

## Get out of the gutter

Health, education, the economy were all rudely shoved aside at last week's political forums as the crowd took centre stage hurling insults at the candidates and each other.

While candidates shared their respective views on the biggest issues of the day, the crowd watching the St. Albert event stole the show, for all the wrong reasons.

Politics by its very nature can be polarizing with temperatures often rising during an election. At times tempers flare and things can get downright nasty with taunts and name-calling, but surely not in here. Not in this community. Well, at least not in a provincial election. We usually reserve that kind of behaviour for our municipal elections — until last week. Until then, St. Albert was a relatively tame place for provincial politicians. Little political blood was ever spilled.

But last Wednesday night, the provincial election brought out the worst in St. Albert. Or perhaps the event brought the worst out to St. Albert.

Incumbent candidate St. Albert NDP MLA Marie Renaud faced off against UCP candidate Angela Wood and while the two did political battle on stage, the crowd shouted insults at the debaters, leaving long-time local political watchers shocked and appalled.

Spectators shouted at the candidates, drowning out their answers to questions, with some shouting "Lies!" at the politicians. Crowd members faced off against each other, shouting at each other to keep quiet and eventually the moderator had to step in and threaten to remove rowdy crowd members.

Many in attendance said they had never seen such deplorable behaviour come out of a local forum and St. Albert has seen hotly contested municipal races play out with residents showing more respect for the local candidates.

It is hard to know if the guilty parties were local residents or party supporters who washed into town to cause a ruckus, but nonetheless, the bubble of respectful political discourse was popped and St. Albert's reputation was stained by the deplorable, Trumpian-style behaviour.

During the Morinville-St. Albert riding forum in Morinville the following night, supporters started to get rowdy heckling the speakers and lobbing vitriol at UCP incumbent candidate Dale Nally and NDP challenger Karen Shaw. The moderators, likely aware of what took place the night before in St. Albert, stepped in quickly and the temperature in the room soon cooled down.

St. Albertans deserve to know what their candidates think and judge them on that merit before casting a ballot. A respectful exchange of ideas is a hallmark of progress and democracy, not the gutter tactics we witnessed last week. Those incapable of respectfully participating in the democratic process should do the rest of us a favour and just stay home.

*Editorials are the consensus view of The Gazette's editorial board.*



## YOUR VIEWS

### Council needs to cool it on spending

Could city council actually be opening their eyes a little to the fact that they need to budget better and not think that they can spend spend spend on every project? Taxpayers have had to tighten their belts during these difficult financial times, the city needed to start doing that a long time ago and didn't. The amount of money being spent on traffic circles, widening of the trail, solar panels for city hall, the defunct solar farm and all the other misspent funds on projects that are never thought through or contracted out properly is outrageous.

There have been more than usual homes going up for sale in our neighborhood and after talking to a few of the owners the general reason is that this city is becoming unaffordable to live in with the yearly property tax hikes and cost of living increases on everything. Fancy terminology such as "debt laddering" are being discussed. Debt is debt and this council seriously needs to rethink how they spend our tax dollars so the never ending tax increases stop or majorly slow down.

Remember council, you are supposed to be working for the public not your special interest projects that do not benefit everyone. You are going to drive a lot of people out of this city with your property tax increases and irresponsible spending decisions.

*J Ritchie, St. Albert*

### Forum showed Trumpian politics

Quite a public election forum on May 16. A seemingly well-organized group of UCP supporters jeered at NDP candidate, Marie Renaud, within the first few words of her opening remarks. While the moderator finally spoke in a stern way to the crowd, he took no action when one of the loud-mouths swore at her, using a despicable misogynist term — and others yelled "liar" over and over again.

*Gazette* reporter Kevin Ma wrote that UCP candidate, Angela Wood, commented that "she did not find the event offensive or intimidating" (May 18) — but why would she?

While NDP supporters also called out comments and muttered — none that I observed sat in the front row and made personal attacks on her.

Frankly, I was shocked that Wood smiled at her supporters throughout and did not ask them to settle down.

I have never seen anything like this forum in civil society — it was truly un-Canadian—but perhaps that was the point? As more than one person has stated, it was very much like Trumpian politics. What kind of community are we creating for our children and grandchildren, St. Albert?

*S. Walsh*

St. Albert  
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