

# Opinion

Send your letters to the editor to 9 Heritage Rd., Markham, L3P 1M3 or fax them to 294-1538

## How will you 'stand on guard' today?

How are you celebrating Canada Day? For many, this day is a chance to put their feet up, enjoy family and friends, a barbecue, read a book, perhaps attend a community Canada Day event. The thought may swiftly cross our minds and swell our hearts about what a great country this is, and how fortunate we are to be living here.

But many of us don't have much world experience with which to compare Canada. The lines in the song, "You don't know what you've got until you lose it," holds much truth for those of us in this state of awareness.

In our own national anthem which we sing with typical lacklustre at sporting events,



### Viewpoint

Jo Ann Stevenson

we pledge we will 'stand on guard for thee.'

Fortunately for us our new Canadians do know what Canada is and they are willing to stand for the values inherent in being Canadian. Their passion for this country is contagious. Given the opportunity to meet recent immigrants and hear their stories, it would be impossible not to be moved.

A newspaper office is a great

way to meet and get to know a cross section of citizens. One faced a firing squad five times in his native country in the middle east, for having a different faith than the military dictatorship. His family chose Canada over all others and struggles today, not with racial intolerance, but with the apathy they see around them.

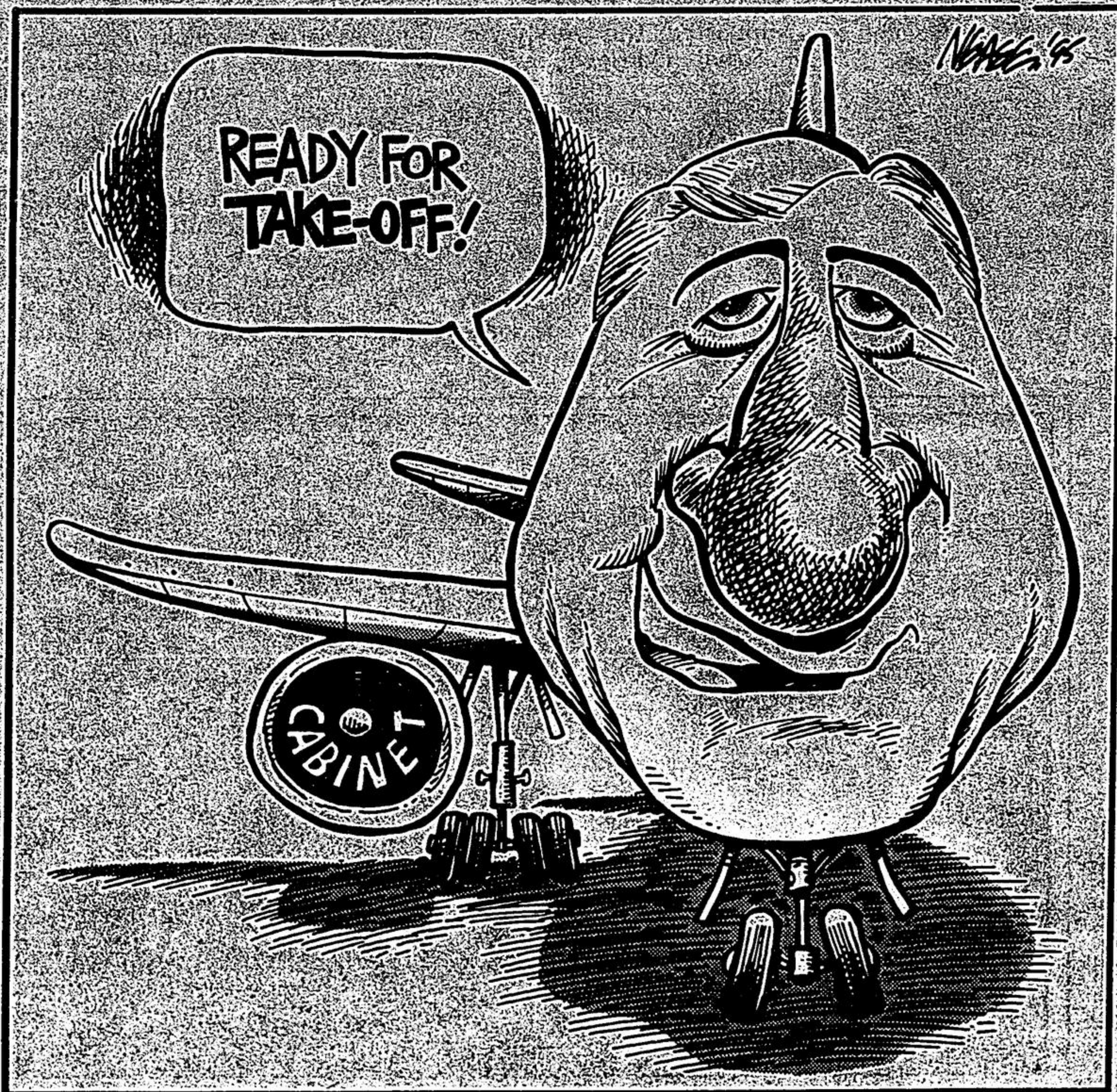
Who cares about Canada? Ask a Quebecker. The majority of them know what Canada is because they've been forced to look at it, and make up their minds about it. The majority keeps on voting for this country despite strong emotional ties to the culture inherent in their local communities.

