

'Voting requires me to be knowledgable on issues'

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exactly why, on June 28, I am going to vote in the federal election.

There is often mention of "participation in the full democratic process," "making one's voice heard", or other such noble phrases. I, however, do not share these self-congratulatory views. Contrary to what some television or radio advertisements might say, I do not believe everyone is really listening to me.

My vote, just one among millions, will not change the

outcome of the election. It will not even be an accurate expression of my "voice," because no single political party has a platform that I wholly agree with and support.

In any case, some of the promises made will not even be delivered. Call me a cynic if you wish; I call myself a realist.

Why, then, do I intend to vote? Beyond my initial negativity lies my full support of the voting process.

Voting allows me to learn more about my own beliefs. It forces me to put into

words what issues are most important to me.

There are so many ideas I would never have given much thought to otherwise, and many I had not realized I felt so strongly about.

Examining the viewpoints and proposals of opposing parties allows me to consider each issue from all angles, and then evaluate the possible ways to address them.

Thus, voting requires me to be knowledgeable in terms of the issues surrounding my country and to question the arguments and reasoning of

others, be they peers or politicians. In essence, voting makes me think. Only in this way will I be able to hold my government to its promises. As a result, it is my responsibility, and the responsibility of all Canadians, to vote.

On Monday, when I cast my vote, I will be taking the first step towards pushing my well-informed views forward by other active means.

This may mean writing letters to political figures or participating in public forums and even demonstrations.

Only en masse can a

strong voice be heard and a common goal be reached. As a result, I hope all other eligible young voters will exercise their right and vote.


Do not simply sit back and be a passive audience to the changes that will affect your country, your community and your daily life.

Voting in itself does not make a difference, but it is the first step towards that lofty ideal.



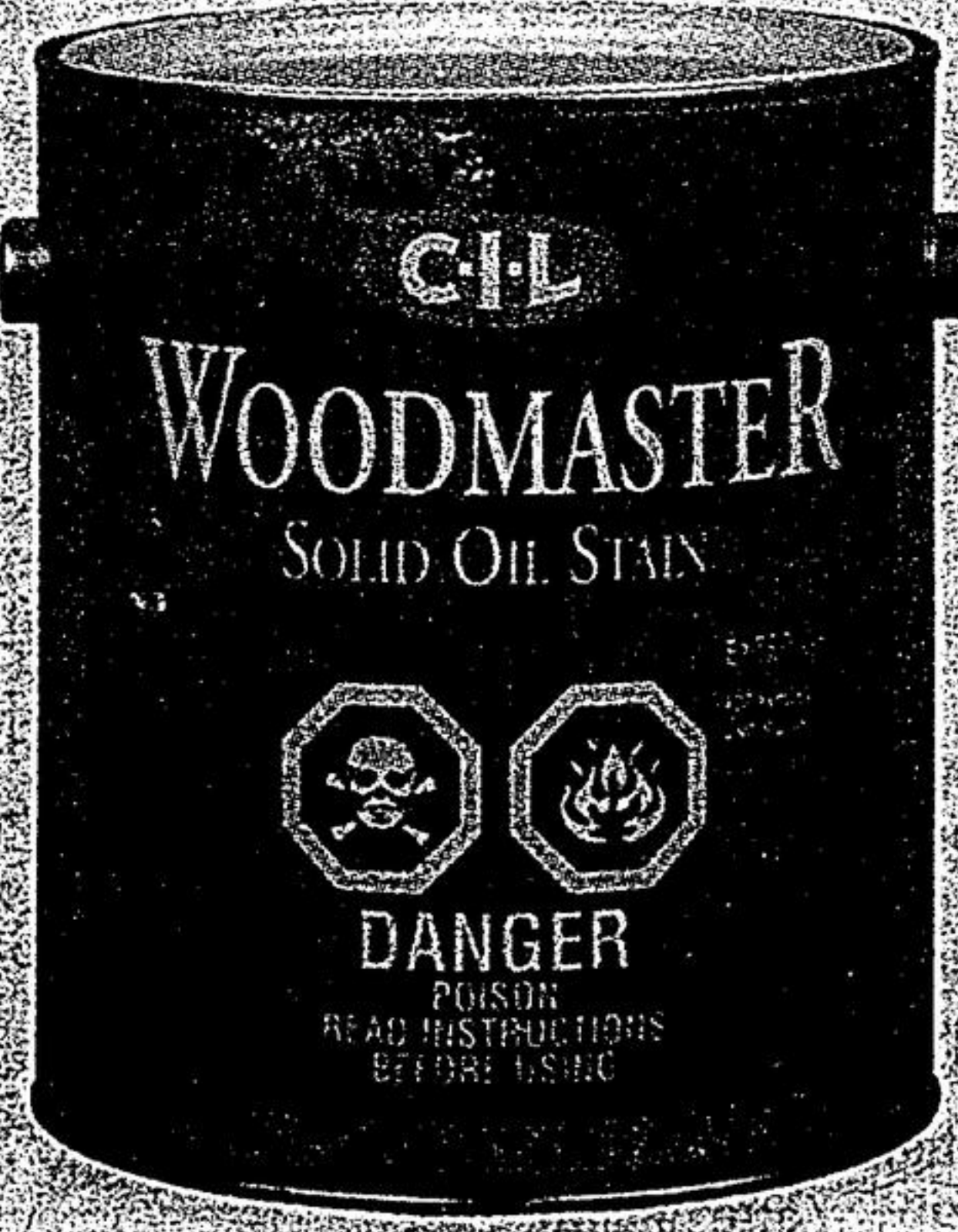
PAMELA COURTOT: Oak Ridges-Markham candidate came up with idea for youth writing contest.

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