

Stouffville Tribune

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EDITORIAL

Province should take over negotiating teacher contracts

On the face of it, striking Bradford teachers have a point: they deserve to be paid the same as fellow teachers at neighbouring school boards.

Their union maintains they are the lowest paid Catholic teachers in the province.

"Someone teaching in Bradford for 10 years would make \$59,800, but the same teacher could drive 15 minutes south and make \$69,800 with the York Catholic District School Board," said Brent Hamelin, president of the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic Secondary Teachers Association.

If quality education for all students, regardless of where they live, is the driving force in the public school system, it's an untenable situation.

It's just one more reason the province should step forward and centralize bargaining with its 123,000 teachers.

While it remains the sole area of financial clout within the hands of local trustees, the reality is the province controls the amount of money with which they can negotiate.

Most provincial teacher contracts expired last summer but boards across Ontario are turning out empty pockets as a result of a funding formula they say is inadequate.

While the Bradford teachers union is suggesting it will agree to a 7-per-cent increase over two years, board spokesperson Diane Legge said meeting that demand will require concessions in other areas or cuts to programs.

It's a reality underlined by the York Region District School Board when it petitioned the Education Equality Task Force last month for a formula that recognizes the reality of the costs of programs and operations.

With about 80 per cent of board budgets dedicated to salaries, a key issue is the teacher salary grid. The province's salary grid provides rates lower than those paid by most boards. Since its establishment in 1998, there has been one increase of 1.95 per cent.

While a supporter of the per-pupil funding formula, the York board stated, "Like every other school board in the province, our board is spending more on teacher salaries than the amount contained in the funding formula — and the difference is increasing annually. The consequence of this is that virtually every aspect of the funding formula is distorted."

Translation: programs such as English as a second language and special education get the short end of the stick.

The teachers unions now set a provincial pay standard that's used as bargaining leverage at every board, while the local boards are at a disadvantage without a centralized position.

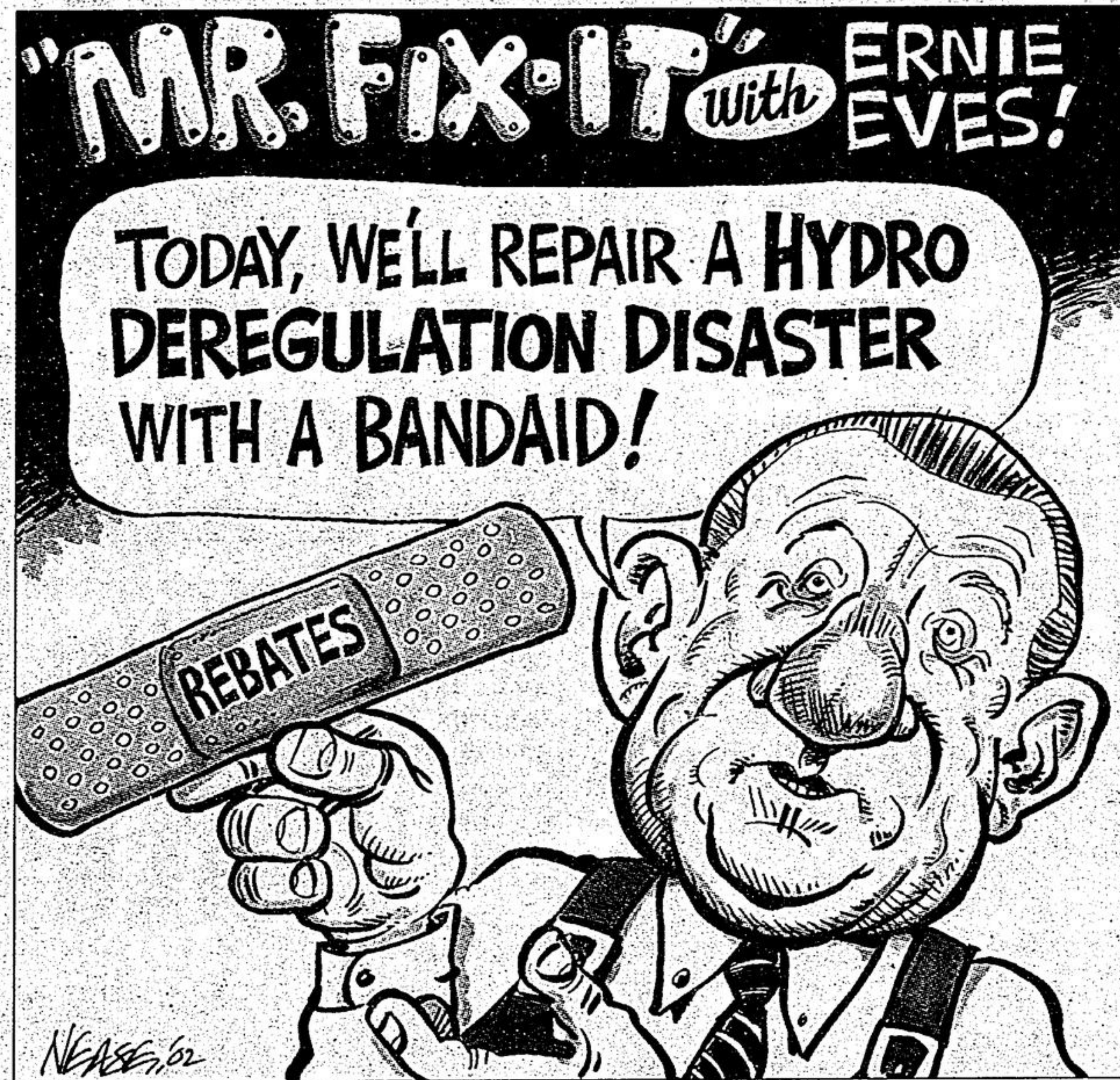
Simply bumping up the salary grid of the funding formula based on the average grid of the largest boards and providing annual increases would be the easiest solution.

