

Springing forward into the future

It's that time of year again!

No, not tax season ? although, in fairness, if you haven't begun the process just yet, it might be a good time to start ? but the season of springing forward.

We all have something of a love-hate relationship with the seasonal time change. I think we can agree that the time change, whether you're springing forward or falling back, is invariably a pain in the butt, what with not only re-setting all the clocks in one's life that don't do so automatically, but also in re-setting one's internal clock, which can be a longer process for some of us than others.

With the time shifts in either direction come the annual calls for the archaic process to be abandoned ? personally, I am yet to hear a compelling reason for keeping it in place that is relevant in our present timeline ? but springing forward has far less detractors than those who come out in the late fall to call for change or otherwise vent their spleens.

I get it, though. On the one hand, in falling back, we are all susceptible to feeling the proverbial walls close in as our daylight hours dwindle. But, on the other hand, falling back gives us, in theory, a borrowed extra hour to play with, whether spend it wisely on accomplishing something on a to-do list or getting an extra dose of worthwhile sleep.

Springing forward, again in theory, presents far fewer challenges.

While we might begrudge having to pay back that bonus hour of autumnal slumber, the trade-off that comes with the longer daytime hours is well worth it, as far as I'm concerned. Being able to leave the office at 6 p.m. in anything other than complete darkness is a unique luxury at this time of year and, if you will pardon the pun, never fails to make me have an extra spring in my step.

Aside from the usual hemming and hawing over the semi-annual time change, the switch-over is rarely remarkable in the grand scheme of things. Yet, this past weekend, it brought us one hour closer to having an idea of what our future might look like amid a sea of uncertainty.

Members of the Liberal Party of Canada met in Ottawa over the weekend to choose a new leader, one who is expected to become the country's next Prime Minister as early as this week.

Ultimate victor Mark Carney sealed the deal with a landslide victory over former cabinet minister Chrystia Freeland, House Leader Karina Gould, and former MP Frank Baylis. Carney's victory was all but certain going into Sunday's convention climax ? the support he received from Liberals from coast to coast left barely a shadow of a doubt on what the outcome would be ? but what surprised me was just how high his support was, with the present cabinet ministers each failing to crack more than four per cent of the vote.

It's one heck of a mandate from dyed-in-the-wool supporters for him to fall back on, but a mandate from the Canadian people writ large will make itself clear ? or not ? sometime this spring with the inevitable election we'll soon find ourselves in.

While I offer no personal report card on the performance of Justin Trudeau as his chapter as Prime Minister closes, it will be nice ? again, in theory ? to turn the page and start reasonably fresh.

While, of course, there have been healthy and not-so-healthy debates across the country on Trudeau's policies and performance as a leader since he was first elected, so much criticism has come solely on the alleged basis of personality.

In the beginning there were comments about his hair and socks in an attempt to detract from substance. There were attacks on his previous career as a teacher, although I was never sure what message that was intended to send to our educators, apparently making

that factor, in and of itself, one rendering him unfit for office.

As the pandemic rolled in, along with other challenges that came from beyond our borders, attacks trebled, with comments again focusing on the man rather than the party or the policy.

It was, to my eyes, indicative of something of an obsession on the part of his detractors, after all, I don't remember the same types and volumes of attacks being levelled at, say, Paul Martin against Stephen Harper and vice versa, or involving Jean Chretien vs. Preston Manning or Stockwell Day, wetsuit choices notwithstanding.

With a new leader in the offing, I was hoping that ads from the opposition would shift substantively towards policy and offering a vision for the future; but even before Carney's appointment ? or, according to the opposition, his ?coronation? ? ads rolled out with the slogan, ?He's just like Justin.?

Enough already.

At a moment when we are facing unprecedented challenges from our neighbours, including the trade war we now find ourselves in the midst of, personality politics should be left by the wayside in favour of healthy national conversations about how we ? and the parties vying to represent us on the world stage ? should respond to said threats and, elsewhere, strengthen our country and our people to withstand whatever unpredictable threats that might come our way in the future.

We have, thankfully, experienced an upswing in national unity in recent days against these very threats and our political conversation should reflect that seriousness, no matter what way you politically lean.

It's what we deserve, what we used to expect, and it's what we should expect from our leaders, our parties, and those who hope to represent their neighbours in Ottawa.

?In Canada, our elbows are up,? said Chretien on Sunday. ?We're working together to unite, to deal with this threat ? the threat to our economy and our sovereignty. In other words, our very existence as a country. At the beginning of the week, tariffs became a reality and there will only be losers if you measure it in financial terms alone. But, for Canadians, it is more than that ? it is more than money that is at stake here. We love our country and our independence. We love who we are because we're unique in the world.?

Elections are always a time for conflict, but let's keep said conflict to an exchange of ideas and visions of how our country can address these threats and remain united in the process. Personality politics and attacks for the sake of attacks serve no one; we can't do with any more cracks in solidarity than the necessary ones that come with these exchanges.

It will take more than our fall ?bonus hour? to repair the damage.