

FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE: State of the Race

By Stephen Somerville

I recall that the American television sitcom 'Seinfeld' ran for almost a decade during the 1990s. The tag line was that it was a 'series about nothing'. For being a series about nothing, it garnered a great many awards and wide spread acclaim.

As we have a lot going on politically in 2018 and 2019, I am going to label this 'a column of questions', because frankly, I have a lot more questions than I have answers or any particular insight to offer.

First we have the provincial election scheduled for June 7, 2018. We then have the Aurora municipal election, including what could shape up to be a very interesting Mayoralty race. On October 19, 2019 Justin Trudeau and the federal Liberals are scheduled to face re-election.

First up, though is the provincial election.

Now that the Provincial PC party has Doug Ford as their new Leader, there are still a bunch of questions.

First off, what will the party policy look like?

As you recall, last fall in Etobicoke, former Party Leader Patrick Brown introduced, to great fanfare, the People's Guarantee. This was the platform that the Tories would use to take on the Liberals in the coming election.

While there were 137 policy resolutions passed by party members, the People's Guarantee was really high-lighted by five key tenets: 22.5% lower income taxes for middle class, 75% refund of child care expenses, 12% further cut to hydro rates, largest commitment to mental spending in Canadian provincial history on mental health, and a Trust, Integrity and Accountability Act.

The imposition of a carbon tax was supposed to bring in \$4.2 B in annual revenue and was to be the vehicle to pay for the five big promises.

However, we know from the recent PC leadership that all the candidates abandoned the carbon tax.

What we don't know is what Mr. Ford will do regarding policy. In a media scrum a few days ago he did say that his team is working on a platform that will be 'fully costed'.

I look forward to seeing this.

Another question involves the nominated PC candidate Charity McGrath. She has apparently been banned from running. She is appealing this. Where does this sit? What about former PC nomination candidate Bill Hogg? And what about the rumour about defeated leadership candidate Christine Elliott being parachuted into the Newmarket-Aurora riding?

While it is still early, the local mayor and councilor races could be quite interesting, with many questions ensuing.

We know that the current mayor, Geoff Dawe, is going to seek another term in office. Will he be challenged by current councilor Tom Mrakas and/or Deputy Mayor John Abel?

One intriguing rumor that is floating out there is that if Chris Ballard, the Liberal MPP for Newmarket-Aurora and the current Minister of Environment and Climate Change were to lose the next provincial election in June, that he may decide to seek the Mayor's chain of office.

It would not be the last time that this happened.

Scores of defeated or retired MPs and MPPs have left party politics and run for municipal office.

What will the top three issues turn out to be this fall?

There are certainly lots of municipal issues for local voters to chew on; growth, the level of spending, stable neighbourhoods, to name a few, but what will the top three local issues turn out to be this fall? (More on this in future columns)

There aren't really any questions at this point regarding the federal election, scheduled for the fall of 2019.

Both incumbent Liberal members are (at this point) seeking re-election, while the Conservatives have nominated Costas Menegakis in the southern part of Aurora (below Wellington Street) while in the north it will be Lois Brown facing Kyle Peterson in a re-match of the last election.

I will be watching with great interest.

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