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Tories' soul searching will have ramifications beyond election day

By David Hains

In one month's time the Tories will choose their new leader in unprecedented circumstances, and in so doing could choose a new direction of the party for years to come.

Following the sexual misconduct allegations against former PC leader **Patrick Brown** that were reported by CTV – which Brown has denied – the outlook for the party has been completely upended.

The former leader, who is still a member of the PC caucus, initially resisted resigning from his role, and so four of his top staffers or advisers did instead. Four hours later Brown saw the writing on the wall and he was gone. **Vic Fedeli** became interim leader, and briefly looked as though he would lead the party into the election. But the PC party called for a leadership race in advance of the election, which is now only four months away. Former Toronto city councillor **Doug Ford** jumped into the race to succeed Brown, followed by former MPP **Christine Elliott** and star candidate **Caroline Mulroney**.

It was a year's worth of change in two weeks, and now attention shifts to where the party goes from here.

The stakes are high, as opinion polls suggest that despite the recent turmoil the new PC leader could very well be the next premier. Unfortunately, there is not much time to step back and consider the gravity of that decision. With a one-month sprint towards their March 10 leadership announcement – voting begins on March 2, and membership sign-ups close on February 16 – the discussion about what the future of the party looks like may take a back seat to the personalities of the three candidates for leader.

As entertaining as a personality-driven contest with three relatively high-profile names can be, it doesn't ensure the long-term health of the party, and the Tories are in desperate need of that soul-searching.

It would be useful to consider what kind of party each leader represents, and where they would take the PCs.

Brown already made his decision. While he initially seemed to some like an ideologically-driven **Stephen Harper** backbencher, his politics were more practical. As leader, he tried to shift the party to the **Bill Davis** consensus-building politics of years gone by. That meant support for carbon pricing, marching in Pride, and showing compassionate conservatism on issues like mental health funding. Not all PC members appreciated these shifts, and while a handful expressed their displeasure, other would-be dissenters privately grumbled and publicly carried on.

But now the new candidates want to distance themselves from the Brown era, leaving the field wide open to re-define – again – what the PC party means in 2018.

Newcomer Caroline Mulroney has a famous last name, an impressive resume, and lots of political operatives backing her. She's also politically inexperienced and something of an ideological cipher at this early stage. She's been slightly less critical of the carbon tax than either of her competitors, but she says she'll listen to what grassroots members have to say about it. She may be running in the safe York—Simcoe riding, but her pedigree suggests something closer to the Laurentian Elites that would cause **Mike Harris** to shake his head.

Christine Elliott is trying to lead the PC party for the third time, having finished third to **Tim Hudak** in 2009 and second to Brown in 2015. She has the respect of many current caucus members, and is pitching herself as ready to lead on day one. The downside is that Elliott can be seen as serving PC coalitions from yesteryear that did not prove broad enough to win electoral support. Choosing Elliott would be a way for the PC party to double down on its pre-Brown approach, and whether that's enough to defeat **Kathleen Wynne** this time — who is much less popular than in 2014 — remains to be seen.

Doug Ford brings the kind of red meat populism that Queen's Park hasn't seen in its modern political era. His brand of conservatism, if it's anything like what Toronto saw at city hall, is more driven by a set of personal preferences than the ideologically consistent worldview brought forward by Harris and his allies in the mid-1990s. Ford is frequently impulsive and confrontational, and seeks to pick fights with establishment figures to set up a contrast that he is sticking up for the little guy. In the past he has shown that even when effectively in power he chooses to govern with an outsider's mentality, which proved more effective at driving the news cycle rather than passing motions at Toronto city hall.

There's a lot for PC members and Ontarians more broadly to process, given the events of the past two weeks. But the PCs owe it to themselves and the broader public to think through how they plan to re-fashion a party reeling from controversy, and what those decisions will mean beyond election day.

Patrick Brown re-emerges on Twitter, promising the truth will out, after sexual misconduct scandal rocks party ranks

Christopher Reynolds and Jessica Smith

Former Progressive Conservative leader **Patrick Brown** emerged from his silence Tuesday, nearly two weeks after his resignation.

Brown, who led the PCs just two weeks ago, made his first public statement since a 9:45 p.m. press conference on Jan. 24 that saw him chased from the building by journalists asking questions.

