

INSIDE QUEEN'S PARK

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GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL ANALYSIS

February 20, 2013

AT THE CUTTING EDGE: PREMIER WYNNE'S PLENTIFUL PRIORITIES

Ontario's new government is headed by a politician who is not afraid to declare key objectives, both substantive and in regard to process. The Premier-elect wasted no time in declaring the importance of acting to advance both social justice and jobs and the economy before she left the Make Believe Gardens stage on which her convention victory was celebrated.

The premier has also sounded the klaxon on the state of Ontario's agriculture, having kept her campaign promise to assume that portfolio – or the best part of it, at any rate. Hiving off the Rural Affairs component (to the steady **Jeff Leal**) will help some but there is no guarantee that Queen's Park can afford the political and financial cost of squaring the horse-racing industry, calming the uproar over wind-turbines and dissipating the bolshy attitudes in rural and remote territories.

Far more difficult, Wynne has to reach a workable détente with the teachers – on which she has tapped a trusted school board leader (**Liz Sandals**). In addition to allocating trusted or promising colleagues to address our jobs and employment needs (**Eric Hoskins**), and the deficit and spending challenges in infrastructure and transportation (**Glen Murray**). The claims of Toronto for action to address grid-lock added to the province-wide transit dossier. And the burdensome issues in the crowded field of energy have been given to a veteran (**Bob Chiarelli**).

handed down as marching orders to the Minister from the OPO, these will now be negotiated in sessions involving the Minister, Deputy Minister – and the Premier.

Another of Wynne's highly significant priorities is aboriginal affairs, the stand-alone ministerial portfolio having been bestowed on another key Wynne campaign backer, **David Zimmer**. He was PA to the AG from the 2003 beginning to the 2011 end of the McGuinty government, and was also PA at Aboriginal Affairs from November 2011 through February 2013. Zimmer does not need to be instructed on how important this field is to the new premier, having been PA to Wynne as Aboriginal Affairs minister from October 2011 to November 2012.

The new premier often strongly pressed Team McGuinty to do more than pay lip service to aboriginal rights. She was the only leadership contender who reminded convention delegates that they were meeting on lands of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. (This went into her Throne Speech, as well.) She understands the potential of aboriginal land claims and other disputes to create strife and foment violence. Road and rail blockages in the name of Idle No More have drawn heavy media interest but their economic impact is perhaps less disruptive than the measures taken more remotely against development of the "Ring of Fire" in which so much northern development depends.

A strong factor which will ensure the Premier's continuing engagement with aboriginal affairs is her family connection with that community. One of her daughters is married to a man from the Moose Cree First Nation in Moose Factory, giving Wynne aboriginal grandchildren.



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Further cost-saving action on health care is imperative and the ministerial portfolio is now wielded by a reliable Deputy Premier (**Deb Matthews**). She can be expected to oversee the poverty implementation plan developed by **Frances Lankin** and **Munir Sheikh**. The premier has already inscribed this last priority on the agenda for the responsible ministers and key bureaucrats. And that reflects, *IQP* has learned, the consensus-making technique Wynne's government will adopt to compile the traditional 'mandate letters'. Rather than as before

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CABINET COMPOSITION

Read alphabetically, the Wynne Cabinet lists four veteran ministers/non-supporters (Bradley, Broten, Chan, Chiarelli) before a newbie/supporter (Coteau) gets a look in. Then another veteran/non-supporter

(Duguid), a veteran/supporter (Gerretsen) a veteran non/supporter (Gravelle) and a rival then supporter (Hoskins), a veteran/supporter (Jeffrey), a veteran/non-supporter (Leal) and a newbie/rival's backer (MacCharles). Next comes a veteran/strong backer who was promoted to be deputy premier (Matthews), a veteran/supporter (McMeekin), a pair of veteran/non-supporters (Meilleur, Milloy), a newbie/supporter (Moridi), and a recent minister/rival/backer (Murray). Next are a newbie/neutral (Naqvi), a veteran backbencher/non-supporter (Oraziotti), a newbie/non-supporter (Piruzza), and a pair of veteran/backbenchers/supporters (Sandals and Sergio). Finishing up is a recent minister/rival/then backer (Sousa), a veteran/rival/then non-backer (Takhar), a very supportive veteran minister (Wynne herself) and finally a veteran backbencher/newbie and very strong supporter (Zimmer).

