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## EDITORIAL: No one's business

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The inside of a voting booth is meant to be the most private of places but our provincial political parties wouldn't mind stepping in with you.

That will be the effect of a bill now before the legislature that would allow political parties to gain access to data on which British Columbians voted and which ones didn't.

The government's justification is that it will help address lower voter turnout as recommended by the chief electoral officer.

Except, as B.C.'s information and privacy commissioner Elizabeth Denham has pointed out, collecting data on who has voted and who hasn't and turning it over to political parties has absolutely nothing to do with increasing voter turnout — and the chief electoral officer recommended no such thing.

More than ever, election campaigns are run like machines — machines that are fuelled by personal information logged into sophisticated databases that allow parties to target their campaign messaging (and budgets). Knowing who doesn't vote simply gives the parties more licence to ignore people already marginalized by the system — especially the young and people with low incomes. Let's not give them more fuel for the machine.

Dwindling voter turnout is indeed a distressing symptom of the health of democracy. If those in power are truly interested in growing voter turnout, they can start by changing the behaviours that keep people home on election day — scandals, attack ads, patronage, lavish spending on things that have nothing to do with governance, putting the interests of the party and its donors ahead of constituents. You know... Mike Duffy stuff.

*What are your thoughts? Send us a letter via email by clicking  
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