

INSIDE QUEEN'S PARK

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GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL ANALYSIS

March 6, 2013

AT THE CUTTING EDGE: ARE THE NEW DEMOCRATS OVERPLAYING THEIR HAND?

It was a refreshing change when **Andrea Horwath** switched from her ultra-earnest generic message about the imperative of making minority government work to her scowling and very specific demand that the government chop auto insurance premiums or suffer the electoral consequences, soonest. The earlier line had begun to be more than a little tedious, yet an election is a high price to pay for a change of pace, *IQP* supposes.

Such calculations should rest on evidence of electoral support, and there is not a lot of light between the three parties. Consider just the three most recently published polls cited in this newsletter:

Innovative Research	LIB 24	NDP 20	PC 23
Vector Poll	LIB 25	NDP 32	PC 36
Forum Research	LIB 32	NDP 29	PC 32
Average party %	LIB 27	NDP 27	PC 31

The closeness of the three packages and of the averages derived from them suggests that all three parties and their leaders would be at risk if they provoked an election.

The parties' CFOs have to worry over however much of the money they borrowed to fight the 2011 election is yet to be repaid, as well as what they must do to satisfy their bankers respecting the re-payment obligations which will be accelerated to fight the 2015 contest a year or two early.

There's no substitute for cash already raised when you are talking to the bank, so the NDP pulled off a coup with its lavish Art Gallery of Ontario "flag-ship social event" on February 28. Although the event raised eyebrows over its \$2,500 ticket price, the rumoured take of \$700,000 makes it clear that the price-point was correctly set.

MANGLING MINISTERIAL SUFFIXES

Embarrassing as it may be, it's not unknown for the name of a ministry to be mangled when the swearing in of a shuffled cabinet involves moving this branch there and that other component somewhere else. (Premier **Dalton McGuinty** was especially given to taking a couple of small ministries apart and putting them back together – in what *IQP* described as 'shufflets'.) But it is of course much more embarrassing when the muddle directly involves the premier.

The latest such snafu happened when Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs was broken up in the February 11 swearing in of Premier Wynne's cabinet. She retained

the agriculture part, the better to woo Ontario outside the cities and gave the Rural Affairs component to **Jeff Leal**, to give him a secretariat to help his boss; but there was no provision made for food.

That omission, which of course did nothing to lend credibility to Wynne's grass-roots plan to grundle vexed constituents on the back forty, was rectified 72 hours later by having her repeat the oath for a ministry called A&F. The government attempted to do this on little cat feet but the clumsy error had by then been noised about by **Ernie Hardeman**, PC agriculture critic. This wasn't in the same league as unearthing a third embarrassing tranche of gas-plant closure documents and spreading doubt about what else had yet to be found by searching the government's massive file servers. But it damaged the new regime's credibility.

Media coverage unfairly termed this a mistake on Wynne's part. Yes, the newly minted premier read out the oath formally stating her portfolio responsibilities, but the job of getting the wording right for the swearing-in script surely fell to Cabinet Secretary **Peter Wallace**.

John Gerretsen had found himself in a similar pickle when he was only partially sworn in October 2003 as McGuinty's Minister of Municipal Affairs, without any mention of Housing. In that case, the embarrassment of not highlighting a key component of the ministry which was a major LIB strategy was not expunged until March 2004. The new government had initially brushed off the mistake but statutory reporting requirements will eventually catch up with anyone playing fast and loose with ministerial names.

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MOWING TRADITIONAL GRASS

As noted in past issues, Premier Wynne began her leadership address in Maple Leaf Gardens and her Throne Speech at Queen's Park by reminding her listeners that they were on turf that is considered to be the "traditional lands" of the Mississaugas of the New Credit. That same message was right up at the top of

the remarks Wynne delivered at the opening of the huge 2013 convention of the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada. The impact of this gargantuan convention has to be seen to be believed. PDAC reported today that the 2013 convention attendance has exceeded 30,000 for the second year running.

HAPPY THIRD BIRTHDAY TO MOWAT

The Mowat Centre celebrated the third anniversary of its 2010 establishment February 28 with a packed and upbeat reception bookending a lively panel discussion moderated by **Jonathan Kay** of the *National Post* on “Beyond Dutch Disease: Ontario’s Place in the Evolving Canadian Economy”. The pundits and professors gumming this topic included **Madeleine Drohan**, Canada correspondent of *The Economist*, Mowat’s founding director and former IGA DM **Matthew Mendelsohn** and economist and commentator **Jim Stanford**.

Mowat is not just a think-tank and publishing house – but it certainly does issue reports: more than 60 over the three years to Feb 2013 across Mowat’s key research streams: fiscal federalism, Ontario’s economy, government transformation, immigration, not-for profit policy, cities, energy, democratic institutions, intergovernmental relations, EI and income support.

The Centre’s next venture, in collaboration with the Canada-U.S. Law Institute of Cleveland’s Case Western Reserve University, is setting up the Council of the Great Lakes Region, which launches in Cleveland April 11-12.

