

Editorial

Positive alternative

It is heartening to hear Education Minister Elizabeth Witmer say that she will consider an alternative diploma for some Ontario high school students.

A coalition of school boards have pressed Ontario to develop a system to help those with little chance of passing Ontario's literacy test. Many of those students are taking basic programs in vocational schools and are several years behind their peers in academic achievement. Some suffer from low IQs and learning disabilities.

Yet, under a government edict, they will not receive a secondary school diploma because they can't pass the literacy test.

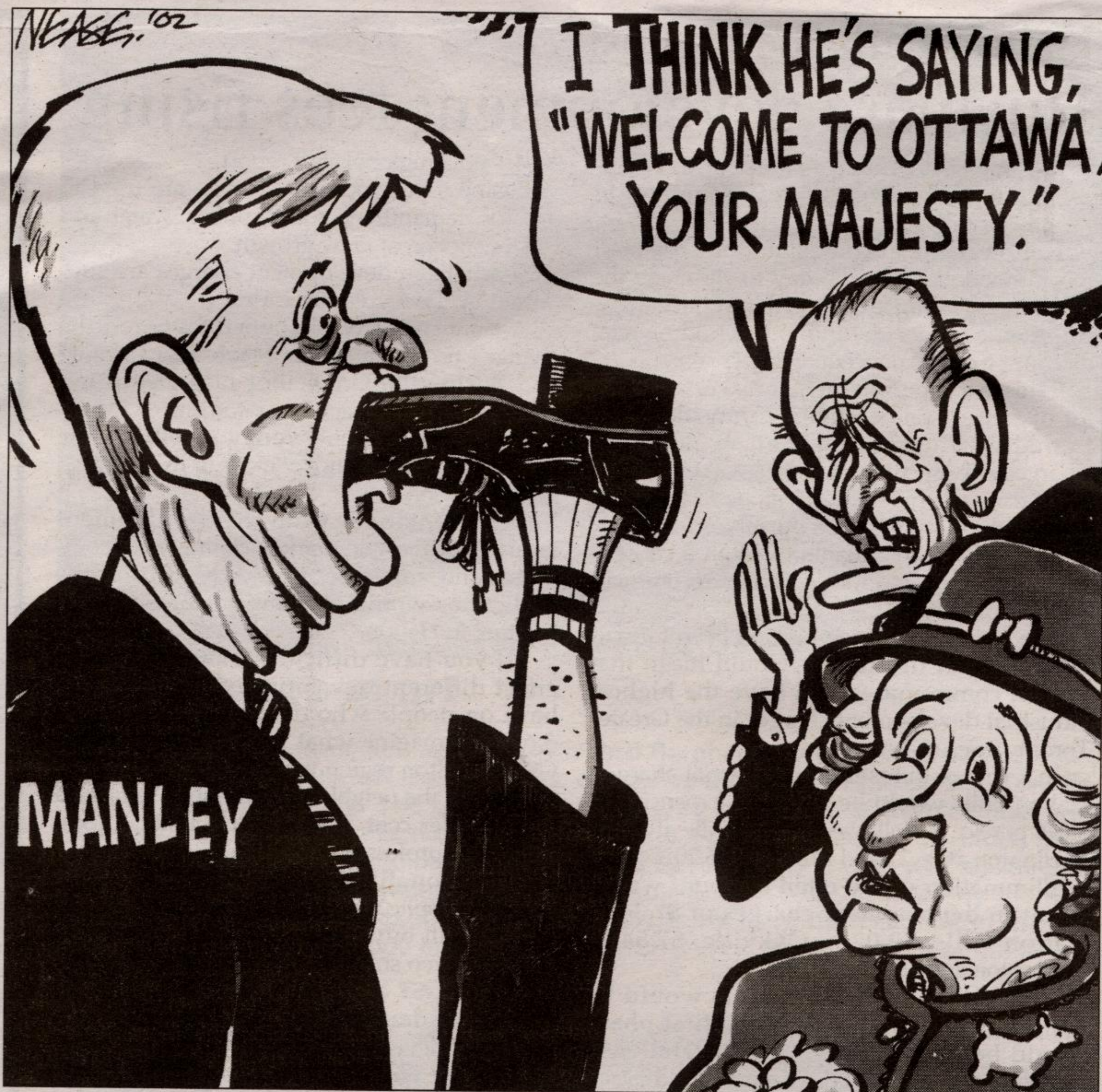
The experience of writing the test reduces a child's already low self-esteem and takes away hope. Some will simply give up and leave school. A shame considering many vocational students of the past— who could not have passed this test— have gone on to successful careers.

The alternative diploma would provide a checklist of skills, a co-op education record and a literacy "portfolio" for employers.

The world needs skilled labourers just as much as it needs sociologists with Ph.Ds.

There's no reason students headed immediately to work after secondary school should be denied a diploma that shows they are prepared for that task, even if they will never write the great Canadian novel.

Let's make sure everyone has an equal opportunity for success once they get past the secondary school level.



Letters to the editor...

Resort conference was money well-spent— reader

Dear editor,

I am responding to recent letters criticizing the Halton Board of Education spending \$48,000 for the administrative

conference held at Talisman ski resort.

Specifically, I would like to respond to Mr. Craig Gray (letter to editor, Sept. 18) and Mr. Darren Coulter (letter to editor, Sept. 20) who were very quick to resort to name-calling in their misguided criticisms of Halton District School Board Director of Education, Dr. Dusty Papke and Board Chair Ethel Gardiner.

Both of the aforementioned letters focus on what a horrible waste of money this conference was and how the money could be better spent on class supplies and text books. I think this misses the point entirely. We can all agree that \$48,000 is more money than a lot of hard-working people make in a year, however, it is a drop-in-the-bucket of what is needed to be reinvested back into the education system in Ontario— some reports put this amount of 'under-funding' at \$1.1 billion.

I have spoken with the principal at our school, and have exchanged e-mails with Ethel Gardiner, and, to be clear, the conference was not a golf junket, though a small group of the attendees did play golf, the afternoon prior to the conference and paid for it themselves.

The real money issue is what do you expect from your board of education and your principals? Do you expect to have unqualified people merely doing a job, or do you want highly-trained education professionals giving you a good bang for your tax dollar? Do you want to send your kids to school and have highly paid babysitters provided by the province, or do you want to cultivate a community of learning. The underfunding issue would go away if more people realized that it is in everyone's best interests to fully fund the public education system. If we have the best teachers and schools, then we will produce the best students. The best students will become the best possible citizens. It is really as simple as that.

As far as I am concerned, the amount of money spent is a joke, and, if anything, the board chair should be criticized for not spending more

Neither one of them had their 'fingers in the cookie jar', Mr. Gray, and by spending this money, Mr. Coulter, they were indeed being fiscally responsible.

Gary Britton, co-chair Harrison School and Community Council

Strangers' kindness won't be forgotten

Dear editor,

A month ago my husband was out jogging and became seriously ill. He was able to get help from two wonderful women— Pat Crouse and her daughter-in-law Tammy.

They contacted me and I went to their home with our two young children. Pat and Tammy called an ambulance and took care of our children with the help of the police until my brother could pick them up so that I could go to the hospital with my husband.

They offered us their home, their hugs and their sincere compassion.

That evening will always be remembered as the scariest time in our lives, but also as a time that we are reminded about the kindness of strangers.

Pat and Tammy, you will be forever in our prayers. You are our friends for life. Thank you so very much.

Kim and Ron Fairchild, Halton Hills

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor must be signed and include an address and daytime telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 200 words and may be edited.

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