

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 com-

munity publications

across Ontario. The York

Region Media Group

includes The Liberal,

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Hill and Thornhill,

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Banner, Vaughan Citizen,

Markham Economist

& Sun, Stouffville

Sun-Tribune, Georgina

Advocate, Bradford West

Gwillimbury Topic, bein-

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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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Ontario Press Council

Canadian Circulation Audit Board Member

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Fast boats, drinking not monitored on lake

Re: High-powered boats don't belong on lake, letter to the editor by Mary Ann & Bob James, July 30.

I read with interest this letter regarding the wake from these boats perhaps being a factor in the deaths of the two young girls who drowned last week.

I have on two occasions, observed kids being knocked off their floating devices due to wake from a boat going by at a high speed on our lake.

The lake, because it is not very deep, has many, many weeds in it, a surprise dismount from a rubber dingy can create a problem for the young kids getting entangled.

This is something that needs to be looked at seriously before any more accidents occur.

There is no police presence on the lake to monitor the

HAVE YOUR SAY, WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

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

speed of the boats, drinking and boating or life jacket use.

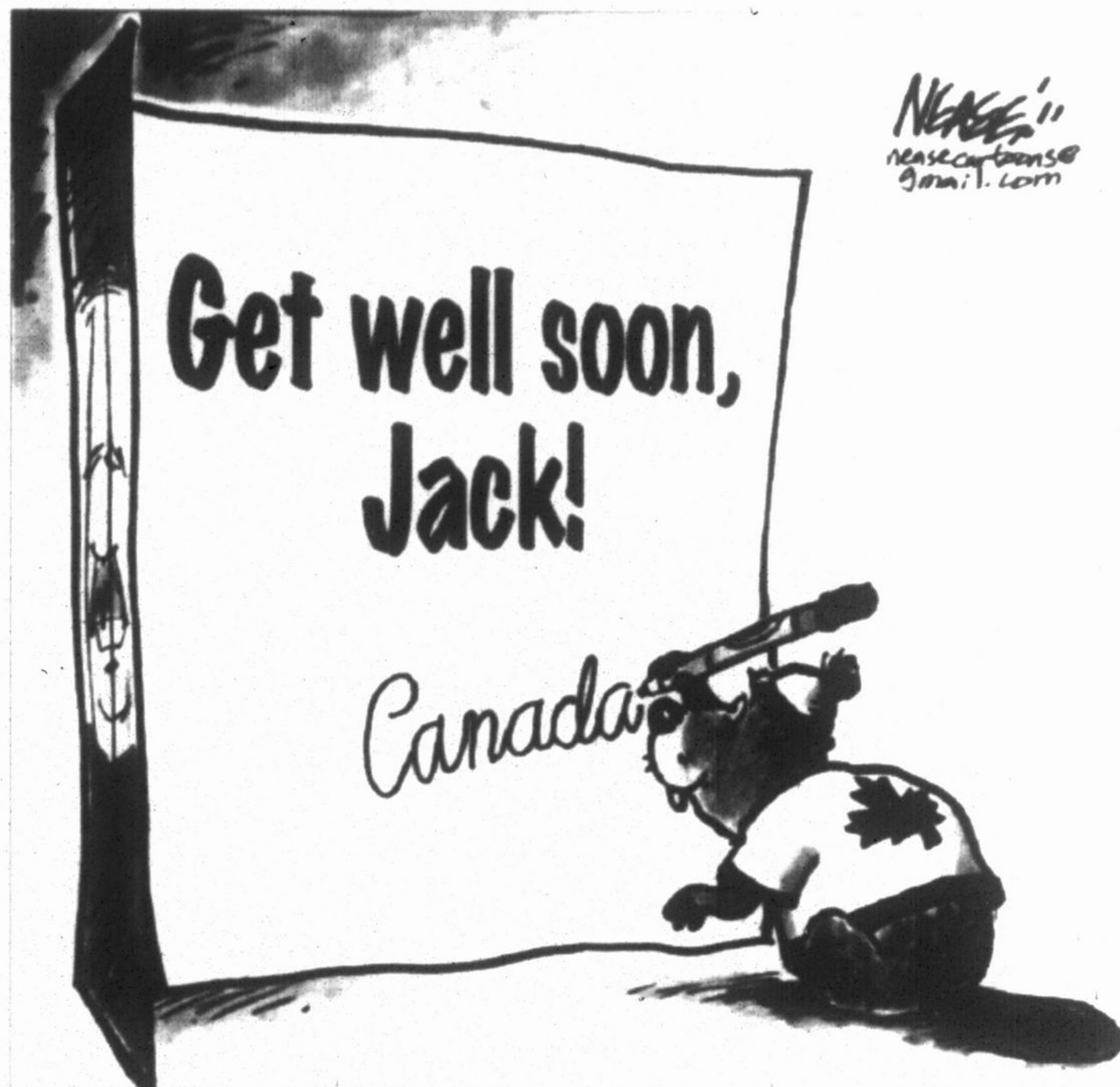
The lake is so very small that the wake from the boats has nowhere to go but to the bank, which is not very far away.