If the province isn't prepared to implement that measure, it has to step into the fray.

OPINION

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Many helped Markham's contribution to Run for the Cure

Thanks to all the family members, relatives and friends who took part in the second annual Markham Departure (courtesy of Laidlaw Transit) for the CIBC Run for the Cure in Toronto.

We had a great day and everyone's time and generosity were appreciated. We were 80 people in total and we raised a whopping \$10,671 to fight breast cancer.

Thanks also to Laidlaw Transit in Markham, which was ready to donate as many buses as we needed to get us all downtown and back safely.

If the cure is not found in the next 12 months, we're looking forward to an even bigger turnout next year.

ANNA SEARLES
MARKHAM

Canadian soldiers fought for freedom, not preserving monarchy

Re: Monarchy important to keep, despite politician's comments, letter to the editor by John Shaw, Oct. 19.

Mr. Shaw is quite wrong in claiming not defending the monarchy means breaking the faith with Canadian veterans and war dead.

These heroes and heroines served in the Armed Forces to defend our freedom and way

The Economist & Sun/Stouffville Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Economist & Sun/Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

Write: Letters to the Editor, 9 Heritage Rd., Markham, L3P 1M3, e-mail letters@econsun.com

of life that they knew would evolve constitutionally and democratically.

Few would believe they acted to preserve for all eternity an institution that is increasingly and rightfully seen as obsolete and irrelevant — except, of course, by those who enjoy lining up to wave and coo, bow and curtsy before these very dull royal celebrities.

Is it not amazing that there are still people like Mr. Shaw, who proudly claim to live in democracy and yet choose to have the highest position in the country occupied by someone who achieves this position not by intelligence or skill or effort or popular vote but by accident of birth. Such a choice is absolutely medieval, feudal and prehistoric.

Do people like Mr. Shaw ever wonder why Canada does not have dukes and earls, marquises and counts? It's simple: we realized a long time ago how archaic, class-ridden, snobbish and ridiculous such empty titles and honours truly are. Like the monarchy.

JAMES P.B. KELLY
MARKHAM



Dave Teetzel

Fixing education? Show us the cash

It was a strange bit of déjà vu.

On Tuesday, Liberal education critic Gerard Kennedy visited the same York Region neighbourhoods the Tories once used as their backdrop to launch their packages of education reforms. Mr. Kennedy's message: It's time Ernie Eves and company admitted they tried some things in good faith that just didn't work. Now somebody has to clean up the mess.

Education is clearly intended as a centerpiece of Mr. McGuinty's campaign. And why not? It's an important issue that affects just about everyone in the province in some way or another.

But I picture shell-shocked teachers, students and parents all pleading, "Please stop fixing education. Honest, we'll vote for anyone who promises to leave the schools alone for just one month."

Actually, the Liberal policy pamphlet talks about that. Mr. Kennedy calls it a "peace and stability plan" and the gist of it is to let educators run the school system with less "help" from politicians and provincial bureaucrats.

So how does the Liberals' platform-compare to local front-line concerns as outlined by the York Region District School Board at the Rozanski commission on education funding?

The Liberals slag the "one size fits all" funding formula that ignores local needs. For example, it doesn't recognize some boards need to spend more on busing and others have more ESL or special education students.

York Region has all these issues. But our public school board says the funding formula itself, which funds schools on a per-student basis, addresses basic issues. The only problem is the government isn't providing enough money.

And that's exactly where the Liberal platform, like so many campaign promises, breaks down. Ambitious and worthwhile goals are assigned politically correct but inadequate funding sources.

Mr. McGuinty pledges to provide smaller elementary class sizes, a 50-per-cent improvement in test scores and improved subsidies for child care.

He will pay for all this by cancelling tax credits for parents who send their children to private schools and not running self-serving ads.

The private school tax credits haven't been fully implemented, so that money isn't even in the kitty. While flooding TV programming with government propaganda is an enormous waste of money, eliminating it won't provide enough cash to make a dent in education budgets across the province.

I would be a lot more excited about this education plan if Mr. McGuinty admitted he would be increasing taxes to implement it and give me an idea how much more I'd be paying.

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