

**EDUCATION:** Judge's ruling releases Catholic boards from 'hostage' situation; Public board teacher feel judgment punishes their students

# Equity lost in Bill 160 decision: MPP

BY DAWN LIERSCH  
STAFF WRITER

A judge's ruling against the province's attempt to put all school boards on a level playing field goes against both taxpayers and experts, according to a York Region MPP.

"So many studies had clearly identified getting education off the property taxes during the '90s," said Durham-York MPP Julia Munro, a former teacher.

But Mr. Justice Peter Cumming ruled that the province's new education legislation, which took away school boards' right to levy proper

ty taxes and replaced it with a per-pupil funding formula, violated Roman Catholics' constitutional right to control their own education system.

Cumming did not support the public boards' argument that they should also keep the right to tax.

Munro said Cumming's ruling doesn't jibe with what experts say about education funding, adding the legislation was well researched and not prepared in haste, as Cumming had suggested.

"To suggest it was done in haste doesn't reflect the concerns of the public, the taxpayers and the

experts," Munro said.

In a ruling released Wednesday, Cumming said the province's funding model actually runs counter to studies on how the education system should be financed, adding the government's approach makes the Catholic community "hostage" to the province.

Munro said she was surprised by comments in the ruling, particularly because the province had only suspended Catholic boards' right to tax for a few years and only to allow Catholic boards to have equal funding with public boards.

"The way it stands right now,

there is clearly an inequity," she said.

In fact, Catholic boards were willing to give up their right to tax in exchange for more money than they'd ever had before.

Tina Rotondi Molinari, chairperson of the York Region Catholic board, said she didn't object to losing the right to tax and doesn't intend to levy taxes this year.

"The abeyance of levying of taxation was only for a five-year term to allow for equity in funding to take place," she said.

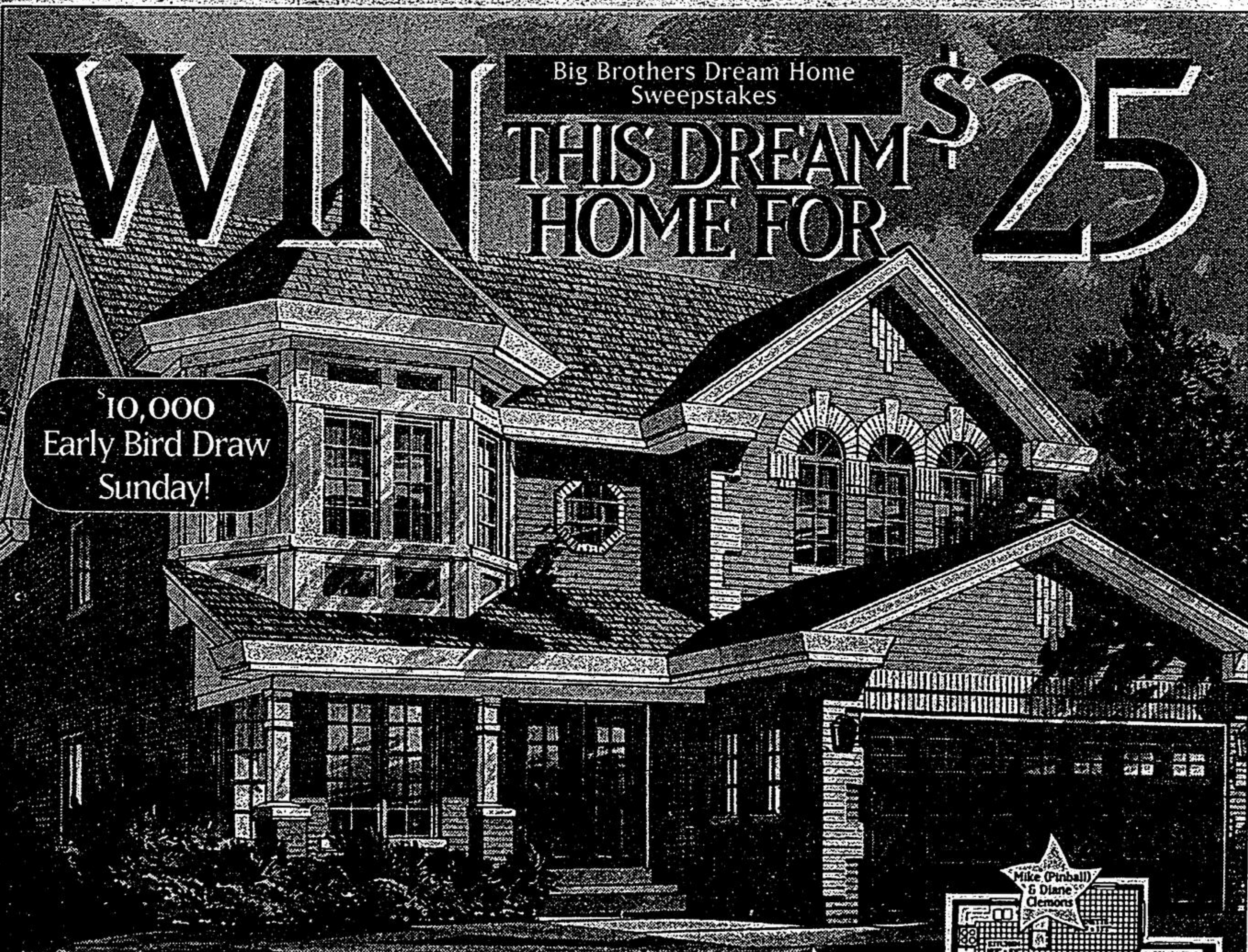
"If we found, at the end of the term, this did not provide equity,

we had the option of going back to the former system."

