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Education

Teachers settle

By **LUCY POLICELLI**
Correspondent

York Region elementary school teachers are one step closer to a signed collective agreement.

The teachers' negotiating team has recommended acceptance of a tentative contract with the York Region Board of Education. The teachers have been working without a deal since Sept. 1, 1993.

On Saturday, the board and the elementary teachers' union announced a tentative agreement had been reached, but a date for ratification has yet to be set.

"It has been a long and difficult negotiating process," said Mary Bruce, communication officer for the Federation of Women Teachers' Association of Ontario.

"A lot has happened. It's been difficult for us to arrive at a deal," Bruce said bargaining lasted until 6 a.m. Saturday to reach the

tentative deal. A fact finders report released early in the early stages of negotiations said major obstacles would be the board's need to save \$10.7 million, along with provincial social contract obligations.

The social contract had frozen salaries until March 31, 1996.

The fact finders report also noted that salaries for the board's 2,500 elementary school teachers are "the highest in the province and can be expected to maintain their leadership position for another three years."

The salary grid was raised 11 per cent over the 1991-93 period through an earlier contract, Bruce said.

She said that with negotiations in the middle stages there is reluctance to discuss contract issues in the media.

A meeting of teachers is expected sometime next week to review the tentative agreement, said Bruce.



Seat of the crime

Andy and Sue Munro examine the site where their 200-pound, six foot mahogany chair the couple used to direct customers to their store was taken over the weekend.

Photo/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Enormous chair stolen

By **MIKE RUTA**
Staff Reporter

Sheraton Antiques owner Andy Munro has lost his seat. Rather, it was taken from him.

The large mahogany chair he has used to

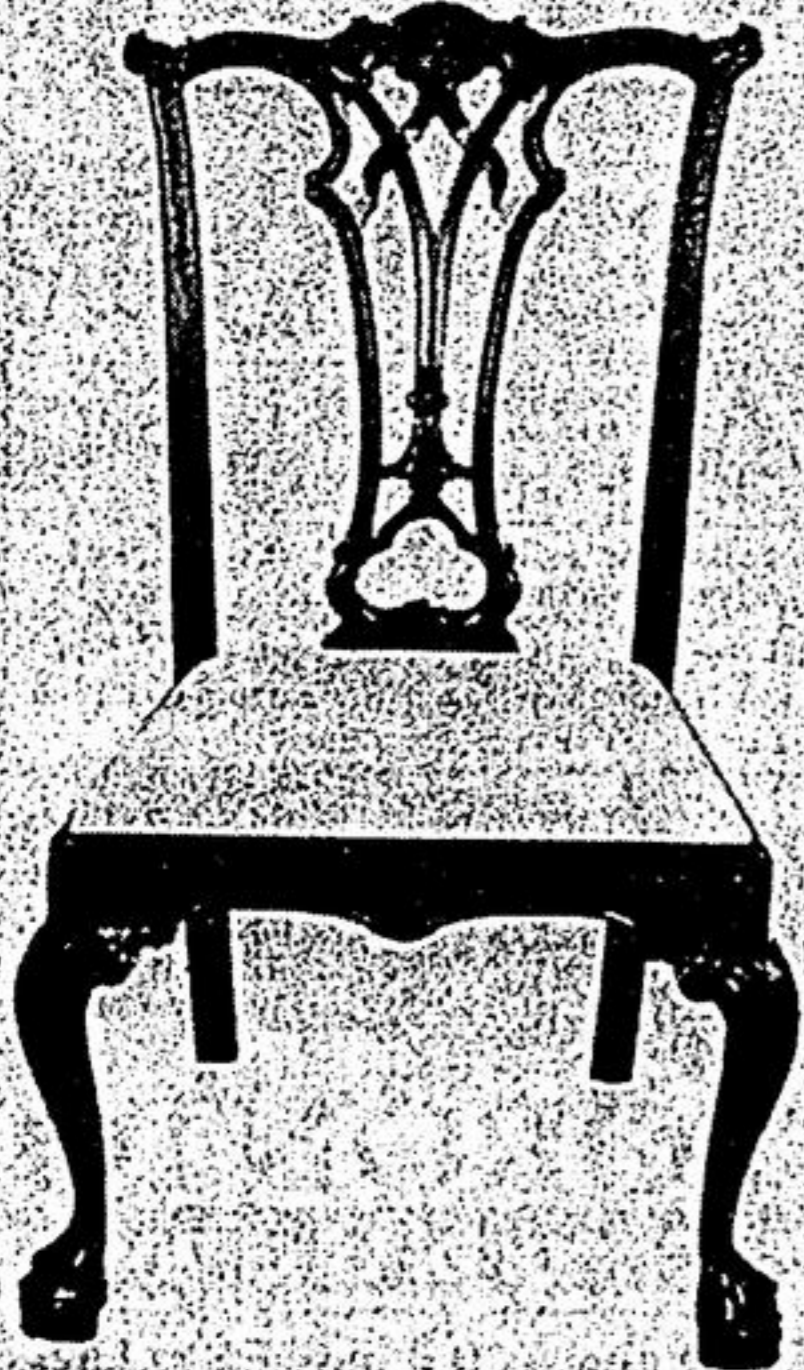
direct customers to his store was stolen over the weekend.

