

BROCK'S BANTER: Tall, Patriotic Orders

By Brock Weir

I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm still rehydrating.

Ontarians made it through a scorcher of a Canada Day this past Sunday, culminating, as tradition dictates, with spectacular fireworks displays.

Well, that is if you actually made it through the day on Sunday without retreating to the comfort of a pool, splash pad, the closest spot with air conditioning, or the freezer section of your nearest grocery store, refusing to come out.

Personally, it was a close call.

At the risk of putting too much information into this column space, I am not ashamed to say that I went through a few linen shirts to get me through the day without looking like a complete ? and literal ? hot mess, but the job had to get done. Parades had to be covered, outdoor festivities needed their moment in, you should pardon the expression, sun, and all forms of patriotism needed to be captured for posterity.

Speaking purely for scorched self, the highlight of my day, as sad as it sounds, was pausing to stage a photo with the local fire department and standing too close to a nearby sprinkler. By the time the gloriously cool spray hit my back and my legs, suddenly I wasn't in such a hurry to get the photo just right. My shoes may have shuddered at the damp experience, but it was totally worth it. But, once again, Canada Day always delivers. You can always count on people turning out in droves to form a sea of red and white, eschewing the Canadian maxim of so-called ?quiet patriotism? and throwing caution to the wind to wear their respective hearts on their sleeves.

The same is true in just about every community across the country, the epicentre of which is, of course in our nation's capital. No matter what I have on my own Canada Day agenda, I like to swing home to catch at least part of the Canada Day Noon Show from Parliament Hill. It is always interesting in that as much as things stay the same, there are always different touches that set the tone for the next few months.

Sometimes these subtle changes take the form of the demographic makeup of individuals crowded outside the Peace Tower, sometimes it is dictated by the dignitaries in attendance, by the Governor General as soon as he or she arrives in the state carriage (or, this year, by bicycle for some reason), or by the Prime Minister of the day who lays out his or her vision for the nation as it is, or the nation it would or could be.

This year, we got a sneak preview of things to come, courtesy of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Canada Day statement.

As the nation teeters on a trade war with the United States, it is perhaps unsurprising that his typically ?sunny? annual message focused primarily on Canadian workers.

?We're 37 million ? strong in our differences, proud of our diversity, and united by our dreams,? he said. ?From one generation to the next, Canadians have brought our country's promise to life, with hard work, bold vision, and determination. They've grown the strong middle class at the heart of our success ? and today, Canada's workers are the backbone of our country.

?Canada's workers build the roads and bridges that get us to work on time and back home again. They put food on the table for families from coast to coast to coast. Some are young people starting their career, or newcomers bringing fresh talent to the workforce. From Ontario steel to Quebec aluminum, from agriculture and the energy sector in the Prairies and the North, to forestry in British Columbia and fisheries in the Atlantic, Canadians get the job done ? and build our communities along the way.

?We know we can count on Canadians. We stand with each other, and we will always stand up for each other. Canada's success has always come from its people ? lifting each other up, one community at a time.?

With this focus, the Prime Minister gave himself a hefty mandate to deliver upon as trade talks only intensify. This is a statement that will naturally be revisited as talks continue, regardless of whether they bear fruit, or are ultimately futile.

The same can be said for Doug Ford, Ontario's new Premier, who was installed along with the rest of his cabinet ? including Christine Elliott, Newmarket-Aurora's new MPP and newly-minted Deputy Premier ? on Friday morning.

?You believed as a province we can do better. You gave us a clear mandate, and you gave us the tools to deliver on a plan. A plan that puts you first, a plan for the people of Ontario?[you] have entrusted us with the highest responsibility. You have trusted us to govern, to respect your tax dollars, to recognize that every dollar the government spends belongs to you. To represent your interest above all others, to make decisions that will make life easier, better, and more affordable. Decisions that will alter the course of our great province and impact the future of our children. It is a tremendous responsibility, and we must never lose sight of this. We must never lose sight of the duty we owe to Ontario. And above all, we must always listen; we must always respect the will of the people.

And to the people of Ontario, I say this: Our government, our team will ever take this responsibility lightly. We will never forget the trust you have put in us. We will never forget who put us here and who we are accountable to.

We have sent a clear message about our position on NAFTA. The world knows that Ontario will stand united, shoulder to shoulder in solidarity with all Canadians. We will protect good jobs in Ontario. We will protect our rural communities. We will protect our agriculture, manufacturing, and resource industries.

It might have been a little late coming, but if the speech is any indication the framework of a plan is coming together. If anything, it's a clear vision of what he sees as his mandate.

Like the Prime Minister's Canada Day message committing support to workers, the Premier's installation message also gives a firm commitment upon which Ontarians will be looking back in the year ahead, and indeed the next four.

The Canada Day afforded an opportunity for our leaders to set out a vision for the future at a very certain time. These visions, however, are a tall order at both levels of government. We can only hope they deliver.