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It is topical to talk about elections once again. As I write this the Quebec election is weeks away. The USA Presidential election follows within a couple of months. Finally of some note to our industry will be the BC election in the Spring of 2012.

Over the past year 8 of the 13 Provinces and Territories in Canada went to Provincial (or equivalent) Election. Despite some change in seat numbers amongst parties, the ruling party in each jurisdiction was returned to power. In fact this trend was arguably started by the Federal election in the Spring of 2011. As far as the USA goes, in general a President will be reelected to their second term the maximum allowed by law.

In general the voting public like status quo if things such as the economy are generally good. This may change in couple of the coming Canadian elections I mentioned earlier: Quebec and BC. At the time I write this the Quebec election is largely a three way race. Economics remains the key issue. That is no different than the previous elections in other Canadian jurisdictions. The leader's party has trailed for the past year but with a three way split in the polls the outcome is very uncertain.

The main opposition party in Quebec is led by a female. They seem to have the momentum currently and may quite possibly be the party that breaks through and is ultimately successful. With female leadership in other provinces such as BC and Alberta we definitely see a different dynamic in leadership style and the handling of policy. No doubt the influence of such things such as gender ebbs and flows in terms of the influence on the voting public however the trend is interesting in noting. Perhaps we will see a female President of the USA in 4 years.

BC currently has a female leader however it appears that won't be enough to save the party. The ruling Liberals face fallout from the policies of their previous leadership including a backlash over the introduction of the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST). In a public referendum in 2011 the HST was rejected however final removal will not occur until April 2013 which is literally the month before the fixed election date in May.

The ruling party in BC has pushed back on the issue of the Northern Gateway Pipeline indicating BC faces the risk of such a pipeline but not the benefits of any royalties. The stance hasn't provided any positive momentum in the polls as they have hoped. In fact with the resurgence on the right by a more conservative entry their traditional voting base is being split. Splits in one spectrum usually translates into more seats than polls would otherwise indicate for the unaffected party as closer local elections allow the third party to come p the middle.

The American election will be most interesting as it winds itself to conclusion in the Fall. The right wing did not fully galvanize itself through the Tea Party movement and the run off for the Republican Presidential Nominee. In general the current President has a great advantage in the reelection bid however the poor US economy certainly makes the bid more challenging. Conventional wisdom says people generally vote with their pocketbooks so the poor economy, high unemployment, and the hopeless morass worldwide generally have the nation questioning itself and its leadership. Obama has much more solid footing in the area of social issues – healthcare, the class struggle between rich and poor, education and social

security. Arguably he inherited much of the economic chaos from his Republican predecessor George W Bush albeit no dramatic change occurred over Obama's term of office. Obama will need to work the social consciousness of the nation if he wishes to beat back the trend of poor economic results translating into changes in power.

Social conscious agendas have played and are playing a greater role in elections. No doubt some of this represents the changing demographics that constitute the voting public with younger generations having greater concerns about soft social issues versus hard economic ones. Unfortunately we may get ourselves into trouble when we lack the financial acumen to pay for our wants.

Balance in our politics is very fleeting these days. Our political structures and electoral processes seem to further add to this viscous circle. We do need bright visionary leadership that can change the course however do so in the footprint that is left – someone willing to stand up to the constant public scrutiny and live in the public eye in today's immediate media. Folks fitting the bill are getting ever harder to find.

From the Thursday Files

*My opinions may have changed, but not the fact that I am right.*

**-- Ashleigh Brilliant**