

POLITICS AS USUAL: Mayor Ford. No, the other one

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

Lots of folks are asking about the switcheroo of the Ford for mayoral race in Toronto. I have been asked about the legality of it all. To be succinct, yes, it was entirely legal. Nonsensical, bizarre and unprecedented, but legal. Whether it was appropriate or not?well, that's for the voters to decide.

In case you missed the non-stop coverage somehow (and I am not sure how that would be possible, I am sure they got the news on the space station), Rob Ford has dropped out of the Mayor's race and will be running in Ward 2 instead.

As he fights what appears to be a very serious illness, Doug Ford has indicated his brother will be flat on his back for a good 6 to 8 weeks?. Given that the election will be held in less than 6 weeks, I am not sure how much campaigning Rob will be doing, but never mind. The pundits all seem to agree that the Ward 2 Councillor spot is sewn up for Rob ? whether he actually campaigns or not. How democratic.

His nephew, who has been running in Ward 2 for months now, has dropped out of that race and is now running for trustee. I have not heard much about the nephew other than that he is a Ford and is thus handily leading all other candidates in the Ward. I am not sure if that will translate to the race for trustee, but we shall see how the good people of Etobicoke feel about the relative worth of a candidate who has expressed virtually nothing about education running for trustee.

And Doug Ford ? who disdainfully announced that he was done with municipal politics? mere weeks ago ? has registered as the candidate for Mayor. Apparently he wants to carry on the good work of the Fords. And the voters are supposed to accept then that a man who stated clearly he didn't want to run for office again, is entirely suited to run for the top office ? because his brother wanted him too?

That seems to be the gist of the platform thus far.

As I said, bizarre.

And all of this done in typical dramatic Ford style, with missing documentation, a race to the hospital to get the forms notarized, clock ticking down to 2 p.m. Media all panting for the story?

I don't agree with the conspiracy theorists that this was all planned? from the start. But, by golly, it did look at least somewhat orchestrated. Say what you will about the Fords, but they do know how to grab headlines. In fact, if the desired effect was maximum press coverage, then mission accomplished.

Virtually no one was talking about the other candidates. Every single paper has had near daily coverage ? and multiple pages too ? of the whole Ford family drama.

I read at least three op-ed pieces this weekend devoted to what Doug Ford's platform will be like. Will it be a rehash of Rob's? Will it be different? Or more of the same? All very interesting and relevant, one supposes, given the excitement of the past few days.

However, it also has the effect of silencing any kind of news from the other mayoral camps. With an election only 41 days away, losing even one day ? let alone nearly a week ? of press coverage to an opponent candidate is not good for anyone's campaign.

It also throws the campaign strategies of the Tory and Chow camps into disarray. They thought they were running against Ford.

Well, they still are, but it's DoFo not RoFo. So, a whole different ball game.

While Doug Ford does not have his brother's personal demons, he also has none of his brother's charm either. So, I don't think the Ford name will carry him very far. But stranger things have happened!

Regardless of what transpires in Ford camp in the coming days, this is going to be one heck of a crazy ride for the next five weeks.

Until next week, stay informed, stay involved because this is ? after all ? Our Town.