

POLITICS AS USUAL: And they're off!

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

Last week, I talked about how deftly Alberta Premier Alison Redford had managed to stave off a palace coup by simply staring them down.

Well, it seems that it wasn't enough.

Following her 'good talking to' by the party brass, folks within the party were still not satisfied.

There were further resignations as well as an imminent, hastily arranged meeting of politicians with the expressed purpose of holding a 'non-confidence' vote on her leadership. She beat them to the punch.

Citing her desire to avoid dealing with further inter-caucus infighting, the now former Premier resigned as of Sunday. It seems she would rather fall on her sword than endure further shivs to the back. Smart woman.

Political party in-fighting in Canada is nothing new. I recall the days of the positively caustic relationship between the Chretien camp and the Martin camp that played out in the 90s - to rather disastrous results for the Federal Liberal party.

As long as there have been leaders, there have been those who wish to tear them down. It makes sense. For someone to win their party's leadership, someone had to lose. And the losing side is often very, very bitter. They have no interest in sucking it up 'for the good of the party', despite what the party brass may say.

But, regardless of what has gone on before, I do have to say the infighting and intrigue does seem nastier nowadays. I think it's a result of the times we live in. We live in a multi-media saturated age.

The avenues for discord and displeasure to be displayed are neverending. It's a 24 hour news cycle. It must be constantly fed. And there are many folks out there eager to feed the beast.

Political friends and foes alike take to the airwaves and saturate the bandwidth with tales of virtue and magnificence or deceit and moral turpitude depending on their viewpoints.

The positive is there for sure, but the virulence and prevalence of the negative overwhelms the positive every time. It certainly seems lost on some that there is a difference between the expression of legitimate opposition to a party or a politician's position and extreme partisanship.

Disagreement and loathing become one in the same.

I do think this extreme negativity is what drives people away from politics - both from engaging in the process or participating entirely. Who in their right mind would want to run for office if they have to be subjected to all of this?

So, it is in this context that I went to the recent Newmarket-Aurora nomination meeting for the PC candidate. Given all that has transpired over the past few weeks, I was expecting some high drama.

I was very pleasantly surprised.

The meeting was an entirely positive affair.

The room was full of people there to support the acclamation of their candidate for the provincial riding, Newmarket Councillor Jane Twinney. Councillor Twinney even had members from her own Town Council there to show their non-partisan support for her campaign.

No attacks on candidates. Not even attacks on the Liberals. A few shots about ORNGE, gas plants, for sure, but they were more as an aside rather than a direct whack at their foes. Just positive messages about the candidate and what she would do for the riding. The Liberal candidate nomination process was drama-free. There were never any other candidates, so a nasty twittersphere war did not ensue.

I was, unfortunately, unable to attend the Liberal nomination meeting as I was in Toronto that night. However, I can report that the candidate - Aurora Councillor Chris Ballard - was similarly acclaimed.

I also understand that, similar to the PC candidate, there was a room full of people, including a few of Councillor Ballard's current Council colleagues, as well as a former Mayor, were also in attendance to show their support for his candidacy.

So far, so good. Will the race for the seat stay nice? Maybe. Maybe not. But it has certainly started off that way. Regardless, let's hope that we get a race about ideas, about vision, about support for our community.

It would be a welcome change from Politics as Usual.

Until next week, stay informed, stay involved because this is, after all, Our Town.