

## COMMENT

## Grit also-rans vie to be queenmaker

Four male candidates ran distinct leadership campaigns



MARTIN REGG COHN

They are the four men who would be premier, but won't be.

Collectively, they have attracted sizeable support from committed delegates for the first ballot — but have little room to grow on their own. As they fall by the wayside, these four rivals will be closely watched — and judged — if they try to play the role of queenmaker seeking a quid pro quo.

Beaten back by the two female front-runners — Sandra Pupatello and Kathleen Wynne — these four also-rans mounted dramatically different campaigns. Here's a look at what they bring to the table:

■ **Gerard Kennedy:** Running a distant third on his third leadership attempt, he is a politician with high name recognition but diminishing returns. In the last provincial race, 16 years ago, he was the front-runner — with roughly three times more support than today. Kennedy lost in 1996 because his rivals quickly discerned that he didn't play well with others.

He still doesn't. In 2006, he quit the provincial cabinet to seek the federal leadership. He finished fourth and led a charge by his delegation to Stéphane Dion — a deal he never lived down. He also had trouble paying down his six-year-old federal campaign debt, retiring it only in late 2011.

If he somehow won, the Liberal party would witness an exodus of MPPs and cabinet ministers of biblical proportions. And the province would inherit the most humourless, rigidly self-righteous premier in recent history — an erstwhile golden boy who never got over his rise and fall.

■ **Harinder Takhar:** Running a close fourth, Takhar has impressed many Liberals with his strength. His disciplined campaign may shock people again by overtaking Kennedy when the ballots are actually counted Saturday. But the biggest surprise is how Takhar has responded to criticism by cynically playing the race card — and then, curiously, playing to type.

As a politician, he doesn't always play by the rules: He ignored conflict of interest rules when in cabinet (and was demoted after being rebuked by the Integrity Commissioner); and he flouted the premier's demand that all ministers resign before actively campaigning (he filed his nomination papers on the last possible day after first signing up more than 4,000 supporters).

Unlike others, his campaign largely confined itself to the South Asian community. While all candidates practice ethnic outreach and sometimes pander, they generally reach out across all demographics. Like a realtor still selling only to family members, Takhar never broadened his base. He ignored half of the province's 107 ridings. He snubbed many of the smaller all-candidates' gatherings. And alone among his rivals, he rejected interview requests by two influential programs — CBC Radio's Metro Morning, and TVO's The Agenda with Steve Paikin. Instead, he found time to go on a local online-only Punjabi-language show, My-Punjab Radio (as I did, when invited). By casting himself as the embodiment of all Indo-Canadians, he mischievously conflated his own political ambitions with their aspirations.

■ **Charles Sousa:** The candidate from central casting, Sousa has an avuncular manner and deep voice, if not quite gravitas. His campaign never gained altitude, possibly because it was weighed down by the heavy baggage of a cancelled gas plant in his riding. Yet he has the personal temperament and political talent to make a fine Mississauga mayor when Canada's sixth-biggest city is ready for renewal.

■ **Dr. Eric Hoskins:** The dark horse is now a dead duck, trailing the others and destined to automatically drop off after the first ballot results. He finished last but made a strong first impression. The physician and Rhodes Scholar started out sounding wooden, but loosened up after a few debates. With more time, he might have made inroads as a compromise candidate with a fresh face, unscarred by scandals. But he ran out of time.

As all the men did. On Saturday, may the best woman win — without giving in to horse-trading among the male also-rans.

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As they fall by the wayside, these four rivals will be closely watched ...

We will stand up, we will persevere. We want to be acknowledged, we want to be respected. The fight does not end because the hunger strike ends. The struggle will continue.

DANNY METATAWABIN, SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF ATTAWAPISKAT CHIEF THERESA SPENCE, WHO ENDED A SIX-WEEK HUNGER PROTEST AFTER FIRST NATIONS AND OPPOSITION LEADERS AGREED TO SIGN A DECLARATION OF SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS SPENCE SOUGHT.

## McMeekin to run again — maybe

Obfuscating incumbent replies to question with classic Ted-isms



ANDREW DRESCHEL

The Hamilton Spectator

Will the one and only elected Liberal in Hamilton seek re-election after his party chooses a new leader and premier this weekend?