Brown faced allegations from two anonymous women that, when they were teenagers and he was at least 10 years older, he offered them alcohol and made unwanted sexual advances, according to *CTV News*. Brown has denied all of the allegations, and, invoking the #MeToo movement, continued to do so in a tweet.

"I am immensely grateful for all the support expressed to my family and myself. #metoo can be a tool to lift society and I applaud that effort. False allegations however undermine that good work. The truth will come out. Thank you to all," he tweeted Tuesday.

Brown had resigned about three-and-a-half hours after holding remarkable press conference began at about 9:45 p.m. on January 24. The usually slickly gelled leader was a little dishevelled, his voice shook and he had no handlers to prevent the media from chasing him down three flights of stairs, shouting questions, to a waiting vehicle.

Shortly before 10 p.m., Brown campaign manager **Andrew Boddington**, chief of staff **Alykhan Velshi** and deputy campaign manager for strategy **Dan Robertson** had resigned as a group, with a statement released on Twitter stating they had asked Brown to resign as a result of the sexual misconduct allegations, but he'd refused.

Other staffers' resignations soon followed: press secretary **Nick Bergamini**, deputy campaign manager **Joshua Workman** and strategist **Ken Boessenkool**.

At 10:23 p.m., the middle of the chaos, **Rebecca Thompson**, who was Brown's communications director and one of two chiefs of staff in his office, sent an email, later obtained by *IQP*, that contained a statement from Brown, directing that Thompson would assume the responsibility of Chief of Staff and **Bob Stanley**, the party's executive director, would become campaign manager, effective immediately.

The statement was never released: *IQP* was told it circulated among staffers, but there was confusion about what to do with it. Thompson said it didn't matter in the end: her intention was to see Brown through to his resignation, not stay on as his chief of staff.

Next, the Tory caucus held two conference calls with Brown urging him to resign — which he ultimately did, with a statement released by the party's official Twitter account shortly before 1:30 a.m.

The Tory caucus selected **Vic Fedeli** as interim leader Friday, and he cleaned house on Sunday, firing the party's executive director and letting go other key staff.

Meanwhile, Brown ally and friend **Rick Dykstra** resigned the same day as party president shortly before Maclean's published an allegation that he sexually assaulted a young staffer in 2014, which Dykstra denies.

In a memo sent Sunday to caucus, candidates and staff that was obtained by *IQP*, **Alykhan Velshi** — now chief of staff to Fedeli, laid out the changes. Stanley was let go as executive director of the PC party. Stanley played a key role in the nomination controversies that have dogged the party, and was present at the nomination in Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas that spawned a civil suit, since settled, and an ongoing criminal investigation for fraud.

"The Executive Director position will be left vacant for the time being. I do not believe there is a need to fill it while leadership activities continue," Velshi wrote.

Garfield Dunlop, a former MPP who stepped down so Brown could win a seat in the legislature after becoming party leader in 2015, was given a paid adviser position, which has now been eliminated.

Deputy chief of staff for policy and legislative affairs **Tamara Macgregor** and Thompson, deputy chief of staff for communications were let go from the leader's office, but Velshi noted that Thompson is expected to play an important role in the Leadership Election Organizing Committee (LEOC).

John Sinclair became the only deputy chief of staff in the leader's office, and he will stay on as executive director of PC caucus services.

Clint Thomas, who was Fedeli's aide, became the leader's principal secretary.

Bergamini returned as director of communications.

"He has been a constant source of sound advice in critical situations," Velshi wrote.

Simon Jefferies became the new press secretary.

Overall, the leader's office is smaller, with four junior and mid-level positions eliminated.

The veteran, the fresh face and the firebrand: Pitching the PC people

By Christopher Reynolds

Christine Elliott tweeted two words: "I'm in." **Caroline Mulroney** posted a video. **Doug Ford** declaimed from his mother's basement. They're campaign launches and branding on websites, social media and promotional output from this temporary triumvirate opens a window on how they want you to view them.

Elliott, a lawyer who launched two bids for the PC leadership during her nine years at Queen's Park, rebooted her political future by invoking her past. She announced her campaign website Monday by citing 15 years of unbroken Liberal rule. Above all, she stressed her experience; her slogan implies it's primed her to hit the government running: "Ready. Now."

Expanding on the theme Monday with Global News, she said: "I've had the experience at Queen's Park. I've been an MPP, I know how things work and with all due respect to the other candidates, they don't have that."