Informed commentary

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CABINET COMPOSITION: COMMITTEES

We presented in the last issue what you might call the political composition of the 27-member Cabinet. This time, we try to decode the roles assigned to the 20 PAs and MPPs who serve on Cabinet committees.

First of all, note how fully Premier Wynne has used her 51-member caucus. Cabinet has 27 members; **Donna Cansfield** is Chief Whip; the resignations of **Duncan** and **Bentley** created two vacancies; Cabinet committees accommodate 20 PAs and MPPs; and **Speaker Dave Levac** completes the 51-member caucus.

Generally speaking, the more cabinet committees you sit on, the more clout you have. **Bob Chiarelli** sits on four committees, including key seats on the Planning & Priorities (P&P) and on the Treasury Board (TB); **John Gerretsen** also sits on four committees, including P&P and TB; **Dr. Eric Hoskins** has four, with P&P but not TB; **Jeff Leal** sits on four; **Ted McMeekin** sits on four, including both leading committees. Finishing up the four committee group is **Laurel Broten**, who sits on four committees and is vice-chair of TB.

Being named chair or vice-chair gives you greater status, as well. Premier Wynne chairs P&P and Emergency Management (EM) but otherwise does not otherwise sit on cabinet committees. The new Northern Ontario (NO) committee is chaired by **Bill Mauro**. **Soo Wong** chairs and **Dr. Shafiq Qadri** vice-chairs the workhorse Leg. & Regs. committee (L&R). **Harinder Takhar** sits on only three committees but he chairs TB and is vice-chair of EM.

Here’s the full P&P membership: Wynne (c); Chiarelli; Gerretsen; Hoskins; **Linda Jeffrey**; **Deb Mathews**; McMeekin; **John Milloy**; **Liz Sandals**; and **Mario Sergio**.

LIES AND DAMNED LIES

A pair of Ontario private investigators convicted of falsifying immigration papers have been jailed in the Turks & Caicos Islands – and are subject to a deportation order which will bring them before an Ontario court to face criminal charges of fraud and conspiracy to commit fraud. The Ontario-registered PIs, Cullen Johnson and Elaine White, face conviction in this jurisdiction for falsifying documents presented in connection with the divorce of former MPP Eric G. Cunningham. (Full disclosure: *IQP*’s publisher and editor taught Cunningham in political science courses at UWO, and they have remained on friendly terms.)

The two PIs simply made up bank statements and other bogus ‘evidence’ of the former MPP’s alleged astronomic wealth – the modest scale of which he says was greatly diminished by his ex-wife’s blizzard of protracted divorce court actions. His lawyers eventually showed the courts that these outright forgeries required to be rejected as attempted fraud upon the courts.

Now, according to a source close to the investigation, the scale of the criminality perpetrated by Johnson and White is being tackled on an international footing. *IQP* has learned that action will be taken against law firms and other investigators, in Canada and elsewhere. “This is finally being taken seriously”. Watch this space in April.

THIS DAY IN ONTARIO ELECTORAL HISTORY

March 7, 2009 – Hamilton city councillor **Andrea Horwath** won the leadership of the NDP at the convention centre in her home town.

Farmer John Vanthof was first elected as MPP for Timiskaming-Cochrane in 2011. He is the NDP agriculture critic.

IQP: How did you get here from there?

Vanthof: My family moved to northern Ontario when I was eight years old. My parents were farmers, and when I was seventeen, we were either going to sell the farm or I was going to come home from school and run the farm. So, when I was seventeen I left high school and went home to run the farm. I bought the family farm in 1981. I bought a much bigger farm in 1992 and still have a cash crop side, but I sold the dairy farm last September. I've got a wife and four happy, healthy kids: three daughters and a son, none of whom wanted to farm. Hence I'm no longer a dairy farmer.

IQP: Tell IQP readers what it's really like to be a farmer.

Vanthof: I've been a dairy farmer my whole life. We get up early, go to bed late and work like crazy. The farmer himself or his employee has to be there seven days a week, two or three times a day to make sure the cows are getting milked. You are always on call because you are dealing with animals and the equipment that feeds those animals, keeps them clean and makes them happy and healthy. If something breaks, it has to be fixed, even at 11:30 on a Sunday night. I can remember spending one Christmas Day fixing equipment because otherwise the cows wouldn't get milked or fed. But there is an on-the-other-hand. My wife and I both worked on the farm together. We raised our kids there and were both home when they came off the school bus. It's a great way of life. I wouldn't trade the years I spent as a dairy farmer for the world.

IQP: Premier Wynne is now Agriculture minister. How do you assess the impact of that step on rural voters?

Vanthof: I think the jury is still out among rural voters, particularly farmers, on what Premier Wynne's decision to become Minister of Agriculture really means. Farmers are rightfully a bit sceptical, because they've dealt with the ministers of agriculture over the years and know it is a full-time job. Having said that, they also realize that there's no better person than the premier to move a big issue down the field or to deal with other provinces and the federal government. If it's just done for PR purposes to reconnect with rural Ontario, it won't work very well at all.

IQP: What would be your top three actions to improve life in rural Ontario?