So of the 27 cabinet ministers, *IQP* classifies 14 of them as supporters and 12 as non-supporters. With that margin (which Wynne's backers may have been tempted to think of as a minor majority), it helps that Yasir Naqvi has not maintained any vestige of his leadership convention neutrality as party president – and is to judge from the zealous answer to his first question in the opening day of the Leg. a strong Wynne booster. And indeed, boosting the leader vigorously is what all LIB MPPs can be expected to do, whomever they backed in the leadership contest and whether they showed up for the February 11 swearing in or not. In respect, we can anticipate that Wynne's government will not need reminding that minorities do not last unless they can work effectively with the opposition. And it's already clear from the NDP response to yesterday's Throne Speech that Wynne has cleared her first hurdle.

Wynne's team contains ten newbies, MPPs not previously invited to sit the Cabinet table, and of this category, only three had first been elected in the most recent, 2011 Ontario provincial election.

The new LIB cabinet contains 8 women ministers (30%) and 19 men (70%).

INTERNS SWITCH SECOND-TERM SIDES

The Ontario Parliamentary Interns have switched from their first-term to second-term placements balancing their government exposure with opposition-side assignments, and vice-versa.

Assisting Barrie's **Rod Jackson** is **Joshua Burdon**; assigned to York South-Weston's **Laura Albanese** is **Beth Elder**; working with **Dr. Helena Jaczek** of Oak Ridges-Markham is **Gillian Hanson**; assisting **Laurie Scott** of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock is **Connor Bays**; with **Steven Del Duca** of Vaughan is **Andrea Ernesaks**; assigned to **Dipika Damerla** of Mississauga

East-Cooksville is **Anthony Boland**; with **Soo Wong** of Scarborough-Agincourt is **Hibah Sidat**; aiding **Mike Mantha** of Algoma-Manitoulin is **Lauren Tarasuk**; and joining the office of Whitby-Oshawa's **Christine Elliott** is **Leanna Katz**.

Placements for two Interns had to be redone after the swearing-in when **Michael Coteau** and **Tracy MacCharles** were put in Cabinet. PAs are eligible to be helped by Interns, but Cabinet Ministers are not.

IN THIS NEW ERA OF CONVERSATION, WE STILL HAVE A WAY TO GO TO GET THE TONE RIGHT

The Leg. opened again today but Premier Wynne was unhappy that the PCs spurned her offered Select Committee yet still called unhappily for – yes, a Select Committee. Mr. Speaker Levac also called unhappily for Members to stop cat-calling and told them to expect a crack-down. He also said pointedly that he does not need to be told how to do his job. *IQP* thinks we'd better brace for some robust conversation.

BITS & PIECES

GAME ON– The Friends of Mike Mantha put on an absolutely delicious fundraiser for the Algoma-Manitoulin MPP last night at Toronto's University Club. A keen hunter, like so many northerners, Mantha treated the large crowd in attendance to an imaginative departure from the usual boring Queen's Park evening reception. (Been there; drunk that, eaten the other.) The "Taste of Algoma-Manitoulin" offered toothsome canapés of moose, partridge, deer and pickerel. *IQP* urges readers to book now so that they can be sure to attend the second annual event next February.

CORRECTION TO: LIBs IN THE LEAD? (Feb. 6)

The first poll since the LIB leadership, conducted January 27-29 and released January 31 by Innovative Research, shows Kathleen Wynne's party in the lead, albeit fractionally. The LIBs lead with 24%, with the PCs following with 23% and the NDP trailing at 20%. The Greens are at 7% with 14% undecided. For this on-line poll, sample size was 506 and margin of error 4.4%.

