

Cut teacher 'perks'? Let's gut education

By CYNTHIA BROUSE

TALKING POINT

Code words

When I read that Education Minister John Snobelen may take away some of Ontario teachers' "coveted perks," the phrase called to mind the sort of extras that fit the usual definition of perk: stock-purchase plans, company cars, staff dining rooms, and the like.

But, no. According to *The Star*, it appears teachers may lose "the right to use school time to prepare lessons, mark papers and talk to parents."

Heavens above! Imagine those profligate teachers thinking they could get away with *doing their jobs on school time!*

Perhaps we should point out to the Ontario government that police officers cruise the streets on city time, in preparation for

apprehending criminals. Maybe we could reduce the deficit by taking away that "perk" — officers could stay home until a crime occurs.

The private sector would do well to cut back on perks, too. For example, grocery store clerks use company time, before customers arrive, to set up their tills and count their floats. Come to think of it, imagine how inflated restaurant prices must be, since chefs use the restaurants' time to prepare meals.

I am constantly amazed by the language used to describe the work of teachers, language

that is never applied to other professions.

When department store managers, newspaper editors or millwrights call regular meetings with their employees to keep in touch with what's going on, pass on new directives from the higher echelons, hear complaints and new ideas, and allow employees to compare notes with each other, it's called good management. But when teachers and principals do the same thing, albeit less often, they're a bunch of lazy people taking a PD day off.

Bankers and CEOs who disagree with government policy are referred to as lobbyists and statesmen concerned about the future of our great nation. Teachers who demonstrate against cutbacks are a whining

special interest group.

Then there's the summer "vacation," when a teacher gets reacquainted with his family, tries to pay some much-needed attention to his health and his home and takes the courses and reads the books, journals, reports and software manuals that are supposed to make him an expert in a dozen subject areas, not the least of which is education. Of course, he may arrive at school in August to discover he's teaching a different grade or subject than the ones he had prepared for.

In any case, much cannot be done in the summer, or even after 3:30 — recruiting parent volunteers for field trips, changing the toner in the photocopy machine, meeting with the Children's Aid Society about a pupil

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tion and be done

who has been abused by her father, composing a response to a student contemplating suicide in his journal, going to the bathroom, setting up science experiments ...

What about the "perks" the government receives from teachers? For example, there's the coaching, supervising, report-card preparation, research, marking, etc., that teachers do on their own time, not to mention the art supplies, books, magazines and computer hardware and software that teachers pay for out of their own pockets or use at school.

Anybody who has faced the challenge of spending the day with two children and still thinks spending it with 20 to 40 of them constitutes a cushy job

has a remarkably poor imagination.

And people who think teachers' measly few minutes of prep time is a "perk" want our children to be babysat, not educated. If that's the kind of education we want, then, it appears, that's the kind of education we'll get.

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