

INSIDE QUEEN'S PARK

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GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL ANALYSIS

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AT THE CUTTING EDGE: BEWARE THE 'B' WORD

*It did not exactly start with the ehealth debacle, but the McGuinty government was tagged as terminally profligate with no prospect of escape once then-Auditor General **Jim McCarter** brought down his highly critical October 2009 assessment of the "investment of \$1B" in generation of electronic health records. That prompted many journalists and pundits to combine "billion-dollar" and "boondoggle" into a catch-all phrase to denote very big and very wasteful government spending. Now new A-G **Bonnie Lysyk**, in the second of two gas-plant closure cancellation cost investigations, has declared that costs were "significantly more than may have been necessary", impugns "a number of questionable decisions" and estimates that total costs of the Oakville cancellation were over \$1B.*

In the AG's April 2013 report on the Mississauga plant, McCarter had found the full closure cost was \$351M but savings estimated at \$76M brought the "net cost" down to \$275M. Lysyk and her audit team calculated that the entire cancellation costs of the Oakville plant alone could total \$1.112B but future savings of \$437M would reduce the net cost to \$675M over 20 years. Cancelling the two plants would therefore cost as follows: Mississauga, \$275M; Oakville, \$815M; Total, \$1.090B – more than the magic \$1B sum.

Nobody will be startled that cancelling the costs of the two plants would together loft us into billion dollar territory, but it is news that Lysyk is highly critical of the government's generosity to its contractors. She contends that the government would have achieved sizeable savings by holding its contractors to the deal negotiated with them instead of undertaking to make them good on the plant move. This will cause much public anger. And Wynne's pledge to preclude involvement of political staff in any such future crown transactions will also remind people of negative experiences at the hands of Team McGuinty.

THE PER DIEM SOLUTION

The righteous frothing in the Legislative Assembly when Choco-Bites are found on an expense account submitted to the provincial government or to any of its agencies, boards or commissions has to be seen to be believed. Perversely, it seems that the most ferocious denunciation of claimed amounts is reserved for the smallest such charges – 91 cents for parking in the current fuss over Pan-Am games spending. MPPs pounce with undisguised glee when such tiny sums are expended by the most highly paid officials and consultants. How dare they! Implicit in the slamming of these claims is the proposition that it is wrong, morally or even legally, for ultra-well paid people to

expect to be reimbursed by employers or clients for the usual out-of-pocket expenses of doing business. Rather, the government which engaged them at top-drawer rates now expects their hirelings to eat their expenses.

Tough action is warranted over charges for transporting pets, but sensible action is what's needed to tidy up these volcanic expense claim eruptions. Surely it would save time and money to cover modest travel and home office disbursements – on coffee, car mileage, newspapers, taxis and the like – by paying a per diem. **Premier Kathleen Wynne's** distinction between "nickel-and-diming ridiculousness" and substantial spending on, e.g., attending the Guadalajara games, helpfully points to this solution.

One element of the problem is the zeal of government decision-makers to be seen throwing the well-heeled expense claimants under the limousine. Tourism, Sport and Culture minister Michael Chan's bizarre suggestion that he had been made to drink poison is not just nonsensical; it shows the craven lengths to which government decision-makers will go in disclaiming responsibility for directly and indirectly authorizing the bumper salaries, fees and expenses which cause media and opposition parties to declare themselves more startled than the Vichy police chief in his *Casablanca* cameo. (**Claude Rains** said he was "shocked, shocked".)

On top of the Pan-Am expenses, the government then found itself under attack for staggering bonus payments for the senior staff of the games organizing committee. But the array of bonuses was ultimately authorized by Queen's Park, not by the raft of VPs. There is a going rate for many such jobs and governments must choose to pay it or not.

"CELEBRATED ONTARIANS, THEN AND NOW"

His Honour **David Onley**, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario has launched a new art exhibition in his suite. Opened September 18 and running to March 31, 2014. "About Face: Celebrating Ontarians, Then and Now" features nearly one hundred arresting likenesses of prominent Ontarians born from the 19th Century through the end of the 20th Century.

"About Face" has a lively introduction penned by **John Ibbitson & John Wright**: "We have come so far, so many of us from so many places, and we have done these amazing things. And the most amazing thing of all is, we're just getting started".

