

Bill Rea ? Too soon to say

In some sports, there is such a thing as Silly Season.

It's a period, usually well into the campaign, but before the runs for the playoffs commence. It seems like various players are looking at positioning themselves, not for the rest of the season, but for where they hope to end up next season.

It makes some sense to me. Even the most avid sports fan has to take the occasional break during the action.

Silly Season occurs in other endeavours that have nothing to do with athletics.

Take politics, for example. There are points in the term of any government when the policies and issues seem to take a back seat, at least for a time, to jockeying.

Looking south of the border, we all know this is an election year, with a sitting president who is not eligible to run again. So the very real question is who's going to replace him. The two major parties have been busy for the last couple of months essentially weeding out those who will not advance. But things seemed to have settled down for a while. I think it's pretty clear by now who the Republicans and Democrats are going to nominate for the big job, but their respective conventions are still some weeks away. After that, things will heat up.

So I wouldn't be surprised if there are some interesting developments, if not out and out foolishness, in the time leading up to the conventions.

In terms of federal politics in Canada, we haven't had a Silly Season yet. I don't think that will come for a while. It's only been a couple of months since the Liberals under Justin Trudeau won their big majority, so I think they're still busy being impressed with themselves. That should continue for the next year or so. True, there have been a few controversial items, like the nonsense that recently took place in the floor of the House of Commons, and what is being commonly referred to as 'Elbowgate.' But I think that mess is going to go exactly where it should, namely nowhere. It was a simple combination of bad manners, accidents, dreadful acting and political posturing. You don't need any Silly Season to have those.

I predict that a year from now, the term 'Elbowgate' will be a matter of trivia.

The real fun is starting at the provincial level. We still have about two years to go before the next general election, but the jockeying has already started, and the proverbial knives are out for Premier Kathleen Wynne.

That really shouldn't be too sur

prising, and as far as Wynne is concerned, it need not be terribly ominous. She leads a majority government, and her party has been in charge at Queen's Park for going on 13 years. Naturally there's a mood for change out there, although it remains to be seen if anything will come of it. There appeared to be moods for change out there heading into the last couple of elections, but we still have a Liberal government. What that all boils down to is nothing is guaranteed yet.

The rumblings, however, are definitely out there. There are scandals on a number of levels that involve the use of taxpayers' dollars and confidence in government, as well as the competency of those running things right now. I think these issues can gain more traction than efforts to hammer Trudeau over his brief breeches of etiquette.

There was a story in the Toronto Sun last Thursday about former Toronto City councillor Doug Ford boldly predicting Wynne's days as Premier are numbered.

'In two years, the party's over,' Ford is quoted as saying. 'Pack your bags, get your loot bags, and we'll be going in there'd straightening out the Province's finances.'

Ford's position on this should not come as a surprise. Indeed, while he has announced he won't be seeking the Progressive Conservative nomination in an upcoming by-election in Scarborough, I would expect him to be prominent in the general election campaign expected for 2018. Since another member of the family has announced plans to seek the City council seat that had been held by Ford's late brother, I don't expect to see him running municipally two years from now.

But, then again, anything can happen.

Interestingly, but certainly not coincidentally, the story about Ford was printed right next to an item by Queen's Park columnist Christina Blizzard, which offered a bit of a catalogue of the various woes facing the Wynne government. One of the points she made is there seems to be a number of Grit MPPs who seem to be about ready to pack it in. Again, that shouldn't be much of a surprise. There are always changes heading into any election, as some sitting representatives come to realize they have had enough. Politics is a rough business, especially if the faction with which you're aligned happens to be out of favour. It stands to reason some of these people might just decide they've had enough.

But no matter how much trouble the party seems to be in, the Liberals can be assured there will be a lot of aspiring party members out there who are willing and anxious to step up. There are lots of Tories and New Democrats available to fill gaps those parties

might encounter too.

So while things might currently look bad for Wynne and company, nothing has been decided at this time.

And where a particular party or leader might stand in the opinion polls at this point is next to meaningless. There's plenty of time for the numbers represented in the polls to change.

In 1990, the poll numbers for David Peterson and his Liberals looked pretty good, so he called a snap election. A couple of weeks later, he was unemployed. Five years later, poll numbers indicated Lyn McLeod was going to lead the Liberals back into power, yet Mike Harris somehow got in. Harris proceeded to make a lot of people like me mad. Some of his opponents resorted to strategic voting, and he ended up getting another majority in 1999. Dalton McGuinty came to power in 2003 with promises not to raise taxes, and he promptly went back on his word. There were predictions he would be tossed out for that four years later, and he wasn't. And much was expected of the last two Conservative leaders, and they weren't able to deliver much.

Many people would like to see the provincial Liberals sent packing after the next election, and that might very well happen. Or it might not.

Two years is a long time, allowing for plenty of variations in fortunes. While I don't expect it to happen, it is possible that Wynne could be restored to grace in the eyes of many who are mad at her now. Patrick Brown is a rookie leader, so there's no telling how he's going to do in his first campaign. And even if he comes up short, it's not the end. Bob Rae, Harris and McGuinty all lost the first elections they contested as leader. Or maybe he'll win. We all just have to wait.

