

## BROCK'S BANTER: Lipstick on a...

By Brock Weir

A lot of people nowadays seem to hesitate, or stop completely in their tracks, before they finish the above phrase.

Up until relatively recently, it seemed very few people had any qualms about reaching that porcine conclusion until the quip was famously co-opted by an American Governor cum Vice Presidential Candidate cum international joke cum television talking head, a jack of all trades and master of none.

It's a pity because its usage is appropriate in so many different contexts.

Take, for example, the long-delayed, long-incubating and long-discussed plans to improve Aurora's Downtown Core.

While many people who live and work in the area are still waiting for something to make a noticeable improvement in moving around the area, whether it is any form of movement on the future of Library Square, a suggestion on Downtown Parking that will prove to be a watershed solution to a decades-old problem, or a magic bullet that will have pedestrians and shoppers suddenly turn heel on their exodus to the east to make the core a thriving hub of economic activity once again, they could be forgiven if their patience is beginning to wear thin.

Thus far, those impacted can take comfort in the fact that the foundation has been laid for some tentative improvements. While new sidewalks in the area created something of a municipal brouhaha when it came to forking over the cash to make it happen, people can expect new planters, street furniture, and seed funding to help local building owners to make their façades more fetching to the general public.

Some have used the cloven-hooved analogy to express their feelings towards such plans, but it's worth a shot. It's better than nothing. If it works, it will be fine. If not, we'll have a nice place to sit, with a bit of ambiance, and some summer floral fragrance while we collectively contemplate our next move.

While I am not sure where members of the Progressive Conservative party Province-wide are setting a spell waiting for their resurgence under a new leader, I often wonder if they are contemplating the same thing. I know I was last week when leadership frontrunner, and Whitby MPP Christine Elliott came to a meeting of the party faithful at Aw, Shucks.

Her visit to fire up the local base came a few months after PC Finance Critic Vic Fedeli came to the same restaurant, for the same purpose, on the same leadership campaign, before he ultimately threw his weight behind Ms. Elliott.

At the time, he was very blunt about his party's prospects.

'The first thing we need to do is restore pride in the party,' he told supporters. 'We need to reach out to members, tell members you are important, that your opinions matter, and we value you.'

Explaining his 'Ontario First' plan to members, he said what he proposed was aspirational for Ontarians in areas of healthcare, education, youth employment and entrepreneurship.

'The real message is the tone we deliver,' he concluded. 'We can be bold without being mean. Right now, what we are is mean to everyone. It is no wonder they think of us as slash and burn.'

A very similar view was expressed by Ms. Elliott last Monday. People, she said, simply aren't listening to what the PCs have to say and to get people to listen they need to get back to the basics of being both progressive and conservative. There is a need to be fiscally responsible in order to be socially compassionate so there is enough money to go around for people who need it.

This includes investment in senior care ? both in-home and long-term, education, support for people living with developmental challenges, and youth employment.

'I think what we're dealing with now in our party is somewhat of a change of brand,' she said. 'There is a lot of people who don't even want to listen to what we say right now. They have turned their ears against us. What we need to do is bring a new direction and tone to our party so people will come and join us. A lot of women don't want to vote for us right now. We have a significant gender gap, a lot of people who don't want to vote for us because they think we're the dinosaur party, and a lot of new Canadians don't know our message because they haven't heard what it is to be a true Progressive Conservative.'

Over the next seven weeks or so, members of the Progressive Conservative party have a choice to make. At press time, that choice includes Barrie MP Patrick Brown, Ms. Elliott, and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex MPP Monte McNaughton. From the sidelines I will be watching intently as to which of the three is able to put flesh on the bones of the party and the apparently shared desire to shed their dour, harsh image, and reframe themselves as a party that is contemporary, vivacious and relevant to Ontarians.

It is not enough to express a desire to overhaul one's image, there has to be something concrete, and while the clock ticks down towards the end of the leadership race, hopefully we'll see something. If they don't elaborate soon, that lipstick will be left on the

dashboard to melt in the summer sun.

### **LIPSTICK ON A FOSSIL**

While we're on the subject of putting lipstick on pigs, as a history buff I have been somewhat fascinated watching the proceedings going on in Leicester, England, as they prepare to lay the beleaguered and maligned (and, in my opinion, justifiably so) King Richard III to rest in a way befitting his station.

After all, if you're King, you don't necessarily expect to spend eternity propping up a Ford Fiesta.

Nevertheless, he was found and will soon be parked in a swanky cathedral, under a nifty new tomb, alongside a shiny new crown.

For someone who died nearly 530 years ago, interest in this side-show-like send-off has been very enthusiastic, if not surprising. It is not every day you get to witness the funeral of a Plantagenet king ? and truth be told, if I lived across the pond I'd be there in a shot ? but this public fascination is teetering towards a degree of reverence. Time might, apparently, be the best lipstick of all, but let's spare a thought for Richard's poor nephews!