

Over the Back Fence
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Approx 625 words

The bribery race
By Alva Wood

The following is an Open Letter from Alva Wood, paid for by the Alva Wood campaign committee. Donations would be gratefully received but are not tax deductible.

Dear voters,

It is with deep regret that I must withdraw my candidacy for Member of Parliament in next week's federal election. As you will no doubt have noted, I was not included in the Leaders' Debates, in either language, even though I have exactly the same number of seats that Elizabeth May's Green Party used to have, before Blair Wilson defected to them.

By the way, how come it's okay for the Greens to gain a seat by absorbing a member who never campaigned as a Green and was never elected as a Green, but it was wrong for the Conservatives to suck David Emerson out of the Liberal party?

I suppose it's the high price of bribery. Wilson got nothing; Emerson got a cabinet portfolio.

I have tried to compete in the bribery race. I offered my recipe for jalapeno jelly and cream cheese to anyone who would vote for me. I bought more apples than I needed from Sam Burkholder, and I dropped a bag of them onto the offering plate at church. I thought it rather overwhelmed the other givings.

And I did promise to drink only Okanagan wines, if elected.

But I'm clearly out of my poker league.

Stephen Harper has been the most restrained. His bids have been mostly in the millions: \$80 million for home care, \$115 million for the environment.

Of course, he doesn't have much left to spend. He has already wiped out the \$14 billion surplus he inherited, and he's raised federal expenditures more per year than any previous government.

Jack Layton upped Harper's ante into the billions. About \$20 billions. For senior care, child care, culture care, and civil service care.

And then there's Stephane Dion. Wow! Over \$80 billion already and still climbing! \$70 billion for municipal infrastructure alone! He's got handouts for farmers, cops, nurses, day cares, energy innovators, fishing vessels, food inspectors, students...

Dion's generosity makes my jalapeno jelly look pathetic.

But the really big spender is south of the border, and he's not even running for re-election. George Bush will bail out a bunch of bankers who deregulated themselves right into bankruptcy. Just like Enron and World.com did near the start of Mr. Bush's presidency.

Does that seem like just a coincidence?

Now Mr. Bush wants to spend \$700 billion to get the economy healthy again. Has he any idea how much \$700 billion is? That's a seven with eleven zeros. It's more than the total brain cells in the Republican Party!

I'm on a pension. I can't compete with that kind of spending.

Besides, I'm increasingly uncomfortable in my brief foray into politics.

My French n'est pas very bon. Whenever I try to parlez francais, I feel comme un dummkopf.

Besides, my campaign handlers made me get contact lenses and wear casual sweaters. The lenses make my eyes water, and the baby-blue sweaters clash with my hair.

I also have arthritis in my fingers. After a day of shaking hands, every bone and joint hurts.

And it's a little disconcerting when people feel they need to wash with germicidal soap right after they realize they just shook hands with a politician.

Like the song says, "You got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em..."

It's time for me to fold 'em. I have to withdraw before you make a horrible mistake and elect me.

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to all those who supported me. If a few more had done so with cheques, I might have been able to offer bigger bribes.

Luv
Alva