

POLITICS AS USUAL

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

The Federal election is now a full month down, with about a month-and-a-half to go.

Speaking for myself, I think it has been fairly sedate to date: one debate that was not much of a debate, canned speeches and announcements at various campaign stops ? with 10 second sound bites dutifully reported on the evening news.

But nothing that reaches out and grabs the electorate, shaking them to pay attention.

I suspect things will change rather rapidly this week.

The campaign trail will start heating up as folks return to work after the summer and start paying attention (well, maybe) to what is being said by the leaders-to-be.

So far, I haven't seen much in the way of true ?platforms? per se from all of the parties. Some have released more than others, and some have provided a relative dearth of information on what they would or wouldn't do if elected.

Some have costed out programs and proposals, some ? being as charitable as possible ? do not. I will leave it to you to decide of whom I am speaking lest I be accused of shilling for one party.

So, I wait in anticipation to see what will be released by the major parties in the coming weeks that will address the serious issues facing our country: economy, environment, education, health. I am sure we will see some interesting ideas put forward by all of the parties (and of course some crackpot stuff too. It wouldn't be fun if we had nothing to criticize now, would it?).

Even fringe parties have at least one good idea that warrants consideration. It doesn't warrant a vote, mind you. One idea does not a leader make.

But, it does make one think: what happens to all the great ideas once the election is over, the votes have been counted and the winner declared? Do they just wither and die? For the most part ? unless they are co-opted, rejigged and then presented as new policy by the ?winning? party ? the answer would be a resounding yes.

And why? Because that's the nature of politics. No party in their right mind ? in the midst of an election ? would say their opponent's idea is a good one. It necessarily leads to the question, ?then why the heck should I vote for you??

Bipartisanship, regardless of how wonderful and noble it sounds, is not a winning strategy. It does not fit with the adversarial nature of the current parliamentary system. Our system is not collaborative. It is combative. Except in the rarest circumstances, the winner takes all approach to governing is not conducive to folks from across the aisles getting together to work ? jointly ? on a solution to the nation's issues.

If you can't take credit then why do it? If it isn't their idea, then it isn't going to happen.

Yes, all MPs elected to the House of Commons are there to represent their constituents, but they do so within the context of their party's platform and policies. The particular policy of the opposition may make the most sense, but I would bet that the party of governance would be loath to say so.

Unless it is a free vote (and there are precious few of those), MPs will be whipped into voting with the party, regardless of whether they think it's the best idea or not.

Sorry if that sounds cynical but that's reality. It's politics as usual.

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