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Comment & Opinions

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EDITORIAL

Time for public to pick regional chair

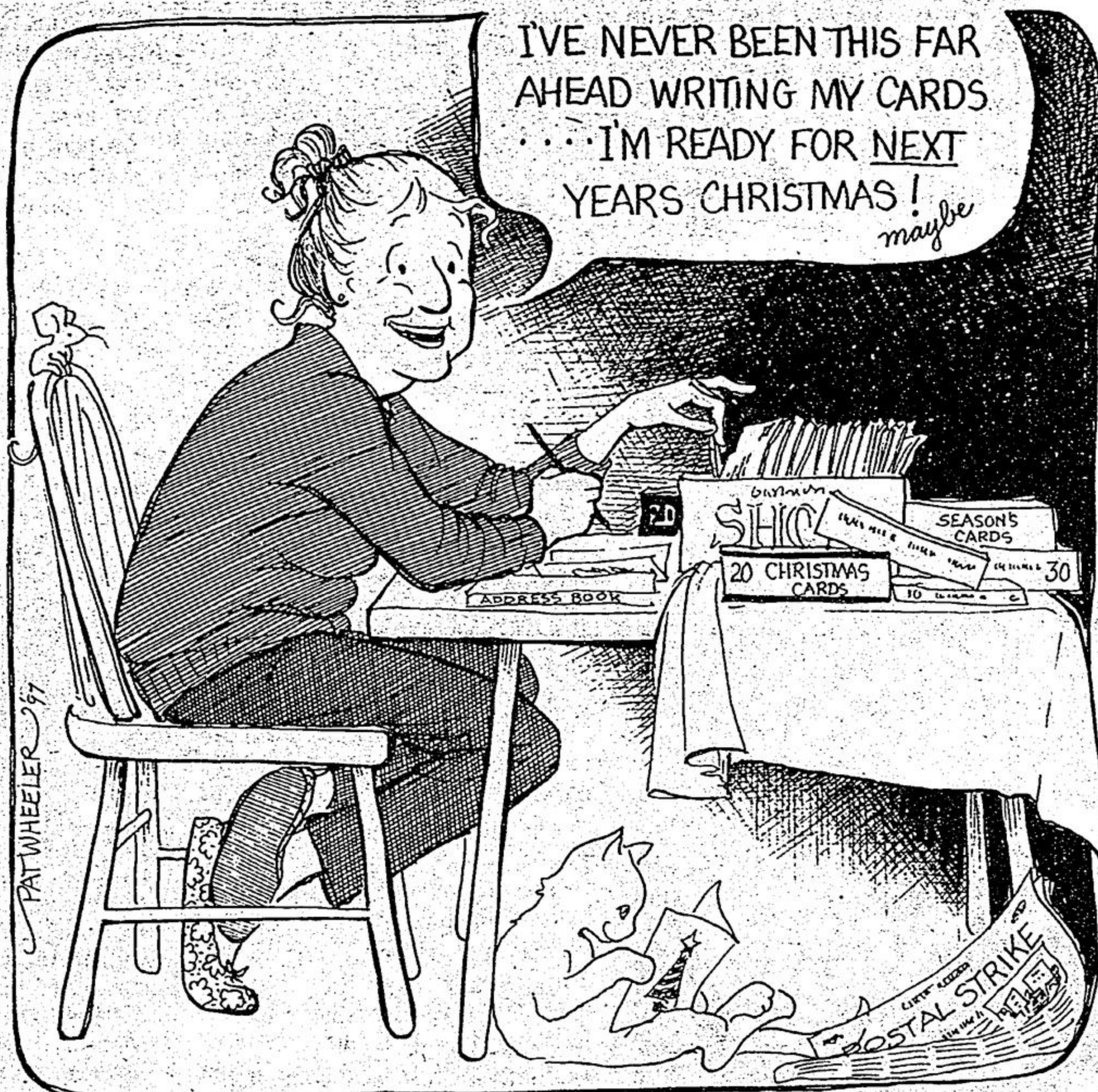
In just over two weeks, York Regional Council will vote in its new chair. Right now the candidates are reported to include Markham Regional Councillor Bill Fisch, former Newmarket mayor John Cole, Georgina Mayor Rob Grossi, Richmond Hill Mayor Bill Bell and outgoing Richmond Hill regional councillor Gail Blackburn.

The process used to select the regional chair has been much criticized in the past. The position is voted on only by members of regional council, and this year's proceedings clearly highlight what some of the problems are.

If Fisch wins the job, and he is considered one of the favourites, then the results of the just-finished municipal election are thrown into complete disarray. If he becomes regional chair, Fisch's seat on Markham Council becomes open. It seems the town must appoint one of the sitting ward councillors to fill that regional post, and will then hold a by-election in whichever ward becomes open.

What a costly, confusing game of musical chairs. There would be a similar effect in other towns should another sitting politician be chosen. Eldred King has served as York Region chair with distinction since 1984.