The LIBs are also reported as behind both opposition parties in the second post-leadership poll, by Vector Poll conducted January 3-15 and also released January 31 by Vector Poll. It has the PCs in the lead with 36%, the NDP following with 32% and the LIBs trailing with 25%. The Greens are at 7% with 17% undecided. The sample size for this telephone survey was 446 and the margin of error is 4.6%.

THIS DAY IN ONTARIO ELECTORAL HISTORY

February 21, 1982 – The Ontario Liberal Party picked David R. Peterson to follow Dr. Stuart Smith as Leader.

DON FORGERON

Don Forgeron has been President and Chief Executive Officer of the Insurance Bureau of Canada for four years. He has held senior posts for 15 years in the umbrella body representing the Property & Casualty insurance industry.

PROVINCIAL PROFILE

IQP: How did you get here from there?

Forgeron: I'm originally from Cape Breton, with Acadian French parents. My father was a high school principal with a strong interest in politics who worked on many election campaigns. So from an early start I had an interest in things political. I attended Cape Breton University and like many of my colleagues at the time went down the road, skipping Toronto, going all the way back in the early 80s, and then returned to Nova Scotia a few years later. After stints with the provincial and federal governments, I joined IBC in 1994 as Atlantic Vice-President. After some 15 years in that role, I spent a year here as the Ontario Vice-President before being appointed in 2009 to be President and CEO.

IQP: The level of auto insurance premiums has been targeted by the ONDP, which put them on the new premier's agenda. What is IBC's position?

Forgeron: Let me give your readers a comparison that shows the extent of the problem. The average accident benefit claim in Ontario in 2011 was about \$29,000; the average accident benefit claim in Alberta in that same year was about \$3,600 – one eighth of the Ontario cost. That is a very big difference in the cost of treating motor vehicle accident victims in Alberta, relative to Ontario. Please understand that the streets of Alberta are not thronged with people suffering from unhealed auto injuries. Here in Ontario we're spending eight times the Alberta amount, and our results are not any better. With such a difference in the average claim payout, it's not surprising that the average auto insurance premium is 40-50% higher here in Ontario. Consumers say they are not pleased with the premium levels they're paying – and we agree with them. Premiums should be lower, and we think there are a couple of key areas that government needs to target. We need to attack the issue of fraud and abuse. The government seems to have indicated they're interested in doing that. We have to stop the excessive treatment reflected in the average claim costs. There's a lot of treatment taking place that's just not needed. We must also cut down on red tape in the system that's adding to the cost of delivering the product. We need to strike a balance between premiums paid by and benefits delivered to consumers. And we must reserve as many of those benefits as possible for those who are most seriously injured in automobile accidents.

IQP: IBC just purchased a full-page newspaper ad, suggesting the industry is on the defensive. What public support does your industry have? Is public auto insurance a popular option?

Forgeron: We spent a great deal of time last fall in communities right across Ontario, and we have heard

loudly and clearly from consumers that they support our push for lower premiums. The notion of having the government run the auto insurance system is an idea whose time has long since passed. It's not who is delivering the product that makes a difference; it's the type of product being delivered. Currently, the benefit of the auto insurance product being delivered by the private sector is set out in government legislation; legislation defines how that product is underwritten; legislation also prescribes how claims are settled; and finally, government approves the price at which our industry sells the product. In many ways, we've already got government-run auto insurance here in Ontario; it just happens to be delivered by the private sector. So government-run auto insurance is not an option. NDP governments have come and gone across the country over the last 25 years and none have adopted that model because it simply doesn't work.

IQP: There have been several attempts to fix the Ontario auto insurance regime over the last 20 years and more – no-fault, medical rehab. limits, etc. Will a crackdown on fraud make much difference?

