



Chair's Column

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Now that the polls have closed

By Jo Mark Zurel

After close to seven years of federal political turmoil that influenced the decisions and actions of two different governing parties, the political die looks to be cast for a few years.

It's certainly a different look than what we're used to in Canadian politics. A government that navigated two minority situations into a majority. A party that has never been official opposition now the alternative voice to the government. A party that led Canada through most of the 20th century now in third place. And a separatist voice that has nearly been silenced at the federal level.

So what?

What about Newfoundland and Labrador, with one Member of Parliament in government, two in the official opposition and four members in another caucus? What about the two newest members; one in government and another in opposition? Where does this leave us, and what about our priorities?

There have been columns and blogs and tweets written about the results of this election, but one I have really enjoyed (even if I didn't agree with everything it said) was asking the question "What do we want to see out of this majority government?" If we – you and I – were going to write the story of this government over the next four years, what would we put down on paper?

Philosophically, we want to see more engagement in democracy, more opportunity to participate, more ability to influence what happens in our society before decisions get made.

Pragmatically, we want to see more people able to get ahead because they can afford (and sustain) quality child care, health care and senior care and still be able to meet their own needs.

Politically, we want to see vision, leadership and stability because we can all go on a great Canadian journey together to determine what the next generation will inherit and what we'll do to leave a legacy to our kids.

We want all of this and more.

I was born and lived a great deal of my life in South Africa, and anyone reading this knows the transformation that my home country went through in the last generation. I hope you're reading this and saying that my adopted, chosen country of Canada can go through transformation in the next generation. The reason for the change – and the change itself – of course will be different, but we can choose to demand it.

Your local representatives and your national parties have now been chosen. Some of you will disagree with the choices, and some of you are thrilled with them. But now is the time to demand more of your local representatives. They just asked you to vote for them; ask them to govern right back. Demand satisfaction. After all, it is **your** government.

The St. John's Board of Trade is clear about what it wants out of the federal government. We want it to deliver on the Lower Churchill loan guarantee to reduce the costs of the project. We want it to be more active and aggressive in managing our offshore fishery. We want it to put this province front and centre in an Arctic strategy that will open new transportation routes and natural resource opportunities. We want it to weed out unnecessary spending and regulation that just costs businesses money with little or no real value for Canadians. We want support for small business so they can complete more deals, not more paperwork.

You have your own ideas too. The words "public policy" might make you groan, but everyone cares about it. In the moments when we think, "This is driving me nuts," those are the moments when we find the public policy issues we really care about. Take some time to think about it, and then let your newly-elected MP know about it.

You might not get anywhere, but considering we have a single ruling party for the first time since 2004, an opposition that has never been there before, a third-place party only seven years removed from a majority and almost no one pushing separatism, you just might say that stranger things have happened.

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