

■ OPINION

DESPITE POWERFUL FOES, IANNICCA GLIDES INTO PEEL'S CHAIR

THE 'SWITZERLAND' OF
CANDIDATES PROVES SAFEST
CHOICE, JOHN STEWART SAYS

MY Dec. 20, 2018



JOHN
STEWART
Column

If nothing else, Nando Iannicca proved, in becoming Peel's fifth chair, that he can bring opposing factions together.

He managed to put longtime antagonists Carolyn Parrish and Hazel McCallion on the same team, pair former Ontario PC leader Patrick Brown with former Liberal finance minister Charles Sousa and unite the mayors of Brampton and Caledon in nominating and seconding a candidate.

Those are no small feats - especially when those unorthodox alignments were all against him - and he still pulled off a 15-9 victory.

There were many unusual aspects to the proceedings - as usual in the Keeping Up With the Car-Crashians world of realpolitik.

Consider:

- Brampton couldn't even muster a candidate from among three veteran, well-qualified, departing politicians (Elaine Moore, Gael Miles, Linda Jeffrey). No defectors from Brampton's uncivil war could see a way to muster 13 votes. They would have competed to be first off the ballot. Peel will be 48 years old at term's end without a single Brampton - or female - chair.

- A few months ago, Ford Nation was reaching out to Charles Sousa to save them from po-

tential Peel chair Patrick Brown. Brown's first motion as a Peel councillor was nominating the Wynne Liberal. Nice to see Brown and Doug Ford have a mutual token Liberal friend.

- Sousa's vacillation about running - not confirmed until the last weekend - hurt his credibility. He gave a fine high-level summary of his executive skills, while Iannicca touched all the hometown bases, effectively demonstrating he can step right into the job.

- Both men praised each other, with Iannicca saying (accurately) that Sousa has done more for Peel than any other modern MPP.

- Iannicca has 30 years at Peel under his belt, but the "old guard" vote didn't win it for him. Seven of eight new Peel councillors supported him. He got two of Caledon's five votes, eight of Mississauga's 12 and five of Brampton's seven. There was no block voting by municipality.

- The vote always puts people in awkward positions. Rookie Dipika Damerla chose the man she replaced as Ward 7 councillor over her former seat mate at Queen's Park.

- Iannicca has no illusions about his win, saying he was seen as "Switzerland - a safer choice." The man of a thousand metaphors says if you have a toothache, you want an experienced dentist (him), not a family doctor (Sousa).

There are trying times ahead, for Peel in particular and regional government in general - which may be on Premier Ford's lengthy hit list.

The new chair insists Peel works well. Problems in other regions don't justify dismantling Peel.

Peel must first address its governance, finding a more equitable voting formula to represent two of Ontario's largest cities amalgamated with a town of 71,000 that has 54 per cent of the land mass.

Once it's set its own house in order, Peel can then present a united front to Queen's Park.

"We have to make the case why we're the right model," Iannicca says.

Switzerland's mastery of mediation is about to be severely tested.

John Stewart is a retired longtime journalist with the Mississauga News. His column, My Back Pages, appears each week.