

# Comment & Opinions

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to the editor  
to the address below

EDITORIAL

## Long teachers' strike will not be tolerated

So it has come to this. The talk is over, and teachers are now walking the picket line. Two million students and their parents are left hanging in the balance as the provincial government and the teachers' unions are in a contest to see who blinks first. Even Chief Justice Charles Dubin can't find enough common ground to keep the two sides talking. The question now is: What next?

Both sides have proved their point: they are committed and will not back down to threats. What they should realize is that the public is in no mood to suffer this strike for any longer than a couple of days. If the teachers and politicians think they're under pressure now, just give this fiasco another week.

At the moment everybody is a bad mood. The government is frustrated, teachers are angry and parents are furious at both sides.

Perhaps the fight over Bill 160 had to come to a walkout. Neither side wanted to be the first to make a concession. Mike Harris and company had to prove they would not be pushed around by a union. The teachers had to back up their words with action and they have done that. In the cold light of morning they have also discovered that fighting for a cause is not a job for the faint of heart.

Now that both sides have shown how powerful they are, we suggest they get back to the negotiating table.

If the goal of the teachers' unions was to focus public attention on Bill 160 and its ramifications, they have succeeded. It's what everybody's talking about. They should build on that success by going back to the classroom as soon as possible.



## McCrae's medals belong to all Canadians

Dear Editor,  
Re: Lt. Col. John McCrae  
Having recently returned from an emotional journey to the battle weary landscape of Flanders Fields in Belgium and northern France, I was greeted by some very disturbing news. The WWI Service medals of Lt. Col. John McCrae, a surgeon attached to

the 1st Canadian field artillery, were going to be sold at auction in Toronto, Saturday Oct. 25.  
My trip to the Ypres Salient of Belgium brought me to the Essex Farm medical dressing station and adjoining cemetery. It was after 17 days of treating the horrific suffering of Canadian, British and even German soldiers,

John McCrae composed the most memorable war poem ever written "In Flanders Field".  
He had been a doctor for years but it was the suffering, the pain and misery he witnessed at this front line dressing station, that had a profound effect on him. He even performed the funeral service for his best friend in the

absence of the Chaplain. It is the anguish and emotion he felt that became the inspiration for "In Flanders Fields". Canada should consider herself very fortunate indeed to have sired offspring of the moral fibre and character of Doctor John McCrae. He is respected not only on the Canadian stage, but the world stage. We, as a nation must retain every possible reminder and symbol of his existence and contributions to humanity.

His medals belong to all Canadians and should be proudly displayed for all to see, particularly, our young people, on Canadian soil. They certainly do not belong in the vault of some private collector.

John McCrae is our link, our constant reminder of the legacy of sacrifice this country of ours has made, particularly in the First World War. It saddens me as a Canadian to witness the sale of our heritage.

My calls to the Ministry of Canadian Heritage assured me that the medals could not leave Canada without their permission, however they would not commit to making the purchase on behalf of all Canadians.

This ministry, that recently spent tens of millions of dollars on Canadian flags, would not commit to spending \$25,000 on such a grand symbol of our heritage. As another Remembrance Day approaches, I challenge all Canadians to contact the Ministry of Heritage at 1-819-997-7788 or fax 1-819-994-5987 and demand the purchase be made.

This small effort is the least we can do for our many veterans past and present.

Glenn Kerr

## Grief easier after saying goodbye

While laughter may be the best medicine for many of life's troubles, there are times when only tears are possible.

In recent days, several people in our community have had to face the devastating loss of loved ones. Some of those loved ones were granted a long, full life, others had barely begun their journey; some I knew, others I knew of; all are mourned by the people whose lives they touched.

On Oct. 21, 34 years ago, my father died of cancer. It was not unexpected, but we were still somehow unprepared for the shock and the grief, and for the time it took for the pain to become marginally bearable.

From the moment we lost him, we wanted to talk about dad — the wonderful times we had shared and the joy he had brought to our lives and to the lives of our friends.

Many people, thinking they were sparing us even more sorrow, studiously avoided the mention of his name. Only those who had been through a similar experience understood our deep need to keep him alive through reminiscences.

In this way we were able, eventually, to come to terms with what had

happened and to draw comfort from the fact that he had been a much-loved member not only of our family, but of our community.

Grief is exhausting. I remember vividly the night dad died, I went to stay with friends who had loved him and who understood my need to talk. I talked and cried until I could no longer stay awake. Sleep brought relief, but it was a cruel respite. Waking up the next day, it took a minute or two for the terrible realization to dawn — I would never see my father again in this life.

But I was one of the lucky ones — during his long illness we had become extremely close. When he needed treatment, he went to our local hospital, which was just yards away from our home, and I was encouraged to visit and help with his needs whenever I could.

My memories of that time are strangely happy. He and I became inseparable — we shared books, and

jokes and celebrated his temporary triumphs over the disease that had invaded his body. Looking back, I was grateful that I had the opportunity to show him my love and appreciation — an opportunity many people are denied.

When death comes unexpectedly, it must be far more difficult to accept. There is no time for farewells, for mending fences or for just saying 'I love you.' I have never had to deal with, and cannot imagine, the pain of sudden loss. I cannot say to those who are left, 'I know how you feel.'

All any of us can do is be there when we're needed, offer practical comfort when we can, and continue to support the bereaved in their grief, not just for days or weeks, but for as long as it takes, and that can be a long, long time.

Grief does not go gently into that good night. It lingers, attacking just when you believed you had made a few faltering steps towards recovery.

Time softens, but can never entirely heal, the rawness of loss. And no words can adequately express the feelings of people in the community, as we reach out to offer comfort to those who are left to mourn.



### Kate's Corner

Kate Gilderdale

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