But now that he is retiring, it's time to change the process. The way things are going with the provincial government and its penchant for amalgamation, the vote for regional chair Dec. 11 may be the last one ever held. If by some miracle York Region still exists in its current form come the municipal elections in 2000, we say it's time to let the voters choose the regional chair directly.



Are we really that afraid of teachers?

Over the past few weeks *The Tribune* has been criticized for what a large number of callers have described as a newspaper "bias" or pro-teacher approach to the controversial education reform issue.

One caller, who assured me the silent majority is actually in favour of Bill 160, said five letters published in *The Uxbridge Tribune* on the subject were actually written by teachers. Another parent in Stouffville said six of the letters flogging Bill 160 were



Kibble's Bits

Tracy Kibble

also from teachers.

If that is the case, then those teachers should be ashamed for writing biased letters under the guise of 'Joe Q. Public,' when in fact their comments are anything but. Teachers

should have the confidence to admit, 'yes, I'm a teacher and here's what I think.' When they don't sign as a teacher, it is simply union propaganda which is serving the best interests of no one.

The Tribune, however, is not blameless. While we do verify letters are signed, and have contact telephone numbers, we just don't have the staff to investigate the professions of every letter writer.

The Tribune did receive a flood of letters in favor of the education reform moves, and ones which nicely lambasted teachers for their move to ignore what 'must be done,' but 95 per cent of those letters were unsigned. We can't publish letters signed 'concerned parent,' 'mad as hell' or 'not going to take it, anymore.'

When I personally asked at least seven callers why they didn't sign their letters or why they wouldn't write us a letter stating all the facts we discussed on the phone, the answer was always the same: "Are you kidding? I wouldn't be able to send my son/daughter to school. I can't sign my name stating my true feelings."

If that's the case, it's a sad day for parents. Are we that afraid of union members or leaders that we can't speak our minds without fear of retribution against our innocent children?

Are teachers really perceived as people who would take out their political fight on kids? It seems so, in Stouffville and Uxbridge, anyway.

Maybe union leaders have held such a stranglehold on the public for so long without any interference from spineless past governments that we're actually afraid of them.

The fact I can't get past in all this mess is that during the past 10 years education spending has increased nearly 85 per cent, while school taxes rose a revolting 120 per cent. All the while the teacher pension plan grew fatter and fatter.

Parents have been wondering about the quality of education for years and teachers have been complaining about fewer classroom resources for years. This isn't a new problem. So why are school unions insisting it is? Let the calls begin.

Beware the simple pasta dinner

My son celebrated his 19th birthday in style with a formal dinner party at Chateau Gilderdale.

We took his request to dress up seriously. Mr. Wallethead donned his tux, your correspondent shimmied about in a silver pantsuit and Clare wore a black velvet dress with stunning stiletto-heeled shoes. Malcolm was resplendent in an elegant suit from the Care and Share Shoppe.

The silverware and crystal (still intact despite the best efforts of Poc and Spasm) glittered impressively on the table, which was adorned with candles and posh-looking napkins. Mentally cataloguing my tiny inventory of gourmet recipes, I asked Malcolm to name the menu of his choice. "Spaghetti and meat-sauce," he said promptly. Martha Stewart might have cringed, but I smiled bravely. "With garlic bread," added Clare.

In a rare display of organization, I made the sauce and prepared the bread the day before to avoid a last-minute panic. That evening, I warmed up the sauce, put on the water for the spaghetti and popped the garlic bread



Kate's Corner

Kate Gilderdale

into the oven. Two minutes later, you couldn't see across the kitchen.

Garlic butter was dripping through the foil onto the oven floor and smoke was pouring from the vent. I opened the window just as the alarm began its blood-curdling tune-up. The water began to boil, so I absent-mindedly added a bunch of spaghetti. I have prepared this simple dish countless times, but I have never yet managed to cook the appropriate amount.

Sometimes I end up with enough to feed Goodwood, on other occasions, I underestimate how much is enough.

To make it worse, by the time the pasta was cooked, my concentration was shot. I drained it too long, causing it to become a glutinous mass.

Clare and I were laughing hysterically as we attempted, unsuccessfully, to separate and distribute the noodles

evenly. Meanwhile the garlic bread was soft rather than crisp, because I'd turned off the oven during the aforementioned smoke storm.

Despite these little challenges, everyone tucked into dinner with gusto. We were about to attack dessert (a store-bought chocolate cake — I know my limitations) when the phone rang. As Clare made to leave the table, her heel became lodged in the heating vent next to her chair.

She repaired to the kitchen bearing the shoe still firmly imbedded in the vent. By the end of dinner, Mr. Wallethead was trying to coax the heel from its vise, while the rest of us wiped tears of laughter from our eyes and got stuck into the cake.

Before I cook pasta at a dinner party again, I'll consider the advice given by Miss Piggy to a frustrated cook, who asked, "Whenever I cook spaghetti, it always gets tangled up in clumps. What am I doing wrong?"

"I am not sure," replied Miss Piggy, "but you might try a light cream rinse, followed by a quick once-over with a blow-dryer."

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