For the unidentified thieves, it was quite a job: the chair is six feet tall, four feet wide and weighs at least 200 pounds.

"They struggled with it," said Munro, "you should see their tracks in the snow."

He has managed to keep a sense of humor about the theft because it was so improbable. The thieves had quite a time freeing the chair from where it was anchored to the ground. Munro said they then moved the chair to a dark spot behind some trees to await the pick-up vehicle. He thinks the theft took place on Saturday night, adding that two men hanging around Dainty Donuts about midnight aroused some suspicion. The men used the telephone behind the counter to call for a ride, so Munro believes they were caught on the security camera. He said police have been called and will investigate the theft.

"Each time we talk to somebody we get more little bits of information," said Munro. "I can't believe, even though it happened late at night, that no one saw anything." The chair had been in front of the store for roughly four months. When an out-of-town customer was looking to get to the store, Munro would end his directions by saying "look for the chair." He did this on Sunday, but then received calls from the same customers who were unable to find the marker. Munro ordered the chair from Indonesia, and paid \$700 for it. He has no idea why anyone would want such an unwieldy piece of furniture.



This is the chair that was stolen.

By **JOAN RANSBERRY**
Staff Reporter

A smoke detector is being cited as a life saver in a weekend house fire in Ringwood.

Deputy fire chief Murray Emmerson said when the local fire department arrived at the fire scene at midnight Friday at Hwy. 48 and Stouffville Road, an adult and two children had already escaped the blaze.

"The occupants had gone to bed. The smoke detector alerted them. It could have been a different story. It could have been a tragedy," said the deputy chief.

Although cost of damages has yet to be estimated, damage was extensive, said Emmerson. While the cause

of the midnight fire is yet to be determined, fire officials are suspecting the cause is linked to a wood stove and the chimney, said Emmerson.

In keeping with the Ontario Building Code, all new homes are equipped with smoke detectors. In regards to older houses, it's up to the owners to make

sure detectors are in place.

"In this case, the home owner made the effort to make sure a smoke detector was in place. It enabled this family to escape. We cannot stress enough how vital detectors are," he said.

A smoke detector can be purchased at any hardware store for \$10, the deputy chief pointed out.

Bandit given 17 years

The Tilley Bandit has hung up his hat for a long time. More accurately, it was hung up for him.

Mississauga resident John Laramie earned the moniker because he wore a Tilley hat as part of his disguise during the commission of armed robberies across south-central

Ontario last year, including heists in Uxbridge and Stouffville.

On Tuesday, in Ontario Court in St. Catharines, Laramie was sentenced to 17 years in prison. He pleaded guilty in November to 17 counts of robbery and firearms charges.

Laramie, 48, was caught in October by Niagara region police after a botched robbery and subsequent shoot-out with police in St. Catharines. A well-educated family man and once a successful businessman, Laramie's life changed dramatically after he was fired from his job. He became a bank robber, and a prolific one at that, once holding up seven banks in a month. Laramie's nine-month spree netted him \$60,000.

