

RANDOM REFLECTIONS: Making It Count!

By Kathryn Wishlow

Recent discussions with friends and family have made me contemplate all of the times voting has come up in my life. It is often a difficult subject in some families, not even a topic for civil discussion. I remember as a child my father actually saying, "Neither politics nor religion are ever to be talked about at this dinner table!" Of course I was too young to understand what either of those words meant, but his warning tone of voice highlighted the importance of the statement, and it has remained firmly lodged in my mind.

This last six months has brought that statement into the forefront with the results of the American election, our provincial election, and of course the most recent federal election. I cannot remember the last time I have seen people so passionate or polarized in their beliefs. This is likely contributing to the increasing numbers of voter turnout in Canada, and frankly I am pleased to see that. By the time this article is published, our future will have been decided.

Apathy, or the feeling that "it doesn't matter how I vote" attitudes are disappointing. Of course it matters! Just because you feel hopeless about your vote counting because of an overwhelming majority of people

supporting an opposing candidate, does not mean you should totally give up. I truly feel that whether my choices win or lose, at least I participated. I want to be able to say down the road, that "I'm sure glad I did NOT vote for that person or party!" ... or "Am I ever glad I did vote for that person or party!" I don't believe I have any business criticizing or making comments unless I took a firm stand by actually voting!

Most of my life, I have considered myself a very "liberal conservative" or a rather "conservative liberal" with a strong sense of social justice especially regarding healthcare and education, plus huge concerns about all environmental issues. NO party has ever fit my criteria completely in order to make me feel their agenda fits my ideals. I would be willing to bet MOST people feel that way. Based on policies that fit my idea of the perfect party or politician, no-one has ever been perfect, although past behaviours, experiences and character have definitely influenced my decisions.

In talking to others, I have discovered that many people pick one particular item in a platform that they wholeheartedly agree with, and that decides how they will cast their vote. Personally, I

have to go more with a majority of issues that fit my ideals. Offering to lower my taxes, is NOT an incentive to get my vote. I happily do contribute my share of taxes IF it is being spent carefully in worthwhile areas. I appreciate the fact that I have access to healthcare, unlike my cousins in the USA, where their child's multiple fractures and concussion from falling out of the tree they climbed, nearly bankrupted the family and left them in debt for many years.

Our healthcare and education systems are not perfect and will need continual scrutiny and upgrading as times change, not funding cuts. So do our environmental laws and their enforcement. These are ongoing areas that will always need improvement. And even though my vote could be cancelled by a majority in a different direction, I still think it is important to be able to say, "I did express my preferences. I did vote and IT COUNTED!"

(Kathryn Wishlow belongs to White Pine Writers Inc., a local group of like-minded authors who encourage and support all facets of writing and publishing literary efforts. Follow them on FaceBook or www.whitepinewritwrs.ca)