

Mike the crane operator versus Mike the mayor

Chris Cooke - April 2025

The two newspapers were sitting there and Americans were reading them.

They were sitting in the café at Neiman's Marketplace, an upscale grocery chain in St. Clair, Michigan.

They were Friday and Saturday editions of the Port Huron Times Herald.

The Friday edition had a front-page story featuring Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley headlined "Canadian mayor requests removal of American flag". The other headline centred on potential layoffs in the auto industry amid an ongoing trade war.

While delivering store copies of grocery ads one of the Americans catches a glimpse of the Canada Goose patch on my jacket.

"You Canadian?" a fellow named Mike asks.

These days I'm never sure how to respond but I took a chance admitting I'm in fact Canadian.

Mike sticks out his hand for a handshake telling me that he owns a crane company in Port Huron and his wife Irene worked for 40 years at Farmer Jack and remembers when the grocery chain would bring in truckloads of turkeys at Canadian holidays.

Pointing to the newspapers Mike asks who's this guy?

Slightly embarrassed I explain that "this guy" is Sarnia's mayor, a career politician who has never had a real job, never made a payroll and isolates himself in his second floor office at Sarnia City Hall overlooking the St. Clair River and expounds on what he perceives are events of the day.

"What's with the flag?" asks Mike noting "we aren't ripping down your flags."

I quickly grasp that Mike is a Republican suffering from buyer's remorse and explain that as far as I know the mayor's position isn't shared by the vast majority of Canadians.

Mike says he voted for Trump to clean up the southern border and reduce the trillion-dollar federal budget deficits left by previous "woke" Democratic governments.

As for tariffs he described them as a "bad idea" that he never saw coming and would never have voted for.

And he had a message for Bradley.

Americans and Canadians have the longest shared open border in the world and he suspects both sides just want to go back to the way things were.

As for Donald Trump he believes if a do-over were held today "he'd be toast".

He shook my hand again and apologized.

Mike the crane operator could be wrong about this but I suspect he isn't.