

# Halton Hills Outlook

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## Their Outlook

### Casting votes overseas is a trying process

By GIL HARDY  
Thomson News Service  
Ottawa Bureau

If you've been moaning because you will have to walk a few blocks to vote in the Nov. 21 federal election, consider the conditions you'd have marking a ballot along the Iran-Iraq border.

The Middle East hotspot is just one of many exotic, not to say dangerous, locales outside of Canada where Canadians will vote in this federal election. They come under the Special Voting Rules section of the Canada Elections Act, which governs all armed forces personnel as well as diplomatic staff overseas.

Under the rules, some 1,900 External Affairs employees, spouses and dependents, along with between 88,000 and 90,000 armed forces personnel and families here and abroad, get the chance to vote. The far-flung exercise using special ballots, military aircraft and diplomatic pouches, is run by Elections Canada, the non-partisan administrator of elections.

The process begins with a statement of ordinary residence filed by all armed forces personnel, as well as those Canadians sent abroad by the External Affairs Department. The statement indicates which riding a Canadian is voting in.

When an election is called, special ballots are sent to military bases, consulates and embassies. Instead of listing specific candidates, the bilingual ballots carry the phrase "I vote for," followed by a space for the voter's choice.

Recently, Elections Canada sent out candidates' lists for all 295 ridings. From these, Canadian soldiers on peace-keeping duty in the desolate battlefields on the Iran-Iraq border and diplomats in cities such as Tokyo or Paris will pick a candidate.

Voting under the special rules occurs between Nov. 7 and Nov. 12. The External Affairs ballots are sent to Ottawa (by diplomatic pouch), where they are tallied.

Armed forces ballots from the eastern hemisphere are collected and flown by military aircraft to London, England, to be counted. The results are sent by military courier to Ottawa.

Ballots cast by Canadian armed forces personnel in Canada, the US and elsewhere in the western hemisphere are collected in Edmonton, Halifax and Ottawa. The Edmonton and Halifax ballots are counted in Ottawa.

#### KEPT SECRET

The results are kept secret until election night. One hour after the polls close in each time zone, Elections Canada officials phone the count to the appropriate returning officer, who includes it in his riding totals.

The process costs about the same per vote as the domestic election, says Chief Electoral officer Jean-Marc Hamel. In the 1984 campaign, the total cost was about \$400,000.

It has been in use since the 1972 election to dispel the myth of the so-called "service vote" impact on elections. In previous elections, the service vote was counted and announced separately after the domestic results.

"The fact that the votes were counted and mainly announced almost a week after the election had quite an impact on public opinion," Hamel says. "There was a common expression saying 'he was defeated by the service vote.'

"That was no more true than saying so and so was defeated by Poll No. 26. It was only one of a number of polls. But the fact it was announced on the Saturday following election day gave it far more importance than it actually deserved," he says.

The changes, enacted in 1970, also included External Affairs employees and their spouses and dependents for the first time. The right to vote was also extended to armed forces dependents.

But there remains a segment of the Canadian electorate with no means to vote: those who have taken up temporary residence in other countries. Bill C-79, which contained 180 amendments to the elections act, died on the House of Commons order paper when this election was called.

The bill provided a mechanism involving write-in ballots for Canadians abroad who are not public servants or armed forces personnel. Hamel estimates there may be as many as 300,000 people who could have qualified if the bill had passed.

SNAFU® by Bruce Beattie



### Two's a Crowd

By BILL BUTTLE



There isn't going to be any commercial!... Now, come on!

### A liberal decline?



Your Business  
Diane Maley

Thomson News Service

One of the more curious developments in this fall's federal elections, both here and in the United States, is the apparent death of liberalism.

Liberalism is the American creed, the philosophy upon which the nation was founded. Yet, in America today, a liberal is what a communist used to be. Liberal has become a dirty word.

In Canada, liberalism means a different thing, it's more "liberal," let's say, than the American version. Not long ago, most Canadians called themselves liberals; many voted for the Liberal Party. Now Ed Broadbent, leader of the New Democratic Party, is contemplating the end of the Liberal Party and the emergence of a two-party state.

The implications for the economy of this shift are enormous and fuzzy. Is it liberal spending the Americans oppose? Or is it liberal views?

What about us? Is it free-spending liberalism that's out of fashion? I suspect not.

