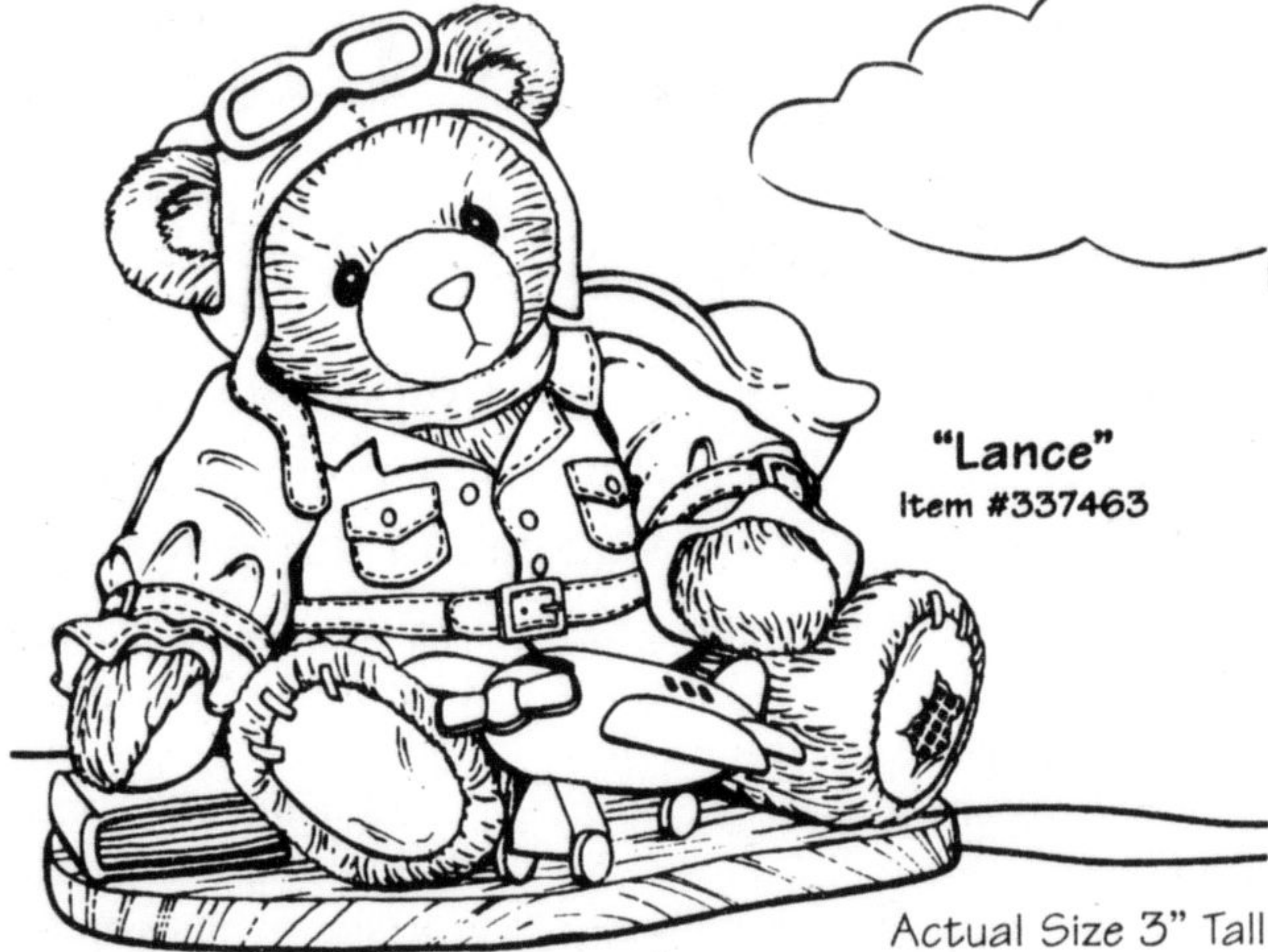
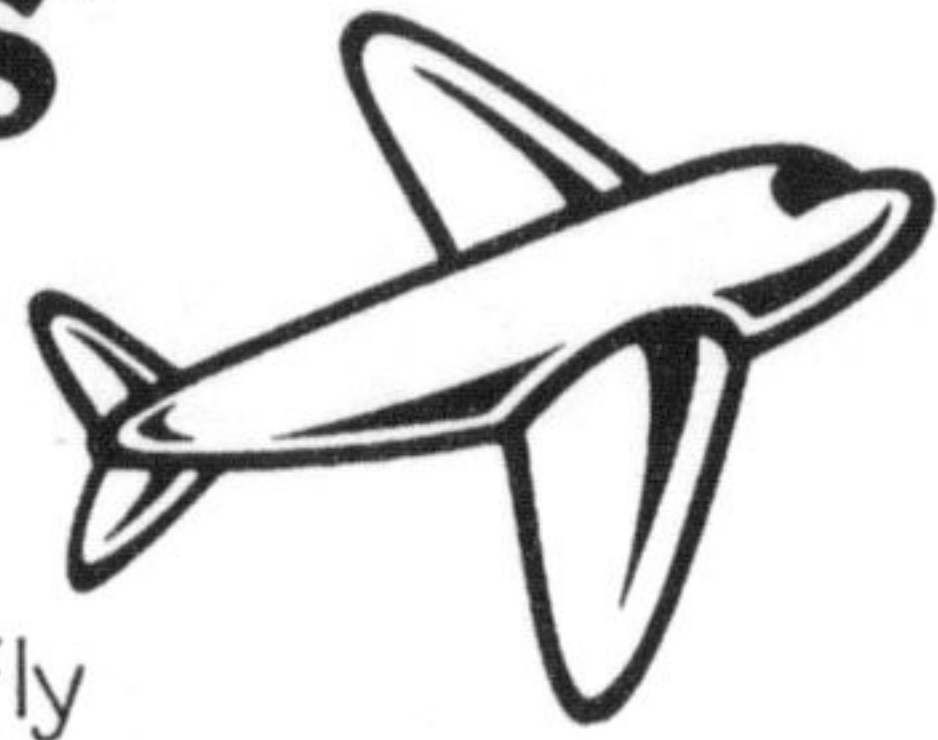


