

BROCK'S BANTER: But Wait! There's More!

By Brock Weir

By the time many of you read this the deal will have already been done.

As of this writing, we don't know just yet what that deal will be, but we probably have a good shot of winning an election pool. Province-wide, there are really only four or five options on the table now: a majority government led by the Progressive Conservatives or the Ontario New Democrats, or a minority government led by either of the two parties. Of course, in a minority situation, there is always the real possibility of a coalition government between the first and second runners up, and the inevitable hue and cry from the misinformed or wilfully ignorant that such an option is undemocratic, but that is not something that any of the major party leaders have openly considered at this point.

Many Ontarians have already gone to early polls to cast their ballots.

It seems, at least from my personal perspective of people I know, that people seem particularly motivated to cast their vote ahead of Thursday, with many lining up at their advance polling location to do exercise their democratic rights.

It is encouraging, from my point of view, that despite continual talking points that voters are (a) just not interested in the election, (b) dissatisfied or weary with the options available to them, or (c) a combination thereof, that there is a degree of engagement, perhaps a sense that their vote is more valuable than ever this time around, or even a motivation that they have the power, albeit with a single vote, to help bring in the change they want to see.

Few could have predicted at this time last year what a raucous election this would ultimately turn out.

Sure, back in June of 2017 there was a very clear sense among voters that Liberal fatigue was settling in. They were tired with mounting hydro prices, for instance, dissatisfied with Kathleen Wynne, but unsure where an alternative lay.

At the time, it was a three-person race between Ms. Wynne, PC leader Patrick Brown, and the NDP's Andrea Horwath.

As we all know, that roster was changed dramatically earlier this year, a move which set the tone for this very unusual ? and very personal ? campaign, a campaign which all but culminated on Saturday afternoon with a dramatic announcement from Ms. Wynne. ?We're in the homestretch of this election campaign and I just wanted to say a few words about what lies ahead and my perspective on the decision left to voters,? she said. ?On June 7, voters will elect a new government. I don't know who voters will choose, but I am pretty sure it won't be me. After Thursday, I will no longer be Ontario's Premier. And I'm okay with that. Because, as I have said many times before ? it is not about me. It is about the people of this province. It is about their wellbeing. And their futures. It is about their jobs. Not my job.?

While the statement was a concession, it was also an opportunity to tout her record and, in doing so, she outlined the Liberal government's boost to the minimum wage, support for tuition costs, expansion of GO Transit service, and programs to assist families helping their senior loved ones age in place.

It is a record she is undoubtedly proud of, one which she has taken from campaign stop to campaign stop, ultimately becoming the centrepiece for her unprecedented ?Sorry, Not Sorry? campaign ad to try and help turn the tide.

It didn't, so enter Saturday.

?People want change but, by and large, they are confident about where Ontario stands and where Ontario's headed. For this reason, many voters are worried about handing a blank cheque to either Doug Ford or the NDP. With a majority government, Doug Ford would have too free a hand for the comfort of most people ? they don't trust his judgement. They don't trust the choices he would make. I don't believe this is a man that people want to hand Ontario over to without putting him on the shortest of leashes.

?And the sentiment toward the NDP is much the same. People worry about what will happen to our economy if the NDP take power and form a majority government with nothing to hold them back. People worry that the NDP will raise taxes on small businesses, that they will take unemployment higher and job creation lower. So, it comes down to this: voters are going to pick a new premier, but they are generally worried about giving that person ? whether it's Doug Ford or the NDP ? too much power. They're worried about giving them too much of a free hand because they are concerned about what that might mean for our economy and our future.?

Ms. Wynne closed out her statement by urging voters to cast their ballots for their local Liberal candidate as the best way to stop Doug Ford.

But, will they?

While the Liberals I spoke to over the weekend ? that is, a few of those who are running for office on Thursday ? said they supported Ms. Wynne's statement, I couldn't help but feel they must feel some of the wind has now been taken out of their already tattered sails.

People generally have a soft spot for the underdog, sure, but there is also a hesitation to try, as the saying goes, to rearrange the deck chairs on the Titanic.

I can't imagine what it must feel like to be a candidate who, as of this writing on Monday morning, still had just two full days left to knock on doors to make a new sales pitch that throws out a platform in favour of a ?Vote for me because I am not [insert name of your opposing candidate of choice here]? position.

Party leaders vying for vote this time around have not exactly captured the public's imagination compared to, say, the way Justin Trudeau energized the youth vote in 2015 or the way Jack Layton steered his party through uncharted waters in the previous Federal election, but it is safe to say that despite what's going on at the top, we're fortunate to have very solid local candidates who have, by and large, solid track records of public service.

They have been generally able to stay above the fray, above the petty, and stick to their platforms ? that is, where such a platform exists ? and interact with each other in a respectful way with minimal mud slinging.

Perhaps a better solution to Ms. Wynne's last ditch-pitch, in what some consider to be a leadership vacuum, is to look at who wants to represent you and your interests at Queen's Park and decide which of the job applicants works best for you.