

POLITICS AS USUAL: You takes your chances

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

Giorgio Mammoliti, the 'colourful' Councillor from Toronto will not be running for Provincial office under the PC banner, or any banner for that matter.

(And I say 'colourful' because apparently that's what we are calling politicians these days who engage in non-stop antics, shenanigans, peccadilloes and the like?but I digress)

It was a whirlwind of press conferences, tweets and announcements. First he was in, seeking the nomination in the riding where he lives and now he is out, to better serve the constituents he has been serving these 20 some odd years. And yes, you read that right. He has been a sitting Councillor in Toronto for 16 years and, prior to that, was the MPP for five years ? for the NDP (!).

His surprising electability aside, what I found interesting in the whole 'I am running?nope I am not running?' for MPP discussion was that nary a word was said about relinquishing his seat first. No mention was made of him stepping down from his position as City Councillor while he sought a higher office. One could surmise then ? and in the interest of accuracy I should point out he did not say one way or the other ? that he had intended to stay on as a Councillor while at the same time seeking the position of MPP. I would like to stress that there is nothing illegal about that. Many sitting municipal Councillors in various communities have done the same ? even in York Region. Occupying both the role of Municipal Councillor while at the same time that of nominated candidate for a particular party and seeking higher office, be it Provincial or Federal, is currently still allowed legislatively.

And that really burns my cornflakes!

No other elected office allows you to do that.

If you are an MP and would like to run for provincial office? You have to resign your seat. MPP running for MP? You have to resign your seat. MP or MPP running for municipal office?? You have to resign your seat.

Only municipal Councillors and Mayors can hang onto one seat while they try their hand at another; keep a safety net, so to speak ? and a paid one at that. Does that seem fair or even logical to you? How can you say that you are continuing to represent one group of folks who elected you while at the same time vying to represent another group of folks in another election? Of course you can't! It's why every other elected office requires you to resign first! The inherent conflict of interest cannot be mitigated, even by 'stepping aside, temporarily' whatever that means.

I have beaten this drum before so I won't drone on much more about it. But suffice to say that I think this is one aspect of our democratic process that is in immediate need of an overhaul.

It's a simple fix.

If you want to run for one office, and you are currently occupying another, then you have to relinquish your seat. Period. No exceptions. If all politics is a risk, then, as they say, 'you takes your chances?? and rightly so.