The exhibition also includes "At My Table", a documentary by **Nick de Pencier**, based on polaroids of more than 100 arts community prominents taken by leading artist **Charles Pachter** at his grange Park Studio.

THE FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY SHOP

Ontario's new Financial Accountability Officer has been given statutory authority by the September 26 passage of *Bill 95*. An independent Officer of the Legislature, the FAO will report directly to MPPs. He or she will be selected by a panel composed of one member of each recognized party and chaired by Mr. Speaker, who will not vote. The hiring process has not yet been initiated.

In the meantime, the tabling yesterday afternoon of the report by newly-minted Auditor General **Bonnie Lysyk** on the cost of shuttering the Oakville gas plant will certainly give Queen's Park plenty of financial accountability to sink its teeth into.

CROWDED FIELD

New provincial polls by Vector and Nanos show very little change compared to their previous reports.

Vector's October 4 poll has the PCs leading at 34%, down one point from April, with the LIBs at 33%, up one point, the NDP at 24%, down two points, and the Greens at 8%, up one point.

The Nanos poll published October 5 has the LIBs in front with 36%, down 1.2% from July, the PCs at 31.3%, up 0.7%, the NDP at 26.1%, down 0.9%, and the Greens at 6.3%, up 1.4%.

Vector thus has support for the three major parties clustered in a range from 24% to 34% while the Nanos poll results range from 26% to 36%. Both pollsters have identified a ten-point spread, making for a very crowded field of battle. Vector shows the PCs ahead of the LIBs, by a single point, with the NDP trailing at the bottom of the range. Nanos has the LIBs in front of the PCs by five points with the NDP at the bottom of the range.

YET MORE ELLISDON BOODLE

Bringing, he surely hopes, an end to queries about **Chris Bentley's** interest in running to be mayor of his home town, the *London Free Press* reported last week that the former London West MPP, Energy minister and Attorney General, has been engaged by Ryerson University to "work on a couple of legal projects" – developing an alternative to articling jobs and augmenting the legal profession's connection to the university's digital media centre.

IQP talked at length to a provincial official who had an interesting perspective on the 1960s transformation from 'Rye High' via its Polytechnic period to its establishment as a full-fledged university. Our contact talked about the secret acquisition of adjacent downtown properties to permit growth of the campus. The trawling for sufficient real estate briefly left Ryerson as landlord of three nearby brothels.

Our observer was told that the lucrative contract to build the new mid-town campus was signed with construction giant EllisDon without ever being shown to, let alone approved by, the Ryerson board of

governors. Friendly then with Tories; friendly now with LIBs: a winning formula for construction firms in building the service state back in the era of steady growth and now in tackling the burgeoning renewal of infrastructure in these current uncertain times.

EVERYONE'S A CRITIC

Tim Hudak evidently got an appetite for shuffling caucus critics when he removed **Peter Shurman** at Finance and **Randy Hillier** from Labour. He has since shuffled several key critic responsibilities: **Ted Arnott** has Intergovernmental Affairs plus Research & Innovation; **Bob Bailey** has moved on from battling jail closures to handle the oil, gas and aggregates parts of MNR; **Toby Barrett** is Consumer Services; **Ted Chudleigh** has Colleges & Universities; **Steve Clark** has gone from Municipal Affairs & Housing to Community Safety & Correctional Services; **Garfield Dunlop** stays with Training & Apprenticeship; **Christine Elliott** holds Health & Long-Term Care; **Vic Fedeli** has Finance; **Ernie Hardeman** is Agriculture; **Michael Harris** stays at Environment; **Doug Holyday** is the accountability supremo and deals with Management Board plus GTA issues and GTA transportation; **Rod Jackson** has Community & Social Services and the PanAm Games; **Sylvia Jones** stays as PC Caucus Chair but the Attorney General critic portfolio goes to **Julia Munro** who remains critic for seniors and retirement security; **Frank Klees** is responsible for Public Infrastructure Renewal; **Lisa MacLeod** has relinquished Education and assumed the Energy portfolio; Education has been given to **Rob Leone**, who drops Colleges & Universities; **Jack MacLaren** handles democratic renewal; **Jim McDonnell** assumes MMAH; **Jane McKenna** now handles Economic Development, Trade & Employment; **Monte McNaughton** now concentrates on Labour; **Norm Miller** has Northern Development & Mines and Aboriginal Affairs; **Rob Milligan** takes on Interprovincial Trade; **Rick Nicholls** has Sport Recreation & Youth; **John O'Toole** is responsible for the Auditor General; **Jerry Ouellette** assumes the fishing, hunting, parks, forestry and wildlife portions of MNR; **Randy Pettapiece** handles horseracing; **Laurie Scott** has Tourism & Culture and Women; **Todd Smith** has Citizenship & Immigration; **Lisa Thompson** has Small Business & Red Tape and the Green Energy Act; **Bill Walker** handles Children & Youth Services; **Jim Wilson** is still House Leader; CSCS had been **John Yakabuski's** critic role but he now focuses on his Chief Whip role; **Jeff Yurek** has Transportation and auto insurance.

