

**DICED AND SLICED
BUT STILL PROUD**

In spite of government cutbacks in funding and a severe attack on its most valuable resource through the imposition of the Social Contract, we still provide one of the best quality educations anywhere in the world. Compared unfavorably to the Japanese school system, Ontario's publicly funded system provides access for all, while Japanese students must pass entrance exams even for pre-school and kindergarten.

A July 1993 Environics survey showed that parents and taxpayers believe the province's professional teachers are making a valuable contribution to society and that Ontario's publicly funded education system is worth the investment.*

We have every right to be proud but one has to wonder how much more the system can endure while continuing to provide this high quality of education which is recognized around the world.

*Aleda O'Connor, "Debunk the myths and blow your own horn", a special report to *The Reporter: The Magazine of The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association*. Volume 19 number 3 February 1994.

Brian Kirlin

YORK REGION

PRIDE

PROUD ROLES IN DELIVERING EDUCATION

STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

At the beginning of the year, there were 3 Grade 7 classes, now we have 2. Our teacher had to leave and go to another school. Now our class is much larger. The teacher is very busy. When I have a problem, I have to wait my turn to confer with the teacher. Sometimes I have to wait until the next day and by that time, I have forgotten what I needed. They say my teacher had to go away because the number of teachers were cut back.

Lisa, who sits next to me and needs help with her reading doesn't get to see her special reading teacher as often as she needs to. Last year, she had special help 3 times a week. Now she only comes once a week if she can. Lisa feels she is falling behind in her work and she is really quiet in class. She doesn't raise her hand and she seems to be daydreaming a lot.

Three other kids who are having trouble this year are George, Jason and Tom. They fool around all the time in class. They tease each other and they sometimes fight. The teacher is always at them to settle down. George has a lot of family problems and he used to go to Mr. Jones, the Guidance teacher, but Mr. Jones is not available anymore and neither is the Vice-Principal.

We used to be able to go down to the library and work on our projects (and on the computers) when we had free time. Now the library door is locked.

This year isn't as much fun as last year. There seems to be no one to listen to the kids. Mom says I am not learning as much either.

Joan, Suzanne, Elaine & Jane

A SECRETARY'S PERSPECTIVE

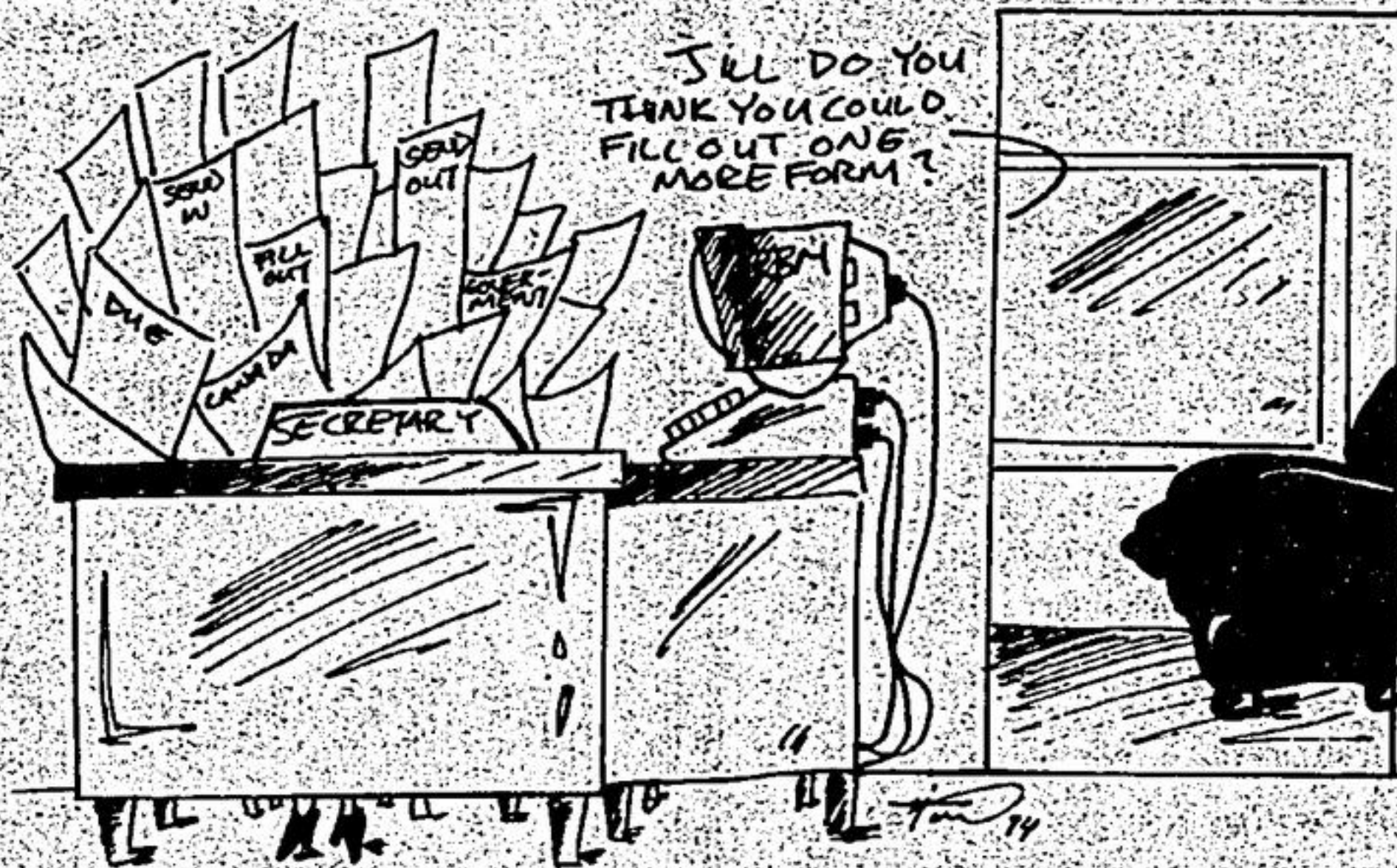
We are entrusted with a most precious commodity — the children, your children, our children. School secretaries have a special gift of working through constant interruptions, dealing with a multitude of personalities and conflicts, and in general, organizing and managing time.

