

OPINION

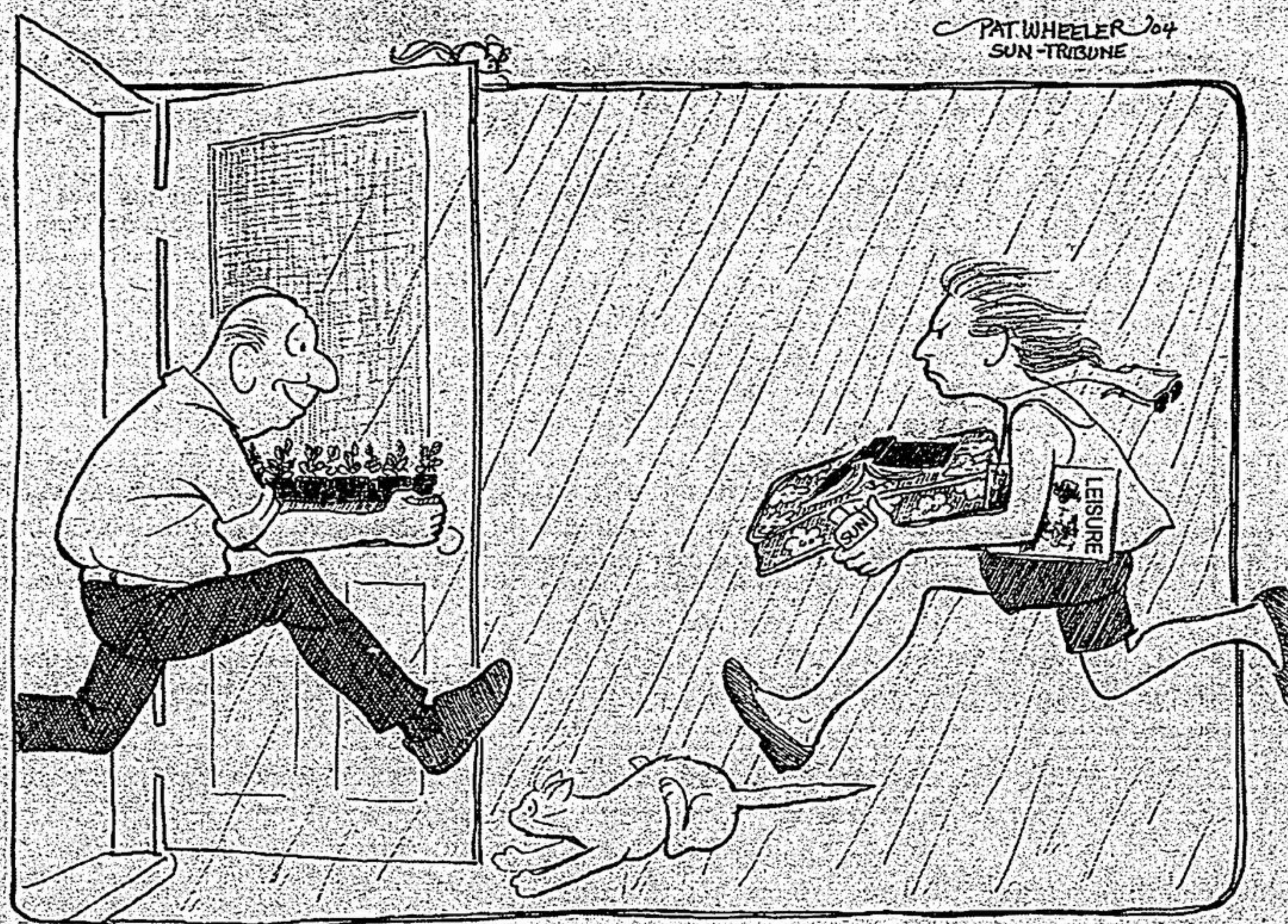
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Editorial