Elliott's website lays out her professional background and key issues.

"Our taxes, our debt, and our hydro rates have gone up, and up, and up. And our families and businesses have nothing to show for it," she says online.

Stability and accountability are two other touchstones for the 62-year-old. "Christine knows that responsible leadership is needed to get Ontario back onto the right financial track," her bio states.

The site also references Elliott's late husband and former provincial and federal finance minister **Jim Flaherty**, her accolades for community work and time as PC deputy leader and, until last week, patient ombudsman for the provincial government. A Pink Palace veteran indeed.

Mulroney, a Harvard-educated former lawyer, and with a CV steeped in venture capital, says Ontarians are "looking for change," and that she's "the only candidate who can bring that change."

"Something different, forward-looking and positive. Something new," she says in her debut campaign clip, which finds her backed by a crowd of youthful supporters, including her young children.

Since tweeting the video Sunday night, Mulroney has hosted a town hall event, retweeted endorsements and posted photos and clips of herself making the media rounds, Tim Hortons cup in hand.

"I'm the candidate that's new, who's fresh and can offer a new perspective on how we can get Ontario back on track," she told the Toronto Star over the weekend.

Her website is limited to one page, featuring a smiling Mulroney with arms crossed. Warm but serious is the message.

The youngest contender by a decade, Mulroney, 43, made her first foray into politics last year when she announced her candidacy for the York—Simcoe nomination.

Whether she can parlay her pedigree into votes as a political neophyte won't be known until March.

Ford, not typically known for his self-restraint, offers only a cryptic message for folks on his new website: "It's time to clean up this mess."

Seven words. Seven syllables. No fancy talk. It's feisty firebrand meets stoic strongman.

But in case you feel like the website is missing some folksiness, it has already been satirized at folksfolksfolks.com, with almost all the text replaced with one of Ford's go-to words.

On the real site, the Etobicoke mainstay, who served one term on Toronto city council while his brother Rob reigned as mayor, does not waste space on trivialities like professional experience or policy positions. The Apartan domain offers visitors five main click options: Become a Tory, recruit a friend, donate, volunteer or hand over your contact info. Meanwhile, the tinted no-nonsense photo of a jaw-clenched tax-blasters lends a vaguely menacing vibe.

So far Ford, 53, has preferred to puff out his brand through spectacle and tough talk. He was the only candidate to announce his bid via suspense-laden press conference — from his mother's basement — and the first to fire up his supporters with a rally. He also channelled the traditional Ford family zeal for football Sunday, with multiple retweets of official NFL posts tied to the Superbowl, telegraphing his average-Joe passions.

Like any good populist, Ford knows to run for Queen's Park by running against Queen's Park. Though his father was an MPP and patriarch of a family said to refer to themselves as the Canadian Kennedys, Ford is whipping up a firestorm against "the elites of this party." Mulroney passed her adolescence at 24 Sussex Drive under a Tory tenure and Elliott spent most of the past dozen years as a prominent PC lawmaker. So the branding might stick.

Debt markets show approval for Fair Hydro Plan financing

By David Hains

Investors gave Ontario Power Generation a boost as they piled into bonds sold for the province's Fair Hydro Plan.

OPG issued \$500 million worth of debt on Tuesday, earning a low interest rate of 3.357 per cent from markets hungry for a safe investment.

Ratings agency DBRS gave the debt security a triple-A rating, while Moody's gave slightly less than its top grade, declaring it to be Aa2.

The debt issuance came amid a roller coaster market that saw the Dow Jones fall by more than 1,000 points yesterday, its largest one-day decline in six years. But OPG, which pitched the investment to investors last week on a road show that took them to Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver, decided to pull the trigger to send the debt to market.

The funds will help pay for the province's Fair Hydro Plan, which was passed by the majority Liberal government in June 2017. A large part of the plan effectively reduced short-term hydro bills by deferring some costs to future bills. A complicated security was created to finance the plan, and it came in for criticism from Ontario's auditor general for, in her analysis, adding \$4 billion in costs in order to keep the proposal off of the government budget. Officials from the Treasury Board and Ministry of Energy said at the time that it was not the case, and they were being diligent about following proper procedure.

Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault** praised the debt issuance and the government's hydro plan in a statement.

