

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? Some storm clouds lying ahead

Can it really have been a year already?

Remember in your youthful days when even the summer holidays seemed to last forever, when you got up each day confident that the fun and games would continue indefinitely and those inevitable school bells were still well off in the distance?

Well, with age, lots of things change, among them the speed at which time seems to fly by.

So yes, it really is a year since Justin Trudeau defeated Stephen Harper ? and Thomas Mulcair ? to take over as Canada's latest prime minister, a year of endless selfies and ubiquitous posing that ? according to the latest Star Forum survey ? shows that Trudeau is still wildly popular.

Mind you, he hasn't done much yet. And it doesn't hurt that both opposition parties are essentially leaderless, involved in absurdly long leadership contests, leaving the Liberals to pretty much spend their time congratulating each other on just how terrific they really are.

Back in 2012, a year into Harper's first term as a majority prime minister ? after several years running a minority ? then Liberal deputy leader Ralph Goodale reminded everybody that more Canadians had voted for the opposition than for the Tories (the same situation now for the Liberals) and that Tory ministers are acting with an ?attitude of impunity,? which pretty well sums up the current Liberal ministers.

?Their (Tory) behavior is a false bravado every day,? he continued. ?It's triumphalism. And that kind of thing is going to lead to bad government.?

Oh, the irony. The Tories, even at their worst, couldn't hold a candle to the smug, self-righteous triumphalism of the current crop. What's more, like him or hate him, Harper had actually taken a lot of tough decisions during that initial year, as compared to Trudeau's constant flitting around from pillar to post, as yet unable to find a camera he couldn't cosy up to with his Hollywood looks and style.

But Trudeau's so-called ?sunny ways? may soon see some clouds moving in, particularly his plan to send 600 soldiers to Africa, a plan that even Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan has made clear ?is not the peacekeeping of the past.?

Liberals ? and others as well ? have lived off the glory for years of former prime minister Lester Pearson's grand idea to set up a United Nations peacekeeping force to help maintain order in the world. In many instances, it actually worked quite well.

But things were different then. The enemy was easy to spot and not impossible to control. No more. Now, the enemy is everywhere, and all the old rules governing war have gone out the window.

According to the aforementioned Forum survey, 56 per cent of the respondents support this plan, but that drops to 44 per cent when respondents were reminded that Canadians could come under fire on this mission.

And, as Harper learned in his earlier days, once the body bags start coming home, support for the mission becomes catastrophic, and the prime minister's popularity, whether fair or not, takes a major hit.

But that's not Trudeau's only possible hiccup on his way to a sunny future. He's going to be in a fight with Saskatchewan and others over his plan to unilaterally impose a carbon tax ? so much for fact-based decision making with the help of all parties involved. As an idea, the tax may be popular right now. But once it's imposed, and people start paying ? and begin to realize it won't do a damn thing to cut back emissions ? a lot of those smiling faces will develop a grimace.

Then there's the upcoming decisions over pipelines and Trudeau's wild-eyed proposals to spend billions in infrastructure projects. Sounds good on the surface. But with the average Canadian family already spending more in taxes than they spend on food, clothing and shelter combined, the inevitable hike in even more taxation isn't going to be greeted by massive standing ovations from coast to coast. Quite the opposite.

One thing I've learned in half a century of watching politics is that people often clamour for government action on this and that, but generally are happier with governments when they're not doing anything.

That explains Trudeau's current popularity a year in. But once he starts doing concrete things ? and there's nothing governments can do without upsetting a lot of people ? we may begin to catch just a glimpse of worry on his bright, smiling face as he hops from selfie to selfie cheered on by the party that invented self-entitlement.

Or, as one former Liberal minister once summed it up nicely when questioned about his excessive personal entitlements, ?I'm entitled to my entitlements.?

Eventually, the public tires of it. But it takes a while.

