

FEDERAL ELECTION A FAILURE OF VISION

The federal election didn't turn out the way Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had hoped. Not only did he fail to receive the majority he was seeking, but he also saw a small dip in the percentage of Canadians who voted for his Liberal Party.

It seems clear that voters didn't trust the Liberals enough to give them unfettered control. It also seems clear that they felt the same way about Erin O'Toole's Conservatives, who, while they won the popular vote for the second straight election, earned fewer seats than they did in 2019.

The trend for the last several elections has been for parties to pepper their platforms with programs and spending designed to appeal to the key demographics in key ridings. The idea is that if the parties dole out enough presents to the proper voters, the electoral math will work out in their favour and they can start measuring for curtains in the Prime Minister's office.

The obvious problem with that strategy is that the parties are generally trying to reach the same voters. And while all those voters may be demographically identical, each one is an individual who will pick their prize in ways that can be hard to predict en masse. Absent that certainty, it's a foolhardy way to campaign.

Those running the campaigns seem to have forgotten their history. Generally speaking, those in opposition win when they electrify voters with their vision for the future. Those in power tend to hold onto it when they've demonstrated that they've acted on the vision that got them elected in the first place.

When Trudeau defeated Stephen Harper he had a clear, obvious vision. It was all about change, progress and doing things differently. He made big promises about electoral reform, reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and growing Canada's influence on the world stage. It worked like a treat, and the Liberals were catapulted into government.

Fast forward four years, and with little visible progress on fulfilling his big vision, voters abandoned Trudeau in droves, leaving him in a minority situation. Andrew Scheer's Conservatives made great gains, but lacking in vision, remained in opposition.

If Trudeau wants to stay in power, he's got to start delivering on his promises. If O'Toole or the NDP's Jagmeet Singh want to take over the reins of power, one of them has got to articulate a vision that excites and energizes the country.

And if one of them does, he'd better get to work right away turning that vision into reality as in politics, four years can pass in the blink of an eye.



■ LETTERS & COMMENTARY

OPPORTUNITY WASTED

Six hundred million dollars was wasted on a pointless election, and for what? The results were pretty much identical to 2019's election, with Trudeau falling short of the majority parliament he so desperately wanted, while losing the popular vote, again.

Right now, hundreds of Indigenous communities across Canada still do not have clean drinking water. Workers across all sectors are losing their jobs and homes as Canada battles the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. More than two million Canadian children go to school hungry every morning. Six hundred million dollars, while being just a small Band-Aid for a large wound, could have done some good in these areas rather than being wasted in this unnecessary vanity project of an election.

Meanwhile, you have 10 defeated MPs who served

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less than two years receiving \$93,000 each in severance pay; and the incompetent and disgraced governor general Julie Payette receiving a \$150,000 pension for life. Something is seriously wrong with this picture.

Before we can even talk about fixing the wide range of social inequities that Canadians face, let's first talk about ending the gravy train and getting the pigs out of the trough, so to speak.

RYAN KLAMOT,
STONEY CREEK

NEW SYSTEM NEEDED

Canadians have gone through an exercise, neither wanted nor needed. The election's estimated cost of \$610 million is probably on the low side.

All of this so one person could hopefully come out at the helm of a majority government. It is the word "majority" that becomes a conundrum.

It misrepresents the re-

ality of the outcome of all Canadian elections. It gives the false impression of majority rule in any first-past-the-post electoral race with more than two parties. As more parties come into being, the outcome becomes less representative. The last two elections have resulted in minority governments because the vote split between Liberals and Conservatives was roughly 33 per cent each. If either party would have received another two to three per cent, they would in all probability have been declared a winner with the majority of seats.

How can such a situation be called a true representation of a majority of the electorate? The presence of six parties vying for your vote can only offer true majority representation under some form of proportional representation electoral system. First-past-the-post does not qualify.

DON PHILLIPS,
HAMILTON MOUNTAIN

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GET TOUGH WITH THE UNVACCINATED

The public has become fed up with individuals who repeatedly refuse to get vaccinated and with governments and organizations that continually make excuses or accommodate them.

After nearly two years of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, and patiently coddling unvaccinated individuals, public officials and those 90 per cent of Ontario residents who have been vaccinated have become accepting of the government to impose stricter restrictions on unvaccinated individuals.

An Angus Reid poll in late 2021 revealed there is little sympathy for the unvaccinated. About 70 per cent of respondents believe airline employees, school teachers, first responders and medical professionals should be fired if they refuse to get vaccinated.

The Omicron wave has only emphasized the expediency required to get the entire public vaccinated. Hospitals are overwhelmed with critically ill patients, the majority of whom are unvaccinated. Unvaccinated patients are more likely to have severe cases of COVID-19.

