

INSIDE QUEEN'S PARK

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GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL ANALYSIS

November 7, 2013

AT THE CUTTING EDGE: 'CREATURES OF THE PROVINCE' DOESN'T BEGIN TO DO JUSTICE TO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO AND THE CITY OF TORONTO.

*In Ontario, municipalities purportedly operate within strict limitations imposed by Queen's Park. The local electoral framework, like all other significant elements of governance, is controlled by provincial legislation, making municipalities 'creatures of the province'. This severely constrains the scope for provincial intervention in respect to what might be called ordinary circumstances. Yet, paradoxically, the comprehensive prohibitions against interfering in humdrum local government activities themselves constitutes a strong argument that the provincial government is obliged to address an alarming crisis in the democratic governance of the principal Ontario city. The gravity of the present situation is beyond dispute, though rumours of even more grisly misbehavior by Mayor **Rob Ford** suggest that it could quickly become even worse.*

Premier **Kathleen Wynne** has most recently taken note of the "turmoil" on Nathan Phillips Square. But like Attorney General **John Gerretsen** and Municipal Affairs minister **Linda Jeffrey**, she has been unwilling so far to signal any intention to intervene. If, however, virtually all Toronto city councillors support a call to action by Queen's Park, straightforwardly removing the mayor and permitting city council to select a deputy mayor, it will not be possible for the province to hold back. This is not a matter for overall changes to the *Municipal Act* but for a one-time emergency intervention, the case which we regard as impossible to refute.

IQP considers that we cannot subject Toronto and the province to any more of the damaging delay and discord inflicted by Rob Ford. (The preceding sentence was written in the late morning of November 7, before the release of the Toronto Star's purchased video with the mayor practicing his death-threats.)

Enough! We can't allow this circus to go any further. Send out the clown, first of all the heavy-set fellow with the NFL tie. The Province simply must act.

BREAKFASTING WITH AGITATORS

The Ontario division of the Canadian Cancer Society filled the Leg. Dining Room for breakfast on October 29, the organization's 'MPP Agitation Day'. Local volunteers and Cancer Society staffers were out in force to applaud passage of *Bill 30, the Skin Cancer*

Prevention Act which will stop use of tanning beds by young people. Among MPPs attending were Health minister **Deb Matthews** and both opposition critics, PC **Christine Elliott** and NDPer **France Gélinas**, the original advocate of the tanning ban. (The next campaign by the Cancer Society is to ban all types of flavoured tobacco, another cancer reform first advocated by Gélinas.)

The event was *IQP*'s first exposure to a healthy breakfast component termed 'turkey-bacon' (or its second cousin, 'chicken-bacon') which presents as flat and rather dry identically sized strips. The good people at Eurest Food Services are surely right to consider that to be a healthier element of a cooked breakfast than mounds of what might be called pre-manufactured bacon. Visual appeal is a less compelling consideration.

RECOGNIZING CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

At the October 29 AGM of Ontario's Centres of Excellence the prestigious Martin Walmsley Fellowships for Technological Entrepreneurship were conferred on **Richard Beal** of COFOVO Energy, **Christina Mueller** of Insight Nanofluidics and **Ali Morbi** of GaitTronics. COE's Mind-to-Market award was presented to Fluidware of Ottawa.

IQP is impressed by the neat compound words coined by Ontario's scientific and technological pioneers to convey the innovative thrust of their enterprises.

FEDELI'S FOCUS ON FINANCE

Nipissing MPP **Vic Fedeli** puts out one of the liveliest constituency newsletters and in mid-October he followed his assignment to be Finance critic for the Official Opposition by adding a second to his stable of publications: *Fedeli Focus on Finance*. (The Thomson newspaper empire originated in Timmins, which suggests one should keep a sharp eye on newspaper magnates in towns in northern Ontario.)

The first bulletin in what Fedeli intends will be a continuing series is just 4-pp. (plus a thundering great spread-sheet of pay increase examples) targeted at 'the so-called "wage freeze"'. *IQP* asked the dapper former advertising man and later North Bay mayor if he was familiar with *Treasury Watch*, the very detailed report put out on a quarterly schedule by **Gerry Phillips**, the LIB Finance critic before the McGuinty government was formed. His detailed analyses did a lot to establish the credibility of the incoming government on deficits, taxes, spending and other fiscal issues in general. Fedeli had done his research and knew of *TW*.

(A caution for Fedeli: Phillips was universally seen as a shoo-in for the Finance portfolio after the 2003 election. The Ontario Liberal Fund hurriedly peddled hundreds of tickets for a Phillips tribute banquet – and then presto! changeo! The cabinet was unveiled, with **Greg Sorbara** named as Finance minister.)

DAVIS TRIBUTE

William Grenville Davis, Q.C., was feted last night at the Tasting Cellars, the best venue for such a gathering in all of the Distillery District development. Getting on for 350 guests paid \$500 each to salute Ontario's Premier from 1971 to 1985, as well as the Education minister from 1962 to 1971. The proceeds of some \$250K will go to TV Ontario, the educational TV network and then-some, for which Davis is to be credited.

