

## POLITICS AS USUAL: Shambolic

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

Shambolic. That's my new favourite word. It is a lovely made up word that is exquisitely appropriate for describing situations that move from farce to shambles and back again. So, I will use this new term to describe what transpired at this past weekend's PC leadership contest.

It was ? in a word ? shambolic.

Where to begin? The leadership race was an embarrassing mess from start to ignominious end. Its start should have been a clue about how it would end. The now former leader Patrick Brown's unseemly departure, then re-entry, then departure was an embarrassing sideshow that hogged all the media oxygen for weeks. The story was about him and not the ?race?. The other contenders had to duke it out on the margins to get some air-time. Imagine that ? the bombastic Ford, reduced to carping from the sidelines for literally weeks.

Then there was the fiasco with the actual voting process. Online voting has been around for a decade now. It's been used in a variety of jurisdictions and contexts. It is not complicated. And yet?This voting process was unnecessarily complicated. To start there was the fact that one needed a verification code to access step one of the voting process. Yet, thousands and thousands of registered party members did not get this magical verification code in the mail. And they needed it to vote. (It was all a bit Willy-Wonka-esque with folks waiting for their golden ticket?but I digress). So they could not proceed to step two ? uploading personal information in order to get yet another PIN that would allow you to vote.

I understand that there were considerable concerns about the veracity of membership numbers, so that may have played a part in the verification code debacle, but based on personal anecdotes, there were many longtime members who didn't get this magical code, so I'm not sure why the mail of out the verification codes went so poorly.

If media reports are to be believed, anywhere from 20 ? 30 percent of registered party members did not get a chance to vote. That is astonishing. This isn't a case of folks not showing up to vote, this is a case of folks not being able to vote at all.

The spin from the party notwithstanding, it doesn't matter that the numbers that did manage to vote were the largest in years, it matters that a sizeable portion of your members did not get to have their voices heard as to who should be their leader. And that is a big problem no matter how you spin it.

And then there was the big reveal itself.

The Leader was supposed to be announced at 3pm Saturday to a convention hall full of excited members. Well, the hour came and went and came and went and came and went. The folks on CP24 were running out of things to say to fill the dead air. They took to filming the ?most famous hallway in Markham? for hours on end in the hopes that something would happen.

And then something did happen. The party brass comes out to announce?that everyone should go home because they need the room for a body building contest. I am not making this up. The room erupted in boos and angry gesticulations?good golly, hardly the way to demonstrate leadership and command.

As I said?Shambolic