# Undercover of the big tent



By Nate Smelle

It's not even 6 a.m. yet on Tuesday, Sept. 21, and with the exception of the last two hours I spent in dreamland, I've been watching reporters and politicians weigh in on the whirlwind election that just swept through Canada since 4 p.m. yesterday afternoon.Being that there was only a 36-day campaign leading up to last night's competition, anyone with a wager on the outcome of the race is now dealing with the inevitable mental, physical, and spiritual hangover that comes with every election.Despite the seeming surge in popularity of exclusionary politicians such as former Conservative MPs Derek Sloan and Maxime Bernier, Canadians sent a strong message to those attempting to divide and conquer. That message being: we have caught onto your ruse; and, Lord-willing, that we won't get fooled again. By electing Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to a third term ? even though he called a $600-million+ election amid the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic ? Canadians showed they would rather the Liberals' more socially progressive style of government than any of the alternatives available on the right.

Whereas the attempted mutiny by this ramshackle team of disgruntled former Conservatives may have failed, this short-lived experiment in blunted fascism was not a complete loss for the country. In the same telling way that the failed insurrection on the Capitol building in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 6, 2020 led by former U.S. president Donald Trump illuminated the waning support for his divisive style of politics; the squawking from the far-right in Canada leading up to Sept. 20 has shone a light on a dysfunctional faction of the Conservative Party that is willing to say and do anything ? including putting the lives of their own potential voters at risk ? just to stay in power.

One of the most encouraging takeaways arising from the recent federal election for me was the story told by the final tally. As obnoxious and distracting as the honking of this twisted anti-Canadian gaggle may be, the total number of votes they received reveals how insignificant they are on the national level. At the same time, the amount of attention these individuals and their supporters garnered from the national media is worth paying attention to.

Before Erin O'Toole was elected as leader of the Conservative Party, he had aligned himself with the more extreme, far-right wing of the party. After becoming leader he quickly upset many of these social conservative supporters when he pledged the party's support to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Two Spirited+ health initiatives; and, announced that he was ?pro-choice.?

The fact O'Toole has shifted the party to the left so extremely since becoming leader attests to his awareness of the writing on the wall. Through his posturing during the campaign, it has become clear that O'Toole knows the days of overtly divisive and hateful governments are numbered. Since taking the helm, O'Toole's ever-increasingly left-leaning stance has also shown that he

understands the Conservatives shortcomings, and what needs to change if they are to truly become a ?big tent party.?

Whether the party will embrace his change is yet to be seen. Nevertheless, a line has been drawn.