This page was exported from - The Auroran
Export date: Thu Mar 28 14:02:03 2024 / +0000 GMT

BROCK'S BANTER: A Tale of Two Channels

By Brock Weir

There was a time in the not-so-distant past when Canadian politics were seen as the boring sidekick to the goings-on in Washington. Personally, I've never enrolled in that school of thought.

Our politicians ? municipal, provincial, federal ? often seem to fall by the wayside when their own constituents are picking which stories to read in their newspaper or click in their feeds.

Is it a matter of the machinations at the U.S. Capitol having a wider international impact than, say, what goes on in our own House of Commons, Legislatures or Town Halls? Is it a matter of the grass somehow being seen as greener and more luxurious on the other side? Or, is it a matter of the United States being close enough away that it seems safe to treat politics as more of a spectator sport than something in which it might be in our best interest to engage?

I'd be curious as to how events unfolded in your own household on Wednesday afternoon when this dichotomy was never more at play.

On many channels, one had the uncomfortable pleasure of watching American President's former lawyer, a man who already has convictions under his belt for lying under oath, come back into a hall of democracy apparently to atone and spill his guts on the myriad controversies that continue to swirl around ?Individual #1.?

Unless you're one to bristle when confronted with second-hand embarrassment, chances are you enjoyed watching this saga unfold in real-time on 24-hour news channels.

You might have rolled your eyes at some of the Republicans using this opportunity to speechify and harangue the witness for his own actions rather than the actions to which he had come to speak, bending over backwards and otherwise contorting themselves to play to their base or make the Boss happy.

Perhaps you even bristled when it came time for the Democrats to speak, cautiously but sometimes over-enthusiastically allowing this man while out the hours ahead of going to jail by stroking his ego, and doing everything possible to make his experience a comfortable one. Politics does indeed make the strangest of bedfellows.

Maybe you were so engrossed in what was transpiring that you found it hard to look away, putting off some of the afternoon's tasks in case you missed a juicy little question or resulting tidbit, a morsel bound to go viral, afraid you might be a few hours, or even a few minutes behind the curve.

Maybe, however, you flipped the channel.

Elsewhere, on our homegrown outlets, was something that was no less compelling: the testimony by a person with a hell of a lot more credibility than the dude in Washington.

?For a period of approximately four months between September and December 2018, I experienced a consistent and sustained effort by many people within the government to seek to politically interfere in the exercise of prosecutorial discretion in my role as the Attorney General of Canada in an inappropriate effort to secure a Deferred Prosecution Agreement with SNC-Lavalin,? said former Attorney General and Federal Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould, at a House of Commons Committee looking into the ongoing SNC-Lavalin affair.

?These events involved 11 people (excluding myself and my political staff) ? from the Prime Minister's Office, the Privy Council Office, and the Office of the Minister of Finance. This included in-person conversations, telephone calls, emails, and text messages. There were approximately 10 phone calls and 10 meetings specifically about SNC-Lavalin that I and/or my staff was a part of.

?Within these conversations, there were express statements regarding the necessity for interference in the SNC-Lavalin matter, the potential for consequences, and veiled threats if a DPA was not made available to SNC. These conversations culminated on December 19, 2018, with a phone conversation I had with the Clerk of the Privy Council ? a conversation for which I will provide some significant detail.?

Did she ever.

What transpired was riveting watching that got to the centre of internal workings within our own government, much of it quite alarming.

Response was swift from the Leader of the Opposition calling for the Prime Minister's resignation, and equally swift was the response from the Prime Minister's former Chief of Staff, Gerald Butts, offering to step up to the plate to shed more light on the matter.

Some might still question why what has transpired so far really matters, as Canada has experienced other, possibly more directly

ethically compromising political affairs in the past, but given how off-brand these events have been for Prime Minister Trudeau, it has had a significant impact.

And there was more to come, relatively close to home.

On Monday, MP Jane Philpott, who has represented Whitchurch-Stouffville since the 2015 Federal Election, and has served in a number of posts in Federal Cabinet ranging from Minister of Digital Government to Minister of Health and Minister of Indigenous services, joined Wilson-Raybould in resigning from cabinet, yet stating her intention to stay on as a Liberal within the House of Commons.

?In Canada, the constitutional convention of Cabinet solidarity means, among other things, that ministers are expected to defend all Cabinet decisions,? said Ms. Philpott in a statement. ?A minister must always be prepared to defend our ministers publicly and must speak in support of the government and its policies. Given this convention and the current circumstances, it is untenable for me to continue to serve as a Cabinet minister.

?Unfortunately, the evidence of efforts by politicians and/or officials to pressure the former Attorney General to intervene in the criminal case involving SNC-Lavalin, and the evidence as to the content of those efforts, have raised serious concerns for me. Those concerns have been augmented by the views expressed by my constituents and other Canadians. The solemn principles at stake are the independence and integrity of our justice system. It is a fundamental doctrine of the rule of law that our Attorney General should not be subject to political pressure or interference regarding the exercise of her prosecutorial discretion in criminal cases.?

That is indeed the case, and a clearer picture will emerge in the days ahead pending further testimony and ongoing reports from the Federal Ethics commissioner. Whatever the outcome, it can't be stressed enough how important it is for Canadians to stay engaged so as to make an informed decision come election time that reflects their own personal values.

Sure, the SNC-Lavalin affair might not involve porn stars, hush money, and a wacky band of former hangers-on fighting for their own survival, but it is infinitely more relevant.