

## FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE: Federal Election

**By Stephen Somerville**

It is a special time of year.

No, it is not the beginning of the Pan Am Games or the final of the Women's World Cup of Soccer.

It is much better than that.

The federal election campaign is almost upon us ? October 19, to be exact.

As a result of seat re-distribution based upon population, the number of contested seats will increase from the current 308 seats to 338.

At dissolution, according to Wikipedia, the Conservatives currently hold 159 seats, the NDP 95, the Liberals 36, Independents 8, Bloc Quebecois 2, Green 2, Strength in Democracy 2, with 4 vacant.

The most recent popular opinion polls are showing a close race between the Conservatives and NDP with the Liberals not far behind.

I think the Tories will win a minority. If the NDP continue to do well across Canada, the Tories will pick up a number of seats in tight races because the NDP will syphon votes from the Liberals.

Mind you, the life of any Conservative minority will most likely be very short as I can't see either Messrs. Mulclair or Trudeau wanting to prop up a Harper government for very long.

It should be an exciting campaign; Lots of interesting issues to think about. To wit, the economy, Canada's place in the world, and First Nations.

The Prime Minister has been through I believe six campaigns now and he is a seasoned performer. I believe that Mr. Harper will perform very well but it will be a very tight contest that will be settled in very close contests in about 40 of the 338 ridings.

Although I will review and handicap the local election races in a future column, some items have continued to both intrigue and perplex me.

As someone who has volunteered on many different political campaigns over the years, there are a number of voter intention questions that I would like to see either a polling firm or some university or college class undertake in the Newmarket-Aurora riding.

All the respective campaigns do their best to show case their candidate and to get them known in the community.

This is done through the use of lawn signs, brochures, newspaper ads and the like.

And with the base of election volunteers slowly declining - meaning a heavier burden is placed on the existing volunteers - those who manage campaigns would love to know when most of you actually make up your mind and decide to vote for a particular candidate.

I saw a study recently that suggested 18% of voters make up their mind in the last two or three days of an election, 20% in the last day and 16% when an individual is actually in the voting booth.

If these numbers are in any way true, they are truly scary. This would mean that just over 50% of voters make up their mind in the last 72 hours of the campaign.

So, maybe Elections Canada should replace a thirty-six day writ period with one that lasts a week.

Based upon the above, one might be asking if the campaign teams are wasting a lot of their time and resources trying to get through to voters before the electors are really ready to listen.

But then again, although 16% of individuals may be making their decision while in the voting booth, what are the key things that influenced that decision?

Did the quality and number of brochures sway their decision in any way? Did the number of lawn signs have anything to do with it?

And the key question: how much of their decision was based on the local candidate versus the Party versus the Party Leader?

A comprehensive study investigating both voting intentions and the reasons behind these intentions would be most welcome.

While you enjoy the nice summer weather, be prepared to be visited by the respective party candidates sometime soon!

Stephen can be contacted at [stephengsomerville@yahoo.com](mailto:stephengsomerville@yahoo.com)