

Tricky Doug

By Bill Kilpatrick

I was introduced to a new term the other day by historian Timothy Snyder and it's called a sadopopulist. Yes, I can already hear some of the groans from people rolling their eyes at yet another term to describe our current political situation, but language, it must be noted, has to change with changing times and with new previously unknown behaviour. In a YouTube video Snyder explained that we need concepts that help us make sense of the world and what's happening in it and only through understanding will we be better able to recognize a behaviour, cope, and overcome.

What is a sadopopulist? Well, first we have to define populist, which is not that easy to do in fact, since most definitions are filled with contradictions and exceptions leaving it a hollow and banal word. A populist, for the sake of this editorial is someone who, can represent the political left or the right and who invokes the idea of the 'common people' and, according to the Oxford dictionary, they 'strive to appeal to ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups.' It's a very general definition, but useful for this argument. As Snyder pointed out, historically populists, once in power, often brought forward policies that would benefit the 'common people' who helped them into power.

Snyder further pointed out that people like Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin are often referred to as 'populist' because of their appeal to the common people, but says Snyder, there is a difference between current populists and historical populists. What Snyder sees happening is the implementation of policies that in fact hurt the very people who elected the populist to power. The current gutting of the Human Health Services and the ignoring of Habeas Corpus in the United States is an excellent example of sadopopulist policies.

With the implementation of the Strong Mayor powers and Bill 5, the so-called Protect Ontario by Unleashing our economy Act 2025, Premier Doug Ford has passed from being a populist leader into the realm of a sadopopulist. His trick was to pretend that Canada is not for sale and talk tough about the tariffs and the 51 state threats, while all the time, implementing U.S. style policies that are weakening our democracy and hurting Ontarians. As a populist he is masterful. Ford has his finger on the pulse of Ontario like no other premier, and like an animal who sensed fear, he took advantage of the tariff threat to make himself out to be the good guy who is looking out for you and your interests. But in reality, Ontario is for sale, and it's for sale to Ford's friends.

According to Environmental Defense.ca Bill 5 will 'kill homegrown renewable energy' and 'will likely end solar power installation in Ontario and deprive Ontarians access to the cleanest source of new electricity available.' This, at a time when smoke from the wildfires in Manitoba invade our air space and NASA points out that 2024 was the hottest year since 1850. By killing renewable energy and depriving us of future clean electricity he is signing our death warrant.

Environmental Defense also pointed out that Bill 5 effectively repeals Ontario's Endangered Species Act 2007, ends Indigenous archeological assessments, 'creates Special Economic Zones (SEZ), where hand-picked developers can ignore municipal and provincial laws,' and 'exempts the Therme Group development at Ontario Place from the requirements of the Environmental Bill of Rights.'

According to the Guardian 'Donald Trump has launched an unprecedented assault upon the environment, instigating 145 actions to undo rules protecting clean air, water and a livable climate in this administration's first 100 days.' Bill 5 seems a lot more aligned with Trump's policies than those that Ontarians desire as Ontario's Auditor General points out. 'Ontario's legislation and related regulations, policies and programs are meant to protect against environmental degradation, and support better health and quality of life for future generations [because] The people of Ontario recognize the inherent value of the natural environment.' Well, some do anyway.

Other environmental groups are also sounding the alarm over Bill 5. Eco Justice points out that 'Bill 5, if passed, would provide Cabinet the power to decide which species deserve protection, effectively making protection a political choice, not a scientific one.'

The new law would define animal 'habitat' to mean only the nest, den, or immediate area around it ? not the forests, wetlands or feeding grounds they need to survive. Cabinet is allowed to further narrow that definition. This would leave species that are already in decline due to habitat loss, without the basic things they need to survive.? It's important to point out that when we deprive other living things of what they need to survive we are effectively depriving ourselves of what we need to survive as well.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association further pointed out that Bill 5 will also ?change the Mining Act to expedite mining activities and amend the Environmental Assessment Act to exempt two contentious projects. The Dresden landfill and Eagle's Nest Mine.? However, their big concern is the Special Economic Zones Act, 2025, which they believe is an attack on the rule of law. They state, ?In our view, this vague proposed legislation represents a direct assault on the rule of law since it enables the province to make regulations delineating zones in which 'trusted proponents' or designated projects may not have to comply with existing legal requirements enacted by the Ontario Legislature and by-laws made by municipalities that otherwise apply to every individual and corporation.? The rule of law has also been a favorite punching bag for Trump and Putin.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association also raised concerns that Bill 5 would ?adversely affect? Indigenous people's constitutionally protected rights. It would appear that many Indigenous people share this view as well. In an Interview with Now Toronto, North Superior Regional Chief Melvin Hardy said that ?First Nations land will be eradicated,? adding that ?We're going to end up back to where we were in the 1920s and 1930s, the government's trying to put us back just to be good little people in the corner and shut up, that's all they want.? Other Indigenous leaders such as Shelly Moore-Frappier, chief of the Temagami First Nation told Global News that there could be Idle No More style protests that could include highway blockages. Moore-Frappier stated, ?What else do we have left to do when they're ignoring the concerns that we have and they're refusing to consult with First Nations??

They are not only ignoring First Nations, but the Ford Government, like Trump and Putin, mask themselves as populists while ignoring the law, the environment, and anyone who disagrees with them by implementing sadopopulist policies under Orwellian titled legislation meant only to deceive. Ford's Tough talk towards Trump means very little if he is going to behave just like him. There is only one action that populists understand and that is action and protest and in order to protect our collective futures, perhaps we all need to be Idle No More.