

FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE: Now What?

The PC Party -- Now What?

By Stephen Somerville

Now that the provincial election has taken place and the Liberals have a majority, what's in store for the PC Party?

Since Leader Tim Hudak recently announced his intention to step aside as party leader on July 2, electing a new leader will be the priority, and hopefully will be done by the end of this year.

In the coming days and weeks you will hear lots about prospective leadership candidates. There have been suggestions that a Federal Conservative Party Member of Parliament will come forward from Ottawa to lead the provincial PC Party.

Unless it is someone of the stature of a John Baird, I don't think any of them could do it.

I believe the leader will come from the existing caucus and it will most likely be one of these three MPP's ? Vic Fedeli, MPP for Nipissing, a former energy critic and the party's current finance critic; Lisa MacLeod, MPP for Nepean Carlton, and the recent energy critic, or Christine Elliott, the MPP for Whitby-Oshawa who was the party's deputy leader and health critic.

A couple of things will be guiding my decision-making process as to whom to support.

First, what personal accomplishments ? either in business, education, public policy or volunteering ? can this person point to?

Second, do I believe that this man or woman has the potential to connect with voters in the large urban areas like Toronto, London and Kitchener/Waterloo, where our Party has been shut out recently?

Third, which part of the political spectrum does this candidate come from ? far right, centre or left/centre? I believe that we need someone who is a moderate.

And fourth, what are the three or four main policy goals of the prospective candidate?

Once a new leader is chosen, then the party can get on with the very hard work of strengthening itself; recruiting new party members, raising funds and developing policy alternatives for the next election.

Speaking of policy, I am also very interested to see how the Party develops policy alternatives going forward.

Much has been written about the Tory ?Million Jobs Plan? and the proposed reduction of 100,000 jobs to the public service.

But what has not received much mention is how neither elected PC MPPs, or rank and file party members such as me, had any input into this very divisive party electoral plank.

My hope is that all party members will have the opportunity for their say on policy going forward and that we have learned our lesson from this recent electoral setback.

Back in the 1990s, the party developed a plan that was discussed and debated within the various riding associations, and then at regional policy workshops before final resolutions were adopted after rigorous debates at a provincial-wide policy meeting.

These final policy resolutions became part of the party's platform.

Party volunteers were energized, as they had the opportunity to make and influence party policy.

This certainly did not mean that they won everything that they wanted - as the Leader and his campaign team craft a campaign strategy and theme out of the policy resolutions - but the grassroots were consulted, and listened to.

What this writer will be watching most closely during the upcoming provincial PC Leadership race is the type of platform that the candidates decide to run on.

Will a Leadership candidate be ?gun-shy? from introducing a platform that addresses some controversial topics because of what just took place, or occurred in the fall of 2007; that was the PC electoral disaster attributed to the ?faith based? issue?

So, why is all this important to me here in Aurora in the summer of 2014 as Ms. Wynne's Liberals will be holding power with a good sized majority until June 2018?

It is important for the simple reason that a democracy best functions when you have opposition parties that are ready and able to potentially govern.

Knowing that the other guy can do the job is a great way to keep the incumbents on their toes.

Stephen can be contacted at
stephengsomerville@yahoo.com