"Today's announcement by Ontario Power Generation (OPG) regarding the successful issuance of secured debt in relation to Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan is a positive sign that our plan is working."

The 3.357 per cent effective interest rate is a strong one for OPG, and bodes well for keeping the borrowing costs for the Fair Hydro Plan low. The rate is 15 basis points lower than Toronto Hydro, OPG noted, and more competitive than industry peers.

In a conference call, OPG said that the final interest rate was slightly better than expectations. The ministry of energy previously stated that they expect a 4.5 per cent average interest rate over the lifetime of the debt issuance for the security.

OPG plans to issue debt tranches two to three times a year to secure \$300 million to \$500 million worth of debt each time. Bond durations will vary, but the first issuance is 15.25 years.

A second round of financing is anticipated in the second quarter of 2018.

Mulroney launches her campaign in front of a friendly crowd

By Jessica Smith Cross

Progressive Conservative leadership candidate **Caroline Mulroney** met supporters and shared a little bit about herself last night at her first campaign event, held Monday evening in North York.

About 250 people gathered at the Logos Fellowship Centre to hear Mulroney answer questions posed to her by MP **Lisa Raitt**, who cut off speculation that she herself might enter leadership race only about a week ago.

Mulroney has been collecting high-profile endorsements, and many of those people were among the crowd, including MPP **John Yakabuski**, MPP **Jeff Yurek**, PC candidate **Rod Phillips**, PC candidate **Paul Calandra**, and city councillor and PC candidate **Denzil Minnan-Wong**.

With relaxed humour and camaraderie, Raitt asked Mulroney questions about her life and her politics — some of which would be expected from the press, albeit delivered in a warmer, more supportive manner. She did not take questions from the press afterwards.

Why did she enter politics?

"I got angry. I was working and raising my family and I got angry at the Wynne Liberal government," Mulroney said.

The interview didn't stray far from any area Mulroney hadn't already covered in a round of interviews over the weekend, but gave her a chance to open up about herself in front of a friendly crowd and deal with some issues that some voters might see as knocks against her.

For example, Raitt said that for her as a woman, it's hard to be referred to as someone's wife or daughter — and asked what she says to people who believe the only reason she has a place in this race is because she's the daughter of a prime minister.

Mulroney answered that as a teenager that had bothered her a lot, but she got some advice early on that she'll always be the daughter of **Brian Mulroney**, and will have to deal with it. She was 19 when he resigned as prime minister, and for the past 25 years, she's been working hard.

"My name's Caroline and I put my name forward because of what I bring to it," she said.

Raitt pointed out that all three candidates in the PC are "legacy political families." **Christine Elliott** first ran for the legislation in the Whitby seat of her husband, **Jim Flaherty**, had held and **Doug Ford** has followed in the footsteps of his brother **Rob** and father **Doug Sr.**

Caroline added that if you grow up with a mother or father who is a doctor you're talk about medicine, so her family talked about politics.

"I don't think it's surprising that people end up following in their family footsteps," she said.

She also offered a couple of personal anecdotes about her life: Like by the time she left 24 Sussex Drive at 19, she was happy to — she was a teenager who wanted to date and it hadn't been easy with Mounties following her everywhere.

She got the chance to be anonymous for the first time at Harvard because there were people there more important than her, like **Al Gore**'s daughter **Kareena**.

The conversation turned to sexual misconduct or harassment — the reason the PCs are having a leadership race in the first place — and Raitt asked Mulroney if she'd experienced anything like that herself.

While, Mulroney said she experienced sexism in her first job and has certainly seen sexism and harassment, she's fortunate she has never experienced it herself.

Raitt asked if the problems the PC party has experienced necessarily mean the PC party needs a female leader.

"The Progressive Conservative Party needs the right leader," Mulroney said. "I'm putting my name forward because I believe that I am the right leader."

On policy, Mulroney didn't make any definitive promises.

When asked if she'll keep the People's Guarantee, Mulroney responded that it's the result of a grassroots process that members were all consulted on, but she wants to go out and meet members, and then move forward, but noted that people like it when she had talked about it when she went out door knocking.

When asked about the carbon tax, Mulroney said she's a conservative who doesn't like taxes, but pointed out carbon pricing is federally mandated and it would be better for the province to keep the revenue it collects and give it back to people than let the federal government have it — but, again, she wants to go out and talk to people on the issue.

