

## POLITICS AS USUAL: Leaders We Deserve

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

This is a short one this week folks, as I have been on vacation.

Besides, I admit I am at a bit of a loss as to what to say about the shenanigans of our fearless leaders ? be they locally, provincially or federally. Unseemly spats with Supreme Court Justices, warring provincial leaders seeing whose arm is strong enough to fling the most mud, and a Mayor that is ?in? rehab, if one accepts his Clintonian concept of the word ?in?.

It's difficult to remain positive or at least constructive under the circumstances. The political scene is in such a state of flux it's difficult to speak about anything of substance ? not that any of our political wannabes would speak of substance.

Good heavens no.

Sound bites and messaging, that's what's proffered to the populace.

Despite active campaigns at all levels of government (federal by-elections, provincial elections and municipal elections) the voters are simply not engaged. Don't believe me? Take a ride on public transit and ask 10 random people to name their local candidates.

I guarantee you that at least seven won't know who their candidates are, four won't know who the leaders are, and three won't even know there's an election on, let alone the fact that there are three.

Why? Because the average voter is turned off.

They see all politicians as cut from the same cloth.

Liars. Prevaricators. Opportunistic frauds. It's very sad, but very true.

No one even bothers to vote anymore, which simply exacerbates the problem. Average voter turnouts are less than 40%. There's lots of hand wringing over the need for ?get out the vote? type of activities. And they are worthwhile initiatives. Our voter turnouts are a disgrace.

But the reality of politics negates those efforts.

The reality is that politics today is reduced to an endless stream of nasty television spots meant to cast the ?other guy? in as negative a light as possible. Misleading adverts that gloss over failings and burnish ?accomplishments? to an unnatural sheen.

Rumour-mongering to out-scandalize the scandal-wear, and folks that print outright lies, in an effort to get your vote ? or at least get you NOT to vote for the other guy. It's all so tiresome, so predictable and so utterly futile.

If you denote a tone of frustration, you're indeed perceptive.

I am frustrated. And fed up.

I am frustrated that regardless of the level of government, what we've got is not the best we've got ? it's all we've got.

And that's not enough.

We deserve more.

I want straight shooters. I want honest people. I want leaders that tell us the truth, not couch everything they say in careful focus-group approved language designed to say nothing at all.

It's poisoned pablum they're feeding us.

Our community ? local and writ large ? is in need of leaders, not politicians.

Not people who want office for the trappings, the status, the power. Not people who want office to settle scores ? real or imagined.

Our community wants ? in fact, deserves ? leaders who understand that to lead is to serve.

I hope that on June 12, October 27 and Fall 2015 ? we get the leaders we desperately need. It's up to all of us to make sure that happens.

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