THIS DAY IN ONTARIO ELECTORAL HISTORY

October 10, 2007 – The Dalton McGuinty LIBs win a second consecutive majority government, electing 71 of 107 MPPs (66% of seats), to form the first provincial government elected on the fixed, four-year electoral calendar adopted in 2005.

Long-time constituency Executive Assistant to Dalton McGuinty, John Fraser retained the Ottawa South riding for the LIBs in the August 2013 by-election occasioned by the former premier's resignation.

IQP: How did you get here from there?

Fraser: I was born, educated and have lived all my life in Ottawa South. In fact, my parents, all three sisters, two of my three children, my in-laws – everyone lives in Ottawa South. We don't go far from Ottawa in my family! I started at Loblaws in high school and continued in groceries, managing medium and large groceries, private and chains for more than 20 years.

IQP: How did you come to join Dalton McGuinty?

Fraser: He asked me in 1999 to work for him. Our families have known each other for a long time. I had supported his father's 1987 nomination. When he asked me in 1999 to run his CO, I took a six month leave from my job and ended up staying – working for Dalton in Ottawa out of the office on Kilborn Avenue. It was a great experience after 1999 in opposition, and then we won election in 2003. I was given broad responsibility for Ottawa, making sure we operated as a team, dealing with stakeholders region-wide. Essentially, my job as his EA was to take care of the hometown.

IQP: You won the Ottawa South by-election contrary to pundit expectations. How far did your lengthy service as Premier McGuinty's EA explain the win?

Fraser: I think it had a lot to do with it. My message was clear during the campaign: Take a look at the record of our government and the premier and myself.

Look at things that matter most to people; healthcare, education, electricity. My consistent message was I'm very proud of our record and of the Premier's record. Two other things: I've lived in Ottawa South all my life, so people knew me. Finally, we worked really hard at knocking on doors – first to get memberships to win the nomination and after that to get votes to win the by-election. Elections are not complicated. Work hard; reach more voters than the other people. It's all about personal contact. I say who I am; ask people who they are too, which is very important; tell them why I'm running; respond to questions; and lastly ask for their support. That's how you win.

IQP: What assessment of Dalton McGuinty would you offer our readers?

Fraser: By any objective measure, our province is a lot farther ahead on the things that matter to people most, and Ontario has been made a better place for business. Personally, Dalton McGuinty is a very principled, disciplined man with a sense of personal responsibility. It was an honour and privilege to serve him, learn from him and work with him. It's not often in your life you get to work with somebody as exceptional as he is. I worked for him for 14 years and that's a long time to work for someone in politics. My family and his share important values. My father, like Dalton Sr., loved

literature. Language is so important. There's a lot of commonality in the families we grew up in.

IQP: Federal politics is of course the main game in Ottawa. Any observations on the secondary role of provincial politics?

Fraser: At the provincial level, we deliver those services that most affect people's everyday lives. Parliament Hill does cast a big shadow in garnering media interest so it can feel like the sky, covering everything.

IQP: You haven't wasted any time as an MPP in tabling a private member's bill. Talk about *Bill 108, The Transparency in Members' Expenses Act*.

Fraser: Quarterly online disclosure of MPPs expenses for travel and accommodation is already done by the Board of Internal Economy. My bill requires disclosure of the amounts of and reasons for all other members' expenses, posted on a quarterly basis. It's not entirely new; cabinet ministers in certain jurisdictions are already doing it. If we as legislators are asking public servants and members of crown agencies to do this, we need to do it ourselves. I made a commitment to do this in the campaign. With the reports out of the Senate people are concerned about openness and transparency. Access has a direct relationship on how effective transparency is. 'Well, they're available,' is not good enough. It is about how easily can a member of the public have it. It's an important thing for us as a legislature to do. I will soon be posting my September expenses on my website. I was very fortunate to have been able to get such an early ballot. This is where we need to go; let's just get there.

