

This election, educate yourself

By Tabitha Wells

When it comes to politics, I realize I have always been an outlier. Even as a young teenager I enjoyed learning about them, and was usually far more invested in elections than my friends were. It seemed natural to me to care about our elected officials and what they were doing, so I never bore second thought to the idea that for many people, the whole thing was simply uninteresting to them.

As I grew older, while my interest never waned, I did start to understand and recognize some of the many reasons people aren't quite as invested in their politics. It ranges from total and complete lack of interest to valid reasoning, such as the political games and the pandering and lying. I get that. Knowing how much lying and pandering goes on is simply exhausting.

Whether you enjoy it or not, however, voting is important. I'm of the firm belief that if you don't vote, you really don't have a right to complain about anything going sour. If you want a better effort made to lower property taxes, vote. If you want better community services, vote. If you want your voice heard at all, vote.

But don't just show up and cast a ballot.

One of the things that shocked me the most during our last municipal election was how many people confessed to me they didn't vote based on people's platforms/personalities, but rather on which names they recognized most.

I get it -- lives are busy these days. There is so much going on that sitting down and flipping through a paper to read candidate bios and following up can feel like a time drain. But it's important to do so.

We saw what happened in this past term ? total, complete, and utter dysfunction. People who weren't qualified, people who were but refused to do their due diligence, and people who already displayed public signs of being combative.

Having a name that is well-known doesn't necessarily mean it's a good thing, as was evidenced by this past term.

Municipal elections aren't just some random thing involving figureheads that will have little to no effect on your life -- especially if you are a homeowner. The results of who is on council will affect you, and affect you greatly. Making yourself aware of not just the issues the candidates stand for, but their local history, personalities, and contributions to the community, will help you make a better choice. It will help you determine who you feel will best represent you and the needs you believe are important to this community. Otherwise, we find ourselves facing endless drama, frivolous investigations, and arguments that would make a third grader blush. This election we have a number of passionate people running for Orangeville Council, people whose names will be exceedingly familiar simply because of exposure. It is super easy to fall into that ?oh their name is familiar and I think I like something they said once so I'll vote for them? mentality.

However, saying things you like doesn't equip a person to be capable of handling a position on council. Let's face it, council is far more gruelling than most people care to admit. On top of all the meetings and commitments, there are genuine, important issues that they have to be capable of making wise decisions about.

We need people who are good at conflict resolution, who can make wise decisions, and who truly have the needs of Orangeville in their hearts, rather than people who have personal vendettas and personal agendas that they will stop at nothing to achieve.

We need people who have proven that they are willing to work with others who have differing perspectives without getting angry, or calling names, or simply refusing to cooperate because they didn't get their way.

While the current term of council did indeed have some members who fit under those qualifications, they were so drowned out that their influence often had little affect. Though I'm sure everyone currently on council joined with the greatest intentions -- as do most candidates -- there was more desire for pursuit of personal agendas than for actual growth.

There's nothing wrong with having some feisty people on council; but feisty shouldn't overrule qualifications and goals.

So as campaigning season draws near, and the election waits around the corner, work to learn about the candidates. Get to know them, know their hearts, discover their goals and personalities. Educate yourself, and then cast your vote.