#### NEW AGE AT HAND

Whoever wins the coming elections will take North America into the next decade, one we approach with hope and dread. When we read that a recession will strike in 1990, we tend to shrug it off. But the 1990s are at hand and the kind of government North Americans elect this fall may determine how well we come through these troubled years.

Think of the dangers, even if only a small part of what forecasters fear does come to pass. The federal budget deficit, that favorite bugbear of economists, really could get too big, with all the disastrous consequences economists have been predicting.

Big deficits leave the government little room to maneuver when it

comes to offsetting the effects of recession. This is because interest rates must be kept relatively high to attract foreign money to buy government bonds and finance the deficit.

Another scary thing is the international debt crisis, which has receded to the background but could erupt again at any time. The problem is exacerbated by the weak financial position of regional American banks and savings and loan companies. Financial institutions with piles of questionable loans on their books could sink if the North American economy worsens.

Oil prices could languish for years, forcing oil companies to cut back on exploration - seriously affecting Alberta and perhaps the Hibernia project off the coast of Newfoundland.

#### CLOSE THE PURSE

Economic uncertainty tends to bring about a retrenchment in liberalism. Unfortunately, it does not necessarily bring about a parallel retrenchment in the government's liberality with the purse strings.

As each day brings new promises of spending from the contenders for the job of prime minister, it's useful to remember that the billions of dollars of goodies they are dangling before our noses may hurt us more than we know in future.

Fortunately, election promises are usually empty and quickly forgotten once the new government settles in.

All the important issues in this fall's election in Canada are economic - free trade, interest rates, housing, the deficit, even the environment. A less liberal approach to government finance does not mean the poor have to face additional problems.

But it does mean that money should be spent carefully, where it's needed the most. Sooner or later, North American politicians are going to be faced with the dangerous task of encroaching on our entitlements - indexed pensions, unemployment insurance and the like. Sooner or later, universality will have to be abandoned in favor of helping those who need it most.

### Power play



Staff Comment

By BRIAN MACLEOD

During elections different groups and organizations often take a verbal beating.

At the Acton all-candidates meeting for municipal politicians Nov. 2 it was the local press' turn.

During the evening I overheard one audience member say to another: "The bull... is flying tonight."

It sure was.

POWER member Robert Masters brought out a quote made by Mayor Russ Miller in February, 1987 in the Herald which seemed to indicate the Mayor thought a landfill site could be good for the town because it would bring in more money. He also quoted the mayor's comments against the dump in last week's Georgetown Independent.

"I can't be responsible for what the Independent writes," Mayor Miller replied (he was actually referring to the Feb. 18 article).

He then implied the local media often gets its facts mixed up.

"Just ask the other councillors," the mayor said.

Okay, I'm asking. Not for sweeping generalities, but for dates and examples.

In my 18 months covering local and regional council, which would include literally thousands of inches of copy, I have printed two corrections. One from Mayor Miller and one from Pam Sheldon.

If the press is often wrong, then I would anticipate that Halton Hills' highly media-conscious council would be on our doorstep first thing Wednesday morning asking for corrections.

It's well known in journalism circles that a politician will say he or she was "misquoted" when they're in a jam.

Higher profile politics is filled with umpteen examples of politicians claiming they were misquoted, or their remark was "taken out of context," even though their comments were recorded on tape.

When a politician, or anybody else, tells you their remarks were taken out of context, it means the political preamble that reporters must listen to before they cut to the meat of the matter was not included in the story. As reporters we must listen to all that rhetoric. But it doesn't mean you have to read it in Wednesday's paper.

As a reader you get the meat of the matter. If you want the rhetoric, the minutes of the meeting are available.

My first clash with a "misquote" adventure occurred while I toiled for the Sheridan College newspaper. I quote a union leader as saying one of his members "couldn't add one and one and make two."

The leader then demanded a retraction saying: "I didn't say that. You may have wanted me to say that but I didn't say it."

There was no retraction, nor was there a lawsuit.

These days when a politician claims he or she was "misquoted" I regard it as a telling sign.

It often means that politician is in a tight spot and they're desperately seeking a quick solution to solve the quagmire their own words created.

In Acton, Mayor Russ Miller urged the audience not to be led astray by remarks made by Coun. Sheldon.

The next time you hear a politician claim he or she was "misquoted" - if I may borrow the Mayor's own words - "don't be led astray ladies and gentlemen. Don't be led astray."