

## Declining to vote a cop-out

A famous politician, probably in a fit of frustration, once referred to Canadians as a 'nation of whiners.'

And there's a lot of truth in that.

For a country that has pretty much everything you need, we complain a lot.

How often have you been in traffic on a hot day and had to stop for a flagman because there was construction ahead. People love to complain because they are detained for a few minutes but never ever do you hear later 'wow, those guys sure did a great job repairing and widening that bridge - traffic is much safer now. It was money well spent.'

Maybe it's human nature and I've never seen a study that tried to determine which citizens of which countries complain the most, but we definitely are in the top five.

We have an election coming up in Ontario next Thursday and of course the top complaint in the country is always something to do with politics.

No matter how good the economy is, how well things are going, and what prosperity lies ahead, at least a quarter of the population will whine incessantly about what is happening in the legislature.

This time around it's no different. Sure, everyone is going to pick their favourites - after all, that's what politics is all about. But choosing your candidate isn't enough for whine-country, they all have to run down the opponent, because, well, that's what Canadians do.

The latest craze, well, maybe not THE latest, is to complain there is no one worth voting for.

That in itself is crazy. I know quite a few politicians, and for the most part the ones I know are pretty decent people.

Then there are the candidates in the fringe parties who have no realistic chance of winning, yet they still take part in the process, step up to the plate, throw their hat in the ring, and give it a go, while knowing full well that they haven't got a chance of winning.

I have to admire someone who will enter the race as an underdog based solely on their commitment and belief in their party's ideals.

There is now a push from a group to tell people they should 'decline' their ballot.

In every election there are some spoiled ballots. Those are ballots that have been marked incorrectly according to election rules.

Is it that hard to colour between the lines by making sure your 'X' is inside the circle?

Declining your vote is a process whereby you accept your ballot then return it to the elections officer and declare you are 'declining.'

The people pushing this strategy seem to think you make a bold and powerful statement by declining your ballot.

Declining your vote does not make you a rock star, nor does it give you the chance to make a speech at the next Academy Awards like the backers of this movement seem to think.

The only thing declining your ballot does is to declare you haven't done any research, are uninformed, and have no interest in the democratic process.

Declining your ballot just means the guy behind you voting for the Pink Panther anti-christ Marxist fringe party had his vote counted instead of yours.

OR it could mean the guy behind you voted for one of the three main political parties and that vote tipped the scale to the final outcome.

Declining to vote is a cop-out. It proves nothing. If you are seriously concerned about your local representation, try picking up a telephone, or better yet, actually make an appointment at your local representative's office.

They don't live in glass towers and they will meet with you.

A lot of people these days are the typical armchair quarterback, calling the plays from the comfort of their Lazyboy in the living room instead of getting out there and participating and realizing that calling the plays from the sidelines is a whole different ball game.

Declining to vote is your right - it's also within your right to actually do some research and cast a ballot for the candidate who best represents your interests, and hopefully the interests of all citizens.

Voting is your chance to be heard.

Declining is just your chance to blow an opportunity.