

# OPINION

**Stouffville Sun-Tribune**  
 A Metroland community newspaper  
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## Editorial

### Series challenges educrats to act

From the first one-room schoolhouse in the 1700s to today's boutique schools specializing in fine arts or sports, education has changed significantly in York.

School boards are some of the biggest employers in the region; the two boards employ 12,500 people, 8,300 of whom are teachers. They're also among the largest collectors of taxes. The public board budget for this year is \$719 million and the Catholic board's is \$390 million.

Talk to bureaucrats and elected trustees with our public and Catholic boards and they talk a better game than they did 10 years ago.

There are significantly fewer portable classrooms in school yards, meaning fewer bus trips for the youngest students and more room for outside activity.

They also talk about character education and better relationships with employees and the community.

Provincewide test results in the region are impressive.

That is all true, but our system is far from perfect, according to students, parents and teachers.

The threat of another strike, this time by 3,755 public elementary teachers, hangs over the region this spring. Teachers are already working to rule, making a less than ideal environment for students and parents. Tensions mount between employee and employer and the victim is the student, left to fend with fewer resources and less assistance.

Premier Dalton McGuinty promised to restore labour peace to Ontario schools. It's time for him to do that.

Class size is a major irritant, parents told us. It has prompted parents to move their children to private schools, many of the Montessori variety, that have popped up throughout the region.

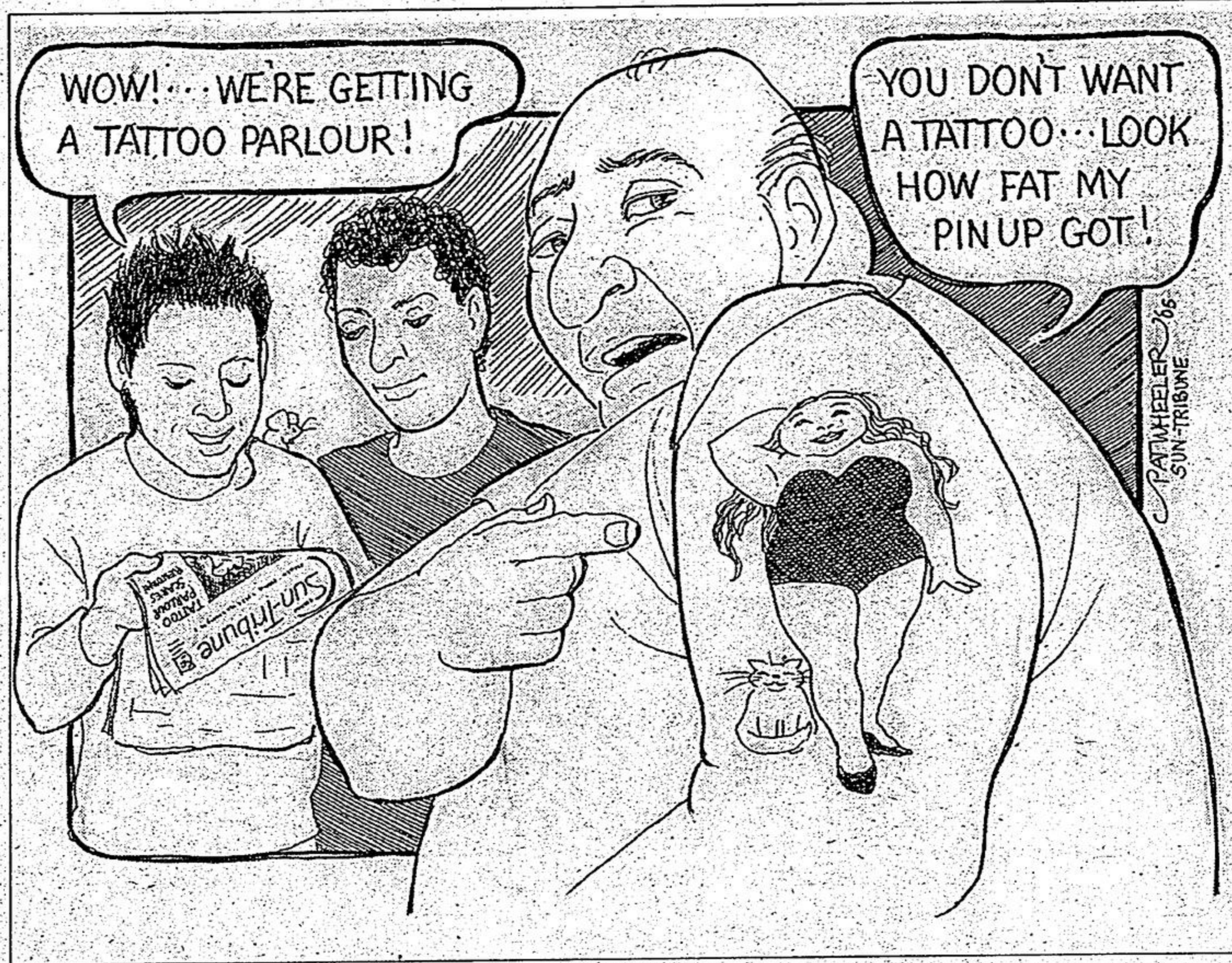
The public board is not afraid of the private school boom. It should be.