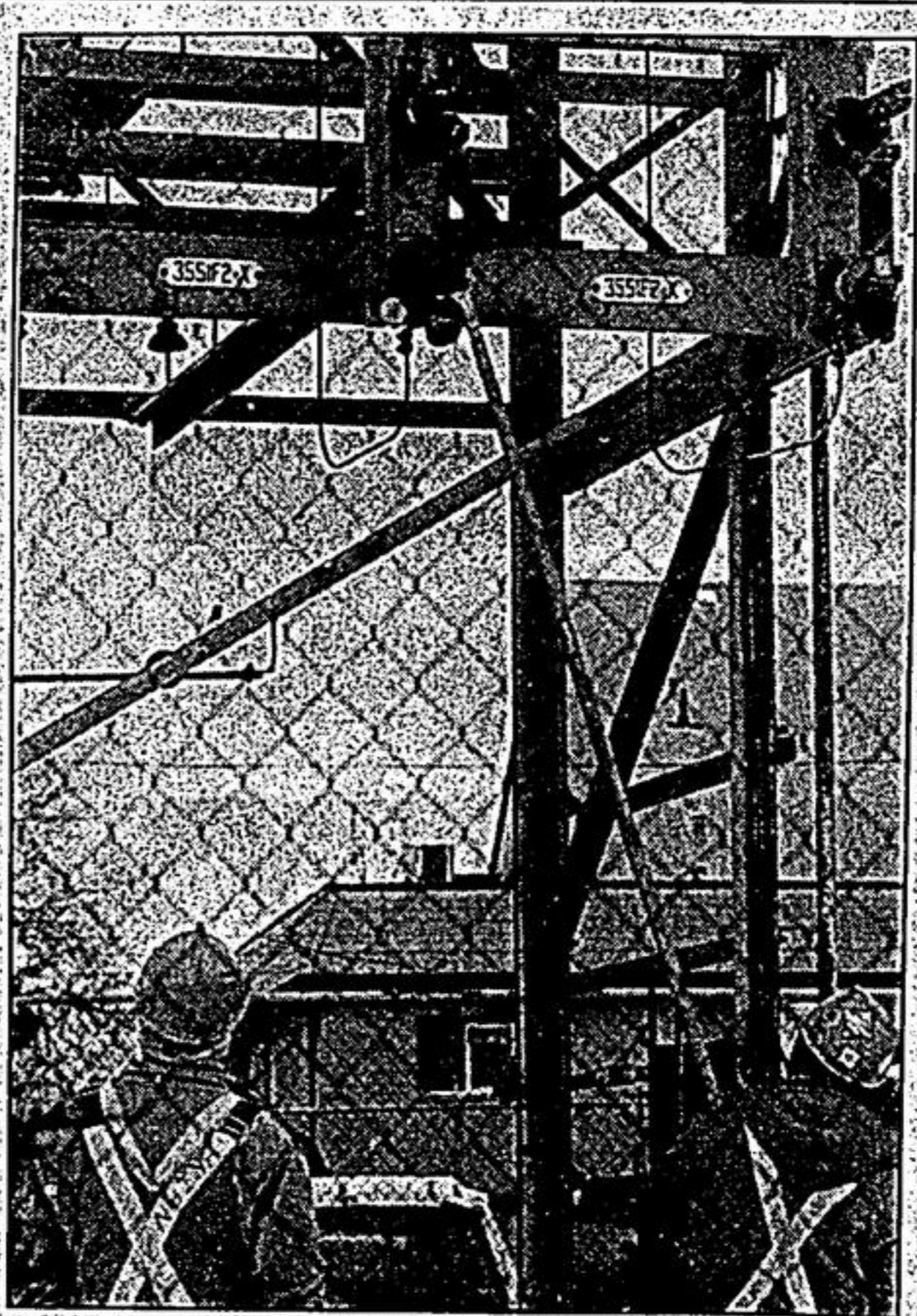
Program for youth expected

Ward 5 councillor Judy Scala said at Tuesday's council meeting that a press conference announcing a youth program will be held on Feb. 6 at the Recreation Centre.

"We are going to be putting together a program for our youth," she said. "I think you'll all be pleasantly surprised."

The tentative time for the press conference is 11:30 a.m.

Scala would not go into detail about the announcement, but did say that "details of the first big venture" in the program would also be spelled out.



Power rangers

Brian Carter, and Steve King of Stouffville, Hydro, take out a blown fuse at the Main St. transformer station on Monday. The fuse caused a three-hour black-out in town, sending children home from school, and forcing the closure of businesses.

Photo/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

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