



# COMMENT

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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## Province dithers as union plays politics

Congratulations to Jim Sherlock, the chair of Halton's Catholic school board, for chastising both sides in the labour dispute that riddles Ontario's school system.

Mr. Sherlock is right to take the provincial government to task for listless leadership. At the same time, he forthrightly slams the teaching unions for political posturing dressed up as profound concern over student welfare.

Joe Pece, one of the point men on the labour side in this dispute, alleges that the board is probably bargaining in bad faith, without any real intention of reaching a settlement.

Perhaps, but what exactly is it that Mr. Pece's constituency is doing as well? Teachers are in essence ignoring provisions of Bill 160, which like it or not is the law, albeit an omnibus piece of legislation in which components are lurching through further legal scrutiny.

Politics of all sorts and stripes are being played in schools across Ontario at present, somewhat shamelessly.

The Mike Harris government has looked indecisive and confused in implementing its educational reforms of late, which is a genuine disservice to the electorate that put Mr. Harris in power.

This especially in view of the fact that most people with kids in the school system are fed up with the current state of affairs.

Area MPPs and Premier Harris would do well to pay close attention to the questions posed by Mr. Sherlock and others in their recent letter to the premier.

Increasingly, representatives of frustrated and hamstrung school boards are looking like the only voices of reason in the current impasse.

It is almost October and as the situation stands now, teachers are increasingly acrimonious, there are no after-school activities at either the elementary or secondary levels, and nobody is following the required teaching time allotments as set out by the provincial government.

If this was a high school course, Mr. Harris would already be looking at getting help after school, since he would be in danger of failing. But then again ... that help wouldn't be available, would it?

*Rob Kelly*

## Making a difference

Despite the tensions that prevail today between the provincial government and Ontario's teachers, it's instructive to remember what a profound influence a good teacher can be for so many students. Milton's Ann Galioto, featured elsewhere in today's paper, is undoubtedly just such an individual.

In time the institutional wrangling between government and teaching unions will pass, but hopefully the passion for excellence that makes an outstanding mentor will not. There are more of these people in the system than many critics may think.

*R.K.*



## OUR READERS WRITE

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

### Mega jail will affect health care in more ways than one

Dear Editor:

A huge health care burden is about to be dropped on Milton and the surrounding communities if the Tories have their way.

In 1996, Solicitor General Bob Runciman announced that many jails and correctional facilities will close to streamline operations.

Milton will get one of three planned 'mega jails'. It will replace half a dozen or so facilities that now service southwestern Ontario. An additional 1,100 to 1,200 inmates will be calling Milton home.

These extra bodies will make Maplehurst the largest correctional facility in Canada, with more than 1,800 inmates. These new neighbours will arrive within two years if things go according to the Tory plan.

Inmate populations harbour a much higher disease incidence than other sectors of society, including serious illnesses like tuberculosis, hepatitis, and AIDS. They will be using the health care services in the Milton area.

Typically, people with these ailments need more than ongoing medication; they will require hospitalization and outpatient services. This may well make it much harder for local residents to schedule their medical appointments. They will find that an inmate has beaten them to the doctor's office.

The Maplehurst mega jail will have a 24-hour nursing station on site. Although this will assist in placing a bandage on a finger or in handing out medication, the vast number

of ailments and needs will be serviced by the Milton and area health care system. The addition of these 1,200 inmates will put an entirely new spin on getting an appointment with your doctor in the near future.

With so many doctors leaving rural Ontario for the bright lights of the metropolis in Canada and abroad, the system is stretched dangerously close to the breaking point. For the government to download provincial responsibilities to an already burdened public is criminal in spirit and should not go unnoticed.

*Michael Foley  
Milton*

### Booing at Harris in bad taste

Dear Editor:

I have a question. Where do nearly 40,000 people under the age of 12 learn discourteous and disrespectful behaviour?

I am referring to the event hosting Nelson Mandela at the Skydome on Friday, Sept. 25. When Premier Mike Harris made his address to the crowd, the boos and chatter were so loud that Premier Harris could not be heard in the dome.

In my opinion, at this moment, the look on Mr. Mandela's face was one of bewilderment and perhaps slight apprehension. Also in my opinion, I believe it is in bad taste to publicly disrespect a leader of our province in front of an incredibly honorable member of society.

For this reason, I ask the question, "Where do nearly 40,000 people under the age of 12 learn discourteous and disrespectful behaviour?"

*Diane Chesla  
Milton*

## Pud

by Steve Nease

