

*"POLITICALLY SPEAKING"*

*Martha Hall Findlay, former MP for Willowdale*

*December, 2011*

## **GOOD GOVERNMENT MATTERS**

To all readers who didn't bother voting last time (and/or any number of other times before that); who think that politics is just a pastime for politicians; who ask themselves, "what does it matter anyway?" -- I want to send a very loud and clear message: It **DOES** matter - a lot.

The past few elections have shown decreasing voter turn-out, and we hear all the time about people's lack of interest in and disenchantment with politics or the affairs of government.

But good governance matters - and it doesn't happen by accident.

Canada, this great country of ours, **DIDN'T HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT**. It didn't happen with a whole lot of people shrugging their shoulders and saying, "what does it matter, anyway?" and walking away. No, we are lucky to have what we have because people - good, talented, hard-working people - stepped up to participate, to get elected, to pass good laws, to manage our taxpayer dollars to best serve the country and its citizens.

Good government actually matters - and you need only visit, or come from, a developing country to see, first hand, why.

At time of writing, my daughter Katie and I are in the middle of a backpacking trip in India. She had already been here on a work assignment as part of her teaching degree, and was going to stay on for a bit to travel. She suggested (or was it I who suggested?) that I join her for a couple of weeks. These opportunities come rarely if at all, so that's what I did.

It has been an extraordinary trip. (Anyone interested in reading of our adventures, please see my blog posts at [www.marthahallfindlay.ca](http://www.marthahallfindlay.ca)). We have seen, smelled, heard, and felt many things - cultural, natural, historical, religious, architectural. But as a politician, another aspect of it all that has hit home for me is the importance of good governance - and the real, negative effects the LACK of good governance can have on millions of people. Here in India, the challenges of building and maintaining infrastructure; the fact that so many children are still unable to be educated; massive barriers to progress created by a culture of corruption; political fighting; sometimes counter-productive economic policies; massive poverty - these are all hard to overcome. India is a

country of incredible contrasts. Wealth and poverty; opportunity and stagnation; an extraordinary and sometimes very difficult past -- together with the possibility of an incredible future.

As is so often the case, it takes going abroad to remind us, to reinforce for us just how lucky we are - just how incredibly wonderful a country Canada is. It's not perfect, we know. But the prosperity, the natural environment, the democracy, the freedom to be and do and say what we want, the appreciation for diversity, the equality of opportunity we enjoy - these are second to none. The infrastructure that we all take for granted - good roads (mostly); good sewage systems (mostly); good water treatment and supply systems (mostly); good, consistent and affordable energy (mostly); effective and efficient supply and distribution systems for food and other necessities (mostly); a good education for every child (mostly); good and affordable telecommunications (mostly); free, universal access to good health care (mostly) - these are things that most people on this earth can only wish for - if they even knew they existed.

But this didn't happen by accident. Canada is the country it is, and Canadians enjoy the services and opportunities we do, because this country has been governed effectively (mostly), by capable people pursuing (mostly) the best interests of the country and its citizens. We have a history of governments (federal, provincial and municipal) that have avoided corruption (mostly); have used our taxes for good and useful purposes (mostly); have implemented legislation that, over time, has enhanced equality and opportunity for all Canadians (mostly). No, none of it has been perfect. But in the grand scheme of things, Canadian governments have done a pretty impressive job. This is particularly true when you compare what we have to the challenges and frustrations - and correspondingly difficult and sad circumstances for so many people - in so many other countries. Just think - there are so many bad decisions that could have been made. So many mis-uses of taxpayer money that could have happened, instead of it going to the services and supports our communities need to flourish. So many impositions on our freedoms that we have seen in other places, but not Canada.

And because good governance matters, we need to encourage more good people to step up and participate. Our voter turnout has recently been at all-time lows. Too many good people are turned away from getting involved in politics because all they see is the partisan bickering and superficial nonsense - instead of the substance behind the scenes.

### **GOOD GOVERNANCE DOESN'T HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT.**

I want to do all I can to encourage as many people as I can to get involved. This country didn't happen by accident. All that is wonderful that we take for

granted didn't happen by accident. It took a lot of good people to step up and be engaged in public service with a view to the greater good. We need more of those people to keep, and improve, the great country we have.

As always, your comments and suggestions are welcome.

[www.marthahallfindlay.ca](http://www.marthahallfindlay.ca) / [info@marthahallfindlay.ca](mailto:info@marthahallfindlay.ca)