The largest source of grief for CUPE 1734 members occurred in 1992 when five working days were eliminated from our year to save on the budget. Many members felt that there was a slow deterioration of the caring attitude that our taxpayers deserve and will eventually notice.

When the infamous Social Contract arrived, just over 100 members were affected by "Rae days", the remaining 600 did not earn enough. According to StatsCanada, the low income cut off for a family in York Region is \$30,460. Again, most of us make substantially less than that figure.

We are concerned parents and taxpayers just like the rest of you, taking pride in what we do, feeling the frustrations of government decisions, struggling to make ends meet and juggling a job and a family.

Laura Romanowsky



A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

The implementation of the Social Contract, along with the staffing reductions made by the York Region Board of Education, in violation of the Collective Agreement, have affected all areas of daily operations at the school level.

Our school staff decided last spring that our priorities would be to keep class sizes as small as possible and to try to avoid a large number of split classes. In order to do this with the staff available, some services had to be cut back.

Teacher/Librarian Time has been reduced by 50 per cent. This means that there are times when students are not able to use the resources in the library to do research or to select reading materials. In order to try to keep the Resource Centre open and available to students the principal and vice-principal have been covering as many periods as possible.

The teacher/librarian has great difficulty assisting staff with program planning and making teachers aware of the wide variety of resources that are available. Learning advantages are being lost due to time and personnel restraints.

Guidance time has been reduced by 50 per cent. This means that daily problems cannot be dealt with as effectively as in the past. All of our small group counselling programs have been cancelled. These programs included Social Behavioural Peer Groups, Separation, Divorce, Remarriage Peer Groups, and Bereavement Peer Groups. The Peer Tutoring program and individual counselling times have been seriously affected.

We believe that proactive, prevention-oriented programs save money in the long run but they need adequate staff. At the same time, cutbacks in community social services have made access to support and counselling programs very expensive and very limited.

Vice-principal administrative time has been reduced to 50 per cent. She is a homeroom teacher for the other 50 per cent. It is very difficult to fulfill either of these demanding roles as effectively as one would like to when one is being pulled in so many directions.

Many staff members have been concerned about the reduction in time for Psychological Services. The process of formally identifying students with special needs is very lengthy and the wait becomes even longer when testing cannot be done because psychologists are unavailable.

Parents whose children are on waiting lists become very frustrated as their sons and daughters experience continuing difficulty and fall further behind their classmates. At the same time teachers feel frustrated as they try to meet the diverse needs of the students in their classes.

All in all, this has been a year of considerable difficulty and frustration. The system continues to work as well as it does because teachers and administrators are dedicated to delivering the best possible service to students, even in very trying circumstances.

Norma Belfry



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