Meanwhile, teachers in the public system say the ruling punishes their students.

"The resulting inequity creates a system in which the majority, the supporters of public schools, have fewer rights than the minority, the separate school supporters of Ontario," Earl Manners, president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, stated in a news release.

Immediately after the ruling, Education Minister Dave Johnson announced he would appeal.



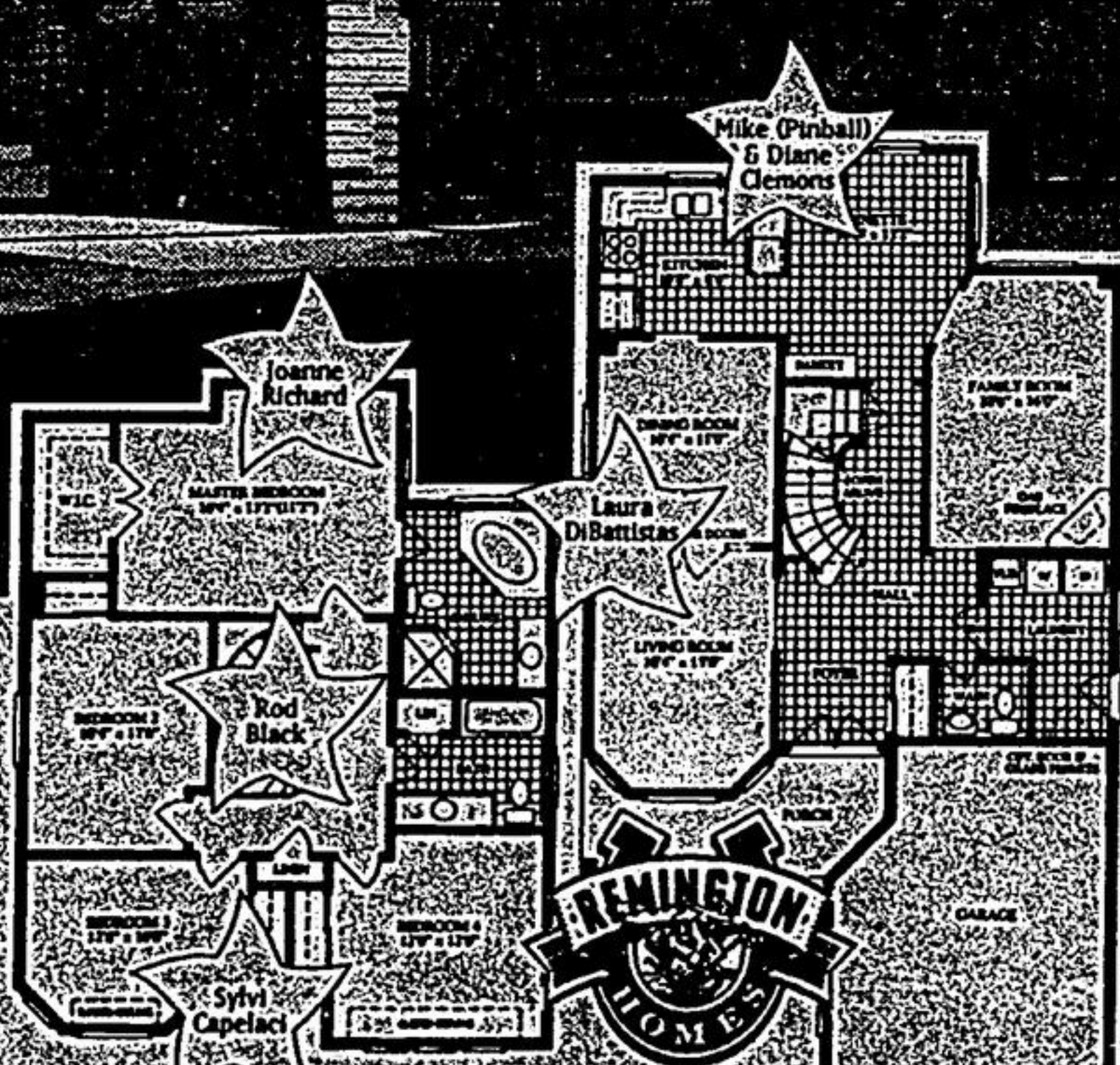
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