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Always the same song and dance

EDITORIAL

With another federal election now in the books, the voting public has had a few days to deliberate over the results. The outcome would suggest that, while some are happy, the majority, likely, are not, with the Liberals set to form a minority government having secured 157 of the 338 available seats across Canada.

While we could fill up many, many column inches in this newspaper detailing the results and breaking down how we expect this next term to go, instead we're choosing to focus on a demographic of Canadians who, statistics would suggest, are growing stronger with each election.

To reference our previous point, again, there are some who are happy, and some who are not. Then there are those who, simply put, just don't care.

Of the 27 million Canadians who were eligible to vote in this year's election, only around 17.9 million chose to do so, according to Elections Canada. While that puts voter turnout in and around the 66 percent range, about average based on the past 10 or so elections, it means more than nine million people, for one reason or another, decided that voting wasn't worth their time.

Imagine that. In a world where thousands, if not millions, die on an annual basis in several ongoing battles in the name of democracy, where people want to have their voice heard, to have the right to decide who will govern them, a hugely significant number of people here in Canada, apparently, just can't be bothered.

There will be some who say ?well, there just wasn't anyone I could connect with', or ?I didn't like any of the parties' platforms' ? fair enough. But you should still take the time to put across that point. While spoiling a ballot is, in our opinion, a waste and should never be encouraged, even that would be better than simply not voting. At least in that situation you're participating in the democratic system and, if even in your own mind, putting your point across.

However, most of those non-voters, we would be willing to wager, wouldn't be able to name you a single person running for election, outside of, maybe, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Judging from the numbers, there is a clear disconnect between a third of the eligible voting public and the federal political arena. Something needs to be done to bridge that gap.

Compulsory voting has been instituted to varying degrees of success in 27 countries around the world. It is not a new concept. Belgium was one of the first countries to adopt a mandatory voting system back in 1892. That system still stands today. Voter turnout in the 2019 Belgian federal election was 88 percent. The 2018 federal election in Turkey, another country with compulsory voting, garnered an 86 percent voter turnout ratio. The system, it would appear, works.

Other countries to adopt mandatory voting include Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Greece and Singapore. Punishments for not voting vary from state to state with examples ranging from a fine, community service, inability to apply for jobs in the public sector and, oddly enough, disqualification from voting in future elections.

Perhaps we should strive to come up with a special made-in-Canada solution. Say, for example, before you were to purchase your morning coffee from Tim Horton's, you had to show a card, or a piece of paper that confirmed you participated in an election. Or, one step further, before you're allowed to pump even a single millilitre of gas for your vehicle, you have to provide proof that you voted. We bet that 66 percent turnout would climb real quick.

Voting is more a responsibility than it is a right. It's what our ancestors have fought to protect for generations. Taking a few hours once every four years to read up on the candidates, and make an informed vote is the least you can do to honour their sacrifice.

So, if you're reading this and you didn't vote for any reason other than unexpected incapacitation on the day, then shame on you. As the saying goes, you just gave up your right to complain about practically anything for the next four years.