Who cares about Canada? The veterans who celebrated

the 50th anniversary of their stand for freedom. They took risks for us, for all Canadians. They and their families carry deep scars from their very trying task. Now they are frail, but their message is strong. They were willing to "stand on guard" when the question was asked, "Who cares about Canada?"

We at home could have been more involved, could have created more political will to help the persecuted Jews find refuge, to object to the internment of Japanese and Italian Canadians.

Today too, we could share our ability to live peacefully together, find ways to integrate more of our own and the world's needy into productive lives.



AIR ONTARIO

Adam

by Brian Basset



## The long and the short of it

It's not very often I can think of anything good to say about the metric system, but I'm glad we've got it.

I'm also glad that we still have officially or otherwise chains, fathoms, furlongs, angstroms, pennyweights, drams, bolts, bushels, cords, spans and gigajoules.

We'd be in a real mess if we didn't have ways to measure things.

Of course for several hundred thousand years, mankind was in a real mess. Grok the caveman would run into the cave and announce that he'd just seen a plump mastodon stuck in the mud.

"How far away?" his tribesmen would ask in StoneAge-ese.

Hmmm. Similarly, Grok would be unable to estimate how tall or how heavy the mastodon was. They didn't have meters or tons.

He couldn't even say "Big as a house." They didn't have houses either.

Eventually, some deep thinker came along and established common measurements. Twelve inches was adopted as the "foot" - the length of an average man's tootsie. A bushel became the amount of apples required to fill a basket, which inevitably (after a few centuries) got us to the Erg.

Which, my physics book assures me, is the amount of energy required to move one gram through one centimetre, with an acceleration of one centimetre per second per second.

Whatever the hell that means. It's all very confusing, but it would be utterly bananas if we didn't have various systems of measurements to fall back on.

For one thing, all our government statisticians would be on the welfare rolls. We wouldn't even be able to measure time



Basic Black

Arthur Black

because we wouldn't know our nanoseconds from our kalpas.

Kalpa? That's the longest measure of time known to man. It comes from the Hindus and is equal to 4,320 million years.

A nanosecond is something that disappears faster than a politician's promise.

We need our means of measurement - even if we don't always understand the units we throw around. Financiers talk easily of millions, billions and trillions - but do any of them really understand numbers of that magnitude?

Just to put it in perspective, it takes 12 full days for a million seconds to tick by. One billion seconds is the equivalent of 31 years.

If you looked at the calendar a trillion seconds ago you would see that the date was roughly 30,000 BC.

Except you wouldn't be able to find a calendar. Most of North America was under five miles of ice.

And where would we be without percentages? We wouldn't know for example that:

45 per cent of women wear uncomfortable shoes because they look good.

Revenue Canada only gets around to checking about one per cent of our income tax returns.

17 per cent of all doctors still smoke.

55 per cent of all North Americans wouldn't take a trip into outer space even if NASA let them ride for free.

## The Tribune

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