

BROCK'S BANTER: A sense of urgency

By Brock Weir

They say that all-elusive they say that a week is a long time in politics. Well, it seems here in Aurora, two months can be the equivalent of two millennia.

Last Monday was not your typical Monday.

You might have started the week thinking that it was a Monday unlike any other. You might have been woken up by an alarm, hopped in for a quick shower, thrown on your clothes and jumped into your car for the long, slogging commute. Maybe you had to get up, race downstairs to make lunches for the kids and get them off to school before starting your own routine for whatever lay ahead.

And, so, the routine went on as it should have.

If you live on the south side of Wellington Street, however, the day might have taken a turn just before the midday mark.

Okay, if you're a partisan, this probably shook down one of two ways.

If you bleed blue for the Conservative Party of Canada, you were buoyed with an elation that carried you well beyond your lunch hour as you contacted all those who lean in your particular direction to share in the euphoria.

If, on the other hand, your blood is a shade of Liberal red, that same blood likely started to boil until you needed to lie down under your desk. Rocking back and forth cradling your knees would, of course, have been optional.

I'm talking, of course, about MP Leona Alleslev's shock decision to cross the floor of the House of Commons from the Liberal Government to take a place among the Conservative opposition.

It was a decision few people saw coming and the word 'shock' is not used lightly here, and her reasons for crossing the floor were voiced later that afternoon.

'Today, I stood in the House deeply concerned for the future of our country,' Ms. Alleslev told assembled media in the foyer of the House of Commons, joined by Conservative leader Andrew Scheer. 'I asked the question, 'Am I doing everything I can to serve my country and work for real change for Canadians?' The answer is no. The citizens of my riding and all Canadians need a government that delivers foundational change for the things that matter. The world has changed dramatically in the last three years and we find ourselves in a time of unprecedented global stability. We're seeing fundamental shifts in the global economy while trade relationships, international agreements, and defence structures are under threat. Canada faces a perfect storm of serious challenges at home and abroad. This is not a strong economy and our country needs strong leadership.'

Ms. Alleslev went on to say that Canadians must recognize that foreign policy, trade, defence and economy are interdependent and, as such, can't be viewed separately. She also said, 'strong Federal leadership' is needed to 'rebuild' our nation's foundations, including modernizing our military 'to reassure our allies and defend Canada's interests at home and abroad.'

'My attempts to raise my concerns with this government were met with silence and, as I said in the House, the Government must be challenged openly and for me to publicly criticize the government as a Liberal would undermine the government [and that], according to my Code of Conduct, would be dishonourable.'

The world may have indeed 'changed dramatically in the last three years' but it seems change equally dramatic has played out here at home in a pretty narrow window.

Just 58 days before, on July 20, Ms. Alleslev was standing at Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's side at a Liberal fundraiser held at the Royal Venetian on Industrial Parkway South, where she touched upon many of the same issues she highlighted in her September 17 remarks.

'The greatest thing about being a Member of Parliament in this Prime Minister's Government [is] that we, each and every one of us, is valued for the contribution that we bring to the team,' she said to a packed house, moments after the PM made his remarks. 'We each have our strengths, we're valued for it, and we lean on each other. And you have a great team, if I do say so myself, with Members of Parliament here in York Region.'

'I swore an oath to serve and defend this country when I was granted my Queen's Commission to become an officer in the Canadian Armed Forces and I decided about four years ago that I really was worried about what my country was becoming and it was getting more difficult to represent this country. That is why I decided to become a Member of Parliament. Last week, when I was in Brussels, at the NATO summit and the Prime Minister was there, you would have been truly amazed, proud and overcome with the power of the remarks this Prime Minister made, not to Canadians, but to Members of Parliament for governments, for social organizations, from all over the world. He set the example for what our NATO allies and other countries can become.'

?I would like to thank this Prime Minister for creating the country I am honoured to serve and defend, not only for what he is doing here at home, but for how he is representing us around the world.?

Speaking to The Auroran after her floor crossing, Ms. Alleslev once again mentioned the oath she took to Queen and Country. Taking this oath to heart, she said she has to ask herself every day whether she is doing everything she can so she can look both her constituents and herself in the face at the end of the day. Being elected, she added, creates a ?sacred obligation? to represent them. ?I needed to exercise a sense of urgency,? she said, but, again leaving the specifics of her decision off the table.

I do not begrudge Ms. Alleslev's decision to cross the floor. There is no reason to doubt she did what she felt was best, but I think she has a duty to explain her decision in detail to her constituents well before the next Federal election. That is the most sacred obligation between a MP and the people she or he represent.

There is a significant contrast between her words on July 20 and those made on September 17 and 18; that, in itself, is alarming. Ms. Alleslev said her decision was cumulative and came at a ?tipping point? but residents need to know what transpired within those 58 days to turn the tide.

It is the only way voters in Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill can make an informed decision next fall.