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Get informed, stay involved

By Sarah Sobanski

Let's talk about being an involved, informed citizen.
In the 2015 election, 68 per cent of Canadians voted ? a record turnout, higher than in 2011 and 2008. When compared on a global scale however, our record turnout falls at just about average for other democracies.
Our Conservative versus Liberals battle last year saw the largest differences in political platforms between the two parties than it has in years. Canadians took note, they got up and they voted.
Moral debates, like which end of the spectrum to stand on foreign policy, draw out voters. Look at what just happened with the European Union referendum overseas.
I think it's insane that some stats report only 36 per cent of young people voted in the referendum vote. A vote that could crash world markets and set one of the oldest democracies back a hundred years, and a whole demographic didn't show up while the other major demographics ? were out to lunch when they voted.
I say that because tweets are rallying now about deporting Polish citizens, and who would kick out the people who invented the perogy. You'll notice my last name is Sobanski, I joke.
People vote when they really care, but most of the time they can't be bothered. Or they aren't aware of the politics happening that will eventually affect them, because they don't get informed. Even those who I suggest really care, are sometimes those who don't take the time to get informed and only see issues as black and white.
Right now, there is an issue in our community that is sparking a lot of attention ? the Long-Term Capital and Accommodation Plan by the Hastings Prince Edward District School Board (HPEDSB). It reviews the vitality, utilization, renovation costs and a lot more of Bancroft area schools over the next 10 years. It also suggests that after review a recommendation to best use board resources be conducted, which might lead to school closures.
We have received a number of letters from concerned parents who don't want their children's schools to close. Among other reasons, parents are concerned their child's education would suffer and that they would spend too long on buses if their school was to close, and they had to come to a Bancroft school.
Going to a new school is scary, both for children and for parents ? if not only because we love our routines, and to be shoved into a different one isn't easy. I think it's really important however, that we consider every option.
Don't rush out when you hear the word school closure, go and first read the plan on the HPEDSB website.
According to the plan, there has been a 20 per cent decrease in the board's elementary school population. It suggests there will be a seat surplus of over 2,850 in elementary schools by 2029.
Many of the schools in the board need substantial upgrades in the next 10 years. Many need to be renovated by 40 to 60 per cent, where the board considers 65 per cent prohibitive.
On the other side, school consolidation could mean a more complex diversity of students and teachers, leading to better social skills and education for children.
I'm aware I'm playing the Devil's advocate here. I believe there are good points for both sides of the argument. I also know that there is speculation that the plan's review draft stats aren't as dire as they seem.
That being said, it's important to know both sides of the story before developing an opinion. Just like it's important to know both sides of local debates even if you aren't directly affected.
You may not have children in school, but don't be that guy who wakes up and wonders how a new school popped up in his neighborhood.
Let's get involved, let's change these stats. Make time to go out and support a cause. The risk is greater if you don't.