Her view on the minimum wage echoed that **Patrick Brown** before her — everyone deserves to earn a living wage, but she objects to how quickly the Liberals implemented. "It's not lost on people that they decided to do it six months before an election," she said.

Mulroney also explained her slogan: "Let's get it done means we've still got work to do, but we can do it and we're going to do it together."

Steve Paikin faces sexual harassment allegation from ex-mayoral candidate

By Christopher Reynolds

Ontario's public broadcaster has launched a third-party investigation into a sexual harassment allegation against TVO anchor **Steve Paikin**, which he denies.

The accusation concerns an inappropriate comment that former Toronto mayoral candidate **Sarah Thomson** says Paikin made in 2010, according to a TVO release.

Thomson said in a post on her news site Friday that she met with the host of a political talk show, along with her assistant, at Grano restaurant in North Toronto sometime after appearing on his public affairs program during the mayoral campaign.

"Not five minutes into the lunch the host asked me if I would sleep with him," Thomson wrote in the *Women's Post*, without naming Paikin. "My assistant almost spit his drink all over the table. I politely told the host that I loved my husband and would never do that. I then excused myself, went to the washroom and called my campaign manager."

Thomson wrote that while she was in the washroom, her assistant asked the host if asking directly for sex works for him and he replied, "50 percent of the time."

She suggested the encounter is why she hasn't been on his show much, and wrote that he's joked about it over the years.

"In 2010 the host made it harder for me to compete with the men I was up against, because they were invited to appear on his show while I wasn't. He didn't give a damn about how he impacted my future. In the years since he's approached me several times, usually at political functions, to suggest we 'sleep together' and he always laughs about it."

TVO CEO **Lisa de Wilde** said in a statement Monday that she first heard the allegation over the weekend after Paikin notified TVO of an email Thomson sent him Saturday.

"TVO does not tolerate sexual harassment," she stated. "We believe it is important that allegations be fully heard and investigated. Therefore, TVO is appointing an independent third party to investigate Ms. Thomson's allegation. However, based on the evidence to date, TVO sees no reason to remove Mr. Paikin from his role as Host for The Agenda pending the outcome of the investigation."

Any TVO stories related to the subject will be handled by other journalists at the public broadcaster, de Wilde said.

On Tuesday, Paikin released a statement on the allegation, denying it.

"I've spent 35 years building my reputation. In one fell swoop, these lies have prompted outrageous headlines and connected me to a story to which I have no business being connected," he wrote.

"Well, all that ends today. Today, I begin to reclaim my reputation and fight back against these scurrilous allegations."

"I mean no harm to Sarah Thomson. But Sarah, you and I both know the incident you described never happened. It's complete fiction. To be clear, I did not have sex, suggest, request, imply, or joke about having sex with you."

Meanwhile, *Toronto Star* has investigated Thomson's claim that her entire campaign was aware of the allegation at the time, and spoke with five people who had been associated with that campaign. Each said they had no knowledge of it.

This is the second allegation against a member of the Queen's Park press gallery in recent weeks. CTV suspended news reporter **Paul Bliss** from his job following an allegation that he sexually assaulted a young broadcaster more than a decade ago. **Bridget Brown** published her accusation in a blog post that avoided naming Bliss, though CTV later contacted her and

launched an investigation.

Paikin, a mainstay of Ontario political journalism, is a household name in the province and the face of TVO's current affairs coverage spanning more than two decades.

Thomson ran for mayoral office in 2010 and 2014, withdrawing from both contests before election day. She was the provincial Liberal candidate in the downtown Toronto riding of Trinity—Spadina in 2011, finishing a close second to then-NDP MPP **Rosario Marchese**.

In 2013, Thomson accused then-mayor **Rob Ford** of groping her buttocks and making a suggestive remark. The transit advocate said Ford "grabbed my ass" and told her she should have joined him on a recent Florida trip "because his wife wasn't there." Ford denied both allegations.

A couple weeks later, Thomson said that she had joked about sleeping with **Conrad Black** in exchange for an interview, the *Toronto Star* reported at the time.

"There were a whole lot of women ogling him at the party so I asked him if I would have to sleep with him to get an interview," Thomson told the *Star* regarding an incident from around 2002. "That was it. It was a joke, it was a party, there was nothing to it."