Davis's Brampton schtick was held to a minimum and he was generous to many who were in attendance. Tory leader **Tim Hudak** had very nice things to say about him. The tone of Davis's remarks about his party's current leader was a fair bit warmer than some of his past observations, but he did admonish Hudak on the importance of both staying in the middle of the road and inviting good people to accompany you along that route. (The NDP leader's schedule prevented her from attending the gala.)

As you would expect, the Great and the Good were out in full force. Among those *IQP* encountered: Senator **Hugh Segal**, fresh from giving the nation a lesson in the importance of due process; Film-maker **Peter Raymond**, director and writer of the 1978 documentary film, *The Art of the Possible*, which went behind the scenes in the Davis minority government; a bunch of Davis's 1971-1985 cabinet colleagues: **Claude Bennet**, **Ernie Eves**, **Phil Gillies**, **Roy McMurtry**, & **George Taylor**.

Almost as warmly received as Davis himself was **Clare Westcott**, the premier's executive assistant and "supreme solver of political problems" (as he was called by **Jonathan Manthorpe** in his 1974 book *The Power & the Tories: Ontario Politics – 1943 to the Present*. Westcott is, Davis noted, just a week away from his 90th birthday.

PAYING UP PROMPTLY

Steven Del Duca was the political action operative for the Carpenters' union before winning the Vaughan seat vacated by Greg Sorbara, so it is understandable that his first private members' bill (*Bill 69, Prompt Payment Act*) tackled the endemic problem of late payment by developers to general contractors to sub-contractors and so on. Del Duca's bill would require payment within a reasonable timeframe after work has been completed.

Bill 69 is widely backed, not least by the three parties represented in the Leg., but since it was given 2nd reading in mid-May it has been collecting dust for nearly six months while it awaits referral to the Regulations committee for public hearings. If nothing happens soon, it could languish through the Christmas break. Given the uncomfortable ride the Wynne government recently had over the EllisDon matter, you would expect to see the Del Duca bill handled with some hustle – or to use a word which comes to mind, promptly.

THIS DAY IN ONTARIO ELECTORAL HISTORY

November 8, 1988 – Lawyer **Peter Kormos** wins the by-election called when NDP veteran **Mel Swart** resigns the Welland-Thorold seat he held for the 13 years 1975-1988. Kormos was an MPP for the 23 years 1988-2011.

Lawyer Yasir Naqvi was elected MPP for Ottawa Centre in 2007. Past-president of the Ontario Liberal Party and PA in three ministries, he was named Minister of Labour when Kathleen Wynne formed her government.

IQP: What do you consider the most important dossier you have taken up as Labour minister?

Naqvi: One file that's extremely important is occupational health and safety – the work of the Ministry in partnership with business and labour to prevent worker injuries and illnesses. On that file I will not be 100% satisfied until we get injuries and fatalities to zero. It's a very important issue to me and I spend a fair bit of time working on it.

IQP: Please address the preventive focus which your government adopted following the grisly 2010 swing-stage Christmas-time deaths on the Toronto waterfront.

Naqvi: That was a very tragic incident. The enduring truth is that workplaces come down to people. We know that stable workplaces are productive workplaces and we're putting ever greater emphasis on preventing workplace accidents and injuries before they happen. Our prevention transformation is about keeping workers safe and supporting businesses with enhanced productivity and competitiveness. In August 2011, we appointed the province's first Chief Prevention Officer – George Gritziotis – who in fact heads the first office of its kind in all of Canada. George is leading the charge, not just in transforming health and safety but in helping to build an approach to health and safety culture that protects workers, works for business and builds a stronger economy. We are focusing more on pro-active inspections as part of this approach and we're seeing some good results in terms of how this approach is working. Ontario's annual rate of workplace injuries has dropped by 30% per cent but we'll do whatever it takes to get it down to zero.

IQP: The schedule of increases in the minimum wage has traditionally been a political football for a pick-up game between anti-poverty activists and the business community. What can we expect from the Wynne government in this regard?

Naqvi: Our government is committed to building a more prosperous Ontario in order to create more jobs and opportunities for all. We established the Minimum Wage Advisory Panel in the 2013 budget to provide recommendations on setting minimum wage rates in the future that are fair for workers and predictable for businesses. We are proud of our record of increasing the minimum wage from 2003 after nine straight years of it being frozen under the PC government. We have increased the minimum wage during bad times and good times because it was the right thing to do. Ontario went from having one of the lowest provincial minimum wages in Canada to having one of the highest. The panel is currently travelling the province to talk to Ontarians and to all sides on the issue. We are seeking a consensus favouring a more fair and predictable minimum wage system. That's part of our

plan for building a more prosperous economy and securing a fair society for all.