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Teachers ready to strike if situation is not changed

By DENNIS SMITH

Special to The Champion

Halton's public secondary school teachers have resoundingly endorsed going on strike, if necessary.

More than 90 per cent of the teachers voted last week in favour of a strike, said union leader Al Tanner.

"There was really strong support for taking a strike action if necessary," said Mr. Tanner, who is president of District 9 of the Ontario Secondary Schools Teachers' Federation. "This shows the members are upset and demoralized and they're disturbed with the offer on the table."

He said teachers are concerned about their contract rights, benefits, working conditions and salaries.

"It's not reasonable that one segment should get kicked around like the teachers," said Mr. Tanner, who noted teachers haven't had a salary increase in seven years. "Everyone else's wages and working conditions are going up."

He cited increased police staffing as a public sector area where wages are improving.

Earlier in the week, Mr. Tanner noted teachers are being asked to handle seven courses per year instead of six.

He said with the semester system, teachers would have to provide 80 more minutes per day of classroom instruction for half of the school year.

Mr. Tanner estimated an equal amount of extra time would be required for classroom and test preparation, plus marking.

Representatives from the union and Halton District School Board will meet with a conciliator in July to try and break the deadlock.

If the conciliator and labour board decide the situation cannot be resolved, then a strike or lockout of secondary teachers will be possible next fall.

Mr. Tanner said he's willing to continue contract



"This shows the members are upset and demoralized and they're disturbed with the offer on the table."

—AL TANNER

talks and noted sides can meet even after the labour board's decision.

"No one wants to be on strike, we'd like to get a settlement," he said.

Halton's director of education, Dusty Papke, previously noted the school board is negotiating under constraints of meeting provincial funding formulas and balancing its budget.

Under the recent 'downloading' exchange of responsibilities, the province is assuming half of education costs from property tax bills and freezing education costs for three years.

With the new funding formula model, the ability of school boards to raise revenues is not as flexible anymore, noted Dr. Papke. He said current contract talks are like negotiating a first collective agreement.

He has declined to comment further on specific issues, noting these are part of contract negotiations.