Students moving to private schools are sending a message that families are not satisfied with public education.

A shortage of English as a second language teachers is a major concern in the south end of York Region, where many immigrants settle. York boards blame the province, which reduced the number of language teachers in 1999. MPPs didn't consider the children of immigrants to be in need of English assistance. Many York Region residents would beg to differ.

We invite you to read more about our education system in our three-part series, *The State of Education*, starting in today's newspaper.

We'd also like your thoughts on the system. Go to our website, [yorkregion.co](http://yorkregion.co), and click on the State of Education icon.



## Letters to the Editor

### Modern-day tattoos not for youths, gang members

*Re: Tattoo parlours, Elvis festival not what downtown needs, letter to the editor, March 31.*

Brian Claman's letter said the Freak Ink tattoo parlor would do nothing positive for our town and the town should spend less time on Elvis festivals and bringing tattoo parlors to town and fix up the downtown core.

I find very little truth and reason in this. Having a business open in the downtown core is positive. It brings business to a downtown in dire need of it. And longtime residents are opening the parlour.

The days of tattoos being only appealing to individuals from gangs and criminals is no longer reality.

Tattoos are a way of expressing oneself.

I have two tattoos. I am no criminal. I am an avid volunteer with many organizations and a student at York University majoring in criminology.

Other individuals sharing my love for tattoos are superstar athletes and youth role models David Beckham and Michael Jordan, Academy Award winners Cuba Gooding Jr., Jodie Foster and Peter Jackson, former talk show host Rosie O'Donnell and musicians Cher and Rod Stewart.

Even Winston Churchill had an anchor on his arm.

These are not individuals you would consider criminals, would you?

We all want to express ourselves in a world

The Stouffville Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Stouffville Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space. Write: Letters to the Editor, 34 Civic Ave., P.O. Box 154, Stouffville, L4A 7Z5, e-mail [jmason@yrmg.com](mailto:jmason@yrmg.com)

that chooses every product we buy and dictates everything we see and hear. You must grow with the times.

Stouffville is a town on the move; if we stop every business from coming in due to a few individuals' prejudices, then we will crumble as a town and as a society.

As to the statement the parlor will only serve as a hangout for local youth, one can only point the finger at the town.

We do need more hangouts for youth, however I doubt they will flock to the parlor considering the age requirements to receive tattoos. It should be noted several government regulations ensure tattoo parlors are clean.

I welcome our new business and wish them the best.

To those opposed, you must better educate yourself before being prejudiced toward our new entrepreneurs.

**MIKE VANDERVOORT**  
 STOUFFVILLE



## Off The Top

with Jim Mason

### Getting ink on Main Street our latest threat

I would have paid significant coin to see a veteran member of Whitchurch-Stouffville council, let's say Harry Bowes, stroll into last week's special meeting of council, his sleeveless shirt showing off a nice pair of tattooed biceps.

It would have been the most fitting irony for a meeting called to deal with the horrors of a tattoo parlour opening on Main Street.

The whole scenario reminds one of Kevin Bacon introducing dancing to Bomont in the movie *Footloose*.

Stouffville's seen this film before.

Residents protested the magic festival of the early 1980s, the same way they opposed a store supposedly selling the occult 15 years later. And remember the letters of protest when the first pub was being built in Stouffville, a town that outlawed over-the-counter liquor sales until the 1960s?

God, save us all.

In the blue-collared port town in which I grew up during the 1960s, tattoos were a souvenir acquired only at sea, in the Armed Forces or in prison.

Take a hard look next time you visit the beach or an indoor pool. ("I was only admiring the artwork, honey, strictly for research purposes.") Tattoos are almost as prevalent as belly buttons.

You'll see Canadian flags, hearts and the names of lovers past and present inked in some of the most unusual spots.

It's not like we don't have larger items on the town's agenda.

Try finding the best location of the three presented for Stouffville's conglomerate of big box stores, also referred to as a power centre. Let's locate and landscape it so it doesn't make Stouffville's entrance look like that of every other community in North America. Grey and bland.

Or let's try settling on a theme for downtown Stouffville. Somehow the board and batten no-neon look championed by mayor Fran Sainsbury in the 1980s was never embraced.

The tattoo parlour may live a long and licensed life on Main Street. A proper business plan and demand for product will determine that, not people trying to drum it out of town.

Somewhere, Kevin Bacon is laughing, if not dancing.

*Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.*

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