This page was exported from - The Auroran
Export date: Fri Mar 29 12:56:16 2024 / +0000 GMT

BROCK'S BANTER: The Blue Wave

By Brock Weir

It's crunch time.

By Saturday, Ontarians will know just who, unless there is another unexpected calamity, will be the primary challenger facing Premier Kathleen Wynne at the polls this June.

It's all down to those all-important votes, which are still rolling in as you're reading this, before Saturday's tally at the relatively impromptu leadership convention in Markham.

To say the last few weeks have been a political whirlwind would be a massive understatement, but Ontario seems to be weathering the storm well and, whether you bleed blue, red, orange, green, or a colour that is determined closer to the election as issues and concerns rise to the top, I get the sense that Ontarians are ready to simply get down to business.

But, hey, if you're a political junky, the race to replace Patrick Brown has probably been nothing short of an armchair Super Bowl and everything here on out might seem rather anticlimactic. Nevertheless, we will press on with whichever leadership candidate is chosen this weekend and we can size up our three main political contenders.

Who would have thought at the start of the year any of this was on the horizon.

At the dawn of 2018, it seemed pretty clear that after 15 years in power, the Liberals had a pretty good chance of seeing the door. People of all stripes seem to be feeling the pinch, whether it is rising hydro rates or anticipating a business hit with the implementation of a rising minimum wage.

And then the tsunami happened, and the party had to sail back to port without a captain. Candidates, party members and supporters ? casual and otherwise ? were left shaken out of their comfortable view of the future and, once the shock wore off, had to pull themselves together to regroup ? and they did just that.

Just days after the political shock began to subside, it was time to rebuild ? but divisions were immediate. There was debate between party brass, candidates and supporters on just how the new leader would ultimately be chosen.

Some thought it would be advantageous from a transition standpoint to choose the next leader from amongst themselves, an already-elected candidate with a riding to contest or a newbie candidate with a relatively safe riding (I.E. Caroline Mulroney in York Simcoe).

Others argued that with the incredible progress the last leadership campaign made in signing up new members to the party, they might as well take advantage of them and put it to a general vote of 200,000-ish members.

Ultimately, as we know, the second option won the day and once that was decided candidates started coming out to try and fill the vacuum, from former MPP and leadership candidate Christine Elliott, political newcomer and freshly-minted York Simcoe candidate Mulroney, to former Toronto councillor Doug Ford, who has repeatedly flirted with the possibility of trying to follow his father's footsteps to Queen's Park, social conservative activist Tanya Granic Allen and, for a wild few days, Patrick Brown himself.

What has ensued is a party that is not only looking for a leader, but is, in some ways soul searching, as well.

As was one of the arguments against opening the party up to a truncated leadership race rather than appointing one of their own to permanently fill the spot, the race has led to the opening of the party platform, a risky move with less than 100 days before Ontario's polls open, leaving a degree of uncertainty as to just what candidates will be running for once the leadership contest has been settled on Saturday.

Don't get me wrong, a debate on ideas is always healthy, and indeed it is always desirable, but, in my opinion, the safe window to have those discussions had long since passed. Of course, the Party is in this position really through no fault of their own, but deviating too far from what had already decided is undoubtedly a risky business.

At the start of this campaign, at the start of Patrick Brown's brief tenure as party leader, and indeed, at the start of any campaign of this nature, I found ? and find ? myself repeating the same mantra, hoping that the election campaign that is ahead of us, whether it is Federal, Provincial or Municipal, ultimately turns out to be one of ideas.

It is not enough, in my opinion, to be someone who always votes Liberal, PC, NDP or Green purely out of habit, or because it is what your parents and grandparents have always done, or simply how you perceive your individual vote to impact your bottom line. Your bottom line is always important, but, as a taxpayer, for example, I have always been of the view that I don't mind paying my fair share of taxes as long as they are going towards programs and services that I believe in and will be a benefit to my town, province or nation.

It is not enough, in my view, to vote Progressive Conservative just because you want to turf Kathleen Wynne, nor do I think it is

enough to vote for Kathleen Wynne simply to keep out whichever PC leadership frontrunner, Elliott or Ford, ultimately takes the crown on Saturday out of office.

What is enough is that you vote for the candidate who genuinely aligns with your views and the vision you have for the country, the province, and the municipality.

While attending a rally for Christine Elliott on Saturday, I was heartened by her pledge that if she indeed becomes Ontario's next Premier, her government will go through programs introduced by the Liberals line by line to evaluate each program's value for the dollar rather than simply throwing the baby out in the partisan bathwater. Whoever takes the crown will do well to adopt this approach.

?Whether you like [Kathleen Wynne] or not, you have to admit she's a survivor,? said Elliott. ?She's a good communicator, she's very intelligent and we know the Liberals are going to throw whatever they can out there to make sure they win this election.?

I'm sure that's the truth, but another factor in the Liberals' survival is not, unlike the PCs, stumbling just before they reach the finish line. However this shakes down on Saturday, let's hope the result will be well thought out and based on clear policy and clear ideas.