

Comment & Opinions

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Send your letters
to the editor
to the address below

EDITORIAL

Remember sacrifice made by veterans

Now that the dust from yesterday's municipal election is settling, it's time to think of the men and women who fought to give us the freedom to vote in the first place.

Today is one of the most important days of the year in the lives of Canadian veterans who fought in both world wars and other global conflicts.

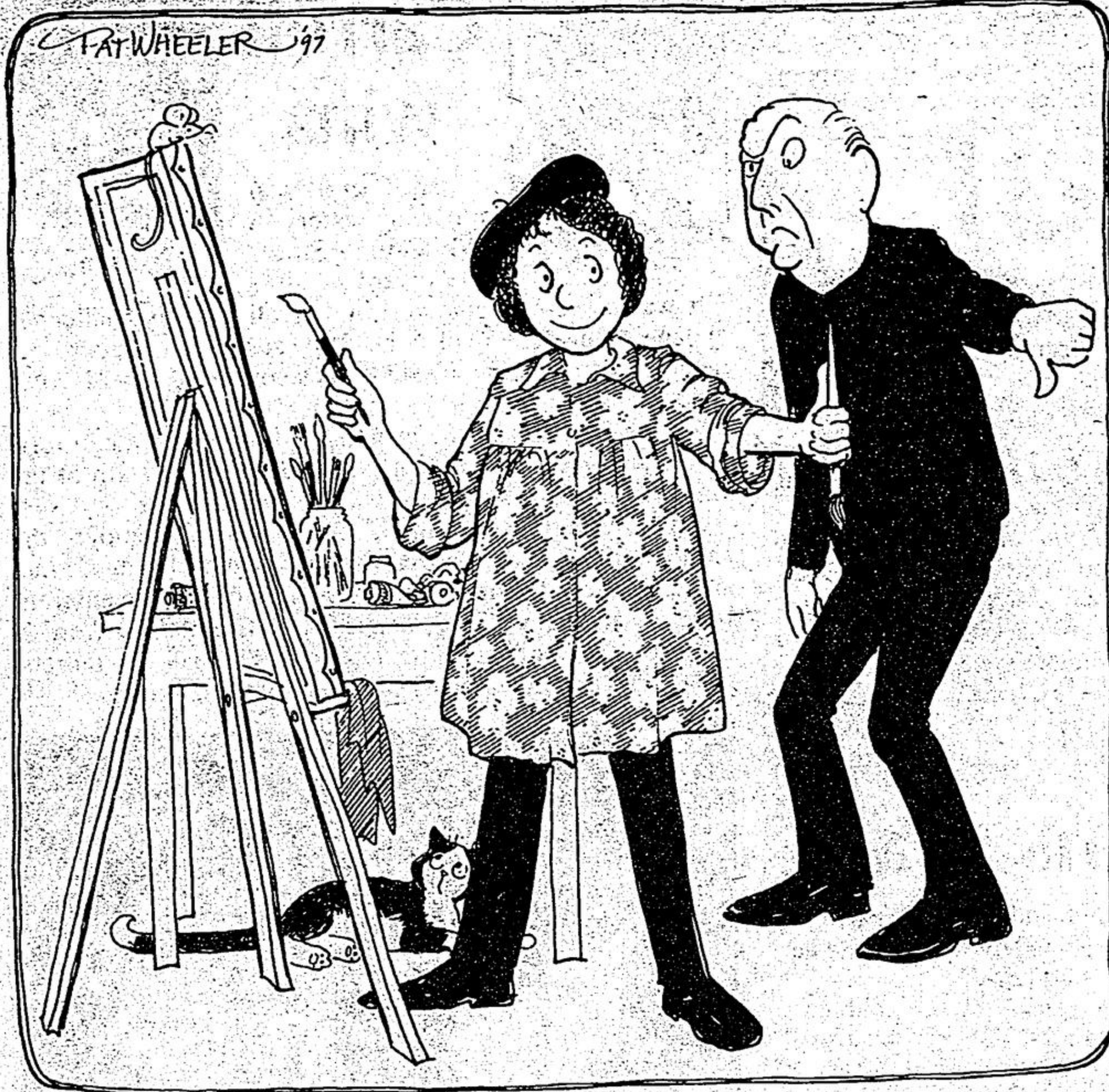
The familiar red poppies blooming on everyone's jackets and coats remind us all that Remembrance Day is a time to remember the sacrifice of soldiers — too many of whom aren't alive today to thank personally.

Yet the youngest generation doesn't know the significance of either poppies or Remembrance Day, and indeed has no real concept of world war. That is their luck and our responsibility.

