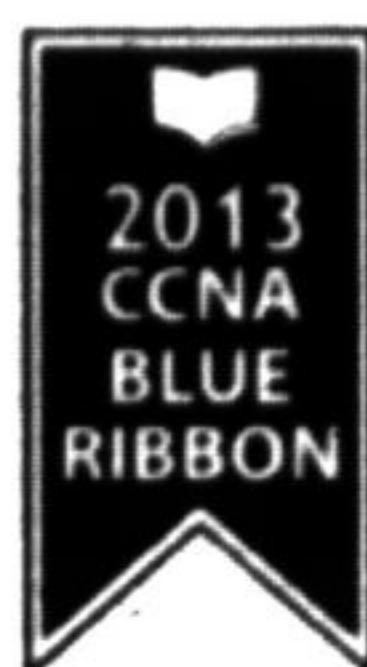


OPINION



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LETTERS POLICY

All submissions must be less than 400 words and include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space. E-mail jmason@yrmg.com

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Editorial

Would new model work in our school system?

ISSUE: Thanks to labour troubles, this was not a normal school year in York Region.

This is one of the best days in any young person's life. The same goes for teachers.

For most, the last official day of school signals advancement. And, in the short run, it means nine weeks of uninterrupted vacation.

Sadly, we couldn't say the same about the school year itself.

Unless your child attended school in the Roman Catholic system or went to a private institution, you learned the definition of the word "unpredictable" in 2012-13.

There were cancelled winter sports teams and clubs. Working parents had to, often at the last minute, make arrangements for child care when school wasn't an option.

There were nasty letters to the editor from both sides of the debate.

Some students are leaving school — and perhaps graduating altogether — this week with a sour taste in their mouths. What about that basketball season that wasn't or the favourite club that never met?

This isn't new to York Region or Ontario.

An all-out public teachers strike from the 1970s here is still referenced. There have been work disruptions in our Catholic board, as well.

It brings back the age-old question: Should teachers have the right to strike? Is teaching an

essential service?

There are other questions. Should teachers be expected to volunteer after school hours? Many do, and we thank them for that.

But what of their union brethren who are the last in the parking lot before the school day begins and the first to leave when it's over?

Should we look at more of a United States model where teachers are often compensated for coaching?

Some students are leaving school — and perhaps graduating altogether — this week with a sour taste in their mouths. What about that basketball season that wasn't or the favourite club that never met?

Let's all take a two-month breather and hope for smoother labour relations in our futures — likely with another party in power at Queen's Park.

It's the least we owe to our children. To our future.

They've been introduced to the dark side of labour relations far too early in life.

BOTTOM LINE: We owe our children a better experience than they received this year.

Is there an issue about which you are passionate? You could be a Saturday Forum contributor and get the chance to have your piece published along with your name and headshot. E-mail your 450-word submission to jmason@yrmg.com

STOUFFVILLE SAYS/SANDRA BOLAN

Whitchurch-Stouffville's biggest party, the Strawberry Festival, is on this week. What event would you recommend to first-timers?



ARLENE HEYWOOD

"The Lions barbecue is a for-sure thing. We wish they would have the (vendor) booths in the centre of the street."



VANESSA ANGELESKI

"The different vendors, the bands, just the entire experience."



MARIE NESBITT

"I always buy a bag of (Reesor's peas) and eat them while I walk along the street. And seeing everybody you don't see for a long time."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

McGuinty messes will take years to correct

Re: Boards scramble as sick days expire, June 15.

We are being told teachers are cashing in sick days this spring because they are no longer able to bank them.

That is partially true. Many teachers are upset with the cuts to their contracts from Bill 115 and are using up their sick days in response.

Teachers had 20 sick days a year for many years. On average, they used six.

With the new legislation, they have 11 sick days per year. The average number used will go up a bit in response to the contract cuts and as a form of protest by some teachers.

There are other reasons for an increase in the number of supply teacher days being used this spring.

Bill 115 also brought other informal protests by teachers, as some chose to cut back on the extra things they did professionally and for their students.

This included fewer extracurricular programs, no training workshops and

HAVE YOUR SAY, STOUFFVILLE

► What do you think of these issues or any others?
E-mail jmason@yrmg.com

other decreases in extra services.

Now that the government has removed Bill 115 and taken steps to honour the negotiation process, programs, activities and workshops have shifted into high gear.

Teachers are doing a lot to make up for some of what happened in the fall and winter.

That means more supply teacher days as extra-curriculars are compressed into a shorter timeframe.

Another thing needs to be noted: the McGuinty government was trying to save money by messing with contracts.

They tried to decrease the number of sick days for teachers, but they have actually increased the number starting next year

Using some creative math, teachers will be able to use more than 20 days next year under the imposed agreements.

McGuinty's government has left messes in education that will take years to correct and result in many students placed in less than great learning environments.

Teachers are doing a lot to make up for some of what happened in the fall and winter.

Most students are now in split grade classrooms caused by inflexible class size laws, messed up contracts and flip-flopping support from government has resulted in jaded workers and a poorly implemented all-day kindergarten program has wasted time and money...another great legacy for the provincial government.

**TOM NOLSON
MARKHAM**