Vic Fedeli updates Tories on the state of the membership rolls, cancels monthly payments to a nominated candidate and regional organizers

By Jessica Smith Cross

Interim Progressive Conservative Leader **Vic Fedeli** updated key Tories on his mission to clean up the party — and it includes the news that the party has 70,000 fewer members in its database than the party boasted of only weeks ago.

Fedeli sent an email, obtained by *IQP*, to all candidates and caucus members Saturday updating them on the progress of his efforts to secure and modernize the party's IT systems and audit the membership rolls.

Fedeli also says he's putting greater scrutiny on contracts with vendors — and he has put a stop to monthly payments that were being made to a nominated candidate and two regional organizers.

On Tuesday, Fedeli had announced concerns about the party membership rolls, financial arrangements within the party, as well as IT issues, promising at a press conference he would "root out the rot."

His Saturday evening email offered an update on how it's going. He wrote the party has about 130,000 members in its database — that number is shy of the 200,000-plus members the party boasted about on January 13, before Brown resigned. It also doesn't reflect any culling of the rolls that might occur should his ongoing review uncover any fraudulent memberships.

"Given recent events and current uncertainties, I want caucus and candidates to be provided added visibility into recent internal Party decisions and various facts as I understand them to be," Fedeli writes. "I apologize in advance for the length of this note: I wanted to err on the side of providing too much rather than too little information, in order to let you decide for yourself what's relevant and what's not."

In the email, Fedeli walks through a timeline of events, starting with about an hour after **Patrick Brown's** 1:30 a.m. resignation in the early hours of Thursday morning, when party IT officials shut down the Constituent Information Management System (CIMS) in order to protect member information.

"This was the right decision to take at the time, notwithstanding the fact it was done without the explicit support of the then-Executive Director. I already have thanked our IT officials for the initiative and courage they showed to protect the Party," Fedeli wrote.

In the morning, the IT officials took advantage of the fact that the system was offline and began doing some necessary updates, such as updating addresses, uploading the Elections Ontario voters list and sorting members into the new riding boundaries, Fedeli writes.

The next day, **Bob Stanley**, the party's executive director, was let go.

"This and other personnel changes made it possible for OLO to ask the Party to run a report of current members in CIMS and get a straight, unvarnished answer. They informed my office that this showed 126,373 members. (They added the caveat that while the database update is ongoing, any CIMS report on current members will not be completely accurate)," he wrote.

On Sunday, the party found boxes containing 9,671 unprocessed paper membership applications and an additional 10,520 memberships in a database, for which payment had not been received, he wrote. Work to process them is ongoing.

As of Jan. 31, the CIMS shows the 127,743 members, Fedeli wrote, adding the caveat that the system update is still in progress.

"On Sunday January 28, the President of the PC Party resigned," Fedeli wrote. "By the end of the weekend of January 27-28, we had let go, eliminated the positions, or received the resignations of approximately ten individuals from the PC Party and OLO. Following the personnel changes at the Party in particular, my office has initiated a review, which is not yet

complete, of various financial arrangements at the Party, with a view towards reducing unnecessary expenses."

The ongoing review has already led to the end of monthly payments to one nominated candidate and monthly payments to two regional organizers and greater scrutiny into certain contracts with vendors, he wrote.

Fedeli did not name the candidate nor the regional organizers and did not say what the payments had been for.

Fedeli also offered good news: The party resumed fundraising last week, and pledged donations were up over the recent daily average.

"We are told that the results have been particularly promising among past donors who had stopped donating. This is encouraging news for the future of our Party," he wrote.

"From the date when the previous leader resigned to Thursday February 1, there have been 4,901 online memberships sold on the PC Party website," he wrote. "In addition, we have had nearly 400 grassroots members sign-up online to volunteer. This too is encouraging news for the future of our Party."

Fedeli ended his note with a description of IT tasks ahead of him, including replacing old servers, securing the network, fixing the party's old intranet site and making progress on new NationBuilder websites.

He said he understood it needs to be done quickly, as the party heads into its leadership race.

Ford Nation gathers to kick off PC leadership race

By David Hains

Doug Ford is ready for his moment.

The one-time Toronto city councillor is at the Toronto Congress Centre by Pearson Airport, and on a snowy Saturday night, so are around 1,500 of his supporters.

