

## How Politics Affects Our Lives

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By Chad Hudson, Bridgetown

As a young person with a keen interest in politics I am passionate about the process through which the decisions that have a direct impact on our daily lives are reached.

As I talk to numerous people I realize there is a strong apathy towards politics and government. This is perhaps the greatest challenge we face currently in our democracy: re-engaging Canadians in the political process, and is a subject that needs to be addressed.

Canadians are disillusioned, and they have a right to be. The chronic lack of forward thinking and inaction is shameful. But being disillusioned doesn't mean that we can simply give up on politics, to do so would be to put our democracy at risk.

Politics is the vehicle by which progress and change for the people occurs. I believe firmly that the purpose of government is to meet the needs of the people. While we are all tired of the old style of politics, much good has been accomplished.

I have identified four common myths that people have about politics. By the end of this article, I hope to have dispelled them.

The first myth is "Politics never accomplishes anything for the people." From universal healthcare for all regardless of financial income, to the Canada Pension Plan, to Social Assistance, to the rights of women and Aboriginals to vote, to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms – all of these things which we often take for granted came out of the political process.

The second common myth is "Politics doesn't affect my life." Every aspect of our daily lives is influenced by politics. From how much we pay in taxes to the price of gasoline, politics has a direct impact on our daily lives. If you have young children and both spouses are working, daycare is essential. Whether there is a program of universally accessible childcare is determined by the government, a decision that can have a profound impact on the lives of families.

In 2003, our parliament voted against joining the American war in Iraq. Imagine you're a soldier in the Canadian military. Had the government agreed to join George Bush's war, you could very well be fighting in Iraq right now. Now tell me politics doesn't affect our lives.

The third myth is "All politicians are the same." Nothing could be further from the truth. That's like saying all lawyers are the same; it's simply a stereotype. Any profession has its bad apples,

keen: eager

apathy: lack of interest (no interest)

disillusioned: disappointed

myth: false believe or idea

dispel: making a doubt, feeling, or belief disappear.

and it's because of individuals not groups of people.

Mahatma Gandhi once said that a few drops of dirty water doesn't make the ocean dirty, and that pertains perfectly to politics. There are good people working to make a difference for their fellow citizens and we shouldn't lose hope because of a few politicians are corrupt.

pertain: concern, relate to.

endeavour: try, aspire, attempt.

The fourth and final myth I have encountered is that "one vote doesn't make a difference." I'll give you a good example of how this common way of thinking is incorrect.

Seven years ago in 2000, the United States voted for who would succeed Bill Clinton as their president. There are likely a hundred million eligible voters in the US and Al Gore lost to George Bush by 537 votes in Florida.

Now, I'm sure many Floridians are kicking themselves right now, wishing they had turned out and voted. The fact is, elections are often close and you're vote can have a dramatic impact on the outcome of an election and the direction of a nation, as we saw in 2000.

So hopefully by now your common myths about politics have been dispelled. Think of everything that we love and cherish about this great country of ours, and remember how they came into being – through the political process.

We are fortunate to live in a country like Canada and enjoy the freedom of a democracy. We must never lose hope in the great endeavor that is politics. The purpose of politics is to better the lives of the people, and to give up on politics could have extremely negative results for our daily lives.

So the next time you feel disillusioned by politics, think of everything that has been accomplished, and have faith in the future.

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### Questions:

1. In one paragraph explain what you found most interesting or what you have learned from this article.
2. Do you think this article was persuasive in getting you think about voting (if you could) or being political engaged? Why or why not?