

Who's going to vote?

by BRIAN LOCKHART

There's an election coming up.

It was no real big surprise. The political ads started appearing on radio a few weeks ago meaning something was up.

This is a savvy move by the PM to try to win a majority when his popularity is fairly high and place him in a solid position for the next several years.

So far, the political adds have been pretty civil. I haven't really seen any attack style adds like we saw during the last election.

In fact, the television ads, so far, have been the political parties telling people what they plan to do, rather than attempt to tear the other guy down.

That could change, but so far so good.

Surprisingly, and thankfully, no one has yet to come out and make the claim about this being the 'most important election' either in your lifetime, the past decade, or the century.

Whenever they toss that one out about an election being so important, it's always a desperate attempt at fear mongering, scare tactics, or just plain bad politics. All elections are important, but they won't change your life. If you don't like that party in power 'vote them out.

It's pretty simple.

What's important is that you have a say in determining who is going to run the country and make the policies and legislation that will have an impact on your life.

Democracy does have its failings. The most obvious is the fact that if 51 per cent of the people vote a certain way, then 49 per cent of the population, half of all citizens, won't have their say in what should happen.

To take this to the very basic level, let's go back to a wild west, but democratic society. Let's say a posse of 20 democratically-minded people have captured a cattle rustler and decide to vote on what to do with him. If eleven of the 20 vote to hang him from the nearest tree, and majority rules, it's going to be an old-fashioned neck-tie party, even if nine of the 20 disagree.

Fortunately, our parliamentary system of government provides a way for those 49 per cent to still have a voice through the opposition who sit on the other side of the parliamentary gallery.

In your lifetime, we have always had the ability to go to the polls and cast a vote in favour of who we want to get things done and determine policy in this province and country.

However, it wasn't always that way.

Prior to the 1837 Rebellion, in Upper and Lower Canada, your votes were made for you.

It was colonial times, and the 'government' consisted of a bunch of local oligarchies that controlled trade and the institutes of state and religion. In Upper Canada, they were known as the Family Compact.

It was the result of a colonial era of rule.

The Family Compact were a small closed group of men who exercised the most of the political, economic, and judicial power. Unfortunately for them, ruling without responsible government wasn't popular with the peasants.

The Rebellion of 1837, wasn't much of a success in terms of an armed conflict. When you've got a bunch of local militia composed of farmers, some of whom only carried pitch forks, attacking a trained force of army regulars, the battle won't go well for the farmers.

In fact, after the first volley was fired, most of the militia realized they were in way over their heads, and they made a sensible move ? they turned and ran away in disarray.

Many of the rebels were later captured and several ended their life swinging at the end of a rope after being hanged for leading the uprising.

While the rebellion itself didn't topple a government, it acted as a catalyst for improvement.

The powers-that-be realized they must install a responsible government to properly govern a growing colony.

Over the years, that eventually led to the British North America Act.

You now have the opportunity to go to a polling station and make your mark and have your say in who you want to run the county on your behalf.

During the last federal election, only 66 per cent of eligible voters took the ten minutes it takes to cast a vote. That means 34 per cent of you could not be bothered to use your right to determine who will have a seat in parliament.

It may be your ?right? not to vote, but essentially it is your civic duty to get out there and mark an ?X? on a ballot.

Don't waste your vote now, and complain later.