IQP: Let's go from those paid not much to those paid nothing at all – interns. News coverage of this matter was huge.

Naqvi: The government is committed to investing in people and investing in infrastructure and supporting a dynamic and innovative business environment. In fact, the premier was in Kitchener recently announcing the Youth Employment Fund which has already connected over 2,400 young people to jobs they can build careers out of. We also know safe workplaces are key parts of a strong economy. Ontario's rules are very clear when it comes to internships. It does not matter what your job title or position is, except for those who are self-employed or working as a co-op student, if you perform work for someone you are covered by the *Employment Standards Act* and entitled to things like minimum wage. We have already allocated an additional \$3M in pro-active enforcement to make sure more businesses are compliant and more employees are protected. We have also recently updated our website, which is Ontario.ca/internshipsstandards, so both employees and employers can clearly know their rights and responsibilities when it comes to internships. Any concerns regarding working arrangements can be reported to the Ministry of Labour's hotline: 1-800-531-5551. My ministry provides confidential help in 23 languages and investigates any and all complaints which are brought to us.

IQP: Please cast some light on Bill 74 and the EllisDon situation.

Naqvi: The government has been very clear on that matter. The original court decision was analyzed and the Ministry of Labour legal team's advice was that the decision resulted in the same outcome as brought out by Bill 74. Therefore it was decided that legislation was no longer needed because the decision of the divisional court rendered the same outcome that would have been delivered by passage of that bill.

IQP: You are a young man who sits for a central city riding. How do those factors condition the way you conduct politics?

Naqvi: You always have to remember that your first and foremost responsibility is your constituents. I have a very diverse riding in Ottawa Centre and I spend a lot of time in my community working on issues that are very important to the residents. Every weekend over the last 6 years I have visited my constituents door-to-door. That informs me about issues and lets me work on resolving their individual problems or finding solutions to community-wide challenges.

PEOPLE

Delores Lawrence has been appointed to the advisory council of the Order of Ontario.

Named to the council of the College of Massage Therapists of Ontario is **Murthy Ghandikota**.

Fabian Ngoy and **Gilles Chartrand** have been named to the Health Language French Services advisory council.

Christopher Clifford has been named to the board of the Law Foundation of Ontario.

Appointed to the council of the College of Dental Technologists of Ontario are **Harold Bassford** and

Christopher McIntosh.

Margaret Fancy has been named to the board of the St. Lawrence Parks Commission.

Colleen Campbell has been named to the board of the Ontario Infrastructure and Lands Corporation.

David Yu has been appointed to the Investment Advisory Committee of the Public Guardian and Trustee.

Named to the board of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection is **Michael Weinberg**.

Named to the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities are: **Lina Chaker, Crystal Chin, Arisha Khan, Madeleine Ross, Camilo Sanchez Galindo** and **Sarah Yankoo**.

Dianne Aziz has been named to the council of the College of Kinesiologists of Ontario.

Named to the board of the Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission is **Bruce Tufts**.

Janicas Alcaide and **Thomas Harrison** have been named to the Consent and Capacity board.

Appointed to the Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs appeal tribunal and the Board of Negotiation is

Edward Dries.

Gail Misra has been appointed vice chair to the Grievance Settlement board.

Appointed to the Ontario Health Quality council is **Shelly Jamieson**.

Steven Portelli has been named to the Nipissing University board of Governors.

FOR YOUR DIARY

- Nov 18 Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario Queen's Park Day Luncheon Reception; Main Legislative Building Room 230; 11:45 a.m.– 1:30 p.m.
- Nov 18 An Evening with Rick Nicholls, PC MPP, Chatham-Kent-Essex; The Albany Club, 91 King Street East, Toronto; 5:30-7:30 p.m.
- Nov 19 Council of Ontario Universities – University Day at Queen's Park 2013; Legislative Dining Room, Queen's Park; 4:30–7 p.m.
- Nov 20 Tim Hudak's GTA Leader's Dinner; Paramount Conference & Event Venue, 222 Rowntree Dairy Road, Woodbridge; Cocktail Reception 6 p.m.; Dinner 7 p.m.
- Nov 21 Broadbent Institute's first annual Progress Gala; Art Gallery of Ontario; Reception 6 p.m.; Dinner 7 p.m.
- Nov 25 The Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians sixth annual Pre-Christmas Reception; Lewis Room 1641, Whitney Block, Queen's Park; 4–7 p.m.
- Nov 28 MPP Vic Fedeli's Third Annual Toronto Fundraiser Luncheon; Albany Club, 91 King Street East; 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.
- Dec 12 Public Affairs Association of Canada AGM; Borden Ladner Gervais, 40 King Street West, 44th Floor, Elliot Room; 3:30- 5:00 p.m. Followed by a reception.
- Jan 15 An Evening with Michael Prue, MPP; Labatt Pub, 207 Queen's Quay West, Suite 299; Toronto; 6 p.m.

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