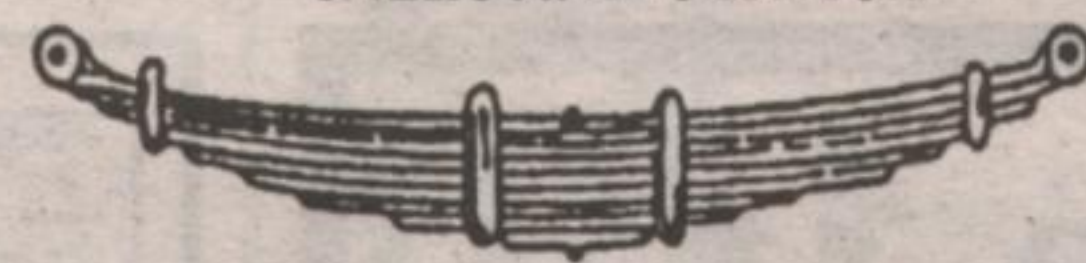
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ENOUGH 20 ENOUGH

Information for Parents

Less help for students

More classes to teach

Adding an extra class to each teacher's workload with 20 to 40 more students to prepare and mark for gives each teacher a total of 150 to 210 students. The Ontario teaching load is higher than in 23 other industrialized countries. All students suffer because there is simply less time available for each student.

Fewer teachers, support staff and resource personnel

There has been a cut of about 15 percent to the number of teachers. This means teachers must teach outside their subject area and fewer teachers are available to run extracurricular activities. Cuts to secretarial and custodial staff, educational assistants and professional support staff mean fewer services for students and parents.

Fewer department heads

These experts have always guided new curriculum implementation and helped new teachers. Just when this help is needed most, the number has been cut. Teachers and students are the losers.

Teacher shortages

Chronic under funding and demeaning of teachers have led to thousands of premature retirements. Specialist in subjects such as computers, math and technological education are choosing more lucrative careers. Students are the losers.

For five years, the Harris government has imposed severe funding cuts and relentless change on our secondary schools. These changes take away from the time teachers have for individual students and at the same time, add to teacher workload and erode teacher morale. The cumulative effects are staggering and in fact are creating more obstacles to students learning. Teachers as professionals and parents whose children are losing out, must stand up and say:

Enough is enough! Let teachers teach. Contact your local MPP, school board trustee, Mike Harris (webprem@gov.on.ca) or Janet Ecker (janet_eckerco@ontla.ola.org) to express your concerns For more information, check out www.sosontario.com

Curriculum and testing

New curriculum

The implementation has been hasty, without all materials and textbooks ready and without sufficient teacher training. Professional activity days have been reduced from nine to four per year just when in-service is needed most to learn new curriculum and assessment methods. Students who began the new grade nine curriculum last year will be guinea pigs for four years, because curriculum changes will be introduced in each year. Some students have no textbooks and must work from photocopies materials or share textbooks with others.

Grade 10 test of reading and writing

Because this is a future mandatory graduation requirement, teacher and student preparation is needed. At least five to 10 hours must be taken from other courses to prepare for and write the test. The test is to determine which students need extra help but the government has made no provision for that. In fact, there are fewer teachers and more students, making remedial assistance even more difficult. This year's grade nine math testing will interrupt courses, take up to a week away from topics on the required curriculum, demand significant preparation, and increase stress for students.

Shorter exam period

The exam period reduction from 15 to 10 days has lessened time for providing students with extra help and for marking. With only five exam days at the end of a semester, more students face multiple exams on the same day and student stress from "cramming" increases.

New assessment methods

Teachers now grade by levels rather than marks. There has been insufficient time and inconsistent training for teachers in new methods of assessing student work and progress.

New report cards

Teachers have had to deal with software nightmares, insufficient and inadequate computers, and hours more work per class. This time is taken away from other activities that directly benefit students.

LET TEACHERS TEACH

A message from Ontario's public high school teachers and educational workers O.S.S.T.F., District 20 - Halton

