

POLITICS AS USUAL

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

We are in the midst of the holiday season and fast approaching the New Year, and I think, despite a challenging year we have much to look forward to in 2018.

The vicious assault on democratic institutions and principled leadership that we have witnessed in the US and in Europe have been beaten back somewhat. In the US, the farce of a special election in Alabama had a positive result. The candidate who literally rode in on a horse to vote that thought that the time of slavery was a great time, that US law comes from god, and was facing multiple allegations of shenanigans with teenagers, lost and the other guy won. So, a positive outcome. Though the fact that he managed to still garner more than 49% of the vote is a terrifying comment on the absence of rational thought amongst the general public in Alabama.

In Europe, the rise of the far, far right ? though I think we should call them what they are, xenophobic, race-baiting, ultra-nationalists ? has fallen back as they suffered electoral defeats in a number of EU countries. But, and there is always a but, they were not resoundingly defeated, which is tremendously worrisome. Poland, Greece, Germany, France all have a sizeable numbers of adherents to the ultra nationalist message. They are lurking there in the dark just waiting to blot out the light of democracy and supplant it with their brand of totalitarianism.

And here in sunny Canada, 2018 will be a year of important elections. In Ontario, we will have a Provincial election most likely around June and, of course, the municipal elections in the 440 plus communities across the province in October.

The provincial election should be an interesting one. The rhetoric is heating up and will likely reach a boil sometime mid spring. Why? Because it looks like the PCs could be on the losing end for the third time in a row. The Liberals, approaching nearly two decades in power, should have a brutal uphill battle to hang onto power but if recent polling is correct, then they have more than a tenuous fingerhold on the lead. And that is bad news for Brown. Though, it remains to be seen whether they can overcome all the scandals that can accumulate in a 20 year span in power.

Municipal elections will be a mixed bag: most likely a changing of the guard in some municipalities and a stick-with- the-status quo in others. It's too difficult to predict trends in municipal elections because local issues play such a big part in how elections roll out. It's pretty clear though that the petty political games have started. To be expected for sure; That's how some play politics...It's not always a winning strategy but we shall see.

As I said, 2018 should be an interesting year; there are signs that it will be a positive one.

I want to thank all my readers for reading my column each week, for sending me comments ? even the flaming ones ? and for engaging me in debate. I appreciate it all so very much. May you all have a truly wonderful holiday season and may 2018 bring you good health and much happiness.