

Negative election campaigns tamer here: York prof

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to bring this forward and consider the consequences.

The tactics are pathetic, said Alan Middleton, a marketing professor at York University's Schulich School of Business and expert on negative campaign advertising.

Although he believes Ms Stronach's personal appeal will carry her to victory, Mr. Middleton said her attacks are indicative of Liberal desperation.

Why resort to a negative campaign?

"It works," Mr. Middleton

said. But not without some caveats.

First, negative campaigns in Canada must be more tempered than they are in the United States, where voters are more tolerant of candidates going for the jugular, he said.

Second, you can't run attack ads before establishing for what your party stands.

There is a stark contrast between the Liberal and Conservative approaches, Mr. Middleton said.

He credited Mr. Harper with running an almost flawless campaign by putting for-

ward the main planks of his platform early, waiting until the second half of the campaign to attack Prime Minister Paul Martin and the Liberals — and only then by quoting third-party newspaper headlines in his ads.

On the other hand, Mr. Middleton said the Liberals launched 11th-hour personal attack ads after a lacklustre, perhaps even arrogant, campaign of resting on their economic laurels with few new ideas.

"It's more personal than about issues, attacking (Mr. Harper's) level of trust. It's not

a bad strategy, but it's so late and so personal, it just looks like panic. If you fall off the edge, it just becomes hyperbole and not believable."

Rather than personal attacks, Mr. Middleton said Canadians are more interested in seeing leaders critique their opponents' platforms, more along the lines of Markham MP John McCallum. Last week, Mr. McCallum slammed the Conservatives' proposed capital gains tax cut.

"That's a huge benefit to a select and wealthy few. I can't think of a tax cut that is

more skewed to the rich than this one," he said. "Is this incompetence or are they trying to hide this massive windfall for the rich?"

While hard-hitting, the criticism was issue-oriented. York-Simcoe Conservative MP Peter Van Loan believes Canadians are fed up with negative campaigns.

"I think the Liberals' negative attack ads are not appealing to voters, who want to hear about substance and policy," he said.

Vaughan Green Party candidate Adrian Visentin said the campaign has been civil and focused on issues.

Ironically, that may be because Liberal incumbent Maurizio Bevilacqua is all but guaranteed victory next Monday, he said.

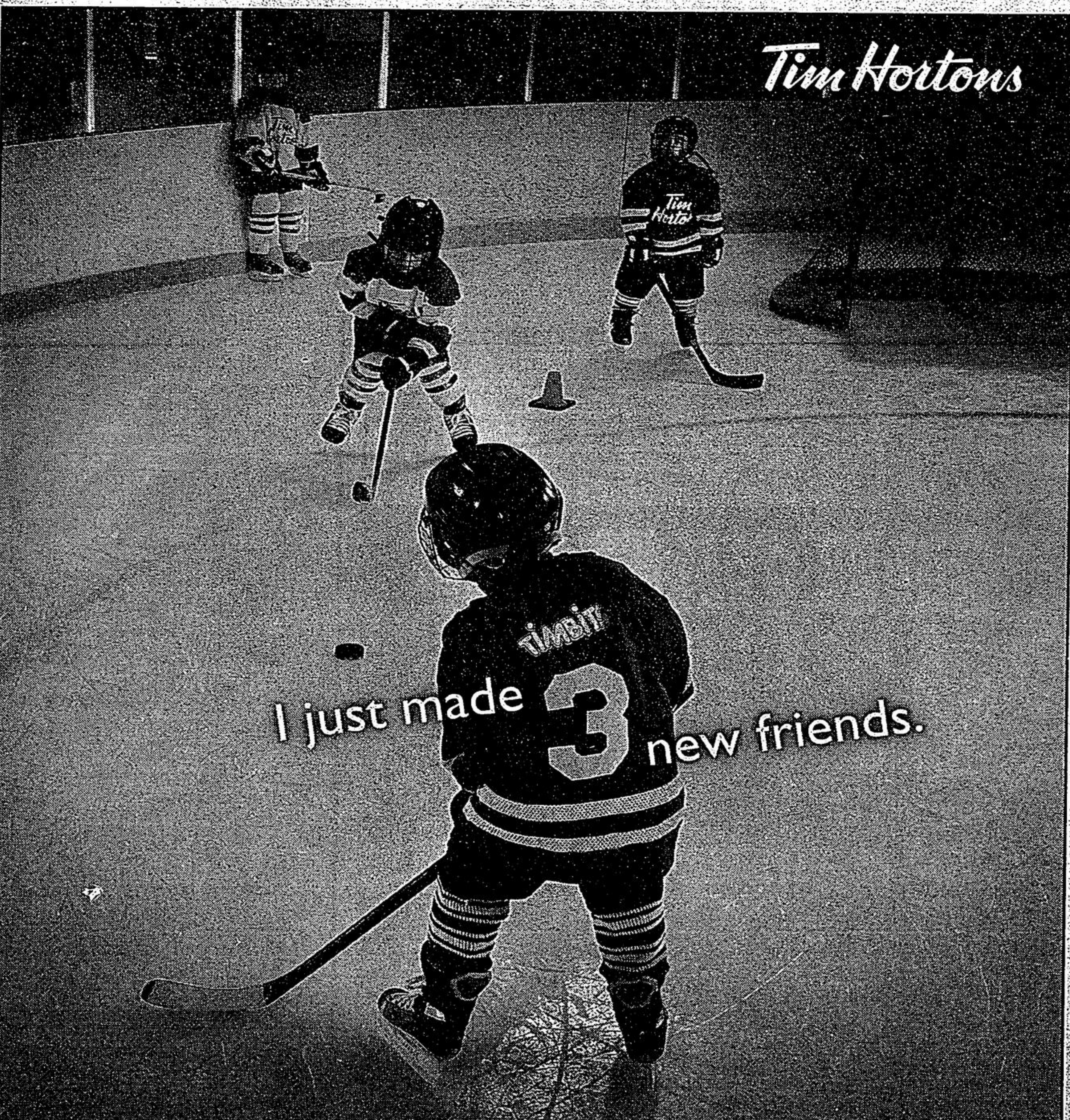
Since candidates aren't involved in a dog fight, they aren't desperately resorting to personal attacks to attract last-minute votes, he said.

"Here, it's been cordial and professional. We're pretty much talking about the issues as we see them," Mr. Visentin said.

It's fine to attack platforms, but not the candidates themselves, Thornhill NDP candidate Simon Strelchik said.

"It's like when you're playing sports. You can be passionate and play hard, but it shouldn't be aimed at the person," he said.

"Sometimes when you attack somebody, it comes back on you because people rush to defend the victim."




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