

# Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper  
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## LETTERS

### Jones is an independent thinker

I do not know Markham MP Jim Jones' motives for his recent political moves, but I do know that they were not the actions of a traitor as letter writer Chrys Pelegris implies.

The people of Canada elected the Liberals because the Liberals said they would get rid of the GST; they lied, that is traitorous.

Brian Mulroney, when he was prime minister, told his Tory MPs to ignore the wishes of the people and only vote with their personal conscience on the death penalty; that also was the act of a traitor directly interfering with democracy.

Maybe Mr. Pelegris wants trained sheep who blindly obey their leader despite what the people of this "democracy" want. I, personally, prefer independent thinkers and if I disagree with their ideas, I won't vote for them.

Just ask ousted Liberal MP John Nunziata how well the party system works in Canada.

GEORGE ADAMS  
MARKHAM

### Streets and sidewalks are for everyone to enjoy

I read with disbelief the ongoing letters back and forth regarding the problems joggers are causing for walkers on sidewalks. Get real, guys. As a jogger of 15 years or more, I have encountered many people on sidewalks and have found everybody to be polite and courteous. Both my husband and I will either go single file or right off the path to accommodate walkers. We are, in response, greeted with smiles and nods of courtesy.

The streets and sidewalks are for everyone to enjoy. Aren't there enough pressures in life, without finding negatives in a leisurely stroll?

Let's all try to be just a little more accommodating toward each other.

KIM ECKERSLEY  
UNIONVILLE

### Smoker has no right to harm health of others

In his letter to the editor, Mounir Sahyoun trots out the usual argument about tobacco being a legal substance, justifying his so-called right to indulge anywhere he pleases.

But he has no right to expect me to put my already impaired health — from years of smoking — at further risk.

### LETTERS POLICY

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

Write: Letters to the Editor, 37 Sandiford Dr., Suite 306, Stouffville, Ont. L4A 7X5

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# OPINION

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Debora Kelly

## Parliamentary system stifling Canadians' right to have a say

Once every four years — or whenever a prime minister gets the whim to call an election — we get a chance to have our say.

Then the voting booth door slams shut on our fingers.

So much for democracy.

The Montreal-based think tank Institute for Research on Public Policy released a major study last week, entitled *Strengthening Canadian Democracy: The Views of Canadians*, that revealed Canadians want the parliamentary system reformed.

More than 80 per cent of the 1,200 respondents want to see more free votes in the House of Commons.

Yet, perhaps in typically Canadian fashion, our discontent with the way government functions — respondents rated their satisfaction with government at 58 per cent and with politics at 53 per cent — certainly hasn't resulted in any grass-roots uprising.

The decidedly unsexy, unedgy topic of parliamentary reform isn't stirring the passions of the electorate, by any means. (In fact, this treatise may have you nodding off already.)

And the cry for reform already sounded by the Canadian Alliance, federal Tories and Bloc Quebecois has failed to capture the imaginations of Canadians.

Yet our House of Commons has become a law-making cowboy, who doesn't need "no stinkin' badge", enforcing the power that lies within the Prime Minister's Office.

Public debate, if it occurs at all, is pointless.

On high-profile issues — the ones the public cares about — such as gun control, the GST, pay equity, tobacco taxation, compensation for the victims of hepatitis C and extending legal benefits and obligations to same-sex couples — the PMO imposes its will on the House.

