

FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE: Initial thoughts on President Elect Trump

By Stephen Somerville

Before this column returns to the local themes of people, politics and public affairs, below are some unconnected, stream-of-conscious and (most likely) incoherent musings and observations regarding the just completed silly season, a.k.a. the presidential election south of the border.

I certainly did not foresee Mr. Trump winning on November 8.

For that matter I did not see him winning the Republican nomination either.

When he first declared his intentions back in the summer of 2015, I gave Mr. Trump no chance. The Republican field was already crowded with veteran politicians with some name recognition, including New Jersey Governor Chris Christie and former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, and I thought his candidacy would be good for some funny headlines, but that Mr. Trump would be eliminated within a few months.

My dad told me at the time that he thought Mr. Trump would win both the Republican nomination and the U.S. Presidency because he felt that Trump had business success and that he was not a career politician. I scoffed at his analysis.

With all the outlandish proclamations emanating from Mr. Trump's mouth during the campaign, I thought there was no way that he would win. I did, however, feel confident that the race would be close for two reasons.

First, the Republican base really dislikes the Clintons and, for sure, would come out to support whoever the Republican candidate would turn out to be - come hell or high water.

Second, as with the election of Rob Ford as Mayor of Toronto, there are a large amount of voters who don't take lawn signs or tell pollsters how they are going to vote, but once they are safely ensconced in the privacy of the voting booth, will vote for him.

I was quite sure that Ms. Clinton would win the 270 electoral votes required to become President, but I was also equally certain that Trump would do at least 2 to 3 percentage points better in the actual voting.

Some of the numbers coming from the exit polling were remarkable and start to tell the story of Trump's improbably victory.

I believe that 1.8 million more Americans voted for Trump than voted for 2012 Republican nominee Mitt Romney and that Ms. Clinton received 6.2 million less votes than Barack Obama received in 2012.

I also could not believe the amount of social conservatives that voted for Trump given his past actions and statements ? he won this group by a 40 per cent margin.

It seemed that white women and white men put Trump into the White House.

I remember when Mr. Obama was re-elected in 2012 pundits said that this would mean the end of the Republican Party because they will never be able to win with the U.S. presidency due the changing demographics of America.

I think Mr. Trump won because he connected with voters at a basic level on two types of security issues; national and economic security. People are afraid for their jobs and their way of life, and they are also very worried about a Paris style attack happening in the U.S. Mr. Trump addressed those fears and said that he would take corrective action immediately upon becoming the President.

So, now comes the time when Mr. Trump needs to put his rhetoric in action. Will he build the wall around Mexico? Will he rip up existing trade deals? What exactly are his plans for dealing with ISIS?

I do like the fact that he seems to be reaching out to former allies for their advice and for their potential participation in his administration.

Whether you like or loathe Mr. Trump he does have a real opportunity to start off his Presidency on a high note. He is beholden to no one. He did not cater to any special interest or particular lobbies. He is also not beholden to the Republican elites or elected Republicans in either the Senate or the U.S. House of Representatives.

Mr. Trump has spoken about ?draining the swamp? and making fundamental change. If he is serious in this regard, then why not begin with a real attempt at fixing how Americans govern themselves.

He could introduce a reform and democratic renewal package that would include term limits for U.S. Senators and Congressmen, and completely ban or at least place meaningful limits on corporate donations and third party election spending.

These measures would be immensely popular with his followers and I surmise, with a few democrats and independents too.

I did not correctly predict that Mr. Trump would win, and I have no idea what the next four years will be like under a Trump Presidency, but I do know one thing, it will be interesting, and this ?reality? Presidency will be must see television.

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