

## POLITICS AS USUAL: Politics Unusual

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

I was on vacation last week getting some much needed sun, sand and ocean waves.

My timing was clearly perfect given the huge dump of snow and freezing temperatures that occurred while I was away. Coming home to a driveway with 15 centimetres of snow on it ? with a crunchy icy top no less ? was certainly a rather bracing ?Welcome home,? but I'll take it. It's great to get away but it's always great to come home to Aurora.

While I did manage to disconnect from work ? well, I still checked in for emails and a few outstanding matters ? politics was still ever-present. The hotel had international CNN so, of course, I watched that while getting ready for dinner each day. And I caught up on Canadian news by reading the Globe & Mail (and The Auroran, of course) on-line at the beach.

And goodness what a week in political news it was, and yet quickly surpassed by an even greater political debacle this week. The US is still the circus sideshow it has been since November 2016, but now even more so. Now even the adults in the room, the folks that ostensibly have the credentials to keep the lights on and the office humming, are screwing up royally. An entire office of staffers without security clearance? After more than a year in office, there are still thirty staff and counting, without the necessary clearance to be there, including a number of senior staff with direct access to the Oval Office.

Isn't it the job of the Chief of Staff to ? I don't know ? staff an office? Folks can't pin this mess on Trump. Kelly should wear this. And back here in Canada? Provincial politics in Ontario has been turned upside down with the incredibly fast downfall of opposition leader Patrick Brown and the coterie of folks around him. When I first wrote this article, Patrick Brown had stepped down as Leader of the Opposition, the PCs had an interim leader and will be having a leadership contest within a matter of weeks ? all just less than four months before the provincial election. But it got all that much more bizarre this past Friday when Brown announced in dramatic fashion that he was seeking to run for the very position from which he literally just resigned (or did he?).

This, the same day that the guy that replaced him in the job that he's now seeking removed him from caucus. Can you keep that straight?

So, he will be running to the lead the party that won't let him even sit with them. Yikes.

Personally, I am unclear how entering the race at this point is in any way a positive thing for himself or for the party, for that matter. What is the end game here? Honestly, I just don't get it. This cannot end well for anyone.

Further confounding the issue is that the recently released PC provincial policy platform ? the Peoples Guarantee ? is on shaky ground. The carbon tax ? an integral part of the People's Guarantee ? is not popular amongst the party faithful, and three of the leadership hopefuls do not support it

Seems then that the People's Guarantee ? the party's platform - is in danger of circling the drain depending on who secures the leadership.

So, less than four months out from an election, the opposition party arguably has no clear leader and no clear platform. Seems pretty grim to me but things have been turned around before so who knows what will happen next.

Regardless, this is going to be a very interesting few months in politics.