

POLITICS AS USUAL: The Odyssey

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

There are still a few more days left of this interminable 298 day election period, but we can see the finish line ahead.

Just a few hundred metres more and our journey of a thousand steps will be over. Thank heavens.

I doubt there will be a golden fleece at the end of this odyssey, but let's hope it isn't a sow's ear either. One can only hope.

As I think about the past 10 months of the campaign, I cannot help but feel somewhat sad and disappointed; not because it is coming to an end, but because it never really began.

A campaign for elected office is supposed to be about ideas, about governance, about the people whom you hope to represent. It's supposed to be about a commitment to service ? in every sense of the word. Or maybe that's just mere wishful thinking on my part. There was no enthusiasm for service, there was enthusiasm to get elected. There's a big difference there in my opinion. Lots of people want the title, they don't want the job. They don't want the work.

And that is what struck me most about the dialogue that surrounds the ?main? candidates in the ?Big? races.

They focus on ideas for the new and shiny but have nothing to say about repairing the old and tired. With a billion dollar infrastructure deficit across the province's 400-plus municipalities, it is disappointing to hear few if any of the mayoral candidates in the big leagues talking about any new strategies to deal with it.

Where's the plan? Where's the collaboration? Where's the talk of integrated service and infrastructure management?

Sewers aren't sexy. Agreed. But broken sewers are even less so.

There is media saturation about the candidates' thoughts on transit. I feel like Jan Brady when I say this but enough of the ?transit transit transit?.

It's not about transit. It's about mobility. How do you move millions of people around our province, our cities, our towns in a fair, fiscally and environmentally responsible manner?

As I listen to them blather on about their respective plans for transit I wanted to scream at the television as not one of them spoke to a central issue of mobility ? affordability.

Do they even know how much it costs to ride a bus? It's 6 bucks for a return ride in Toronto. It's 10 bucks for a return ride in York region. That's \$50 a week, 200 bucks a month. And that is only if you take two trips a day, five days a week.

Many people have two jobs, working six days a week. This pushes transit costs closer to \$75 a week and \$300 a month.

If your net income is only \$2,000 a month (the average income in Ontario apparently), spending more than a tenth of it just to get around is quite a lot of money.

Yes, a plan to address affordability of transit doesn't fit nicely in a sound bite or a 140 character tweet.

How sad that that matters.

If I sound weary. That is because I am.

I want social justice issues to matter. I want our community to matter. I want our future to matter. But they don't. Not in any tangible way. Certainly not by the standards of our national media.

What seems to matter? Muck and mud.

For the most part, York Region's municipal races have been devoid of the low brow, mud pile dwelling, personal attacks that have plagued other municipal races. That's a pretty low bar to meet in terms of expectations for our council candidates. Let's hope that no one steps under it in the waning days of this election.

If you haven't already done so in an advanced poll ? don't forget to vote on October 27th!

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