

BROCK'S BANTER: "I Love You..."

"I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change!"

By Brock Weir

A good section of the Commonwealth prepared to get comfortable this weekend, fire up their 24 hour news channels, log onto the internet for one of the invariable web feeds outside of the hospital where the Duchess of Cambridge is due to give birth (and still due at press time) to a future King or Queen.

Womb watch was in high gear, but at least three individuals in Toronto courts last week might have been wise to swing by eBay to pick up the newly designed Royal Baby Barf Bags.

It is a very Canadian scene, so familiar to everyone on Canada Day, seeing people from all corners of the world, right hands raised as one, and pledging allegiance to a country they have now come to hold dear. Amid the group of impending Canadians are many people for whom Citizenship has been theirs since birth, something they may have taken for granted, but feel compelled to also raise their hands to renew their commitment to their country.

?I swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.?

This is what is repeated in either official language in unison as the time-honoured ceremony unfolds. For people looking on, it might seem like a simple recitation but in talking to those who have come from many other parts of the world, some leaving countries in turmoil, others looking for better jobs and an improved quality of life, or often simply following their hearts in obtaining citizens enjoyed by their spouse and/or their children, they are not mere words.

It is the beginning of a new relationship with a country where they have chosen to plant roots, raise a family, and carve out a better existence.

For the Toronto Trio, however, this oath is ?the antithesis of democracy?, ?repugnant?, ?anachronistic?, ?repulsive?, and, for a man of Irish heritage, a ?betrayal? of his republican roots.

Although I don't personally share their views, I am not without a degree of sympathy. I can see some of their arguments, and a couple of them are not necessarily invalid. In my view, however, a constitutional monarchy such as ours works quite well within our democratic principles for the checks, balances, and cultural perspective that comes with it as an institution.

Being forced to swear allegiance to a principle they do not believe infringes on their human rights, they argue, and their ?inability? to undertake the Oath of Allegiance keeps them from receiving a Canadian passport, voting, or any of the other privileges that come with being a Canadian citizen. At the risk of pointing out the obvious, that is, quite frankly, the point.

People vying for citizenship are given rigorous and comprehensive guides on what it means to be Canadian, our parliamentary democracy, and all other aspects of Canadian identity. It seems unlikely they've only now started to crack the books, seen the Queen's face pop out of an ATM, or flipped a coin.

Yet, Citizenship is a road they've decided to embark on despite knowing the process is anathema to them.

It is, in my view, political grandstanding at best and grandstanding in a time honoured form. This is not the Ontario Courts' first time to this rodeo. As long as the rights of Canadians are maintained and enshrined into law and maintained by our institutions, it will not be the last.

The fact people have a voice in this matter, a principle also enshrined in our culture, is a good thing. But can we have too much of a good thing?

South of the border lies a republic where rather than swearing allegiance to their President as head of state, they vow to ?support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies foreign and domestic.?

If I fell in love with an American, followed my heart into the States, married, started a family, deciding to share the same citizenship ? and all the privileges that come with it ? of my wife and children would not be unreasonable.

Would I have the balls to go to the highest court in the land to argue the Oath violates my human rights as I'm vehemently against the Constitution's Second Amendment protecting the right to keep and bear arms? I think not.

Would I go to court and say I couldn't take the Oath of Allegiance because ?all enemies foreign and domestic' is vague and I'm a firm believer in ?know thine enemy?' Probably not.

Would I write to President Obama that before he can enjoy the privilege of my citizenship, an executive order changing the orientation of the American Flag is necessary as I'd like to wear patriotic t-shirts on July 4 and horizontal stripes make me look fat? Certainly not ? although that, again, might be due to a hesitation to state the obvious.

Canada's Oath of Citizenship is not a collection of mere words and not something which should be taken lightly. Nor should it be something that can be easily tinkered with to bend whichever way the political winds are blowing.