Time to remind politicians who runs country

It's tempting. Given the current state of politics in Ontario, some longtime voters may be thinking of skipping this election. And, at first glance, who can blame them? Will their vote really make a difference? And if the party they vote for wins, will it actually live up to the promises that lured that vote? After the disastrous Ontario election, whether it was the Liberals breaking promises or the Tories lying about the books doesn't really matter, many constituents are weary of politics. Period. Chief electoral officer Jean-Pierre Kingsley has predicted a low turnout, suggesting the June 28 vote may be the most poorly intended in history. It's disturbing more voters than ever may give up their democratic right despite a government battling one of the biggest scandals in decades. Or maybe it's because of it. Cynicism, after all, is at an all-time high. The McGuinty government's pile of broken promises and the Chretien government's sponsorship scandal can take much of the blame for that. Giving up on politicians would be easy. And some voters may think they're sending a message by not voting in this ill-timed federal election, which falls on the last day of school as Canadians prepare for cottages and camping trips. But this is the time to vote. This is the time to take democracy seriously. This is the time to stare politicians in the eye and say: You must do better. So, too, must voters. It's no longer appropriate to vote traditionally, picking the party your parents voted for or choosing a candidate based on political stripes. Those stripes are changing all the time. Right has moved left; left has moved right. And, more than ever, political promises are made to be broken. It's time to pay attention. Voters are the only ones who can bring good government. To do so, they must demand details from their candidates. Don't write them off. Challenge them. Force them to prove why their platforms will work and how. This is no time to give up on democracy. It's time to remind our politicians who really runs the country.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Revisiting our old friend, the ballot box

As if we needed any more practice marking ballots.

In a nine-month span ending June 28, we Whitchurch-Stouffvillians will have voted, or at least had the opportunity, in every government election possible.

Add union strike votes, baseball all-star picks and Canadian Idol choices and we're selection-ready.

We're set, but are we happy? Not bloody likely, as the Liberals are about to find out.

If you thought you just voted in a national election, you're not far off, friend. Forty-three months will have passed between elections, well short of the four-year norm and the five-year maximum at the federal level.

Why so soon, Mr. Martin? To give you a mandate? After all, you were only picked to lead the country by the party faithful, not the nation.

Fair enough. Or is to strike while the iron is hot, while the polls still show the Liberals on top?

Who remembers the political end of David Peterson? The provincial Liberals had the majority of support in the polls when they called an early election in 1990. The call appeared hasty and so seemed the campaign, including a Peterson whistle stop of a barbecue on the front of lawn of Parkview Village.

But voters thought Mr. Peterson was being greedy and tossed him out in favour of the New Democrats. It took 13 years for the Liberals to get back into office, courtesy of Dalton McGuinty's promise-packed campaign of last fall.

Will Mr. Martin fall like David Peterson? Yes, if ornery voters interviewed on television and in print are representing their neighborhoods. He won't, if voters like the Liberal record and Mr. Martin's new vision for the country. It's your call.

Here, in this neck of Ontario, we have more reason to be confused, if not angry. We'll vote in a new riding — Markham-Oak Ridges — in what seems like a regular occurrence. Blame it on the warp speed growth that continues to rock York Region's look.

It's almost like a blast from the past, with the new riding's borders stretching from the edge of Uxbridge into King Township, resembling the constituency Sinclair Stevens served in the 1980s.

Meet you outside the ballot box, again.

Jim Mason is editor of the Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Whitchurch-Stouffville's no Camelot

Culture as defined in Webster's Dictionary states refinement of intellectual and artistic taste.

Refined and intellectual were not the words I would have chosen to describe the town's arts and culture committee and its cheering section during the May 18 council meeting.

Loud and boisterous were words that came to my mind as I listened.

A member of the committee and a group of speakers wanted council's assurance the old town hall will be transformed into a building addressing the needs of Whitchurch-Stouffville's artistic community.

The only king in this soap opera attempt of classical works was Councillor Clyde Smith. Councillor Smith questioned the committee member with the articulation and intelligence of a modern-day King Arthur in his attempts to identify the committee's objectives.

The committee member failed to submit drawings or information of the proposed theatre structure for council's review.

In the absence of information, Councillor Smith recommended a task force be set up to research and document all necessary data that could prove beneficial in outlining a theatre structure.

Although a delegation is permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes, various proponents rambled on for about an hour.

Nearing the end of the hour, Mayor Sue Sherban revealed she had documentation three feet in height on this issue.

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@ymg.com

Mayor Sherban said she refrained from submitting the documents to council members in order to avoid influencing them. Council members appeared surprised by this.

In support of Councillor Smith, Councillor Rob Hargrave also made a valiant effort to decipher the direction of the delegation with all the qualities of a Sir Lancelot.

Where would our knighthood be without its Merlin? Perhaps, in a manner like King Arthur's chief adviser, Councillor Harry Bowes had completed some of the delegation's homework.

He had brought research conducted after visiting 26 towns and had documented similar challenges.

Council members could not appease the rowdy group, whose behaviour could have resembled Saxons attacking the Knights of the Round Table.

I salute our members of council. I believe they demonstrated restraint, courtesy and respect for the positions for which they were elected.

Councillor Smith and King Arthur would probably agree that Whitchurch-Stouffville ain't no Camelot.

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