I do hope something is done in the near future.

It would, at the very least, take out one problem that is abundantly apparent on the lake.

No one will ever know what really happened. I feel for the families of these two young girls. It is such a waste.

KAYT BARCLAY
MUSSELMAN'S LAKE



Politics trumps reality when cop is shot

The stark juxtaposition of politics and reality played out in York Region last week.

Early in the week, Statistics Canada announced the national crime rate is continuing a 20-year tradition of decline — reaching levels not seen since 1973 (when gas was 40 cents a gallon, Nixon wasn't a crook, *The Sting* and *American Graffiti* were at the drive-in and The Partridge Family and Columbo on TV, and we rocked to the Stones' Angie and Elton John's Crocodile Rock).

The annual survey of police-reported crime showed the number of incidents fell by 5 per cent between 2009 and 2010, along with the severity of the crimes. Homicides, attempted murders, serious assaults and robberies were all down. Youth were accused of committing fewer offences. Property crime was reported less frequently with reductions in break-ins and car thefts.

Two days later, a York Regional Police officer was shot during an armed robbery in Aurora.

In the rational part of our minds, we know this isn't a crime wave; we know our communities are safe.

But one of our cops was shot, for goodness' sake.

Ripples of shock, dismay and out-



Debra Kelly

rage spread throughout York Region's communities.

Our sense of security was threatened — let's face it, nobody is really safe from random crime — and many of us were left feeling vulnerable, others wanting justice.

Three young men — one a young offender — from Pickering face a plethora of robbery-related charges. Ryan Berment, 18, is additionally charged with assaulting a peace officer and weapons possession offences.

The officer, shot in the hand, is recovering, while a suspect shot by police remains in hospital.

It doesn't help that the community's emotions are still raw following the senseless death of Const. Garrett Styles, who was dragged and crushed by a van he had pulled over in East Gwillimbury June 28.

A 15-year-old is charged with first-degree murder, igniting debate about young offenders and the justice system.

With the release of the crime rate, the federal Conservatives' get-tough-on-crime agenda came under renewed fire.

Coming this fall, the Tories' omnibus bill would put more young offenders in jail, end house arrest for many offences and impose mandatory minimum sentences for sexual offences against children and drug crimes.

By the way, if the provincial Conservatives get elected Oct. 6, some prisoners will be working in the community reminiscent of chain gangs, while released sex offenders will be wearing GPS tracking devices.

Hell yeah, did you say?

Yet most statistics and research indicate doing the time doesn't reduce the crime, but contributes to an increase in re-offenders.

The Tory agenda bucks the trend in developed countries in which ideological theory has been buried in favour of an evidence-based and balanced crime-

reduction program.

But statistics, you might say, don't keep cops from getting shot at by punks in baggy pants.

"...we do not use statistics as an excuse not to get tough on criminals. As far as our government is concerned, one victim of crime is still one too many," Justice Minister Rob Nicholson has said.

If the Tory bill passes, the prison population is expected to jump, at a cost that will weigh heavy on your much-imposed-upon wallet. The upgrade and expansion of jails is estimated to cost more than \$2 billion.

Meanwhile, the Correctional Service budget, which has already increased 86 per cent, from about \$1.6 billion annually, since the Conservatives took office in 2006, is pegged to climb to more than \$3 billion by 2013-14.

Which in the face of the dropping crime rate might have seemed troubling to many of you until a week ago.

Until one of our cops got shot.

Then suddenly statistics are just an excuse and politics trumps reality. Hell yeah.

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