

Get out and vote

by BRIAN LOCKHART

Several years ago I worked with a full crew of guys who were fun to be around.

The usual 'guy talk' was part of the day. They would talk about whatever sport was in season, and all the other things they were up to.

Occasionally politics would enter the conversation, but not too often, and if it did, it was all very civil.

Thankfully, we didn't have that one 'political guy' that a lot of groups have. That's the guy who has to come in every day and complain about the government or some other related issue and expect everyone to agree with him.

The building had one of those guys ? fortunately, he worked in another department.

Usually, if a person declares they are 'politically aware,' that's just some kind of code for saying they are opinionated, rude, and close-minded.

During the usual discussion one day, one of the guys made a comment which caused me to ask him how long it had been since he voted in an election.

It turns out, he had never voted in any election ? ever.

He had never cast a ballot at the municipal, provincial or federal level.

How could a grown man with two children, who pays taxes, and owns a home, never take on the responsibility of being part of the process that elects a government?

I asked him a few more questions.

From his answers, it seemed he had no idea how the political process worked, no idea what platforms the political parties had, and very little knowledge of which party might work in his best interest.

He also seemed to be somewhat intimidated by the thought of showing up at a polling station and casting a vote. He didn't seem to understand how the process works.

He was content to let others determine the next government for him.

We have another provincial election coming up in Ontario ? and very soon.

Unlike the U.S., where the process takes a couple of years, in Canada, an election happens at a quick pace.

There's not much time for campaigning, and a wise voter should already be on top of the issues to make an informed decision.

We have the ability to determine who governs us, unlike many places in the world, and yet most people do not exercise their right to cast a ballot.

The figures in the last provincial election were dismal.

Voter turnout in the region:

? Dufferin-Caledon - 41.6 per cent

? Barrie-Innisfil - 39.75 per cent

? Simcoe-Grey - 43.5 per cent

? Simcoe-North - 46.2 per cent

? All of Ontario - 44 per cent

People use all sorts of excuses to explain why they didn't vote.

Some say they 'don't have time.' That's a bunch of nonsense. The polls are open to accommodate people all day and into the evening.

In the last election, I went in, registered, and cast my ballot, all in less than five minutes.

Quite often, I've heard people say 'There's no one worth voting for.' That's another pile of nonsense.

Candidates are vetted by their parties and have earned their place on the ballot.

There are plenty of good, hard-working candidates who do a good job representing their constituents.

How would you know if there is someone worth voting for if you haven't done your homework and learned about the people that are running, and what their party plans to do if elected?

The system of democracy isn't perfect, but it's the best we have.

If you do vote, and your candidate isn't elected, that doesn't mean you aren't represented.

Elected officials are supposed to work for everyone in their constituency, not just those who voted for them. Even if you do go to your local MPP's office for a meeting, you are under no obligation to tell them who you voted for in the election.

How is it that in the province of Ontario, more than half of its citizens don't bother to vote?

But it's a whiny province and many of you who couldn't be bothered to take the time to cast a ballot, complain the loudest when the government does something you don't like.

The next time I see some kind of protest about something the provincial government is doing, I would like to find out how many of those protesters actually voted.

Of course, no one at the protest would admit they didn't vote, but you can be sure half of them didn't bother to make the effort but still complained the loudest.

Your ability to vote is a right, not a suggestion.

During this upcoming provincial election, get out and cast a vote.

If you can't be bothered to be a part of the process, then do the half of us that do vote a favour, and don't complain over the next four years.