That would be MPP Ted McMeekin, of course.

And his answer is a classic Ted-ism.

It's a qualified yes with a built-in escape hatch.

McMeekin was one of the party's first big guns to endorse Kathleen Wynne for leader.

He's in his mid-60s. He's been at Queen's Park since a 2000 byelection. And he had a brush with cancer in 2008.

He's warm and fuzzy, he's hokey and folksy, he has the gift of the gab and the political wiles of a fox.

He's spent a lifetime in politics. First a Hamilton councillor, then mayor of the former town of Flamborough, now MPP for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

A new leader and premier could very well spell a fresh election in the coming months.

Is McMeekin ready to take on Conservative candidate Donna Skelly and a yet-to-be-determined New Democrat candidate?

As it happens, McMeekin dropped by City Hall late the other night to see what was going on. Council was behind closed doors so the always affable MPP lingered to gossip with the media who were cooling their heels in the hallway.

At the end of the evening, I got a chance to ask the question.

**Q:** Do you intend to run in the next election?

**A:** "I anticipate that I will be running in the next provincial election."

**Q:** When you say you "anticipate" do you mean you're planning to run?

**A:** "I'm, ah, doing the things that one needs to do to get ready to run in a provincial election. Frankly, it will depend on the outcome of the leadership race."

## Here is Africa. Don't be afraid

Robbery, ripoffs, threats and corruption. But we — the world — can't give up on its people

THOMAS FROESE

ARUSHA, TANZANIA Edward should be fired. I can't trust Alice. And our piano and our laptop won't resurface any more than anyone will know what happened to that \$13 million.

This is how it's going around here.

Not right "here," actually. I'm on business one country over, just southeast of my family's home in Uganda. At the moment I'm drinking a cider of sorts, what the gentleman beside me called "rotten apples." That's a pretty good name, I think, for my recent experiences.

"Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid." This is what a writing hero of mine once said.

He's right. Not that I'm afraid, at least no more than anyone in Africa should be. In Uganda, a family of nine was just murdered in their sleep. A father just beat the corpse of his dead child. This, Uganda's daily news. So I'm happy to be away for a break, some perspective, some air.

Alice used to help us in our home. A rather beautiful photo of her with her children was once in this newspaper. But then, later, her ugly threat against my family. It changed everything.

Edward is an electrician employed by the university where our Ugandan home is located. He robbed us. Just after, someone stole my children's electric piano. Just after that, someone stole my wife's laptop. And just after that, she and I chased another thief across our yard.

Finally, the \$13 million is what Uganda's Prime Minister's Office recently ripped off from international donors: Ireland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. You may have heard, it was given by those donors for Uganda's north, the area previously devastated by Joseph Kony's rebels.

Beautiful and terrible things, with the weight on the terrible, for sure. So what do we do?

The Wall Street Journal says in the past 60 years Africa has received \$1 trillion from rich countries, but about 350 million Africans now live on less than \$1 a day, double the number of the 1970s. The help, apparently, is not helping.

Too much of it is free money for corrupt governments to use for all the wrong things, including to overstay their welcomes.

Entire national economies have become dependent, like a drunk to his bottle, and millions have

**Q:** So if Kathleen Wynne wins ...

**A:** "Well, there are several good candidates but there are several that I would — they're all good candidates, but I think you're smart enough to read between the lines."

**Q:** But you're not planning on retiring from provincial politics?

**A:** "I'm having a helluva a good time and, you know, when I see issues like the horse racing issue, which I think our government dropped the ball on, and when I see issues like the windmills ..."

**Q:** Ted, I'm not asking for a campaign speech. It's a direct question.

**A:** "As long as I'm making a difference and I'm healthy — and, touch wood, I'm healthy — then it would be my intent to continue to make a contribution to public service. How one does that is open to conjecture."

**Q:** Wait a minute. Now the ground is changing underfoot.

**A:** "I don't mean to do that. I'm not trying to sabotage or anything. But, you know, there are options."

**Q:** Yeah, you could run for mayor. But right now, is it fair to say that you are planning on running in the next election depending on who gets the leadership nod?

