

# Comment

## The Canadian Champion

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## Voters have spoken

If there's a lesson to be learned — by all politicians — from Monday's federal election results it's this: Don't take the electorate for granted.

In a rebuke to Paul Martin's leadership (or lack of) and 12 years of Liberal rule, Canadian voters elected a minority Conservative government — Stephen Harper's Conservatives — just as many pre-election polls had suggested they would.

The fact Harper was able to bring Conservatives to power barely two years after riding shotgun on a merger between Reformers and Conservatives, and only 18 months after an election defeat, is testament to his ability to sell Canadians what the Conservatives have to offer.

Of course, he had plenty of help — mostly in the form of Martin and the Liberals.

While Harper can be credited with doing the seemingly impossible, the same can be said for Martin. His party was in firm control of this election when it began, yet he failed to convince Canadians the Liberals were still best for the country despite a booming economy and low inflation and unemployment rates.

Instead, the unfocused Grits adopted a "who cares" attitude when it came to the crucial issue of the sponsorship scandal (and other scandals), and failed to act on a number of promises during the past 18 months.

Martin and company blithely ignored obvious signs the electorate was out for blood — governing blood.

The Liberals got off to a slow start in the campaign, stumbled repeatedly, then in the final two weeks tried to demonize the Tories (and especially Harper) — a strategy they used successfully last time.

This time, however, not enough voters were buying the Liberals' message, and because they weren't, paid more attention to the Conservatives' vision for this country.

The national trend was evident locally with the Liberal incumbent Gary Carr losing his seat to Conservative candidate Garth Turner.

While enough voters gave Harper the keys to the car Monday, they did so gingerly — handing him only the slightest minority win. How Harper and his party proceed will be interesting to watch.

## Our Readers Write

### Town not allowing its citizens enough input

Dear Editor:

As a former member of town council, I have to agree totally with the comments in Bob Beyette's letter of January 6 pertaining to the abuse of the democratic process practiced by our town council.

Mr. Beyette cited the budget process as an example. Though it's the most recent and glaring example, it's by no means the only one.

While serving as town and regional councillor for Wards 2 and 4, I was involved in six local and six regional budgets, so I'm in a position to compare the process at both levels of government.

At the Region, councillors and the public are given many weeks to analyze, discuss and provide input on the projected budget. Compare that to the couple of days allocated

for the Town budget.

There's no reason to ram these budgets through, except to deny Miltonians who wish to do so the opportunity to properly analyze and bring forward any concerns or issues they may have with the projected budget.

That's why we have seen Milton property taxes increase every year for the past three years. Despite the continued slots revenue and the major increase in revenue from the residential, commercial and industrial growth we're experiencing, our taxes continue to go up with no increase in service levels.

In fact, many Milton residents will say that the quality of life and enjoyment of our community has decreased over this same period. The blame for this, I believe, lies

with this council.

Of the 11 members of council, six have served together for five terms or more, and with the exception of Councillor Barry Lee, they're united in what, I believe, is commonly referred to as the 'Old Boys Club'.

This doesn't serve Milton or its taxpayers well.

In order to have council function as intended, we must change the face of council. In the upcoming municipal election, we must elect members of council who will think on their own and truly represent their constituents.

Failing to do so will simply mean more of the same — increased taxes, decreased services and a reduction in our quality of life.

**Rick Malboeuf**  
Woodward Avenue

## Hey doc, thanks for the much-needed wake-up call

It was a night when I just wanted to go to sleep early, but got a real wake-up call instead.

After a long day at work about two weeks ago, I dragged myself to an all-candidates meeting at Bishop Reding Secondary School. Though not usually too intrigued by such events, I found myself quite impressed with our local Green Party candidate, Dr. Kyle Grice — whose eloquence and passion about the environment and our ongoing neglect of it grabbed my attention a number of times during the evening.

He wasn't saying anything that I didn't already know — or at least should already know — but sometimes it's not just what's said but how it's said that can really get a person thinking.

Barely 10 minutes after leaving the meeting, I found myself visiting a nearby fast-food establishment — idling my car for several minutes while waiting in the drive-thru. As if that wasn't

enough, a couple hours later I polluted the air a little more with a completely unnecessary two-minute drive to the convenience store for a quick munchies fix — on a night when weather conditions were more than ideal for walking.

As someone who usually grasps at least the blatantly obvious things around me, I couldn't deny the sad synergy between what Dr. Grice was trying to say and my unintentional yet total disregard for it.

So I say enough already.

Much like our new Halton MP Garth Turner had a simple seven-point plan that helped usher him back into office, I've come up with a seven-point pledge to Dr. Grice and the Green Party.

Call it a belated New Year's Resolution list of sorts. Here it goes.

• At least once a week I pledge to walk somewhere that I would normally drive. And no



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exceptions because of the weather.

• I pledge to recycle — not just some times, but all of the time. That's not always practical for someone who lives in an apartment, but then nobody said protecting the environment would always gel with our convenience.

• I pledge to start eating healthier. Maybe if I stop polluting my body I'll have more energy in

my efforts to stop polluting our environment.

• I pledge to stop leaving so many damn lights on around my apartment and help cut back on this country's ridiculously-high consumption of electricity.

• I pledge to become better informed of what we're doing to our planet and the inherent dangers of that neglect.

• I pledge to wipe out the drive-thru completely as a means of getting my coffee. With my caffeine consumption pretty high, this could be a tall task, but I've gone up to the counter twice already this week and — surprise, surprise — it really wasn't that big of an ordeal.

• Once a month I pledge to get out and enjoy one of this area's many conservation parks. Perhaps if I develop a stronger appreciation for our environment, I'll be less likely to keep disrespecting it.