IQP: What local Ottawa issues will you pursue?

Fraser: In some neighbourhoods I grew up in there are challenges with youth employment and access to recreation. Another priority is helping people stay in their homes longer. Both my parents and my in-laws are in their 80s and are still living in their own homes. Getting this right isn't a concern for the next four years; it will be a challenge for the next twenty years. This will take more than just government. We will need to see the transformation of healthcare as the population ages. It requires a community-based solution to bring focus to things. For example, we built a \$1M equal partnership called Project Step around 2007/2008 with the school board, the federal government, United Way, City of Ottawa and province – combining in an equal partnership to bring drug counselling and treatment to all area high schools. Community solutions brings strength to a project: if one of four legs goes out, you can still balance on three. Community-based solutions build trust and that's what gives them strength.

PEOPLE

Appointed Chair of the Technical Standards & Safety Authority is **Judith Wolfson**, University Relations VP at the U of T and former DM; named Vice Chair of TSSA is **Norm Inkster**, former Commissioner of the RCMP.

Appointed Vice President, Strategy at TV Ontario is **Andrew Steele**, previously with StrategyCorp.

Equal Vote Canada has named **Kelly Carmichael** as Executive Director.

The Institute of Public Administration of Canada has appointed **Andrew Treusch** as president for 2013/2014.

Former Energy minister and Attorney General **Chris Bentley** has been engaged to undertake legal projects for Ryerson University.

Appointed to the board of governors at Sheridan College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning is **Bruce Nicholson**.

Named to the board of the Ontario Trillium Foundation is **Claudette Paquin**.

Ana Gaina and **Michael Irvine** have been named to the board of the Pesticides Advisory Committee.

FOR YOUR DIARY

- Oct 10 Institute of Public Administration of Canada/Toronto Regional Group, "The Future of Transit in the GTA & Hamilton"; Bruce McCuaig, Pres. & CEO, Metrolinx; Fionn MacCool's, 181 University Ave.; 5 p.m.
- Oct 16 NDP Leader's Gala, Royal Conservatory of Music, 273 Bloor Street West, Toronto; 6:30-9:30 p.m.
- Oct 16 An Evening with the Hon. Dr. Eric Hoskins, MPP; Gowling Lafleur Henderson LLP, GLH Boardroom, 1 First Canadian Place, 100 King St. W., Suite 1600, Toronto; 6-8 p.m.
- Oct 19 27th annual Renaissance Policy Conference with keynote speaker John Tory, Chair of the Greater Toronto Civic Action Alliance; Scarborough Civic Centre, Borough Drive; 8:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
- Oct 28 People for Education tribute to the Hon. Ken Dryden P.C., O.C., the 2013 recipient of the Egerton Ryerson Award; TD Bank Tower, 54th Floor, 66 Wellington Street West, Toronto; 6-7:30 p.m.
- Oct 30 The Ontario Mining Association's annual tradition "Meet the Miners"; Queen's Park, Main Legislative Building, Committee Rooms 228 / 230; 5:00 – 7:30 p.m.
- Nov 4 Lisa Thompson's Fall Toronto Fundraiser
- Nov 6 TVO's 40th Anniversary Gala honouring founder Premier Bill Davis hosted by Steve Paikin; Fermenting Cellar, Distillery District; Reception 5:30 p.m.; Dinner 7:30 p.m.
- 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 19 Council of Ontario Universities –University Day at Queen's Park 2013; Legislative Dining Room, Queen's Park; 4:30–7 p.m.
- Nov 21 Broadbent Institute's first annual Progress Gala; Art Gallery of Ontario; Reception 6 p.m.; Dinner 7 p.m.

TRIVIA # 442: How long has *Inside Queen's Park* been published?

TRIVIA #441: How many of the 107 Ontario provincial ridings were won in the 2011 general elections with outright majorities and how many by pluralities?

ANSWER TO TRIVIA # 441: Of the 107 provincial ridings in the 2011 general elections, 36 (33.6%) were won with majorities and 71 (66.4%) with pluralities.

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