Michael Ford, a Toronto city councillor who holds the Ward 2 seat previously occupied by his uncles Rob and Doug, greets people at the entrance and takes selfies, and gives a speech later on. Some in the crowd are wearing old Ford Nation t-shirts, and others pick up new ones. Some supporters grab signs to hoist during Doug's speech to make for better visuals on television.

Underscoring the family element of the evening – the word "dynasty" is thrown around a lot – Doug's daughters Krista, Kayla and Kara enthusiastically introduce their father, giving a testimonial before the former city councillor walks onstage to Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger."

"Friends, we are ready to take back our province and I am ready to fight for you," he tells his supporters.

"Together, we will defeat **Kathleen Wynne** and together we will take our province back!" he says to roaring applause at the end of his 15-minute speech.

Talk to enough people who have experienced the Ford orbit and you will hear one refrain from both supporters and critics alike: Do not underestimate the Fords.

When **Rob Ford** announced his mayoral run in early 2010 he was not taken seriously by Toronto's political observers. Then-city councillor **Adam Vaughan** was delighted that Ford running for mayor meant that he would no longer be a member of council; Doug's late brother was long-considered a misinformed around city hall.

But critics underestimated Ford's appeal to the public. Although former deputy premier **George Smitherman** was considered the overwhelming favourite early on, from July until election day in October Ford led all opinion polls. Following an extended 2009 outdoor workers' strike that saw garbage piling up in public parks, Ford was the right candidate for an angry electorate that no longer wanted the progressive urbanism of the **David Miller** years, and no amount of citing the councillor's past indiscretions or trouble with the facts would budge his supporters.

Likewise, when Rob Ford dropped out of the 2014 mayoral race due to a cancer diagnosis and Doug replaced him on the ballot, the older brother did better than most observers expected and finished 6.5 percentage points behind winner **John Tory**. This close race was despite four years at city hall where Rob Ford had proved ineffectual at advancing his agenda and internationally infamous for lying about crack cocaine use and consorting with local gang members.

"The people who think of themselves as the smart ones don't understand or travel in social circles with Ford Nation. They don't know them, they don't understand them," explains **John Filion**, a left-of-center Toronto city councillor whose 2015 book *The Only Average Guy*, attempts to understand Rob Ford's appeal.

"In their own minds they downplay how many of them there are because they don't encounter them in their daily lives, but there are loads of them out there. Go to a hockey association dinner dance or drop by a Tim Hortons."

He adds that there Ford supporters tend to think the same way, and their loyalty to the family – Doug once proclaimed that Rob could commit murder in front of city hall and he wouldn't lose any supporters – is undying, and not necessarily driven by policy particulars.

"They are not influenced in the least by facts," Filion says of Ford Nation.

Judging by the applause at the Toronto Congress Centre, Ford Nation really dislikes Wynne, and they also dislike the carbon tax, the proposed replacement to cap-and-trade in the People's Guarantee, the PC platform.

"Folks, I am not going to introduce a carbon tax and if the Prime Minister tries to make me, well, in the words of his father: 'just watch me,'" says Ford to rapturous applause.

—INSIDE QUEEN'S PARK

The promise to stick it in the eye of someone else is vintage Ford, even when the facts don't add up. Provinces and territories will have to live within a carbon tax or cap and trade framework if legislation proposed by the federal Liberals, who have a majority, passes. And if a province doesn't comply with the legislation, as Ford proposes, it could face a scenario where the federal government does not allow the local government to set its own priorities for the money collected, the environmental commissioner explained to *IQP* on Friday. Since the carbon tax pays for a bulk of the PC platform – popular goodies like tax cuts and childcare rebates – that could mean that the People's Guarantee essentially falls apart.

Following his speech a reporter asks Ford how he would pay for platform promises in the absence of carbon tax money. He trots out a familiar word: efficiencies. Toronto has been down this road before.

In 2011, the Ford administration, where Doug was effectively a vice-mayor to his brother Rob, sought to reduce costs in the 2012 budget. They hired consultants KPMG to do a line-by-line review of the city's \$9.6 billion budget to find the "gravy" that the Fords so often said existed at city hall. They also said that there would be "no service cuts, guaranteed". But that campaign promise was quickly abandoned when the gravy didn't materialize. Instead, they reduced service on 56 bus routes and six streetcar routes. They proposed cutting the student nutrition fund and hardship fund, and Doug launched attacks on the city's library system. Citizens lined up all night to explain why city services shouldn't be cut, with one particularly heartfelt deputation from a 14-year-old at 1:30 a.m., who explained through tears that she needed a place to do her homework.

