This page was exported from - Caledon Citizen
Export date: Thu Mar 28 19:33:44 2024 / +0000 GMT

Bill Rea ? Interesting times

These are interesting times as we approach the upcoming provincial election, which is now less than three months away.

Last week, we were told of the results of a new poll which was certainly not good news to the governing Liberals. We were told that poll, conducted by DART Insight, in the middle of last month for Newstalk 1010, revealed that about 81 per cent of respondents want the Grits out of power. According to the results I've read (I was looking at a story in last Thursday's Toronto Sun when I started writing this), the Progressive Conservatives, who as of that point were leaderless, were favoured by 44 per cent, while the New Democrats were backed by 24 per cent, 19 per cent are for the Liberals and 13 per cent favour ?other.?

I'll work on the assumption the poll is correct. Although polling practices have improved a lot since 1948, when Thomas Dewey was expected to kick Harry Truman out of the American presidency, it is accepted that they carry a margin of error. After all, if polls were always right, Hillary Clinton would be the president today.

Besides, do these polls really mean anything at a time like this? Granted, election day is not that far off, but there is still lots of time for things to change.

For one thing, like I stated above, the Tories did not, as of last Thursday, have a leader. True, Doug Ford has been elevated to that spot in the days that followed. But there have been plenty of questions raised about the practice that was followed to pick a leader. So no matter who ended up getting the nod, there were sure to be a lot of questions raised about how legitimate this leader is. The Grits and NDP are not dummies. They are going to be asking these questions as often as they can.

As well, have not polls heading into previous provincial elections painted roughly similar pictures? If memory serves, Ontarians were heading into the last campaign with certain assurances that a Tim Hudak government was a distinct possibility. And a couple of years before that, we were anticipating seeing John Tory as Premier. History records that neither scenario played out, and it could happen again.

There is always room for surprises, especially in provincial politics. I don't think many people expected Bob Rae to form a majority government in 1990, and the Liberals were talking with extreme confidence at the start of the 1995 campaign (that was the election in which Mike Harris won the first of his two majorities).

I think there are a lot of people who are not too enthused at the thought of Ford as party leader. But he won the race, and myself and a lot of other people are willing to see what he can do.

And now we're hearing about the upcoming Provincial budget, which is not going to be balanced, despite promises that it would be. Finance Minister Charles Sousa announced last week that we could be looking at a deficit on the order of $8 billion.

So are the governing Wynne Liberals planning to spend a lot of money trying to get votes? It's not that big a deal. It wouldn't be the first time something like this has happened, and you can count on the fact it won't be the last. Governments of all parties have been using our money to buy votes for years, and that's going to continue

One thing we hear too much about is how the deficit comes in terms of a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as if that's supposed to mean something.

Here are the facts. Government is in debt at the provincial and federal levels. As I have often stated, there is nothing wrong with being in debt, as long as there is an exit strategy from that debt. There was a time when I was in debt. Like most people who have ever owned a home, my wife and I had a mortgage. But the payments were well thought out in advance and were manageable. We had an exit strategy from that debt, and indeed, we paid off our mortgage a couple of years earlier than we had anticipated.

Most people approach their debts the same way, and are able to get out of them. True, sometimes things take unexpected turns, and there are some people who get in too deep, but most of us are able to manage things.

The problem is government doesn't look at debt that way. Wynne doesn't have an exit strategy for Ontario's debt (for that matter, Justin Trudeau doesn't have an exit strategy for Canada's debt).

There's the deficit that Sousa might be dropping on us later this month. That's just an addition to the already massive debt we have in place. The average person in the street, who's trying to get by and maintain control of their financial affairs wouldn't dare get themselves into deeper debt if they could avoid it. Government, unfortunately, doesn't see things that way.

And it's a debt that's going to have to be repaid one of these days. Indeed, the debt draws interest charges, that we're already paying. Adding more to the debt means more interest payments.

And this is what is going on as we head into an election

There are poll numbers that are telling certain tales. The government is planning to throw money at projects neither it or we can afford.