Canadian veterans fought in rat-infested trenches, desert sands and sweltering jungles to save the world from dictatorship, genocide, inhumanity and racism. That Canadian children today enjoy peace and freedom and have no personal knowledge of war is a credit to those veterans.

We can say a quiet thank you to both the living and the dead during the obligatory moment of silence at 11 a.m. today. We can also participate in solemn observances at local cemeteries and war memorials.

But there's something else we have a responsibility to do this Remembrance Day. Explain to our children and grandchildren why they, too, should be grateful and respectful of veterans' sacrifice.



Maybe separate board teachers need miracle

Dear Editor,

For the past several years I have been fascinated by the ads which are repeated week after week under the heading "Personal Prayer to the Holy Spirit" or "St. Jude's Novena."

There is rarely a week goes by

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without one or more people attesting to a miracle.

This week "M.M." acknowledges a miracle and provides a three-step

formula which is guaranteed to work "no matter how difficult your wish may be."

In addition "E.D." provides a 9-step formula for answered pages which "has never been known to fail, never."

Now this is clearly superior to

Aladdin's Lamp, since there is no limit on the number of wishes.

Is this the solution for the York Catholic teachers' grievances with their board? See their ad on page 12 of the same paper.

Blake Tufford
Stouffville

MPP clarifies government position on Bill 160

Dear Editor,

I am deeply dismayed that teachers and students have been out of their classrooms over Bill 160. I have read the messages, letters and e-mail forwarded by constituents. I have met with individual teachers and federation representatives and I am well aware of the concerns that have been raised.

Now that the government has tabled its amendments, I welcome this opportunity to clarify my position and respond to the issues.

Teachers have told me they have too many students in classes, not enough textbooks, and inadequate assistance in classrooms to teach integrated students with special needs. There's no question teachers are being honest.

But consider this: Two years ago, no one disagreed that too much money was being spent in the board offices

while classrooms were neglected.

Although the government has persistently asked school boards to make the classroom a priority, I ask you, what has changed since 1995? Has the gap between the luxuries of the board offices and the deficiencies of the classroom narrowed since the provincial government cut funding by three per cent in 1996?

The answer is no. Teachers and students have not been placed first on the agenda locally. As a teacher who sought election to make positive changes in the education system, I believe this must be reversed.

In addition to 60 per cent of your municipal taxes that go to school boards, the province kicks in \$4.5 billion without any control over how that money is spent locally.

It's not in the best interests of teachers and students, and it should not be allowed to continue. If an elected provincial government — which holds constitutional responsibility for education — does not require school boards to spend your money in the classroom, who will?

There has been a lot of media discussion about who will control education — the unions or the government. It is true that Bill 160 would give the government the authority to

implement previously-legislated reforms including school board amalgamation, and allow the province to set education taxes.

But on the eve of the strike, Minister Johnson indicated the important issue for the government is not who controls education but what standards we are going to adhere to.

The public has objected to the regulation of class size, prep time and non-certified teachers by cabinet decree. To increase the accountability of this legislation, the minister has significantly clarified it and dropped parts of the bill that would have allowed changes to these standards without public debate.

The amended legislation stipulates that the average class size in each board cannot exceed 25 in elementary schools and 22 in high schools. Special education classes, and non-teaching staff would not be included in the class average equation.

Johnson has also changed language in the bill that would have allowed teachers to be replaced by non-teachers. Any changes to these standards would require full legislative debate.

I support these standards because they will enrich the experience of students in our schools.

These amendments have largely satisfied the demands of union leaders and teachers.

The outstanding issue is high school prep time. On this, I agree with constituents that both sides must compromise. The education system cannot be enhanced unless there are enough teachers to meet the needs of students. If reductions in prep time really mean more time with students, the government must ensure that the level of education funding does not jeopardize teaching staff.

This is the position I am advocating with my caucus colleagues.

Julia Munro, MPP, Durham-York

Congratulations, teachers

Dear Editor,

I want to congratulate the teachers of Ontario. I'm not sure how it was done, but they were completely successful in pulling down the mask of the government to expose the nasty tyrants masquerading as a popular party.

This was the turning point for the Harris government.

Greg Keilty, Cedar Valley

Editor's note

In a letter published in The Tribune's Oct. 23 issue under the headline "Reader defends SDSS coach and dad," the name was withheld by mistake.

The writer was Sarah Connell, who had wanted her name published with the letter.

The editor apologizes for the error.

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While we endeavor to print as many letters as possible, we regret that not all letters may be printed.