

Mr. Stephen Goes to Queens Park

The docudrama story told in *Mr. Stephen Goes to Queens Park* is presently playing in the new Public Interest theatre in the community of North Grenville, home to the small town of Kemptville, Ontario.

This gripping docudrama opens with a retrospective look at Mr. Stephen's political career. When the residents of a region with a very long name needed to choose an amiable, trustworthy and hard-working politician to represent them in a legislative body (referred to as Queen's Park in the story) they choose Mr. Clark Stephen. As the story unfolds, we see how Mr. Stephen's political trajectory began at the tender age of 22, fresh out of university, the youngest mayor in the country at the time. By all accounts, he was perfectly suitable to rise to the region's prestigious position of PPM (Permanent Political Master). The audience follows along as he is mentored by the character of Mr. Ford Douglas, the affable Supreme Political Master who eventually gives him some significant institutional political power, known as a ministry. Then it happens.

Spoiler alert: I shan't reveal how it happened, or the room where it happened, because this is part of the mystery. Suffice it to say that the plot seriously thickens when Mr. Stephen falls in love with the seductive temptress known as Ministerial Zoning Orders and a version of George Orwell's Ministry of Truth. We witness the Supreme Political Master's eccentric approach to economics, his repeated backtracking on poorly thought out plans and the befriending of corporate allies. In this toxic (or intoxicating) mix of decision-making, Mr. Stephen suddenly faces a moral dilemma: should he fight to preserve the vision of a small town in the region he represents, or should he destroy it with a terrible plan cooked up by the Supreme Political Master and a triumvirate known as A.O. Thompson, I.O. Surma and SolGen Jones – the antagonists of the story. It's a classic morality tale, with a wonderful cast of supporting actors collectively known as "the Council" who are forced to face their own moral choices.

Viewers will be enthralled by the drama. On the one hand, the triumvirate repeatedly insists that they are translucent, but all the audience can see is a stone wall. Meanwhile, Mr. Stephen repeatedly says that he's there to protect what matters most, but does he mean what matters most to him, to the Supreme Political Master and the triumvirate, or does he mean the people – the protagonists - who democratically elevated him the position of PPM? The antagonists repeatedly claim that their less than democratic plan is a done deal, but the audience is shown the many times and ways that the Supreme Political Master has backtracked on other bad plans. Throw in the Council's tricks to mislead the audience, and the plot twists and turns in secretive ways. But of course, the facts come out, revealing that the Council's support for the antagonists' plan is wrong-headed, and the suspense builds from there as the region's citizens work together to be spared the destruction of their town's vision, the loss of their heritage farmland and the financial costs they will bear because of the PPM's plan.

The story unfolds over a period of several months, where the powerful antagonists get the upper hand early on through undemocratic measures, including Mr. Stephen's brazen attempt to silence citizens of his region. But the town's residents struggle on, slowly exposing the hollowness of the Supreme Political Master's plan, which generates an ever-increasing opposition from many sources. The docudrama swings back and forth between the antagonists' Goliath-like attempts to fool the citizenry and the

protagonists' David-like efforts to expose the truth. We reach the climax of the story when Mr. Stephen must choose between his political masters or the citizens who still hold onto the image of the amiable and trustworthy PPM, and hope that he will choose to defend democracy.

The audience may find the docudrama's ending rather disappointing, since the nefarious plan is still threatening the small town in question. This is because as *Mr. Stephen Goes to Queens Park* ends, there is still plenty of time for the Supreme Political Master, the PPM and the triumvirate to put their plan on hold, and restore democracy in the region. But whether the town is saved or not, there is no doubt that the audience will have seen what happens to Mr. Stephen when he goes to Queen's Park.