

POLITICS AS USUAL: Red October

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

As I watched the latest show to hit the theatre that is politics in Aurora, and believe me, it's a show folks, a bad one, but a show none- the-less, I couldn't help but think of my favourite scene in one of my favourite movies.

The movie is The Hunt for Red October and the scene is between Jack Ryan and Dr. Jeffrey Pelt, National Security Advisor.

As Ryan protests about the proposed course of action, Dr. Pelt says to Ryan, 'Listen, I'm a politician which means I'm a cheat and a liar and when I'm not kissing babies, I'm stealing their lollipops.'

It's a great line. It's great because it's great dialogue, but it's also great because it rings so true. He's saying, essentially, that politicians are always working the angles and to make no mistake, that it's always about what's best for them.

It's true as a group, politicians - even the bad ones - are master equivocators. They don't necessarily lie - though some do, if we are to believe our national media - but they don't tell the truth either. They tell you what you want to hear because that way, you'll vote for them. Or at least, you won't vote for the other guy - which seems to be a popular strategy, certainly for some of the more bitter candidates.

A politician - pick your stripe, or party or ward - sees an issue that can be exploited or manufactured as is more often the case, seizes on it. Then gets a group within the community suitably agitated about this 'issue'. As expected, the group of angry or upset folks send emails to constituency offices, or letters to Councillors/MPP/MPs or what have you. Community meetings are held and the 'issue' gets a thorough airing, while the progenitor of it all sits aloft his/her white horse, lance at the ready proclaiming that s/he will 'fight for you,' or words to that effect. Cue the applause.

The concerns of the community are genuine. The response is most definitely not.

Often the 'issue' as presented never had a solution at the local level. The decision rests in the hands of higher levels of government or worse, the courts. So your local politicians are safe to give the impression of 'fighting for you' when in fact they know darn well that regardless of what decision or resolution is passed at the municipal level, it will be overturned at another.

But that's not the point, is it? The point is politician X can look like the hero - fighting for a cause - that never was.

The disingenuousness of it all is positively galling. Presenting a solution as possible, if perhaps not probable, without mentioning that the decision is not really theirs to make. This happens time and time again. It makes straw men of hard working folks who deserve better from our elected leaders.

People deserve the truth; the WHOLE truth about an issue. Not cherry picked phrases from an agreement that give the impression of a solution but have no real relevance to the issue at hand. Not bits and pieces, shards of information that if seen in totality would project a completely different picture. The whole, unvarnished truth. Believe me, folks can take it.

Angry, upset residents are not NIMBYists, though they often end up presented as such. What they are, is misinformed and often deliberately so, by those who have their own agendas.

Local politicians may not be 'kissing your babies', but make no mistake they're probably, 'stealing your lollipops.'

Until next week, stay informed, stay involved because this is after all, Our Town.