In Canada the unvaccinated make up less than 13 per cent of the population, but that is still nearly half a million people.

The frustration surrounding those people who refuse to get vaccinated - either due to conspiracy theories, religious belief, or some form of libertarian attitude - is forcing governments to take stronger action to follow health and safety protocols for the rest of the community.

Hamilton last week approved a change to its employee vaccination policy requiring all staff to be vaccinated with at least two doses by the end of May. If not, the city will terminate employees who are not vaccinated by June. There are 474 employees who have been undergoing regular testing and 63 staffers who refuse to get tested and have been placed on unpaid leave.

Hamilton's get tough attitude with its employees is following other municipalities - after Ontario ignored the issue and left it to cities and towns to take action - that have given up soft-peddling the vaccination pitch and have decided a tougher tone is needed. The City of Toronto fired 461 employees in January who refused to get vaccinated, while Oakville fired 12.

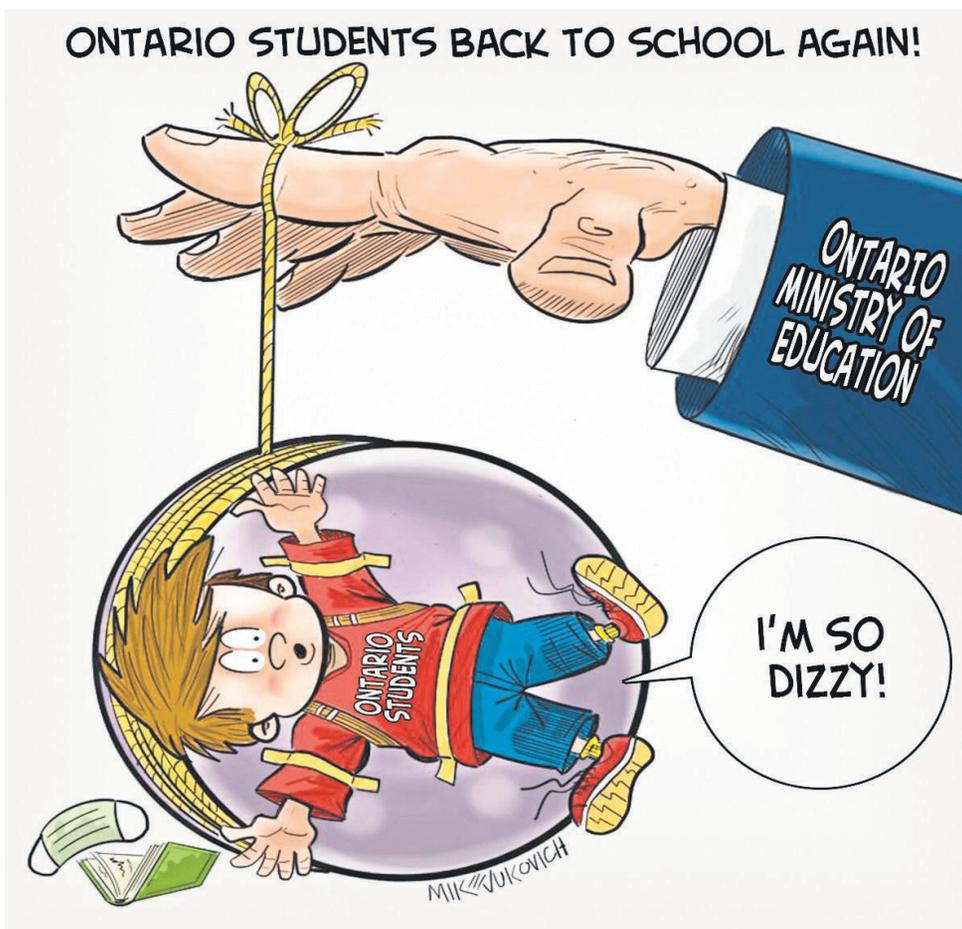
But governments are finally seriously considering ramping up the controls to get people vaccinated. At the forefront is Quebec Premier Francois Legault when he announced unvaccinated people would be required to pay a tax for the health care they receive.

This isn't just a Canadian phenomenon. With Europe expecting to be overwhelmed with the Omicron variant, various countries are also placing restrictions on the unvaccinated.

The pandemic is not over. There's a sizable number of people who are wishing it to be gone and are living in a post-pandemic lifestyle without regard for their friends, neighbours or even family members. But to live in a community is to also respect and abide by certain laws because not to do so will result in a devolution into chaos and barbarism.

Getting people vaccinated is our one best hope to return to a time when the community can accept COVID-19 and live out our lives with it.

