

POLITICS AS USUAL: The Pig Flew the Pen

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

Well Hallelujah!

Common sense has prevailed.

It seems that Toronto Mayor John Tory has come to the realization, somewhat belatedly in my opinion, that an Olympic bid is not a good idea.

I am not clear how he could reach any other conclusion.

Neighbouring Municipalities such Mississauga ? who had been intimately and intricately involved in the success of the Pan AM games ? stated baldly that they were not supportive of a bid. In other words, they were not willing to cough up their constituents' cash to help fund this

This was made clear weeks ago, so the 11th hour press conference at City Hall last Tuesday morning about the ?no go? position is somewhat puzzling.

As we saw with Pan Am, the City of Toronto cannot host the Olympics alone.

In fact, few of the events would be held in the City proper.

The broad range of Olympic events ? from equestrian to white water kayaking ? necessitates a variety of locations to accommodate the venues each sport requires. Once Mississauga said it was out, and there was radio silence from other municipalities that would have needed to be involved, the Olympic bid was pretty much dead in the water.

Besides, the bid didn't even have the full support of Toronto Council. While Tory may have been able to submit the letter of intent on his own (and it's not clear to me how he could, in fact, make that decision. I will do a separate column on the powers of the mayor and limits thereto), he would need the support of Council to move forward with an actual bid. And it is pretty obvious that that was not going to happen.

On top of that, the Province had made clear that it had no intention of providing any guaranteed cash to support the bid, let alone the actual hosting of the Olympics. The Feds are in the midst of an election campaign so there's no way any of the parties would engage in the discussion of supporting a multi-billion dollar party. That would seem to be at cross purposes with their current rather feverish efforts towards extolling their fiduciary virtues.

So, to recap ? no strong Council support, no support from co-hosting neighbouring municipalities, no support from the Province and no clue about federal support. Again, just what decision was being made today? Why the false spectacle of a ?big? announcement?

It didn't take a genius to know what he was about to ?announce.? He had no decision to make; it was already made for him.

Regardless, I am glad that cooler heads have prevailed and the taxpayers of municipalities across the GTA will not be on the hook for the quadrennial extravaganza. As expected, the giddy excitement of the ?success? of Pan Am has waned and the reality of day to day difficult decisions around municipal affairs has set in. Just in the past week alone, the multiple issues of massive public housing repair bills, decrepit roads and stalled and stagnant public transit have been brought uncomfortably back to the fore.

Responsible leadership requires making responsible decisions. And, for once, it appears that a municipal leader has acted responsibly.

I think I just saw a pig fly.

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