

POLITICS AS USUAL: Change the Game

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

Mercifully, we are nearing the end of the Federal Election campaign.

Just two scant weeks are left.

There will undoubtedly be a flurry of ads and a bevy of 'policy' announcements in the days to come, all designed to entice those not yet already decided into voting for Larry, Curly or Shemp.

My flippant tone is not meant to be disrespectful, but it is difficult to adopt any other tone given the circumstances. I find the whole exercise somewhat frustrating. I have said it before, but I want more than canned talking points from our would-be Premiers. Policy not pandering please!

I am frustrated by both the media coverage and the seeming apathy of those who are supposed to be listening.

I understand that media chase 'stories', but they shape them too. And the narrative on this campaign is misshapen, in my opinion. I did a quick scan of columnists in the three major papers (okay I did look at the fourth too, but the obvious bias in the majority of their commentators' sputtering drives me bonkers). And the focus of the opinion columns? How apathetic voters are. How they are not paying attention to the issues, etc.

With relatively few exceptions, little commentary was provided on the actual the issues 'The TPP? Keystone pipeline? Economy? Health care? If you are going to engage in attacks of the electorate for their lack of awareness of the issues, then perhaps you should first demonstrate that you know what those issues are lest you be seen as somewhat hypocritical.

One hopes that folks are paying attention, and to an extent they are. But just what exactly has caught the attention of some voters is somewhat disheartening, disconcerting, discombobulating.

If pollsters are to be believed (and that is a different conversation entirely), then focus seems to be on a narrow issue of national identity. Important for sure, no question. I would hazard a guess that most folks would have a rather strong opinion on what constitutes appropriate expressions of national identity.

However, is that the only issue? And is it even an issue at all? If inches of column in multiple media are any indication of its importance, it is outsized in comparison to many others competing issues. And that, dear friends, is what frustrates me. When there should be attention, there is distraction.

At times, the various party leaders appear as nothing more than ciphers, not leaders. The manifestation in human form of policy and position as decided by focus group testing. Calculated messaging designed to appeal to targeted pockets of undecided voters.

Don't get me wrong. I don't blame them. It's not their fault. They are merely playing the game with the rules that we have - if not agreed to - then acquiesced to.

The game of politics isn't about providing clear statements about what you stand for. It isn't about being right or even honest. It's about winning. Period. At all costs.

That's the game of politics. Don't hate the players, hate the game? Don't take your ball and go home. Help change the game, so that we'll all want to play.

Until next week, stay informed, stay involved because this is, after all, Our Town.