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LETTERS & COMMENTARY

LEARN FROM HISTORY

RE: Answering a reader's question on COVID and the media, Jan. 13

I wish to comment on the article answering a reader's questions on COVID-19 and the media. I thought it was very good. Thank you for publishing a good summary of the reasons why we should be vaccinated, if it all possible. I think the public needs to know that the government of Canada and public health department would never ask us to do anything detrimental to our health and they are desperately trying to protect the general population.

I wish to communicate to the general public to go ahead and get your COVID-19 shots and to be sensible about the other restrictions following guidelines regarding masking distancing and washing your hands. We cannot rely on reactive medication to

save us from this particular organism because there are just too many people that are ill.

When I think back to a time of pre-antibiotics when we had the flu pandemic at the turn of the century, all they had was the basic aseptic techniques of washing your hands, distancing, gowning, masking and isolation. They had no vaccinations against the flu pandemic. People lived or died according to how well they observed aseptic technique and good general nursing care of those who contracted the flu. We still have to rely on those basic techniques in order to survive this pandemic. Fortunately we have some extra protection by getting our COVID vaccination. One more item in our arsenal to combat this particular pandemic. Take advantage of it.

In the future you might consider running an article on the flu pandemic in

1918 and the things that were done to combat it, comparing it to our current situation. I am sure there are some interesting comparisons. We can learn from history.

FRAN GROVES,
STONE CREEK

TAX LOTTERY WINNINGS

The Liberal government's Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation paid a quarter of a million dollars to a group of "experts" to tell them how a "housing inequality" tax might function.

I have a solution. Tax the millions and millions in lottery winnings and use that revenue towards building much needed housing.

MARTIN HAWTHORN,
GLANBROOK

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GUN FREEZE ONLY A STEP

It is no surprise the federal Liberal government has proposed to freeze the sale and transfer of handguns, a central tenant of a new Bill C-21 — in essence a gun ban to address the rising incidents of gun violence.

Just days after the horrific deaths of 21 people, including 19 small children at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, and weeks after 10 people were gunned down at a Buffalo Tops grocery store by an avowed racist, it seemed the appropriate time to capitalize on the fear of such weekly massacres in the United States to ensure something similar doesn't happen in Canada.

Under the new legislation, existing handgun owners would be allowed to keep their firearms, but would only be allowed to transfer them to businesses and exempted individuals, primarily valuable goods carriers and sport shooters.

The number of registered handguns in Canada has increased by 71 per cent between 2010 and 2020, reaching about 1.1 million, according to federal statistics. Handguns were the most serious weapon present in the majority of firearm-related violent crimes between 2009 and 2020.

However, further restricting handguns is only a first step in a long process to stop gun violence in this country. It is well known that many guns used by Canadian criminals — an estimated 80 per cent — come from the United States through illegal trafficking. While the new Bill C-21 is meant to crack down on gun smugglers by increasing criminal penalties, providing more tools to investigate firearm crimes and strengthening border measures, it will not prevent criminals from finding a gun. However, fewer legal handguns means fewer guns potentially flowing to criminals.

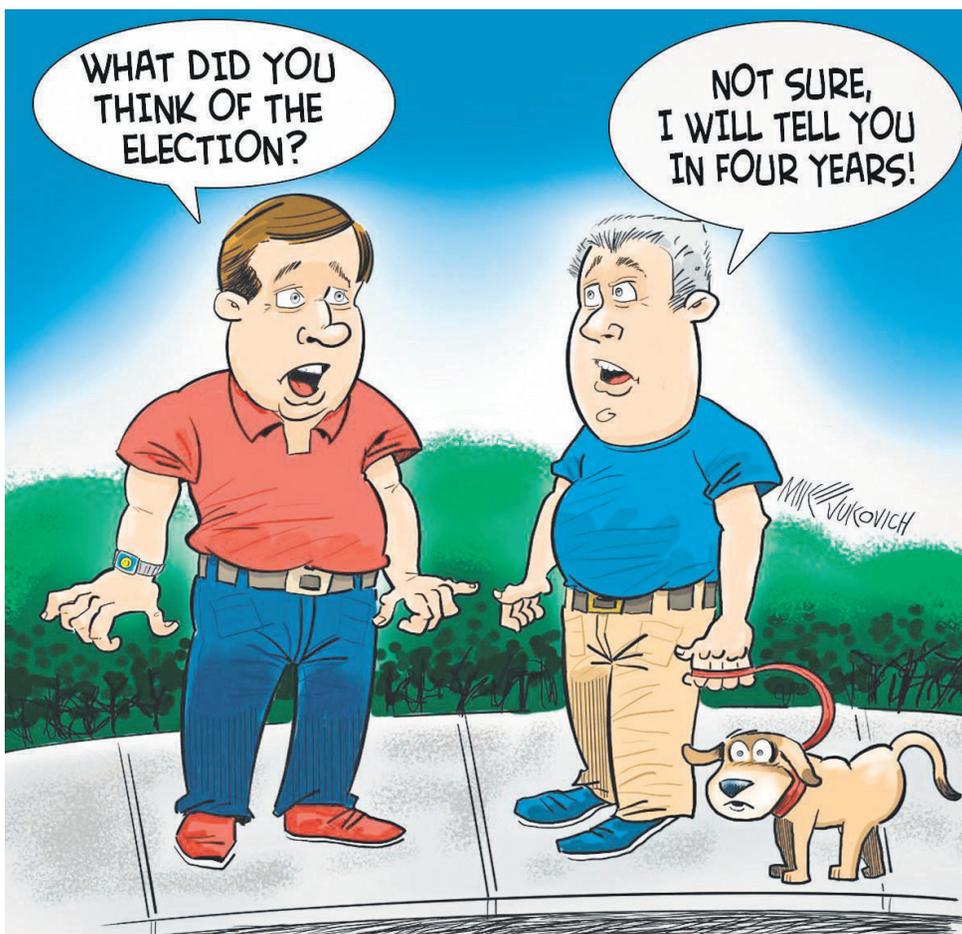
Still, the estimated 600,000 legal gun owners in Canada are not usually the threat to society that some may suggest. They follow the laws. They are not members of gangs or commit violent crimes. They've had exhaustive background checks, are properly trained and store their guns safely.

