

Bill Rea ? Predictions; for what they're worth

I guess there's hope for me yet.

Here we are, a bit more than a week into the new year. I've already had to write a couple of cheques, and have had no trouble remembering to put down '14? instead of '13.? That probably shows that I've accepted the passage of time, as if time was patiently waiting for my acceptance.

The start of a new year carries emotional impact on a number of levels.

For one thing, for most of us it carries a realization that the holiday season is just about done. I think some people are inclined to jump the gun a little. For example, the decision was made in our office to take down the holiday decorations New Year's Eve. It really didn't mean too much to me, although I was pressed into service lugging the Christmas tree into the back room of the office (a task that proved a little more bothersome than it sounds).

For others, it's a time for reflection on what has gone on in the previous 12 months. I think for just about all of us, every year has a certain number of charms and challenges, and that was certainly the case with 2013, at least from where I was watching. So the start of a new year was something I was looking forward to.

And then there are those who look ahead to what's in store, either for them or the rest of the world.

This time of year always seems to be filled with predictions from people who think they know something special. I like to think I know something, although I am inclined to hold my thoughts to some extent in such cases. I'm still getting ribbed for the mess I made of predicting the municipal election results in Caledon in 1991 (I guarantee you Richard Whitehead has a big grin on his clock as he reads this).

Be that as it may, I'll try a couple of predictions.

I expect the Leafs are going to make the playoffs this year, and do just well enough to get everyone's hopes up for the next season. Is that not the way things have been going for 40 some-odd years?

Sticking with the sports theme, I figure the Blue Jays are going to do better than they did in 2013, if for no other reason than I have a hard time figuring how they could do worse. And from what I've been reading, Munenori Kawasaki remains in the organization, so I think they should use him. Granted, he's not the greatest ball player in the world (neither am I). But the team seems to do well when he's in the line up. More important, my wife likes him.

I have no idea who's likely to compete at Wrestlemania, let alone who's going to win. I care even less.

Politically speaking, I think it's a safe bet we're going to have some election fun in 2014.

Owing to the nature of my job, I'm a little too close to the action to make any bold predictions on what the municipal campaign is going to offer in and around these parts. The situation is going to have to do a lot of clarifying before I start repeating my performance of '91.

I will get a little bold and say there will be a provincial election in '14, although I do hope we don't have to wait for the fall, when it would overlap with the municipal campaigns (I hate having to worry about two elections at once). I don't think the opposition is going to let Premier Kathleen Wynne get another budget through, which means the minority Liberal government is due to fall. The real problem with that prediction is I didn't think the Liberals could get through 2013 without being defeated, which I guess speaks volumes about how much I know.

Assuming we have an election, I'm a little scared to publicly guess how it's going to play out. Considering all the scandals the Liberals have had to deal with over the last couple of years (I think the gas plant fiasco has been the worst), I can't understand how they could get back in. Of course, I had similar thoughts after Dalton McGuinty told me and everyone else watching him in 2003 that he would never raise taxes, and then we got that health premium. Yet he was re-elected to another majority.

And there are people out there who don't understand that making predictions about elections can be risky.

Just look at the situation in Toronto, with Rob Ford running for another term as mayor. Despite all that has gone on, especially in the last several months, my gut tells me he's got a chance of getting back in, provided he can get through the coming year without doing something monumentally stupid. And that's going to be the real election issue in Toronto ? Can Ford turn in such a year? No predictions from this observation post!

Since Stephen Harper is heading a majority government, it's very unlikely that we'll see a federal election this year. But I expect federal politics are going to get a fair amount of play.

I don't think the scandal involving the Senate has much more traction to it. I think it's going to turn out to be the political wet firecracker I always thought it was.

As far as federal politics are concerned, I think the major questions in the coming year are going to deal with personalities in

general, and the personality of Justin Trudeau in particular. It's easy for people to ask whether or not he's qualified to be Prime Minister, but that leads to the broader question of what does a person have to accomplish to be considered qualified?

Mike Harris started out as a golf pro, and ended up being premier. People in Ontario will probably debate forever how good a premier he was, but I think two points are undebatable: he knew how to make government work the way he wanted and he kept most of his promises, even the bad ones.

Looking south of the border, I think of two particular presidents who served after the Second World War who greatly exceeded expectations, in the eyes of historians I have read. One (a hero of mine from history) was a failed haberdasher, and the other was a screen actor whose ability in that field was at best debatable (I've seen a couple of his movies, and I don't even think there's room for debate).

Harper and company will, I suspect, put a lot of effort into discrediting Trudeau over the coming year. That's good. If he can't handle that kind of heat, it's best that the entire electorate finds out about it now. And if he can take it, Harper will have time to adjust his strategy.

And another point is how much in the way of qualifications did Justin Trudeau's father have to offer when he hit the political scene? As far as the NDP are concerned, I fear the membership is going to learn the hard way that Thomas Mulcair is no Jack Layton. I also believe the impressive performance Layton headed up in 2011 was something of a one-shot deal, which is not likely to be repeated anytime soon.

I also predict that winter is going to continue to be too cold, summer is going to be too hot, and there's some idiot out there in a car who's going to cut me off at some point this year.

There are some things I do get right