Unmoved, the Fords moved forward with their austerity agenda, although they failed to gather enough votes to pass their preferred budget.

Filion explains that there is a big gap in the Ford appeal and skill set. While Doug may be adept at campaigning and winning votes from the public, that does not translate to governance.

When asked if Doug would make a good premier, Filion laughs.

"No," he says flatly.

"[Doug] doesn't really understand nuance or complexity," he explains.

"He just doesn't have the skill set to be premier. He has the skill set to be elected leader," the North York councillor tells *IQP*.

John Parker, a former MPP in the **Mike Harris** government and city council colleague to Rob and Doug Ford, says that Doug would have to address some of his shortcomings, and learn lessons from his brother.

"[Doug] shares Rob's meat and potatoes approach to political issues that resonates with voters on the conservative end of the political spectrum - which is in the DNA that they inherited from both of their parents," states Parker, who served alongside **Doug Ford Sr.** at Queen's Park from 1995–99. "But he does not have Rob's gift for sentiment. Rob took pride in being a coach. Doug would be more natural as a sergeant major. If he hopes to lead a political caucus, Doug would be wise to take a few lessons from the best side of his brother's nature," Parker adds.

Michael Ford offers a different assessment of his uncle, and one more in line with the attitudes shared by the audience at the Toronto Congress Centre.

"I think he is a man of integrity, he is a man that stands by his principles, and I think that's the person we need to lead our province right now," he tells *IQP*.

As Doug Ford leaves the Toronto Congress Centre for the night, he has mobbed by groups of well-wishers who demand selfies with him, and it's difficult for him to get away.

One onlooker muses that given the crowd "he wouldn't want to run for mayor," confusing the office the candidate is seeking.

Hearing the remark, Doug responds that he revels in it all.

"I wouldn't trade it in for anything."

He exits, and if anyone remaining in the room still underestimated Doug Ford, then they weren't paying attention.

People

- Three former cabinet members have new jobs as parliamentary assistants. The Premier shuffled **Liz Sandals**, **Deb Mathews** and **Brad Duguid** out of cabinet in January, as all three have announced they're not running for re-election. On Thursday, **Kathleen Wynne** announced they will serve as parliamentary assistants, until the writ drops. They'll bring significant experience to their files. The new roles also come with a pay bump, from the base MPP salary. Sandals is now the parliamentary assistant to the minister of infrastructure. Mathews is now the parliamentary assistant to the Premier. Duguid is now the parliamentary assistant to the minister of intergovernmental affairs, focusing on U.S. state engagement.
- Meanwhile, MPP **Amrit Mangat** has been named parliamentary assistant to the minister of tourism, culture and sport, in addition to her role as parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for accessibility. MPP **Han Dong** has been named parliamentary assistant to the minister of energy in

addition to his role as parliamentary assistant to the minister of advanced education and skills development.

- Brown & Cohen Communications & Public Affairs added three new members, including account director **Mike Winterburn**, who has a long history with the Ontario PC Party and the Conservative Party of Canada. He was a speechwriter for former prime minister **Stephen Harper** and premier **Mike Harris**, and served as a communication director at the cabinet level. He has also worked in communications with organizations, including Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, the Canadian Soccer Association, the University of Waterloo and AstraZeneca. **Darsha Jethava**, an NDP member who worked at CBC Radio joins Brown and Cohen as an account co-ordinator. Jethava is a past president of the Ryerson University Chapter of Journalists for Human Rights. **Damali Thomas** joins the company as a social media account manager.
- **Lucas Malinowski** has joined Crestview Strategy's Ottawa office as a consultant. He brings Queen's Park experience and was most recently the director of communications to the minister of environment and climate change.

Please send your tips about people on the move to jscross@torstar.ca.

FOR YOUR DIARY

February 8 - 11 The 2018 Manning Networking Conference. Shaw Centre, 55 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa.
mnc.manningcentre.ca

February 8 A Fundraising Reception in Support of Bob Chiarelli with special guest David Herle. Canoe Restaurant, 66 Wellington St. W, 54th Floor, Toronto.

February 8 Ford Nation rally in Hamilton. 3:30 to 5 p.m. 2799 Barton Street E, Hamilton.

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