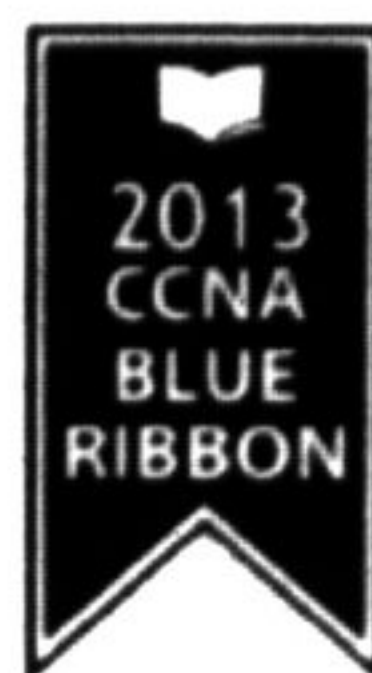


OPINION



PUBLISHER Ian Proudfoot
GENERAL MANAGER John Willems

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

6290 Main St.
Stouffville, ON L4A 1G7
www.yorkregion.com

Sun-Tribune

905-640-2612
Fax: 905-640-8778
Class: 1-800-743-3353

DISTRIBUTION
905-294-8244

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Debra Kelly
dkelly@yrmg.com

BUSINESS MANAGER
Robert Lazurko

Director
Regional Products
and Classified
Debra Weller

Director of
Production
Jackie Smart
jsmart@yrmg.com

DIRECTOR,
ADVERTISING,
DISTRIBUTION
Gord Paolucci

Editor
Jim Mason
jmason@yrmg.com

Advertising Manager
Dave Williams
dwilliams@yrmg.com

Regional
Office Manager
Melanie Attridge
mattridge@yrmg.com

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E-mail: jmason@yrmg.com

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SATURDAY FORUM

Online voting would increase town election participation

According to Statistics Canada, Canadian homes now have more Internet-connected devices than they do

people.

We now have PCs, laptops, tablets, smart phones and more to keep us connected to the web and all that it has to offer.

Through these devices, we can instantly research anything in which we have an interest, watch a TV show we may have missed, pay our bills from the comfort of our kitchen table and talk to and see loved ones anywhere in the world.

The Internet has dramatically changed the way we live and work.

Why then are we still forced to take precious time from our busy days to physically line up and register to vote for our elected representatives?

According to the York Region Media Group and its website, yorkregion.com, voter turnout is dismal.

Anyone under the age of 50 arguably lives and works in a totally connected busy world. They need to be able to vote for the candidate of their choice in a convenient and efficient manner

Municipal elections consistently lure just more than one third of York's eligible voters off the couch compared to 58.4 per cent in the last federal election.

In York Region's 2010 municipal elections, voter turnout ranged from a low of 28.8 per cent in Richmond Hill to a high of 49.9 per cent in King Township.

Turnout was 45 per cent in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Now, our town is better than most in getting out the vote but we can do a great deal better. It just takes a different approach.

There are still a great number of people who prefer the old, get out to the polls and vote system. We need to respect that.

However, we also need to tran-



Frank Van Veen

sition to online voting. Anyone under the age of 50 arguably lives and works in a totally connected busy world. They need to be able to vote for the candidate of their choice in a convenient and efficient manner.

I would hazard to guess if we were to offer online voting, participation would increase dramatically.

To enable online voting, the rules need to be changed. Our municipal government representatives need to approve online voting and then the provincial government needs to approve it.

The first step in this process is you, the voter, need to make your desire to vote online known to your municipal representatives.

Although rare in Canada, a referendum on this issue should be held. A referendum or a vote on a ballot question is a direct vote in which an entire electorate is asked to either accept or reject a particular proposal.

Our next municipal election is only 17 months down the road. We need to get involved now.

We need to let our elected representatives know that it is time to move forward and put a referendum for online voting on the ballot. This can be accomplished for the 2014 election.

If we are successful in getting it on the ballot and the referendum passes, it will then be up to the province to approve it. The provincial election is scheduled for Oct. 1, 2015. The timing could work out very favourably.

Frank Van Veen is a member of The Sun-Tribune's Community Links panel, which hopes to increase voting in the 2014 municipal election in Whitchurch-Stouffville. If you're interested in joining the panel, e-mail editor Jim Mason at jmason@yrmg.com

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Let's build something we're all proud of

Re: Developer, residents, still can't agree on condo building; Maybe we should keep PACE Geranium, April 5.

There's no denying that we would all like to see a more vibrant downtown. And there's no denying that we need a shot of something to help do that.

The PACE Geranium development proposed for Main and Lloyd streets could be that healthy dose.

A condo development would bring many new people into what was once our core. And with this would come more and varied businesses to help them walk, shop and eat in the area.

That would be great for the economy and for the character of our town.

While it's understandable neighbouring businesses and residents have their concerns, we have to ask ourselves what happens if we continue to oppose such projects because they don't meet our esthetics or because we want the traffic to go elsewhere instead of

in our neighbourhood.

Appearances are a valid concern. However, maintenance should be more of a concern.

I see lots of historical homes and buildings along our Main Street that instead of adding to the character of our town are an embarrassment through lack of care, upkeep and vacancy.

I see lots of historical homes and buildings along our Main Street that instead of adding to the character of our town are an embarrassment through lack of care, upkeep and vacancy.

Traffic is another. But wouldn't a development such as this help attract businesses and professionals into the area so people could walk instead of drive everywhere? And wouldn't it entice drive-by traffic to stop and have a look at

what our community has to offer?

Let's ask ourselves if we really want the SmartCentre to become the centre of our community just as it has in so many other small towns. If we continue to fight developments such as PACE Geranium that may be our fate.

What PACE Geranium should realize is that we want a development of which we can be proud.

We all understand it has to be economically viable. However big doesn't have to be the answer.

Let's make this a project people want and will pay to live in. Let's add value not size and, I believe, both you, PACE Geranium, and the community will reap the rewards.

Let's work together and pace ourselves to revitalize our downtown.

Hoping to continue being proud business owner and resident of Stouffville's downtown

CHARLOTTE CAVE
STOUFFVILLE

Tell us how you feel. Send a letter to the editor to jmason@yrmg.com

