

Stop the power struggle

As 2015 moves on, we can look forward to a new year rich with political posturing, grandiose promises, attack ads, robo-calls, pithy accusations and fear-mongering.

It is, after all, an election year.

And while we don't yet have a date for the federal vote, it's never too early for an opposition party to toss out a salvo or two, in hopes of generating some headlines. Federal NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair did just that recently, writing a magazine piece that calls for Canada to reform its electoral system and switch to proportional representation.

"In the last election, Conservatives formed a majority government with only 39 per cent of the vote," Mulcair wrote in *Common Ground*.

"In our current first-past-the-post system, they govern as if they have the support of all Canadians, but the fact is 61 per cent of voters wanted someone else in government."

Mulcair is absolutely right. The notion the Conservatives of Stephen Harper have a legitimate mandate to do whatever they want in Ottawa is absurd. But here's where it gets tricky.

Despite polls showing Canadians theoretically believe in a more proportional system, we have been reluctant to deliver the goods when the question hits the ballots.

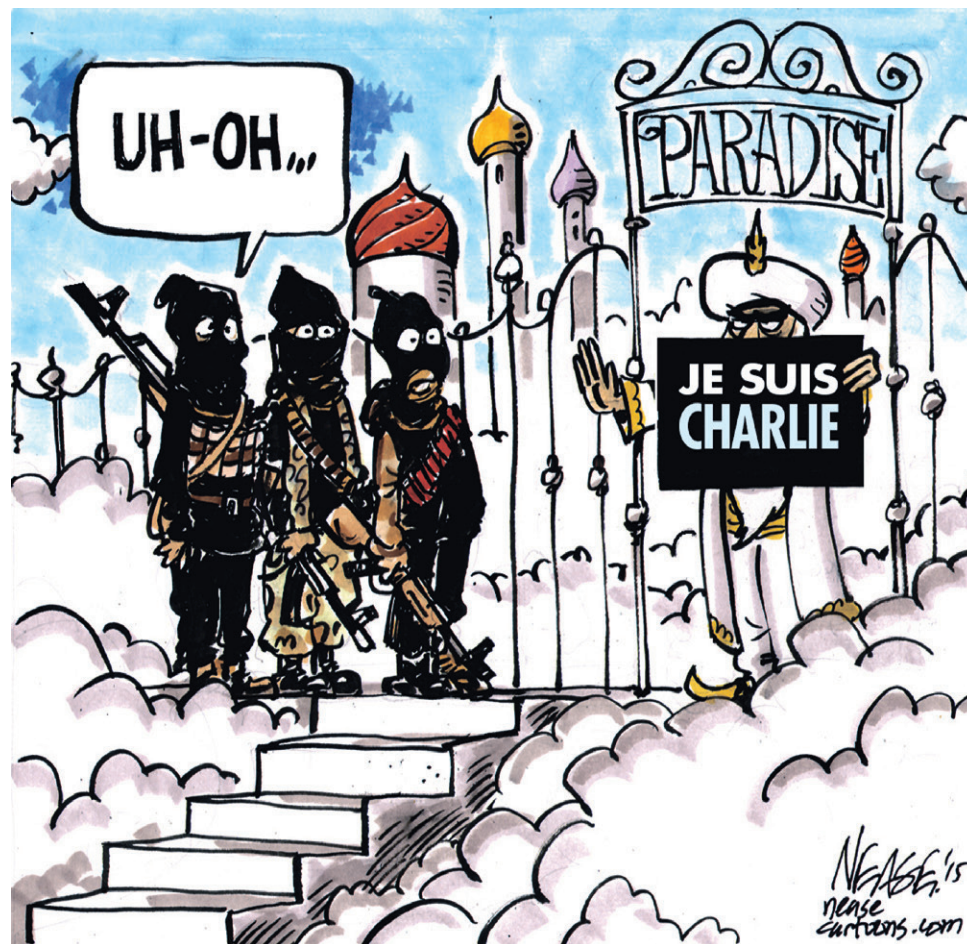
Proposals to move to proportional representation have been rejected in Prince Edward Island, Ontario and in British Columbia (twice).

In Ottawa, an NDP motion to reform the system following the next campaign was defeated in the House. The Tories opposed it unanimously (big surprise), but a surprising number of Liberals voted yes. It seems that until a province bites the bullet and adopts the system (for example, a common variant sees voters cast a ballot for an MP and then another for a party), the pros and cons will remain theoretical, rather than tangible. And we'll continue to struggle with the notion of change.

In the meantime, the unwillingness of the Liberals and NDP to collaborate for the benefit of the majority of Canadians will also likely continue. Fundamentally alike, their pursuit of power will again trump the need to act in the best interests of constituents. It is, after all, an election year.

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Letters to the editor

Your pet feels the bitter cold too

This is more a plea of concern rather than words of a PETA lover. With the cold temperatures looming on us, we all have one thing on our minds. Keeping as warm and sheltered as possible. This does not exclude our beloved pets.

On one of the coldest days of the year, I saw a snuggly warm walker out on her morning stroll accompanied by a little beagle mix. The first thing I noticed was that the walker seemed to be dressed from head to toe in wintery warmth.

The dog? Even though it was -18 degree weather, nothing was on his/her paws and no jacket was around his/her little waist. The result? Numerous times I saw the beagle stopping and sitting while simultaneously lifting its paws up in a flee to escape the frigid sidewalks it had to walk on given how cold it was at 6 a.m. in the morning.

The owner simply nudged its leash and continued with the walk not even stopping to see why the dog was halting in the first place. After hearing it whimper and addressing my words of concern

to her (and yes, I was very polite about it at first), she just yanked its chain and sped up while continuing to listen to her earbuds. I am not concerned with where she was going or how far she had come; she was obviously very warm and didn't mind. My concerns lie for her furry friend. This scenario leaves me frustrated and angry and is a classic case of animal mistreatment.

How many more stories of animal abuse do we have to hear in order to get the concept that animals need more awareness from us when it comes to understanding how they are feeling or what they are trying to tell us.

We have responsibilities when we choose to own a pet. I understand dogs need to be walked. I know owners think they are doing the right deed by providing the daily requirement of exercise needed to keep their pooch in tip-top shape, but common sense needs to be used here, even more so in the extreme temperature shifts that occur.

Our pets cannot speak to us using words. It is up to each individual pet owner to be aware of their pets' needs. They are family and are to be treated as so. We are able to get up and dress accordingly

for any given weather. Our pets? Not so much.

It is up to you as a pet owner to ensure your dog's safety and dress it accordingly. Ignorance is no excuse. The rules of winter when it comes to your pets are very easy to follow. Cold grounds, salt, and snow seep through dogs' paws just as easily as it does when we wear mittens and they get wet and frozen. Also, just because they are covered in fur does not mean they have their own little "built-in coat."

When they start whining or crying to be let in from the outside or they continuously stop and lift their paws up while being walked, let them in and stop walking them.

Alisha Grant

Letters policy

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