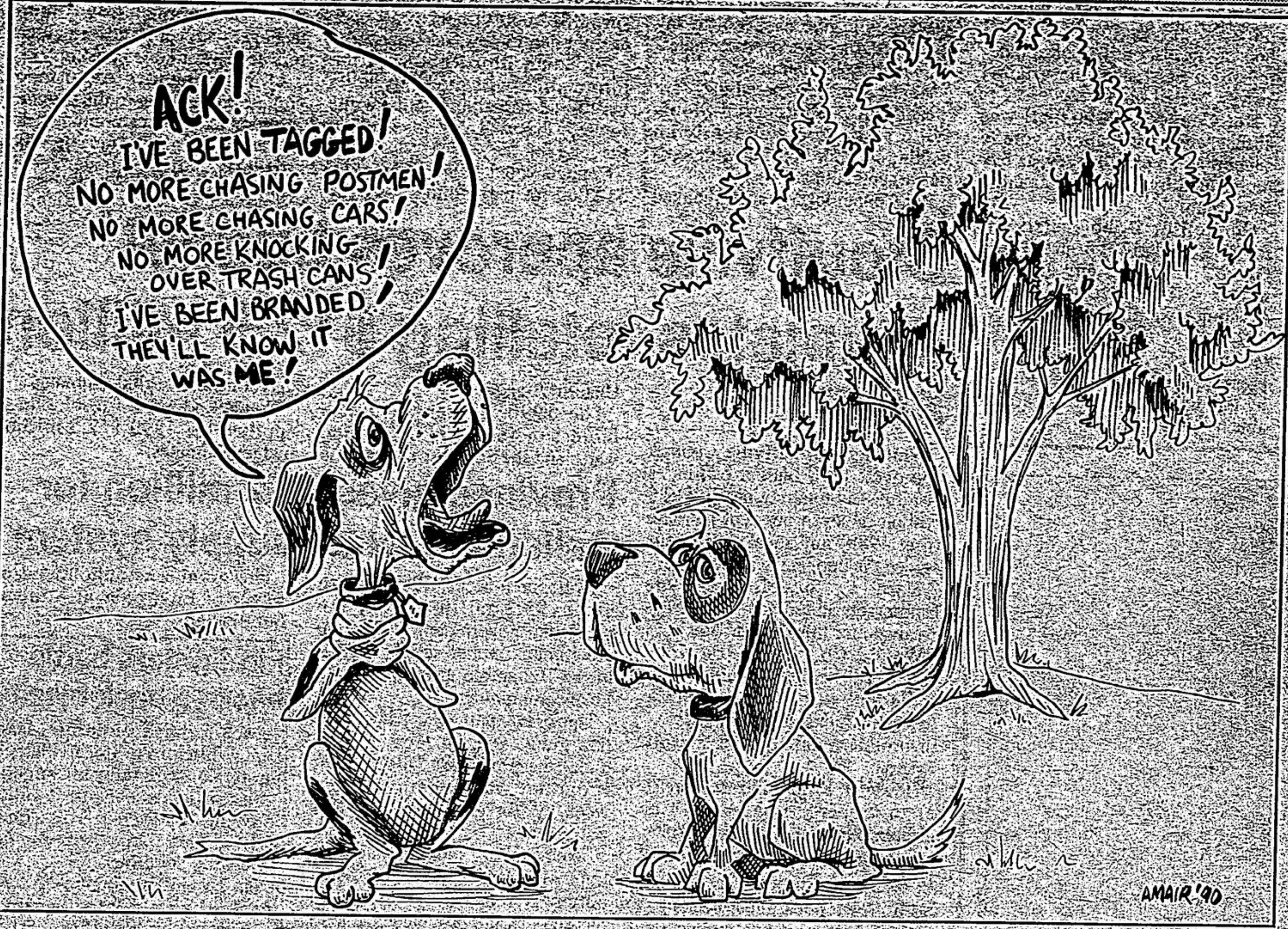


# Comment Page



## Survey not a waste

A \$12,000 housing survey, dubbed a waste of public money by local politician Margot Marshall, is worth the expense.

And despite some good points raised by the Councillor, the bigger picture could be drastically different to that we see today in the Stouffville community.

Indeed, a lack of sewage capacity limits growth prospects within the town, but volumes can be said and planned with the results of the survey.

Using it as a blueprint for the future, survey results can help town officials look beyond the year 2000.

It could also be used as ammunition against regional and provincial groups when grappling for much-needed funding or growth opportunities.

There is no doubt that Stouffville, like most communities in York Region, is sorely lacking accessible affordable housing.

Developments to help alleviate the strain don't necessarily have to add up to unwanted growth. Nor do such developments have to be built at the expense of other projects.

With the study, at least Stouffville will have a clearer picture.

# Family feud gets ugly for Liberals

It's been six lonely years since the federal Liberals last governed this country and six hungry years since they last snorted at the public trough.

During this time the Grits have engaged in political mud-flinging, eye-gouging and back-biting of the worst kind.

That's why, whenever Liberals gather at a cocktail party or political event they always have a certain look - it's the look of a man who is nervously petting a pit bull with one hand while groping for a rock with another.

Recall the hatchets planted firmly in John Turner's back and the bitter nomination battles of less than two years ago, including one in this riding which pitted many old-time Stouffville Grits against their newer



### guest column

paul pivato

brethren in Markham.