While the Liberals are making headlines, the real solution to preventing gun crimes remains strangely absent. Real solutions involve building relationships with communities to deal with the hopelessness, poverty and homelessness that plague our cities. We should be advancing progressive drug policies, as a significant amount of the gun violence occurs within the illicit drug trade.

And the government should be making more resources available for post-sentencing rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

The federal government is attempting to rein in what is essentially a symptom of a continuing problem within society manifesting itself in social dysfunction, limited mental health funding, drug dependency and growing inequality. Addressing the gun violence is a positive first step in what is a complicated problem vexing our communities.

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LETTERS & COMMENTARY

HOW MANY MURDERS ARE COMMITTED WITH REGISTERED HANDGUNS?

Once again, "ban all handguns" is making the headlines. So I'll ask again, open to all (politicians, police, media, bean counters, et cetera), this simple question. How many murders were committed by law-abiding citizens, legally owning their registered handguns, in Toronto, all of Ontario or all of Canada?

I've posed this simple question for decades and no one has ever responded to this simple question.

Maybe it's too simple?

I suspect all I'll hear are crickets.

JAY MILLER
GREENSVILLE

GARAGE CONVERSIONS WON'T ADDRESS THE PROBLEM

There is a real concern as to what the city may do regarding zoning policies on the density issue.

How many people would legally be allowed to live in these triplexes and fourplexes? One, two, four, six people? Would this put a strain on the area's water, electricity services and roads?

It has been said there are thousands of illegal and unsafe apartments in the city. Is it believable that by turning single-family dwellings into multiple units this would ease that problem?

Would it not be safer and more practical to properly construct apartment buildings rather than allow hundreds of garages to be turned into a tri- or fourplex? Would this really be gentle density?

JACQUIE REID
HAMILTON MOUNTAIN

WHAT HAPPENED TO PARK MAINTENANCE?

I wonder why the city does not cut the grass in Veevers Park at Greenhill

Avenue or cuts the grass only in some strange way close to the sidewalk. Children congregate only in that space, in fear of getting ticks, as the grass around them is knee high.

Also, in other parks, I see high grass. We are still paying high taxes for poor service at city hall. I bet if Chad Collins was still councillor of Ward 5 it would not be that way. He was always looking out for residents.

From an environmental protection perspective, cutting higher grass requires more fuel consumption and more time spent by workers.

At least place a "beware of ticks" sign there.

WIESLAWA DERLATK
HAMILTON

YOU OPINIONS

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Re: Explanatory Letter for Mike Vukovich, Cartoonist of the Year, Dundas Star News

The first submission from cartoonist Mike Vukovich looks at the initial distrust of Ontario's vaccine passport system that included concerns that some people would be bullied for using them. Here Mike makes an extreme point about just how that could go.

The second entry makes visual what Ontario's students went through during COVID with schools being open, then closed, then opened...

The third is as true as it is funny. While many people will have their own opinions about whether or not the results of an election, the truth is you'll never know until the next vote.

Mike Vukovich's cartoons are published in the Ancaster News, the Dundas Star News, the Mountain News and the Stoney Creek News.

Regards,

Gordon Cameron
Group Managing Editor
Hamilton Community News