

Answering the call

by BROCK WEIR

Do you always answer the phone when it rings, vibrates, or lights up?

If you are, you might be in good company.

A few years ago, the BBC explored the idea of why Gen Z and Millennials are ?hung up on answering the phone.?

The data cited in the report found that 25 per cent of people between the ages of 18 and 34 never answer the phone, preferring instead to ?ignore the ringing, respond via text, or search the number online if they don't recognize it.?

The conclusion rendered by Yasmin Rufo found it's a generational thing in that those who were between the ages of 18 and 34 in 2024 grew up in a time where texting was gaining a foothold and traditional telephone use was taking a backseat.

So, what's the excuse of those of us who have barely aged out of the 18 ? 34 demo?

I don't have a clear answer.

Admittedly, talking on the phone is not my favourite thing in the world, but when I have to use it, I send up a silent thank-you to the brains that came up with the simple concept of Call Display.

I love hearing from all of you, and please keep the calls coming, but over my years at this desk, some calls have been nothing short of head-scratchers.

One such call that always comes to mind was from an incensed reader who took exception to a photo caption.

There was nothing wrong with the caption as far as I could tell. It was factual. It stated the facts.

So, what was the problem? It was a photo of the Member of Parliament of the day and, as the caller in question didn't vote for him, they were offended we would refer to them as such.

The caller was old enough to know that our Members of Parliament are chosen by the collective, rather than the individual, but it was clear the caller was in no mood to receive a civics lesson, and I was in no mood at that moment to give one.

But, what a missed opportunity!

Three MPs have come and gone in that riding since I first received that call, and, if recent events are any indication, I don't think the level of civic engagement has improved over those intervening years.

This is often most evident when we, as Canadians, are in a Minority Parliament situation, as we are now.

While the numbers are currently on the Prime Minister's side, sabres often rattle louder when a minority government has secured its status as such by the thinnest of margins and opposing parties might see an opportunity in banding together to form a coalition.

?This is not what Canadians voted for,? is the common refrain when political parties at loggerheads during the campaign suddenly find themselves with a breadth of common ground once they sense an opportunity to oust the victor, sometimes creating some very strange political bedfellows.

When this happens, we're often told that such strategic moves fly in the face of the electorate and the Constitution. The former might have merit depending on which political colour you happen to bleed, but, at the end of the day, forming a coalition government is a time-tested component of our constitution and our parliamentary democracy.

More recently, again through the lens of having a minority government, is the thorny issue of floor-crossings.

Members of Parliament crossing the proverbial floor from one party to another is hardly a new invention, despite what some talking heads would like us to believe. In our Parliament's nearly 160-year-old history, it's a situation that has unfolded surprisingly regularly, but we're now living in a society that is sadly fuelled more and more by outrage, which, I suppose, gives it a fresher feel.

Nunavut MP Lori Idlout is the most recent example of this ? at press time ? having crossed the floor from the NDP to the Liberals last week.

?Nunavut and the North are central to Canada's future, and the rights and aspirations of Indigenous peoples must be at the heart of Canada's democracy. I have devoted my life to this essential change,? said Idlout in a statement. ?With new threats against our sovereignty and pressures on the wellbeing of people throughout the North, we need a strong and ambitious government that makes decisions with Nunavut ? not only about Nunavut. The success of that work needs all of our voices.

?Our North is where climate change is felt first, where new threats to our security and sovereignty are growing, and where Canada's responsibilities to our people are among its greatest. As a Member of Parliament, I have always worked to bring Nunavut's priorities into national focus: especially ensuring the immediate needs of Nunavut are addressed and so that we can confront the high cost of living, the urgent need for housing and food security, the importance of protecting our land and waters, and the need for policies that reflect the culture, language, and rights of Inuit and Canadians all throughout the North.

?? At this turning point in our history, I am ready to work with [Carney] to build a strong future for Nunavut and for all of Canada.?

While I sympathise with disappointed members of the Nunavut electorate who voted for Idlout solely due to the fact she ran under an orange banner in the last campaign ? while that's not how I vote, I say this as a voter who has seen his MP of the day cross the floor not once but twice ? one can only hope the majority of her constituents cast their vote because she was the right person to affect the change so desperately needed in Canada's north.

It's a mandate she can certainly fulfil much more effectively as a member of Government rather than on the backbenches of parliament in a party with little more than a handful of members left. That's inarguable. But people vote for different reasons.

I'm sure many went to polling stations last April to vote for Mark Carney, Pierre Poilievre, Jagmeet Singh, etc., and their respective parties rather than for the person whose name was actually on the ballot. But, at the end of the day, no matter what your intentions, you're voting for your local representative and who you feel will best represent your interests in Ottawa.

Conservatives have accused the Prime Minister of making ?backroom deals? to facilitate the recent wave of floor-crossings, of members themselves betraying their voters in the process, but it's curious that when Parliamentarians cross the floor to the Conservatives from any other party, it's often framed as a principled decision and a move that should be celebrated in the name of democracy.

It can't go both ways.

Nunavut voters will have the chance to signal their support of Idlout's move in the next Federal election, but the time between now and then will help determine whether she made the right decision on behalf of her constituents and her territory as a whole.

As for the other riders impacted by floor crossings, it's a chance for some introspection on whether you vote for the person, the

party, the plan, the potential impact, or any combination thereof.

Your motivations might surprise you.