Prevention workshop

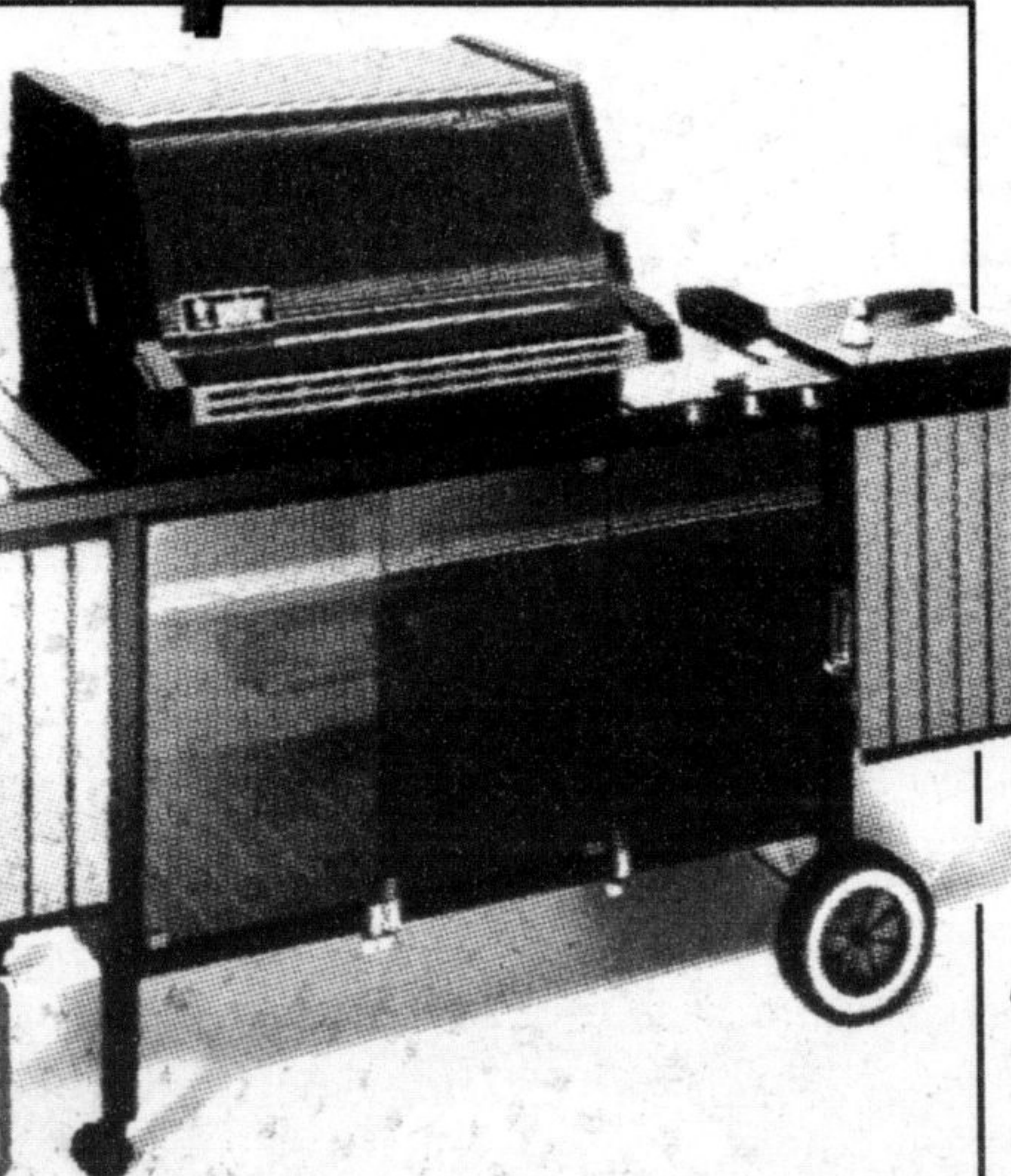
A two-day suicide intervention workshop in Oakville will be held July 9 and 10.

Offered by the Canadian Mental Health Association, the workshop will provide an overview of common warning signs of suicide, indicators of risk, assessment and how to intervene. To register, call 693-4270.

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