Vanthof: There's no quick fix for what ails rural Ontario, but what has to change is that rural Ontario has to have a voice. It's not a case of coming out once in a while and talking to us, and then going home. Consider what happened to horseracing with OLG Slots. It's government's prerogative to change the slots program but it was wrong to do it without actually looking at the countryside impact and talking to people first. Whenever someone comes to me with a problem I say, "You want to do this, what's the downside, who are you going to hurt?" They never asked that question before taking those decisions. It's because there's not as many people in rural Ontario. They just seem to forget those questions. Another big concern in rural Ontario is infrastructure funding. The fact is when you're in the country, you need a lot of room to grow food and do other things. Consequently, the population is spread much further apart, but the people of rural Ontario still need to move their products and themselves. When it takes two hours on a bus for our kids to get to school, no wonder people aren't staying in

rural Ontario. People in rural Ontario are not demanding equal service to higher population centres; they're demanding and need equitable service.

IQP: The loss of manufacturing jobs has left producing and processing food as of greater importance than making things. How can urban Ontario be helped to understand the implications of that shift?

Vanthof: Processing food in this province and growing and selling it has always been a huge industry, but it's always been under the radar because the manufacturing of cars, widgets or whatever has always taken the front seat. All of the sudden, a lot of the manufacturing that depended on exports has collapsed and food is still standing. During this recession, food didn't take a nosedive. The food processing industry actually kept growing during the recession. How are we going to make people understand that? We're going to have to educate people to take food much more seriously, because people need to know. We need something like truth in labelling, truth in packaging, to ensure people realize where food is coming from. I think most people, if given a choice, would rather buy food from Ontario or Canada, and right now you can think that's happening and it might not be happening at all. The government has a role not just in advertising that good things grow in Ontario but to making sure that people have access to things that are grown in Ontario.

IQP: What are your key concerns for the Timiskaming-Cochrane riding that you represent?

Vanthof: My main problems in my riding are: healthcare, hospitals and homecare. Long-term care is feeling the crunch. With our population so spread out, you may have to put your elders in care two or three hours away. We're getting to the point where, is that feasible? Is that equitable? That's a huge concern. We have a serious problem with winter road maintenance. Our winters are long, but in past memory, we didn't have problems where roads are closed. In the last few years, we've had serious problems that we've been many times isolated from the rest of the province, even though we have the Trans-Canada Highway. I think one of my overarching issues is what I focus on here, is that northerners and their needs are often misunderstood. People talk a lot about understanding us and wanting to talk to us, but decisions are made, like ending ONTC rail passenger service without any input from northerners at all.

IQP: Any other question you would like to ask and answer?

Vanthof: I should say how I went from being a farmer to an MPP. I had no interest at all in politics, but I got involved in a couple of community issues. Through fighting a successful 15-year battle against the Adams Mine Landfill, I became President of the local Federation of Agriculture. We had another battle where Parmalat Canada wanted to close our local cheese factory. I was better at organizing then, so the cheese factory is now owned by an Ontario-wide farmer cooperative that's throughout Ontario. So, people started asking me to run. I ran five years ago against David Ramsay and we came close. I ran again and David had retired and here I am. I also have a family member in the legislature: the PC critic for agriculture is my Uncle Ernie.

PEOPLE

Michael Balagus has been named CEO/CAO of the Ontario Nurses' Association.

Named to the Ontario Review Board is **Jamie Cameron**.

Carmine Marcello has been named to the board of Hydro One Inc.

Named to the board of the Ontario Securities Commission are: **Deborah Leckman**, **Alan Lenczner** and **Anne Marie Ryan**.

Named to the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario are **Richard Dicerni** and **Cindy Hazell**.

IN MEMORIAM: Marion Bryden, MPP for Beaches-Woodbine from 1975-1990.
Herb Epp, MPP for Waterloo North from 1977-1990.

FOR YOUR DIARY

- 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 18 Fundraiser in support of Vic Gupta, PC candidate Richmond Hill with special Guest Hon. John Baird, PC MP Ottawa West-Nepean; The Albany Club, 91 King Street East; 5:30-7:30 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 19 Fundraiser for PC candidate Kevin Gaudet, Pickering Scarborough East with special guest Frank Klees; Baker & McKenzie LLP, Brookfield Place, Bay-Wellington Tower, 181 Bay St., Suite 2100; 5:30-7:30 p.m.
- Mar 20 Liberal Heritage Dinner 2013; Metro Convention Centre, South Building, 222 Bremner Blvd.
- Mar 21 The Empire Club presents Andrea Horwath, Leader of Ontario NDP, "Creating Jobs and Building a Stronger Economy"; Royal York Hotel, Ballroom; 12:00 p.m.
- Apr 3 Lisa MacLeod's Annual East Coast Kitchen Party; Duke of York, 39 Prince Arthur Ave.; 6-8 p.m.
- Apr 9 2013 PC Leader's Dinner; Metro Toronto Convention Centre, South Building; 6-10 p.m.
- Apr 11 Public Policy Forum 26th Annual Testimonial Dinner and Awards; Metro Toronto Convention Centre

TRIVIA # 429: Which current MPPs were preceded at Queen's Park by parents or siblings?

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