Forgeron: Absolutely it will make a difference. Let me describe just for a moment how the auto insurance system has been modified in this province since 1990. Government sits around the table with the various stakeholders: the insurance industry, with lawyers, health care providers, and goes through this reform process, and divides the pie up and provides a little bit to the trial lawyers, the insurance industry and the health care providers. The one dynamic that's missing from the table is the consumer. The consumer's been missing from the table for many, many years and unfortunately, at the end of the reform process there's very little left for the consumer. We have said to government over the last four or five years to forget the stakeholders. The only group that should be at the table with government is consumers, and they ought to be looking at what's best for consumers. And that's a product that's affordable and has an appropriate level of benefits to treat them when involved in a motor vehicle accident. We think the government has started down the right road with the 2010 reforms and encourage them to proceed with consumers at the centre of the reform process.

IQP: Leaving auto aside, what's the significance of property & casualty insurance in Ontario?

Forgeron: The P & C insurance industry is a huge contributor to the economy. Look out of a window, practically everything you see is there because of the P & C sector. It really is the oxygen of the economy. Cars can be operated because of insurance; buildings can be erected because there's insurance coverage.

PEOPLE

Allison Duff and **Peter Noonan** have been named to the Ontario Energy Board.

Ernest McNee has been named to the board of the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Named to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board is **Bryce Walker**.

David MacLachlan has been named to the board of the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation.

Peter Smith and **Andrew Stewart** have been named to the Ontario Film Review Board.

Named to the board of the Algonquin Forestry Authority is **Sarah Bros**.

Named to the board of the Financial Services Commission of Ontario as vice-chair is **Elizabeth Shilton**.

Joan Bush has been named to the board of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection.

Martha Durdin has been named to the board of the Royal Ontario Museum.

Named to the Ontario Civilian Police Commission is **Georges Bedard**.

Joe Deklic and **Ann Louise Vehovec** have been named to the board of the Centennial Centre of Science and Technology (Ontario Science Centre).

FOR YOUR DIARY

- Feb 26 An evening at Labatt House with Jim McDonell, PC MPP, Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry; 207 Queen's Quay West, Suite 299; 6-8 p.m.
- Feb 27 Fundraiser for Paul Miller, NDP MPP, Hamilton East-Stoney Creek; The University Club, 380 University Avenue; 6-8 p.m.
- Feb 28 Cocktail reception fundraiser for Dr. Kellie Leitch, MP for Simcoe-Grey, with special guest Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance; Norton Rose LLP, Royal Bank Plaza, South Tower, Suite 3800; 5:30-7:30 p.m.
- Feb 28 Mowat Centre's 3- year Anniversary Celebration; Bram and Bluma Appel Salon, Toronto Reference Library, 789 Yonge Street; Registration 5:30 p.m.; Welcome from Matthew Mendelsohn 6 p.m.
- Feb 28 NDP Winter Social; Art Gallery of Ontario, 317 Dundas Street West; 7 p.m.
- Mar 4 An Evening with John Yakabuski, PC MPP, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke; The Albany Club, 91 King Street East; 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
- Mar 5 Garfield Dunlop's "Hockey Night at Hart House" fundraiser; University of Toronto's Hart House – Debates Room; 5:30 p.m.
- Mar 11 "Spring into Cottage Country" fundraiser for Norm Miller, PC MPP, Parry Sound-Muskoka; Screen Lounge, 20 College St.; 5:30-7:30 p.m.
- Mar 18 Ontario Legislature Internship Programme's Annual Reception; Legislative Building, Rooms 228 & 230, Queen's Park; 4:30-7:00 p.m.
- Mar 19 Cocktails and Conversation with Lisa Thompson, PC MPP, Huron-Bruce; Brassaii, 461 King Street West, Toronto; 6-8 p.m.
- Mar 20 Liberal Heritage Dinner 2013; Metro Convention Centre, South Building, 222 Bremner Blvd.
- Apr 3 Lisa MacLeod's Annual East Coast Kitchen Party; Duke of York, 39 Prince Arthur Ave.; 6-8 p.m.
- Apr 11 Public Policy Forum 26th Annual Testimonial Dinner and Awards; Metro Toronto Convention Centre

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