

MAY 2013 - PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Just when you think you have seen everything – you see one more thing. That is never truer than when you are talking about the greatest of democratic expressions of public opinion, an election.

I use the word “public” because it certainly is not a “majority” opinion. We have just witnessed an election with the lowest voter turnout in British Columbia history. The May 14th, 2013 election night initial count is showing a voter turnout of 48%. Less than one in every two eligible voters put a pencil in their hand. A full 3% less than picked up a pencil in the May 2009 B.C. provincial election which, for those who were counting, was the previous record low voter turnout in B.C. If you voted, then the person sitting across from you at coffee today did not. Unfathomable.

Of the 3.369 Million eligible voters in B.C. – **1.752 Million** of you did not even care enough about your family's well being to find it a big enough priority in your life to vote at any time in the last 28 days. I am not sure what was so important that 52% of the provincial voters couldn't find the time or make the effort to vote, but whatever it was must have been huge. I know it wasn't playoff hockey. Not this year. Not in this province.

1.752 Million British Columbians were so unconcerned about the next four years of their lives, their children's lives, their parent's lives, that they couldn't even be bothered to walk or drive to a school guaranteed to be less than 1 kilometer from their house to mark an “X” in a circle with a pencil.

Just less than 9 years ago, in June 2004, a bus full of Afghani women was blown up because they had the audacity to get together and to think that they had the right to drive into town and register to vote in a free election to determine their collective fate and decide who would govern their lives. Determine who would make the laws that would shape their future. They were killed for daring to dream of a right so sacred that less than half of us who freely enjoy that privilege, without fear of prosecution or recrimination, bother to use it.

Kings and dictators have been beheaded and assassinated by their citizens to gain the right to vote. Wars have been fought. Countries have been founded. Countries have collapsed. All so that citizens could gain the right to self determination and self governance.

Us Canadians, ahhhh, not so much. I guess we feel that this voting thing is over rated. This last couple of weeks has been jammed packed with the Survivor finale, the end of the Amazing Race, the American Idol semifinals, Dancing With the Stars getting down to the end, The Voice starting up. Really, who has time to vote if I can't do it from my cell phone or by texting “Idol09” or “liking” some contestant or other on Facebook. Besides, those shows give you 20 or 30 or 50 votes per night. Now that's voting that really counts.

For us, finding 20 minutes in a 28 day period, once every 4 years to go to our child's school is too onerous a demand, too terrible a price to pay for the right to vote. Who could possibly endure such hardship for such a minor thing as electing the government that will control every aspect of your life for the next 4 years?

I am not smart enough to understand why voter turnout continues to fall in every single democratic country in the world that does not impose a penalty for failing to vote, yet the citizens in every single country in the world that does not have the right to vote for a democratically elected government are fighting and dying for the right to do so.

I guess that is human nature in a nutshell. We do not want or care for what we have; yet we crave and yearn for that which we cannot.

So while we have all been busy voting for our favourite Survivor, Dancer, Singer or Amazing Racers we just didn't seem to have that same amount of vested interest or desire in voting for the survivors of the only Amazing Race that really impacts all of our lives. The race back to Victoria to put their hands in your wallet and pass legislation that will govern your life, lessen your right to freely organize and collectively bargain for fair wages and working conditions, determine environmental and health and safety standards.

The race that gives them the right to enter into non-disclosure agreements with 7 multinational oil companies that mean your government cannot tell you any details of the deals they have signed with those companies without them being sued within an inch of your tax dollars.

1.752 Million of you felt perfectly content with allowing just 80,326 other people to choose your next provincial government. The government that will decide the price of the gas for your car, the tolls you will pay on the roads and bridges, B.C. Ferry rates, Hydro rates, every single conceivable tax rate and user fee, MSP premiums, ICBC rates and just about every other single thing in your life; both working and personal. That is an amazing show of confidence you have placed in the 722,737 (21.4%) voters who did come out and vote to elect the new "majority" Liberal Government.

Only in Canada can you be elected to a majority government by earning the trust and support of just 1 voter in every 5. That kind of number only gets legitimacy when more than 2½ in 5 don't even think it important enough to vote.

What is the difference between a 50 seat majority government and a 33 seat opposition party in British Columbia? The answer is less than 17,000 votes. That is just 1,000 votes in the 17 closest of the province's 85 total electoral districts won by the Liberals. That means that of the 1.752 Million absentee voters if only 1 in every 98 of them had voted for a change in government, the result would be reversed.

The Liberal election strategists were proven correct once again. Negative advertising works. Never let the facts get in the way of a good story, or smear campaign. Fabricate. Spin. Repeat. They have achieved exactly what they set out to do. They have convinced enough voters who entered this election campaign wanting a change in the government that the NDP are just as bad as the Liberals so why bother to go out and vote. That is how money defeats democracy. I bet you tell your children not to believe everything they see on TV or read on the internet.

To plagiarize and paraphrase Edmund Burke *"All that is necessary for the triumph of [bad government] is that good men do nothing."*

Here's hoping that the blind faith and trust of 1.752 Million British Columbians doesn't end up biting us all in the ass as well as the wallet. After all, what could possibly go wrong with a stoked ego, a sense of entitlement and invincibility and the ability to justify every single thing you do with the phrase *"Well, a majority of British Columbians have given us a vote of confidence for the job we have done over the last 12 years in the only poll that really counts"*.

You will be able to turn that into a drinking game for every time you hear that repeated as justification for everything this new Liberal government does to us over the next 4 years. Here's looking at you kid. All those waiting for a liver transplant in 4 years, form a line on the right. The far right.

Christopher Hiscock
President, Canadian Airways Lodge 764