

Sun-Tribune

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York Region Media
Group community
newspapers

The Sun-Tribune, published every Thursday and Saturday, is a division of the Metroland Media Group Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. The Metroland family of newspapers is comprised of more than 100 community publications across Ontario. The York Region Media Group includes The Liberal, serving Richmond Hill and Thornhill, Newmarket Era, Aurora Banner, Vaughan Citizen, Markham Economist & Sun, Stouffville Sun-Tribune, Georgina Advocate, Bradford West Gwillimbury Topic, beingwell and yorkregion.com

**LETTERS
POLICY**

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

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Sun-Tribune

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

York police officers found missing girl

We live in rural Whitchurch-Stouffville with its ponds, creeks and forests, where our daughter, with autism, loves to roam for short periods or on Sunday walks with the family.

She's a true camper, a woodland fairy and quite a tomboy with no fear of water or heights.

On Good Friday, Jaime disappeared into our back woods. My son, his friend and I searched for her for 45 minutes before I called my husband to come home, then dialled 911.

York Regional Police descended on our home in minutes - 16 cruisers plus a canine unit and ready to launch a search helicopter. In minutes they were walking up fields, through the woods and knocking on neighbours' doors.

Within about 30 minutes, Const. Matt Blurton found her two doors down on a

HAVE YOUR SAY

► What do you think of these issues or others? E-mail letters to the editor to jmason@yrmg.com

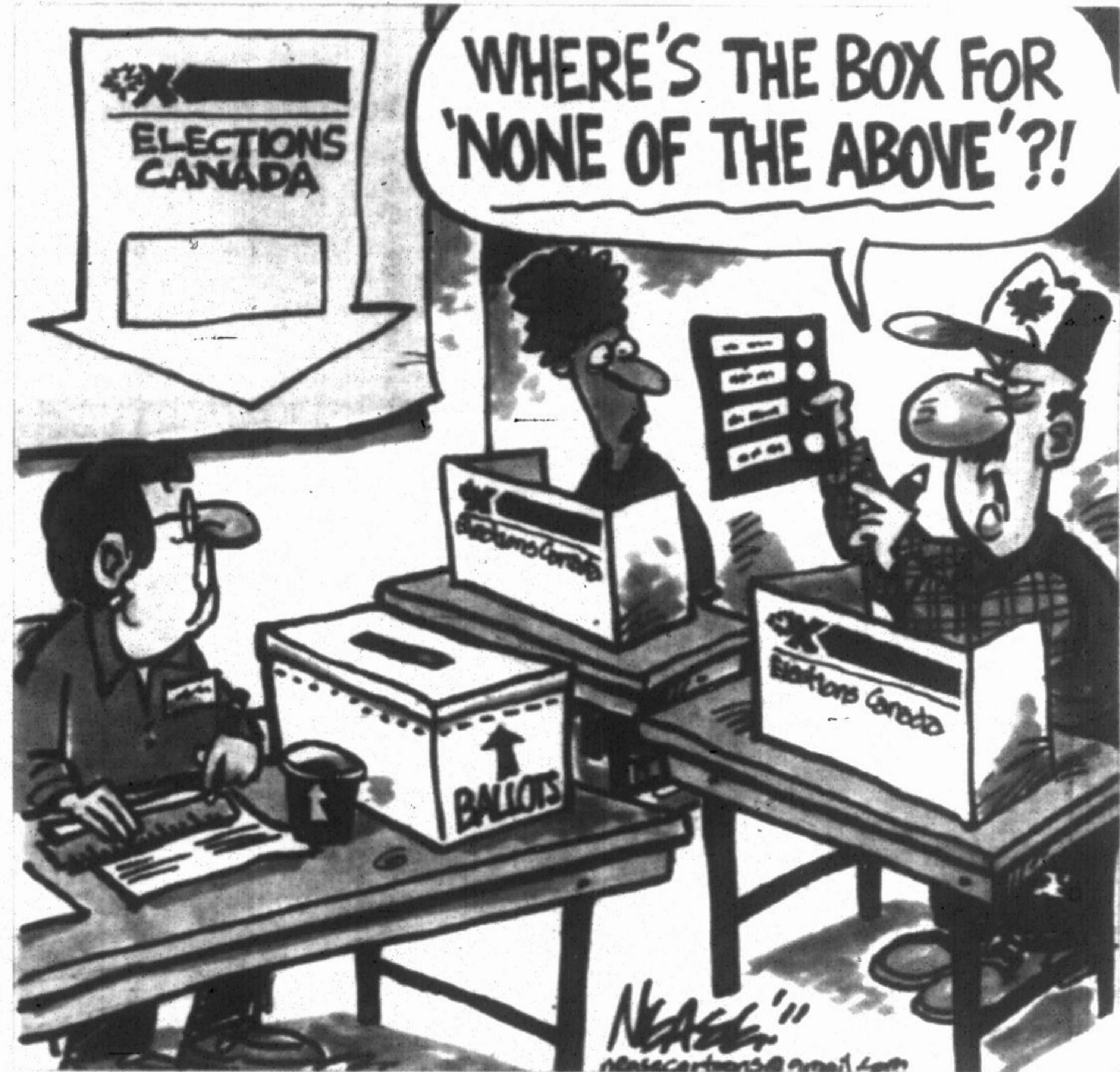
gravel pile.

