

Clearing the way for elections

Gayle Nichol - September 2019

In the month running up to Canada's federal election, there is no shortage of vote-worthy issues on the table.

Each of us gravitates to our own areas of import, often reflecting our stage in life. Voting issues for post-secondary school students are likely to differ from a newly retired baby boomer. And that's just fine. All issues are valid, and we look to our sitting governments to offer direction and movement based on the voices of the electorate.

That's the point of elections: To live up to our obligations as citizens of democracy and to participate in the process. We are guaranteed winners and losers on the evening of October 21, 2019, but the victor will be the democracy of having had the opportunity to be heard, and to exercise our right at the polls.

Voter participation is always a valid point, but I digress.

This election is already shaping up to be such a dizzying display of spin from all sides that I find myself consistently waving the caution flag: Do your own research.

While we have come to expect political parties to frame events, situations and crises in a way that benefits themselves and detracts from their opponent, the new spin that comes from social media and discredited online sources is out of control, and is making its way into mainstream newsfeeds.

Please be careful that you are not responding to fear mongering headlines that can only be legitimized in a scenario where all systems of checks and balances have been thrown out of Canadian governance in a Hollywood scenario where Kiefer Sutherland is now our Prime Minister.

Most Canadians are not interested in moving backward to a time of social intolerance and political ill will. Be careful of headlines or pundits who warn that such eventualities are just around the corner with enough support. Understand the context in which those dire projections would be allowed to come about.

Similarly, be careful of widespread promises of collective benefits and freebies for all. Everything in life carries a price tag, and someone eventually pays.

I am shocked on the daily by what I see trickle through my newsfeeds. The only way to know for sure is to get to work for myself, finding reputable sources for clarification. If necessary, call your local Member of Parliament and speak with Marilyn Gladu or her office staff for answers directly. She works for you.

If your research leads you down the Internet rabbit hole, confirm that your sources are real, reputable, and know which side of the political fence they tend to land on. It's ok if there is a bias, so long as you recognize that when weighing your decisions.

This federal election will require us to go to work in making our own determinations, perhaps as never before. Too many strategists are muddying the waters. Wait for the swells to calm and find your own way.