

POLITICS AS USUAL: Unforced Errors

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

I have been off sick (and thank you for that random lady on the plane who provided me with a shower of germs as you sneezed in my face) and then away at a conference, so have not had a column for two weeks.

Much has happened and yet, at the same time, nothing new has happened in the world of politics while I took a break from talking about it.

Let's start with the new.

For once, it looks like naked self-interest did not rule the day. Kevin O'Leary withdrew from the leadership race as he just realized that not being able to speak French and thus not being able to win the francophone vote would be detrimental to his chances of beating Trudeau, which one assumes is ? ostensibly ? the rationale for seeking the leadership in the first place.

I am not clear why that came as a surprise. Ten minutes of basic research would indicate that the francophone vote is clearly important in a bilingual country, but, regardless, at least it is a ?sensible? approach.

If he had continued, he could have won the leadership race but lost the election. So, not good for the Conservative party. And yes, not good for Mr. O'Leary either. But none-the-less, at least considerations other than one's own self-interest factored into a political decision. So score one for something new.

And then there are the unforced errors manifested by hubris ? or, in the political world, what amounts to more of the same. What else to make of the debacle with our Minister of Defence? Taking credit for something ? in this case being the ?architect? of a military strategy ? for which in reality he had little to do with. Politicians taking credit for things, glomming on to the work of others, is nothing new. Unfortunately, a lack of vision, originality and ? alas ? integrity, seems to plague some folks in higher office.

But speaking to the example of the Minister, let's not get too high and mighty about it. We all embellish the stories we tell. The bus that ?was speeding down the road and almost flattened me,? was in reality a minivan in a parking lot, a good 50 feet away, going just 5 km an hour. But the truth would make for a boring story, so we embroider it a bit with fanciful details.

In the political world, as with the real world, modest self-aggrandizement is par for the course. I think folks kind of expect it by now. But flat out fabrication? That's going to get you in trouble. People don't take too kindly to being played for fools.

In the age of social media, and instantaneous access to information, facts (real and alternative) are accessible to anyone at any time. Taking credit where credit is most decidedly not due is not wise.

No one likes a phony.

Let me rephrase that, no one likes an obvious phony. The Minister gets that and has apologized for his little trip into the land of make believe. As long as there isn't a repeat trip, then I accept him at his word.

Now let me tell you about the time I was attacked by a bald eagle, while riding my bike?