Witness the daily squabbles over the Meech Lake Accord and the current scramble for leadership candidate delegates. This is a party gnawing at its own tail.

Local Liberals will gather about a month from now at Milliken Mills High School to elect 12 delegates to attend the leadership convention in Calgary this June.

Odds are that most of the delegates will be Jean Chretien supporters. And odds are that none of the delegates will be from

Stouffville.

That doesn't sit too well with Elva Boyd, a longtime Stouffville Grit. Mrs. Boyd, you see, thinks Jean Chretien helped tear the Liberal party apart.

But many Markham Liberals, including riding president Khalid Usman and former candidate Jag Bhaduria, think Chretien is the only hope they have of regaining power.

And since the Markham Liberals tend to outnumber the Stouffville Liberals, it appears fairly certain that this riding will send a Chretien slate to Calgary.

Mrs. Boyd was elected as a delegate at the last Liberal leadership contest when John Turner defeated Jean Chretien.

She supported John Roberts, a former Trudeau cabinet minister and a distant runner-up in the race.

This time around, Mrs. Boyd is supporting "Tequila" Sheila Copps, a street-smart Grit with political nerves of iron and more moxie than all the other candidates combined.

She was originally backing Clifford Lincoln, the former Bourassa cabinet minister who resigned on principle when the Quebec government decided to maintain its French-only language law despite a Supreme Court ruling that it was unconstitutional.

Politicians with that sort of backbone are rare indeed. Lincoln addressed a gathering of about 35 local Liberals last Octo-

ber in Mount Albert. Like many of the Liberals who attended, Mrs. Boyd became an instant convert.

But Lincoln dropped out of the Liberal leadership race last month after losing his bid to win a seat in parliament. Most of his supporters, including Mrs. Boyd, have since gravitated to Copps.

It's highly doubtful, however, that any Copps delegates will be elected to represent the riding.

Overall, the riding of Markham - which includes Whitchurch-Stouffville - has been relatively quiet compared to some other Metro area ridings where the camps of rival candidates have waged heated and often dirty campaigns.

Some of the guerilla tactics used including phoning members on the night of a delegate selection meeting and telling them the meeting has been cancelled; paying for memberships; and from the big-buck candidates - the offer of financial assistance to delegates who cannot fully afford the \$850 delegate registration fee.

Liberals in many Toronto ridings have resorted to the same old street-fighting they perfected during the nomination meetings: attempting to disqualify new members from voting, busing in "instant Liberals" to stack a meeting, and signing up ghost members as a ruse to allow people to vote twice.

Up to this point, Markham riding has been spared and riding President Khalid Usman is hopeful that the delegate selection process will go smoothly.

"Instant Liberals," says Mr. Usman, "are not really bringing in the wishes of the public or the riding."

And while things may be calm, there has nevertheless been some political evangelizing in the riding.

Durham-York MPP Bill Ballinger has been discreetly lobbying on behalf of Paul Martin, Ontario Premier David Peterson is anchoring his Big Red Machine behind the Martin team and most of his caucus, including Mr. Ballinger, are promoting Martin as the best candidate.

Any first-term MPP who did otherwise could expect nothing less than back-bench banishment.

Former Markham Liberal candidate Jag Bhaduria, however, is not impressed by Martin.

"We should not pick a leader," he says. "We should pick a Prime Minister."

And that future Prime Minister, he argues, is a little guy from Shawinigan - Jean Chretien.

Mr. Bhaduria says the message he received during the last election campaign was clear: bring back Chretien and the voters will return the Liberals to power.

As far as Mr. Bhaduria is concerned, Martin is cut from the same cloth as John Turner - a businessman with backroom clout and boardroom muscle but little support among the grassroots.

Elva Boyd bristles at the mention of Chretien, who stuck more than a few hatchets in Turner's back. Chretien, she says, has done more to split this party than he's ever done for it. I'd like to know what his magic formula is to put the party together.

She adds: "I don't think he has one."

You've got to wonder if any Liberal does.

Paul Pivato is a former journalist who currently works and writes in York Region.

**Stouffville/Uxbridge Tribune**

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Published every Wednesday by Metroland Printing, Publishing and Distributing at 9 Heritage Rd., Markham, Ontario L3P 1M3 Tel. 294-2200  
 Second class registration number 1247

The Stouffville Tribune, published every Wednesday, at 54 Main St. W. Stouffville is one of the Metroland Printing, Publishing and Distributing group of suburban newspapers which includes: The Action Free Press, Ajax-Pickering News Advertiser, Aurora Banner, Brampton Guardian, Burlington Post, Etobicoke Advertiser-Guardian, Georgetown Independent, Kingston This Week, Lindsay This Week, Markham Economist and Sun, Milton Champion, Mississauga News, Newmarket Era, Oakville Beaver, Oshawa Whitty This Week, Peterborough This Week, Richmond Hill/Thornhill/Vaughan Liberal, Scarborough Mirror, Topic Newsmagazine, Willowdale Mirror, Metroland Printing, Publishing and Distributing is a division of Harlequin Enterprises Ltd.

NATIONAL SALES REPRESENTATIVE: Metroland Corporate Sales, 493-1300.

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