

OPINION

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

York police second to none with new technology

Re: *More than cops needed to fight crime, editorial, Nov. 3.*

I can assure your readers our police services board and York Regional Police are more than ready to respond to the increases in criminal activity outlined in your editorial.

Our board is responsible for providing adequate and effective policing to the citizens of the region. To govern the region effectively, we must be proactive and anticipate issues that could affect the safety and security of our citizens.

Our 2005-2007 business plan outlines our policing priorities and strategies to keep our citizens safe and crime prevention is our number one priority.

We know our population of 903,600 will grow annually by about 35,000 residents and that crime will continue to defy geographic boundaries.

We have positioned the police well in staffing, training, technology and equipment, including a state-of-the-art helicopter, so that they can respond quickly and effectively to criminal activity. Our sophisticated technology is second to none in this province.

In February 2004, our board adopted an aggressive staffing plan that will increase the total staffing of York police from 1,302 in

2003 to 1,855 in 2008.

Most of the 378 new police officers will be deployed to the front line, patrolling our streets and neighbourhoods.

Our 2003-04 crime rate is down 13.6 per cent precisely because we have increased police visibility in our communities by hiring 110 officers in 2004 alone.

In addition, 61 experienced officers from Ontario and Canada joined York police since 2002 and these officers bring experience in the type of crime that is coming to the region.

Over the last few years, regional council has made a significant investment in policing to keep the region a safe community.

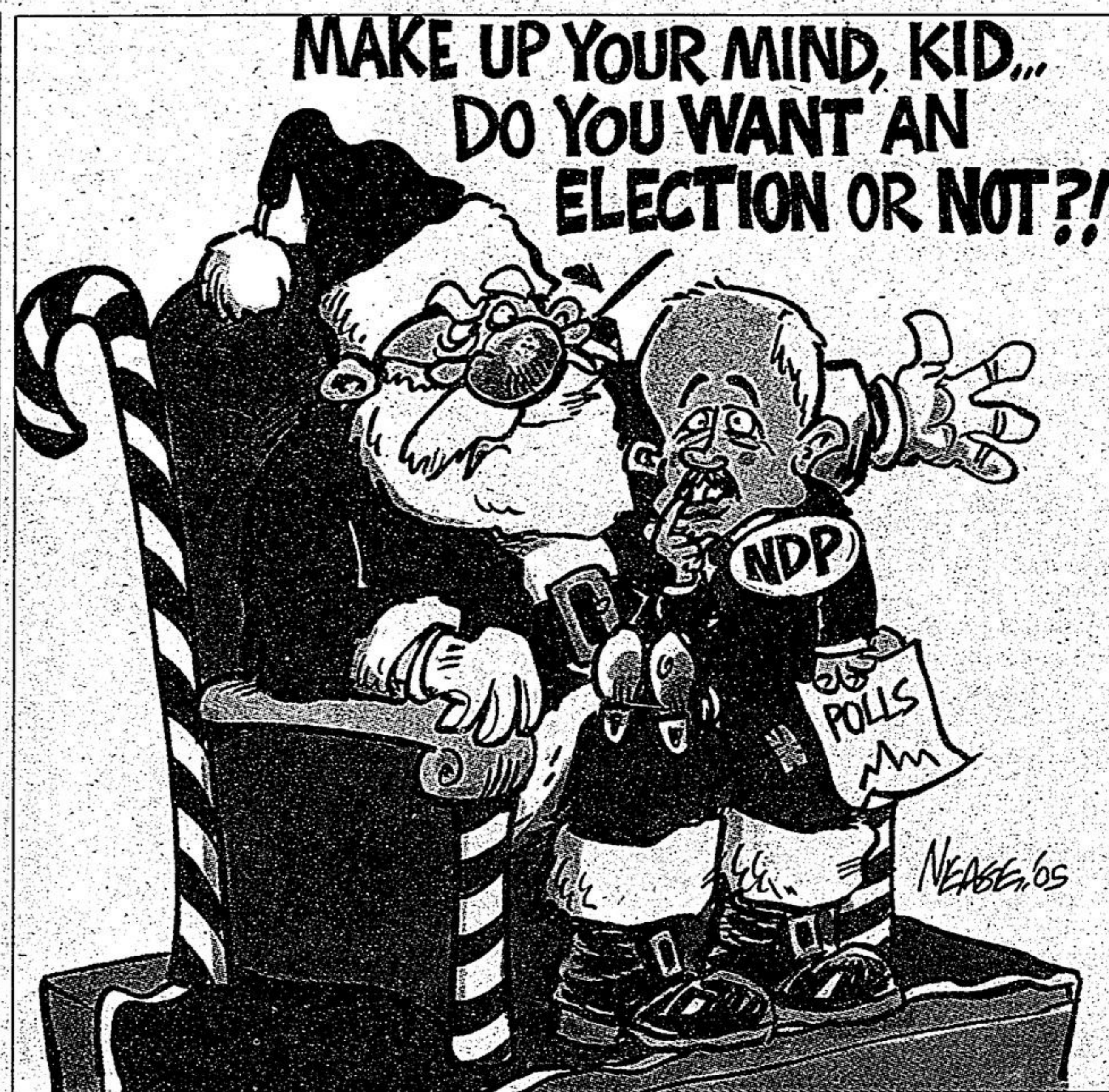
In 2005, council approved the board's budget of \$150 million for 67 additional officers and 35 civilians.

