

Don't allow the will of the minority to dictate the will of the majority

We have been embroiled in election rhetoric for what seems like an eternity—most notably from south of the border what with the Democrats and Republicans knocking each other as they vie to win the most powerful seat in the western world. Canadians get it from both ends considering our own political campaigns follow a similar format. The federal Conservatives had been broadcasting their “feel-good” pre-election ads before the campaign even began. The Liberals have been broadcasting Harper attack ads for quite some time. Even the federal NDP has gotten into the game.

The federal election has been called for 14 October 2008 and the civic elections are scheduled to take place 15 November 2008.

Fortunately in this country, law dictates that there can be only 30 days of actual campaigning leading to an election. So with two elections for British Columbians this fall within a 1-month time span, plus the US election slated to run smack in the middle on 4 November, we will be terribly weary and glad to see the end of it all by mid-November.

With the accompanying bombardment and proliferation of television, radio, and newspaper advertising—not to mention the plethora of signs firmly planted on every patch of green space available, the urge is great to shut our eyes and ears to all the political posturing. But I think it important not to lose perspective. By all means, ignore, to the best of your ability, the mass advertising and the signage planted in front of your face—contributing to the 1200 daily pieces of advertising, on average, that our brains are expected to assimilate. But it's to everyone's advantage for each

of us, physicians and lay people alike, to do our homework and determine each candidate's position on issues important to us, and then to participate in the elections process and vote.

Remember we don't have to participate in elections and vote in or out various counsellors, mayors, MLAs, and MPs—we get to participate. We get to have our say. We get to hold our local and national leaders responsible for the decisions they make. We get to send a firm and decisive message to our leaders about the issues we think important.

The large number of citizens that decide their vote is meaningless and therefore do not vote in any given election means the will of the majority is replaced with the will of the minority.

And the will of the minority might not be what most Canadians want.

Your vote affirms our rights as free citizens to elect our government and take part in democracy (a concept many of us take for granted). Your vote says you care about your community and you value the rights and opportunities we have in this country. I hope this election season you are able to put aside partisan politics, find the time to do some research, and vote. As my predecessor said in a previous column, decisions are made by those who show up. Remember, if you don't show up, you lose your right to complain.

—**Bill Mackie, MD**
BCMA President