

## The cost of dental care

by LAURA CAMPBELL

If you're reading this, you've probably already read every clever thing out there with respect to the election results last Monday. So please, keep your expectations for my analysis fairly low.

I'm exhausted. Mentally, emotionally, spiritually. And I wasn't even a candidate this time around! That's because I'm deeply invested, like many of you were, in the outcome of this process. I'm an environmentalist first, and I use politics as a medium for change. Social justice is at the core of environmentalism- they are deeply intertwined. To see something I've been fighting for, for so long, (climate action, social justice, and broader environmental protection), be either dismissed or instrumentalized by different political parties was frustrating.

Let me stay with the environmental discussion for a minute. Locally, and across Canada, many environmental communities were divided- both ideologically and strategically.

There are many who believe the carbon tax is the best way forward ? the best way to export a relatively successful policy across the globe was to make it work here first. And B.C. has proven the efficacy of the carbon tax- albeit emission reductions haven't been overly deep there (7% reduction).

Those people necessarily supported the Liberals. The NDP embraced a Green New Deal very late in the whole discussion ? a much deeper, more ambitious climate plan. This remained a major thorn in the side of Greens who created the Green New Deal about 10 years ago. For people like me, the NDP environmental message was shallow and hastily patched together, and seemed disingenuous.

Greens talked about a 'just transition for workers' long before the NDP conceived of such a thing, in particular as Alberta's Rachel Notley championed the pipeline and expanding existing oil and gas infrastructure.

The NDP's embrace of a Green New Deal speaks to the success of non-partisan organizations such as Lead Now, Environmental Defense Canada, and the Climate Action Network. All of these groups pressed the progressive parties to adopt a Green New Deal- yet the smallest of the three parties already had one- and this was never discussed in the media in a significant way. My disappointment in this regard speaks to the emotional labour of democracy.

This brings me to the second broader discussion around the election. We all know that third-parties played a role. Whether it was Campaign Coalition Life (an anti-choice group promoting the end of abortion in Canada), or Unions, or Environmental Groups, or 'Canada Proud' and other anti-immigrant/nativist organizations whose funding we should look into. They emailed members, pressed them to send surveys or 'pledges' or other such material to local candidates. They also bought advertising before the writ dropped, to spoil the image of various parties. Did you see the fancy ads on behalf of Unifor? I'm not yet sure what to make of this phenomenon. Of course it isn't new, but it also has become more complicated in the age of globalization.

The Conservatives managed to evade criticism until the very end of the campaign. Their failure to release a properly costed platform until deep into the writ period speaks to the fact that the platform was written by strategists rather than the grassroots of the party. And despite that, they successfully changed the conversation from one around climate action to one about affordability.

Objectively speaking, an extra boutique tax credit here and there does not make life more affordable for Canadians. Simply 'stating the problem' (which is what Scheer did, over and over) does not show leadership. The complex realities of our affordability crisis now requires a more bold solution, and I think one that can be forged by cooperation among all parties.

The cuts that the Conservative platform proposed were unacceptable, especially for Canadians like me, a small business owner and a

parent. Conservatives must get back to the drawing board. If they say they care about affordability, they need to listen to their supporters and think critically about how to move forward.

The election outcome, therefore, means all parties (and their members) have to do some soul-searching. Myself included. Why didn't I talk more about our ideas as Greens? Why was I so devoted to criticizing my progressive peers? (Emotions). Liberals have to stop asking Canadians like me to compromise our values- or to dismiss our democratic rights to vote for what we really want, in favour of strategy. The NDP has to spend more time thinking about how they hope to rectify their industrial roots in fossil fuels with the new economy. The Greens have to be better at messaging.

Overall, I think the outcome of this election was a good one, though it continues to prove the need for electoral reform. There are still many unknowns. How will Trudeau form a government? Will there be a formal deal with the NDP? Maybe the Bloc? Or ad-hoc governance? Policy by policy negotiation. It's really too early to tell. But one thing is for sure, a minority government will make for plenty of great writing material.

More to come, friends! Thanks for reading.