

In praise of an abundance of choice

by BROCK WEIR

Well, everybody, we're in the home stretch.

If you're feeling bombarded by election signs on just about every corner, there's just a few days left before they all have to come down.

If you're left feeling a bit tired from unexpected door knocks or bell dings from mayoral, council or trustee candidates coming around and saying what they'll do for you, you don't have much longer to fret.

If you're tired of the constant bickering on social media from backers of some candidates, detractors of others, and those who somehow feel they don't have any skin in the game, despite municipal issues having the most immediate impact on you, you don't have to withstand it much longer.

If, however, you're one who thrives on the debate, the exchange of ideas, and hearing the respective visions of everyone who wants to find a place at the table to help shape their community? well, your very own political Super Bowl is nigh and you only have a few more days to prepare, grab some drinks, and lay out your snacks before settling in to watch the numbers roll in on Monday night.

There might not be a half-time show, but if you're a political junkie you don't need any extra bells or whistles to heighten the excitement!

But, the real question is: Will you be celebrating around the water cooler the next day or bemoaning the choices made by your neighbours? Well, it's too early to say ? but if you didn't take the time to get engaged in the process and mark your ballot, in my opinion it's best to keep the belly-aching to yourself, regardless of whether ?your? candidate won or lost.

People often bemoan low voter turnout each time we collectively go to the polls, regardless of which level of government is involved.

Seldom does voter turnout crack 40 per cent, which doesn't say much for our democratic process; but, on the other hand, those who do come out to the polls seem mercifully engaged in the issues, are informed, and have done their homework on which candidate best represents their views and aligns with their own visions for the future.

We'll only know after polls close on Monday night just how many eligible voters in our community turned up to exercise one of their most important and sacred of democratic rights, yet until the numbers do roll in we do still have quite a bit for which to be thankful.

First of all, we have an abundance of qualified candidates who each bring to the table their own views for the future, and their own life and professional experiences that have informed their respective visions. They are in it for the right reasons, whether they want to help shape growth, help businesses continue to recover after an exceptionally and unprecedentedly difficult time in all of our lives, or want to keep a close eye on the environment, development, and/or services.

They have put in the time to develop platforms.

If they're incumbents they've taken the time to review their respective records and proudly stand upon it. They've picked up their phones, logged on to the platforms of their choice, and have probably worn out more than a couple of pairs of shoes in the quest to knock on hundreds if not thousands of doors, depending on if they're going for mayor, council, or trustee positions ? and all should be commended for taking the time to do so.

We're spoiled for choice and for that we should be grateful.

As much as we focus on voter turnout, there's one factor that bodes well: as far as the mayoral and council races are concerned not one race has gone uncontested.

This is not a knock on any of the incumbent candidates; quite the contrary. Instead, it's a welcome reminder that democracy is alive and well and people want to be a part of the conversation.

Our neighbours in King Township, for example, have not only seen incumbent Steve Pellegrini acclaimed back into the Mayor's position once again, but two of their ward Councillors acclaimed as well. Regardless of their respective performances over the last four years, this does nothing to facilitate healthy exchanges of views in their Wards 2 and 6, let alone King-wide.

Similarly in Newmarket, incumbent John Taylor has been acclaimed back into the Mayor's seat, while the incumbents in Wards 3 and 5 were returned as well without challengers.

Acclamation certainly makes the process easier for candidates looking for a seat at the table ? it saves time, debate, and shoes ? but a healthy exchange of ideas and the potential for food for thought can both spark new perspectives and keep incumbents at the top of their game.

Everybody wins.

Well, everybody wins if they take ownership of the process and the outcome.

All too many like to hang their hat on the old, misguided adage of, ?You can't fight City Hall,? or, as it is more commonly known today: apathy. But that has not been present in this election. Town Hall is thankfully not seen as a place of impenetrable bureaucracy, but rather a place where voices can be heard, make a difference, and even earn them a place among lawmakers.

Regardless of how the chips fall on the evening of October 24, I hope you've all become more engaged in the issues that hit closest to home, become informed on just what those issues are, have become engaged in potential solutions, and have marked your ballot according to the visions of the community and the education system that best align with yours.

Municipal issues, such as the budget process, are never seen as the ?sexiest? of issues compared to those that unfold at Queen's Park or on Parliament Hill, but they really are the issues that have the most immediate impact on our day-to-day lives.

If you haven't already done so, take the time before Monday to see how your day-to-day lives might be impacted by how you mark your ballot.

Good luck to all the candidates, and we'll see you on the other side!