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Election reflections

by BRIAN LOCKHART

It's easy to forget how regional this country is.

We all live in our safety area of familiar and comfortable surroundings in a mini-culture of what becomes normal with very little real thought of what is going on just a few hundred miles away.

This really becomes apparent when you spend time in another area of the province.

Most regions have their own little boundary areas that include a few neighboring towns in which they visit, have friends, and patronize the occasional business, but past that invisible line not much exists on a day to day basis for most people.

In Toronto they have their own culture, which means they don't even know that an entire province exists around them.

?What do you mean, the rest of Ontario? Like Markham??

When I first moved to Toronto years ago, someone asked which neighbourhood I was from, and when I replied I wasn't born in Toronto, another girl looked at me and sarcastically said, ?Not Toronto? Where are you from? Mars??

That was my welcome to the new office.

The country is highly divided. Quebec of course, is the obvious choice of the odd man out.

Many outsiders are surprised to learn, in addition to language, Quebec has its own way of thinking, its own magazines, even its own entertainers, who are popular in the province, but unheard of anywhere else.

The Maritimes is another place all on its own. I worked with several fellows from Newfound-land over the years and they have all sorts of funny little customs the rest of us have never heard of, as well as a distinctive regional accent.

It is the size of this country that divides us all so much. It's well over 4,000 km from east to west ? a lot of changes along the Trans-Canada Highway.

I once had an interesting conversation in a cafe with a girl visiting from Vancouver.

She told me she was very surprised when she visited Ontario.

In B.C., she said, they think of Ontario as being one giant paved-over city. She was surprised to find herself sitting in a small-town cafe having a conversation with a stranger with actual trees and farmland surrounding the area.

She told me when they think of Ontario, they think of only one city.

In this country of regions, it is the West that has been making the news lately with rumblings of separatists wanting to create a new state of Western Canada ? in particular, Alberta and Saskatchewan. However, Manitoba and British Columbia have shown some interest in the past.

From people in the know, they say, yes, there is some real interest among some people in becoming a kind of rogue nation and breaking away to form some sort of giant square of a country that is flatter than a pancake in the middle of nowhere. However, in

truth, the separatist movement in the West is more loud talk than really serious interest in separating.

It doesn't take an economist or political scientist to figure out what would happen to a landlocked region in the middle of a prairie that suddenly decides to put up a border and tries to establish trade ties.

First of all, you would have a mass exodus of people fleeing the region to find jobs in a more stable area, before the inevitable serious recession and economic downturn takes over.

Next, you would have major industries packing up shop and moving away, and real quick.

Trying to separate would not be a good idea.

However, I do understand the frustration of a lot of people in the West.

According to polls, only 12 per cent of Albertans wanted Justin Trudeau and his Liberal government re-elected.

The 2019 federal election resulted in the entire province voting Conservative. In neighbouring Saskatchewan, the entire province voted blue, except for a northern riding, who elected an NDP candidate.

The results mirrored the federal elections of both 2011 and 2008 ,where every riding in Alberta voted Tory blue and in Saskatchewan only one riding didn't elect a Conservative member.

And yet despite two entire provinces voting for a Conservative government they still didn't get the government they wanted.

Yes, it must be frustrating to have the government decided by voter turnout in Ontario, but that's where the most people are and one person/one vote makes the final decision.

First-past-the-post voting can be a frustrating experience all around. In this past election, Conservative leader Andrew Sheer won the popular vote. In some places that would have elected him to the leader's office.

However, our system is what it is, and it still works well.

Our fellow citizens in the West will just have to live with it like the rest of us and rely on a provincial government and their elected officials to fight for their interests over the next four years.