

Croft Talks



By Nate Smelle

WHEN I WAS FIRST ASKED to speak about my perspective on the 2015 federal election as a guest on the new talk show in town, Croft Talks, I hesitated for a millisecond before saying yes. Spending so much time with Conan O'Brien, Jon Stewart and Bill Maher over the years, how could I say no?

Sending last week's newspaper to press 15 minutes before I was supposed to be on stage, I scarfed down a piece of cold garden lasagna in the parking lot, washing it down with the remainder of my stale but potent morning coffee. Rushing across town to the Village Playhouse I slid in the backdoor and found my way backstage. Sitting in the green room eating donuts and drinking red wine while the crowd mingled with the candidates out front felt the fear come over me when I saw the lights flicker signalling the show was about to begin.

The volatile concoction of food and alcohol I had ingested at the office and in the green room was now rumbling aggressively in my belly, causing me to consider making a run for it. What kind of fool would put himself in this position, I thought to myself as I eyed the door. Before I could answer my own question I walked the show's host, Barb Shaw; with the candidates following close behind.

Too late to gracefully perform my vanishing act I chugged down as much water as I could in hopes of calming the storm inside. After a quick breakdown of the evening's order by Shaw for myself and the other guests, I was ushered upstairs to wait for the curtain to rise. By the time it did the gurgling in my stomach had stopped and the interview was underway.

The reason I had been asked to share my opinions and observations from the campaign trail on Croft Talks was because of four letters I had written last February to the leaders of the four main political parties in Canada. The idea: to help people living in small towns relate to federal politics. Taking care to reach out to each of these people in a way that might appeal to them individually, there was one line that remained the same in each of the letters. It read, "I understand that you are very busy and timing may be a difficult, however, I think such an interview with a friendly small town paper would help put a local face on the most important issues in the upcoming election." Although only one of them, Tom Mulcair of the New Democratic Party, took the time to engage with our community through Bancroft This Week, the others' responses, or lack thereof were just as telling in regards to how much they care to appease voters in small towns like Bancroft. Revealing a shared sense of humanity between ourselves and the federal politicians who make the very serious decisions affecting each and every one of us, was the whole purpose I reached out to the Party leaders in the first place.

Hanging around backstage at The Village Playhouse while NDP candidate Betty Bannan, the Liberal Party's Mike Bossio and Conservative MP Daryl Kramp bantered with Shaw and each other was another very telling moment for me in this election on the local level. In small towns like ours, we are privileged in that we can access our candidates in such a friendly and humorous manner. It was great to see the candidates sit back, relax and interact with one another as people, rather than slamming one another as competing candidates. The ability to take and tell a joke is not something to overlook when choosing who to give your vote. Not that last Tuesday night at the Playhouse made our decision any easier considering each of the candidates proved to us they can hold their

own in terms of comedy.

With less than two weeks left before Canadians go to the polls on Oct. 19 our candidates will certainly have their personal sense of humour tested. As this nationally imposed deadline looms it is up to us as genuinely concerned citizens to test the individuals who are asking for our support. Find out where the candidates stand on issues that matter to you before you give them permission to stand on guard for our country.