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

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# OPINION

Stouffville  
**Sun-Tribune**

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### How to hire a politician

Re: Fake campaign promises from non-candidate, column by Jim Mason, Oct. 14.

Sorry you missed the deadline to register, Mr. Mason. I thought you declared in March when you shouted at me across Main Street. (Newcomers should be made aware "Main Street" runs east and west through "Downtown Stouffville".)

A local newspaper editor of your long standing with your knowledge of the history of the community and proven management capabilities would seem to be a natural in any position on council.

With the position of fake editor open due to your fake candidacy, I offer the following:

You suggest a summer concert series. Fat chance. In this day and age, such a feat could not be accomplished without some ridiculous cost to the taxpayer, as in staff involvement and overtime pay.

A "Shop Stouffville Campaign" would require many

merchants to upgrade worn merchandise, as well as stay in town, perhaps even after dark.

A one-way street behind a fake candidate's office sounds a little self serving.

More sidewalks? We're not using the ones we have now.

As fake editor, I would commend all candidates for their commitment toward the betterment of the community.

I predict this election will be won by the candidates with the most real votes. Lip service won't cut it this time around.

Before voting, check your candidates' credentials and qualifications. You're hiring on behalf of your corporation.

Find out if they play well with others. Will they hold hands when crossing the street?

In short, do they really understand the job at hand; do they appreciate the need for teamwork?

Or are they also faking their role?

THOMAS E. WINTERS  
STOUFFVILLE



## Dirty politics rears ugly head in races across region

As we — thankfully, I have to say — near the final days of campaigning in the Oct. 25 municipal election, let's acknowledge the hundreds of candidates across our region who were willing to step up to the plate to make our communities better places for all of us.

For months, most of them have been tramping through our neighbourhoods, knocking on doors and glad-handing at community and election events.

Most of the campaigning has been clean and authentic, encouraging legitimate discussion about issues that hit home: sustainable growth, economic development, congestion and fiscal responsibility.

But there isn't a single community that hasn't been touched by campaigning of a different sort — call it negative, attack or dirty politicking, it's about using disreputable tactics to harm a rival's campaign.

Granted, it's tamer at the local level compared to provincial and national campaigns, but there was plenty of evidence of negative politicking.

To name a few, there was a brown envelope with documents alleging conflicts of interest by a mayor that was



Debora Kelly

mailed to media, candidates and citizens.

There was a flyer questioning the motives and integrity of candidates because they don't live in the ward in which they were running.

There were hundreds of election signs destroyed, defaced or stolen.

There were exaggerated or false reports made at the doors, including one that an incumbent was charged with drunk driving, which made their way to our newsrooms.

While it might momentarily grab attention and coveted notice in the media, it doesn't engage voters in an election in which they typically have very little interest to start with.

In her book, *Dirty Politics*, Kathleen Hall Jamieson says with this kind of politicking, people "see themselves not as voters but as spectators evaluating the performances of those bent on cynical manipulations".

"...it doesn't do much for those intelligently trying to cast a ballot."

Candidates who avoid fair, transparent and appropriate debate of issues not only fail the public, but turn them off politics by reinforcing prevailing cynicism.

A turn for the worse midway through what had been mostly positive campaigning was disheartening for community activist Elliott Silverstein, a member of Vaughan's task force for democratic reform.

An anonymous group calling itself Time For Change began running full-page newspaper ads and launched a slick website taking aim at incumbents. The "smear campaign" may have garnered attention, but if the "concerned citizens" wished to create discussion about an important issue, he says it

likely only left voters confused.

"It's hard enough to campaign against incumbents," he says. "This makes it harder."

He adds if we want better representatives, we have to demonstrate better behaviour ourselves.

The survey was clear in finding citizens don't want nasty politics.

"Negativity deters people from voting — we saw that in the last election," Mr. Silverstein says.

"It reinforces the concept that all politics are dirty, so why should I vote?"

Don't let the efforts of the majority of good candidates go up in smoke.

Before you vote Monday, do a bit of research if you haven't already.

Vote for candidates who are talking the issues, suggesting solutions and explaining how their qualifications will help make a difference.

Don't vote for candidates whose platforms are focused on trashing opponents; that's not the kind of leadership we need to make our communities even better.

Debora Kelly is editor in chief of the York Region Media Group