Our 2006 gross budget is expected to top \$170 million, bringing our per-capita cost to \$188 and our police-to-population ratio to 775 to one, a substantial improvement to the number quoted in your editorial.

We will never eliminate crime, but crime prevention is just as much a priority for our board and Chief La Barge as is law enforcement.

York Regional Police continues to provide excellent service in a cost-effective manner to its residents.

REGIONAL COUNCILLOR **DAVID BARROW**
CHAIRPERSON
YORK REGIONAL POLICE SERVICES BOARD



We have power to look to future, so why don't we?

If we were to invent a time machine, I would want to see what it was like in Africa, 100,000 years ago when our species was just born.

If you have been to the Serengeti, you know how impressive the variety and abundance of animals are, even today. A hundred millennia ago, the diversity and concentration would have been far greater.

In that context, the small groups of naked apes who were our ancestors would not have been very impressive.

After all, there weren't many of us, we weren't very big, fast or strong, nor was our vision, smell or hearing very acute.

But we did have a special advantage — the most complex brain ever known. That brain compensated for our lack of sensory and physical prowess, conferring a massive memory, curiosity and inventiveness. And one of that brain's inventions was the concept of a future.

Our ancestors recognized that they could shape that future by making deliberate choices in the

present. Foresight was the great leg up that enabled our species not only to survive but to flourish.

We are now the dominant species on the planet, the most numerous mammal in the world and so powerful that we are affecting the biological, physical and chemical makeup of the biosphere.

And that is why climate change has become a major issue.

It is astounding to me that today, with all the increased brainpower to give us greater predictive powers, we no longer use foresight as our forebearers did.

For decades now, the leading scientists of the world have been telling us we are on a dangerous path, we are compromising the air, water, soil and energy by our activities and we are undermining the diverse creatures that make this planet habitable by cleansing, capturing, replenishing and creating air, water, energy and soil.

We are upsetting the atmosphere upon which all life depends. In the late 1980s, when I began to take climate change seri-



David Suzuki

ously, we referred to global warming as a "slow-motion catastrophe" — one we expected to kick in perhaps generations later.

Instead, the signs of change have accelerated alarmingly.

We saw, when Hurricane Katrina hit, the consequences of ignoring foresight.

Scientists had warned of such a catastrophe for years. Even when the hurricane was forming, experts gave warning days ahead of landfall and evacuation orders were given more than 24 hours before.

Yet the richest, most powerful and technologically advanced

nation in the world failed to act on the warnings and we all witnessed the disastrous results.

What is it going to take to return to the strategy for survival that worked so well for 100,000 years?

It's time to take back the critical faculty for survival — foresight — and begin to act as our ancestors did to get us here in the first place.

The terrible part of this looming catastrophe is that people have been working on solutions for years and have developed concrete steps to massively reduce our energy use, while stimulating whole new industries and technologies that are more efficient and affordable.

Indeed, Amory Lovins' Rocky Mountain Institute has released a massive study showing that the

United States, the greatest user of oil in the world, can reduce its oil needs by at least 50 per cent while saving money and halting its dependence on foreign energy.

Detractors often point to the variability of analytic models and the lack of absolute certainty. Well, foresight was never absolutely certain.

"If the sandwich on the table in front of you has even a 10 per cent chance of having food poisoning, would you eat it?" Climatologist Stephen Schneider, of Stanford University, says.

I know I wouldn't. Yet here we are playing Russian roulette with features of the planet's atmosphere that will profoundly impact generations to come.

How long are we willing to gamble?

It's time to take back the critical faculty for survival — foresight — and begin to act as our ancestors did to get us here in the first place.

Join the Nature Challenge and learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org

LETTERS POLICY

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

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