These officers were knowledgeable about children with autism. They knew what to look for, what to listen for, how to respond to the parents who were beside themselves and how to act every quickly.

It was incredible how helpful they were and to see first-hand their work in action. I stood there in awe, very overwhelmed by the power of a phone call and the response of an incredible team.

We have much to be thankful for this past Easter weekend and are very proud of and grateful for our York Regional Police service.

DEB & JIM LYTLE
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE



Should casting ballot be mandatory? I vote no

It makes me feel like a political nerd to say it, but as far as I can remember, I have voted in every election for which I was eligible to vote since I turned 18.

Municipal, provincial, federal, school board. You name it, I have cast a ballot in it, kind of like a fisherman who has cast a lure into every lake he has happened upon since he was old enough to have a fishing licence.

(That's how I feel after voting for someone and they don't win. Like I'm casting and I just have this hook with seaweed on it, and I have a sunburn - or I snag something and rip the lure right off in all the excitement, the same way your candidate looks for a moment or two like he might win! then loses. So I get out the paddles and row home.)

I'm not really sure why I feel compelled to vote - I know lots of people who don't vote and they seem like fine, upstanding citizens - other than that I've always subscribed to the idea that if you don't vote, you can't complain.

And with complaining about government such a beloved pastime in these parts, I feel like if I ever want to be eligible to join in, I need my membership card, which is a ballot cast in the most recent election.



Bernie O'Neill

Of course, I would never tell anyone who I voted for. I just reassure them that I wielded that mighty pencil behind that cardboard barrier (the pencil is mightier than the sword, as they say) - letting the country know, anonymously, how I feel about the issues and the candidates.

Unfortunately, maybe two-thirds of those who are eligible actually bother to vote, or less. Which often prompts suggestions, right around now, that voting in Canada should be mandatory, kind of like in Australia, which it must be pointed out got its start as a penal colony, so maybe these kinds of things go over a little

better down there.

In other words, if you don't vote, you are forced to pay a fine, or worse (they take away or your cable channels except the one with the parliamentary debates 24/7, your only reading material is MP newsletters, and you're forced to go the same hair stylist as Stephen Harper - Jack Layton doesn't really need a hair stylist).

In the 1890s, Quebec MP Guillaume Amyot proposed mandatory voting with the punishment a \$50 fine (about \$1,000 today) and 30 days in jail. His bill failed.

I don't think voting should be mandatory, since democracy is supposed to be all about being free - if you don't want to vote, you should be free not to.

If you get a government you don't like, well, you had your chance.

Still, I worry about people who don't vote, especially in this election.

Imagine being governed by a coalition involving the Bloc Quebecois? Some would think this was the beginning of the end for Canada. Others would think the same thing about a Conservative majority. Still others would have that reaction to the NDP as the official opposition, or even leading a governing coalition.

Any one of these could be made possible by one MP tipping the balance, after winning by one vote. No one would

ever again take their vote for granted.

Scene: Bedroom. Day after the election. A couple turns in for the night.

Wife: "So, I meant to ask you. You voted right?"

Husband: "No."

Wife: "You voted NDP?"

Husband: "No. I thought you asked if I voted. Yes, I voted."

Wife: "I asked if you voted right, as in right-wing, the Conservatives."

Husband: "I thought you asked me if I voted. Yes, I voted. That doesn't mean yes, I voted Conservative."

Wife: "So, you're telling me you voted Liberal?"

Husband: "No."

Wife: "You voted NDP?"

Husband: "It's a secret ballot!"

Wife: "But, honey, you can tell me."

Husband: "You tell me first."

Wife: "But I asked you first!"

Husband: "What does it matter who asked first?"

Silence.

Wife: "I'm never voting again. These elections are tearing this country apart."

Husband: "ZZZZZ."

Stouffville resident Bernie O'Neill is a York Region Media Group editor.