

Taking politics to the street

EDITORIAL

There's a lot to consider as we edge closer to the October municipal election, and if you want to get the dirt on what's going to be important to people when they go to the polls you have to go down to street level to find it.

There's a reason populists are winning elections these days. It's not necessarily because they're smarter or more capable than the competition (though they might be), it's because they're the ones who have their finger on the pulse of what people are thinking. They speak the lingo and they empathize, whether it's genuine or in jest.

Consider this: Donald Trump doesn't give a hoot about anyone who voted for him, aside from the fact he'd like them to vote for him again. Yet somehow he became a man of the people, the hero of the working man and woman who are losing their jobs to technology and immigrants, real or imagined.

He has never sat at a picnic table in a pair of old jeans and downed a six-pack while stoking a camp fire. His hands are as soft as a baby's behind and I'd bet he couldn't find his way to the right end of a screwdriver if you gave him two tries.

After all of the scandals, after proof that Russia compromised United States democracy, after everything, polls show that his base still supports him. It's mind-numbing to even imagine, but it's true. They think he is working for them because he speaks their language.

Rob Ford was always going to win the recent provincial election, but who knew it would be a landslide? The NDP had a pretty good run with few major hiccups and a leader who looked and sounded like a leader. Polls showed they were neck and neck coming into the home stretch, but by the time the race was over Ford was Secretariat and Horwath was whoever came second.

Again, Rob Ford is not one of us. He's wealthier than most of us could ever hope to be and he appears to crave power, whether it be municipally or provincially (yes, we wouldn't be surprised to add federally to that list one day).

The difference between Ford and Trump, aside from the fact that we believe Ford has never said there are some good people among the white supremacists, is that people can see Ford downing a few brews by the campfire. He's a man of the people and, for the most part, has come by it genuinely.

So what does all of this mean for Caledon and Bolton this fall? If you go online to various pages devoted to the area, you learn pretty quickly what's driving people crazy around here. Trucks and that damn fence, and a lack of connection between our leadership and the people who want answers.

Residents are upset about the paramedic situation and how their elderly parents on the fringes of Caledon will get service quickly if their lives depend on it. They're worried about rising crime and empty buildings and more.

Yes, we're focussing on the negative because those are the issues that will define the election. No one says they're happy with the way everything is, but the truth is most residents are proud to live here. They just want answers and to see action being taken on their concerns. That's why the candidates who go the furthest down to street level will likely have the best chance of winning.

The world was saddled ? for better and worse ? with eight years of Bill Clinton because George H. W. Bush couldn't speak directly to dull normals. That image of him looking at this watch during a presidential debate that was in the form of a town hall was a major turning point of the election. Clinton was engaging people while Bush was looking to see how much longer he had to be there.

If we recall, there was a photo of Robert Stanfield trying to kick a football that helped a guy named Trudeau take over the big chair in Ottawa.

You can't please everyone, but you should at least listen.