

At her majesty's pleasure

By Brian Lockhart

I've always thought that working in the diplomatic service of any country would be at the very least, interesting work, and at the other end, a glamorous type of job with a lot of parties and hobnobbing with the movers and shakers of society.

At least in the movies, there's a lot of "Let me introduce you to the Ambassador, Mr....."

"Bond, James Bond," while men in tuxedos and women in expensive evening gowns hold martini glasses and converse in witty banter in several languages.

I'm sure most people in the service would tell you it's more hard work than parties, and if a super secret foreign spy did attend your embassy party, he certainly wouldn't tell you who he was.

Becoming a diplomat and representing your country in another nation isn't a job you come by after attending a six week course on foreign affairs.

I'm sure there is a whole process of working your way up through the ranks of the civil service.

People who are selected for the position of Diplomat must maintain a certain decorum at all times.

The profession is the skill of managing international relations. A Diplomat must be able to listen, speak, negotiate, and influence, while maintaining that sense of decorum.

Someone who is routinely loud, opinionated, not-flexible, arrogant, rude, or not informed, would not do well negotiating a trade deal.

A person who doesn't have the right personality simply would not be chosen for the job because they would fail at it.

That decorum not only applies to the dealings with foreign diplomats and dignitaries, it also applies to the staff who work at an embassy or consulate and manged the day to day affairs of that office.

The position of Governor General in Canada, is one of those well recognized titles that everyone has heard. However, I'll bet if you asked around, half of those people you questioned would really have to think about it, or would come up short naming the current Governor General.

The Governor General, as we all learned in school, is the Queen's representative in Canada. However, the position has no real power. It's almost exclusively a ceremonial position which includes waving at crowds, showing up at some events, handing out medals, and occasionally hosting dignitaries.

It is also a position that costs tax payers a lot of money.

There seems to be no real qualifications for becoming Governor General.

Our current GG is Julie Payette - a former astronaut. While being an astronaut is indeed an impressive addition to your resume and a rather stellar accomplishment, how does that experience translate to becoming a person holding public office?

The role of Governor General is by nature, one that requires diplomacy.

The reports coming out of this latest GG's office are less than favourable. Payette has been accused of belittling and publicly humiliating employees, throwing tantrums in her office, and bullying people in her service.

This isn't a complaint from one disgruntled employee. These are complaints from more than a dozen insiders in the GG's circle. Several long time employees have left after being harassed.

As one insider reported to CBC news, 'This has gone from being one of the most collegial and enjoyable work environments for many of the staff to being a house of horrors. It's bullying and harassment at its worst.'

Payette is described as an 'intensely private' person. She has spent a lot of money at Rideau Hall, the official Governor General's residence, to maintain privacy so she won't have to see members of the public or workers. And yet she has never even moved into the residence.

Now the people charged with protecting her have added their complaints to the list.

RCMP sources say the Governor General has added to the cost of security through her disregard for the Mounties and by routinely requiring her protective detail to scramble to fulfil last-minute requests resulting in spending on overtime, hotel, and plane tickets.

The RCMP sources said they have had to apologize for her behaviour to foreign security teams because she treated them so poorly.

The position of Governor General is tolerated at 'Her Majesty's pleasure', meaning there is no actual term limit. However, the normal term spent in this office is five years.

We the tax payers are forking over big bucks to support this office. It costs \$ millions each year to run a position that is largely hollow.

At the very least we deserve a person in a diplomatic position to behave with a degree of diplomacy in regards to the public, foreign dignitaries, and especially their own staff.