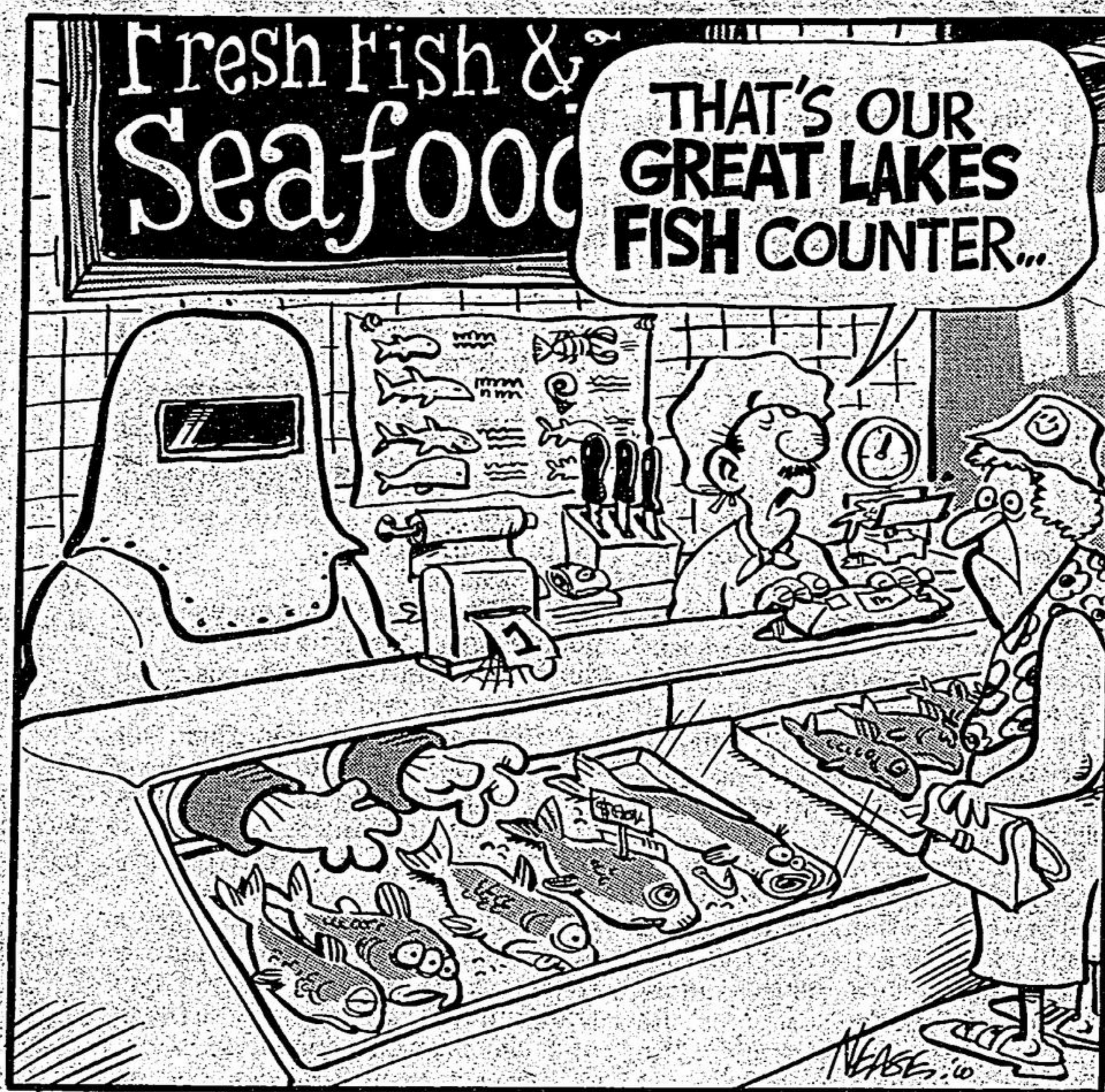
Waving the premise of the non-confidence vote in the air, party whips ensure backbenchers toe the party line. And they do, rather than face being "voted off the island". But, come on, does every vote threaten the government's tenure?

Democracy has been whittled down to MPs, concerned only with their own political survival, choosing to ignore their conscience and constituents' wishes when voting in the House.

The survey goes a long way in explaining why Canadians lack confidence in their so-called representatives. Our right to have a say in the system — and, boy, do we have that right — is being violated.

Let's not resign ourselves to the situation. Rather than allow interest groups and fringe parties to express our anger and frustration at being muted, let's push for reform. Let's restore our faith in the system.

And the timing is oh-so-right, with an election looming in the wings. . . .



Despite the big tobacco companies' propaganda alleging second-hand smoke is not harmful, their research is blatantly biased.

The true scientific evidence shows second-hand smoke in an enclosed area is more harmful than direct smoke.

By all means, Mr. Sahyoun, continue with your addiction. But believe me, the price you pay down the road might be less pleasurable than your present temporary gratification. Just keep your poisonous fumes away from me.

PERCY BARBER  
MARKHAM

### How can we trust Harris government on health care?

Re: *Witmer knows where health funding is needed most*, column by Brenda Larson, July 25.

I found this article most amusing. How and why should we trust Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer to administer additional transfer payments when it is the Mike Harris government that created the health-care crisis in the first place by closing needed hospitals, firing nurses and technicians and cutting certain medical procedures from OHIP funding?

The Harris government has given no guarantee additional funding will be used directly to fund health care or that it will not introduce a two-tiered medical system.

This government wasted millions of dollars on TV commercials with fabricated numbers in a bid to make it look like the federal government was to blame for our health-care crisis.

I don't trust the Harris government to receive additional funding without guarantees of bailing us out of our health-care crisis.

I have not heard Witmer or our representative in Thornhill, Tina Molinari, discuss how

they plan to use additional funding to improve patient care.

LARRY ISRAELSON  
THORNHILL

### Local newspaper should keep its nose out of federal politics

Re: *editorial*, July 13.

As a local newspaper, you should stay out of federal politics. I will read the Toronto Star to get your "liberal" views of our "Liberal nation". Canada might be a Liberal society, not a Liberal nation or country.

Your editorial also mentioned Canadian Alliance leader Stockwell Day might be more appealing to the younger generation. Hopefully not, because I am 70 years of age, an old "DP", and I am still looking for someone who can straighten out Canada.

Please, stay out of politics. It is not your job.

E. VON ENCKEVORT  
STOUFFVILLE

### Family, friends helped family

The Toliopoulos family would like to express our sincere gratitude and thanks to all our family, neighbours and friends for their outpouring of love, kindness and generosity when we lost our home in a fire. Thank you all so much from the bottom of our hearts.

Special thanks to Barb Amadori, Sharon and Richard Forbes, Maurice and Christine Arsenaull, Vaughan and Arta, Judy Royal and the staff of Buttonville Public School.

TOM, MARCIA, LEIGH, JASON & LAUREN  
TOLIOPOULOS  
MARKHAM

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