**A:** "I need to be assured that whoever is the next Liberal leader — and I have every reason to believe this will be successfully secured — but I need to secure confidence that we will be a little bit more progressive than we've been. A little bit more collaborative than we've been. And that we'll listen better than we have. And we will quit trying to wedge issues. And I'm confident we can do that."

**Q:** Under the right leader?

**A:** Under the right leader.

**Q:** And you're endorsing ...?

**A:** "I'm endorsing Kathleen Wynne. She's the most substantive and conciliatory and collaborative of the candidates running. She's the one who wants to work with people not — as Gandhi said, 'You can't shake hands with a clenched fist.'"

So there you have it. A ringing endorsement for Wynne. An implicit rebuke of Dalton McGuinty. And a conditional commitment and definite maybe about his political future.

All in all, a classic Ted-ism.

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been left trapped and suffering.

Look at Uganda's poor taxpayers. They will now repay that \$13 million. Even the African Union reports that corruption costs Africa a staggering \$150 billion a year.

Edward, like Uganda's government, apologized. Later, to keep his job, he denied his crime ... just like the most senior officials in Uganda's Prime Minister's Office have kept their jobs.

This is all Africa's daily beat. So, really, what can we do?

Does my family simply pack up and return to Canada? Do rich governments simply turn off the so-called golden taps, especially during times of austerity?

Certainly, regarding my own rotten apples, I'm pushing hard for Edward's dismissal. And we'll improve our home's burglarproofing.

Similarly, donor countries need to push hard, harder than in the past, to have corrupt officials dismissed. And they need to tighten security around their aid dollars by, at minimum, rerouting government-to-government channels.

The issues are more complex. More nuanced. But we do need to find new creative ways. Because rich nations can't give up on the world's poorest. Not for a minute. Just like, despite that old threat from someone like Alice, my family can't give up on her, or more so, her children.

They're the kids we help with school fees, the ones that go to a Ugandan school where, for this new semester, each kid is required to bring things like six pencils and six rolls of toilet paper and, if you're boarding overnights, a bucket for bathing, and other things so lacking that it all breaks your heart.

A couple of days ago, Alice showed me the report of her oldest son. She was so proud. "Do not be relax," was the full extent of his teacher's remarks.

"Do not be relax?" I wondered just what value are we getting for what we're paying?

But I know what she meant. And that teacher is right. None of us can relax. Not really. Too much is at stake.

Author and journalist Thomas Froese is a Hamiltonian who lives in Uganda most of the year. [www.thomasfroese.com](http://www.thomasfroese.com)

Even the African Union reports that corruption costs Africa a staggering \$150 billion a year.



## BRIEFLY

Short and excerpted comments sent to [letters@thespec.com](mailto:letters@thespec.com)

## Do we need more police on Parkway?

Police Chief Glenn De Caire wants to hire 20 new officers for the city. Sometimes I think we have more than enough, especially when I see one spotter and four or five chaser cars on the Red Hill Valley Parkway on the weekends.

JAMES PANCHUK, STONEY CREEK

## Hudak: The right to work for less pay

Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak and other right-wing politicians, along with some of their corporate friends, want to weaken the power of workers and their unions through so-called right-to-work laws. Their efforts are a partisan political ploy that would undermine the basic rights of working women and men in Ontario. By making unions weaker, right-to-work laws would lower wages and living standards for all workers in the province.

Workers in U.S. states with right-to-work laws earn an average of \$5,680 less a year than workers in other states where no such legislation exists. Working families in states without these laws benefit from healthier tax bases as a result of the higher wages paid workers. Healthier tax bases result in improved quality of life for all citizens. Hudak should come clean with working families in the province and call his party's policy what it really is: The right to work for less.

ROLAND KIEHNE, PRESIDENT, CAW LOCAL 112

## Bingo provides crucial charitable funds

Regarding the letter writer who seeks to replace the Delta Bingo with a grocery store, I am not sure if she is aware that the sponsors' share of this "eyesore" bingo is crucial to many charitable organizations, including my church. A grocery store is a fine idea, but I shudder to think of what fellow parishioners and numerous other community groups will do should this money disappear.

STACEY SULLIVAN, HAMILTON

## Car plants get cash, hospitals cut back

In the same section of the Spec on Thursday, it is announced that the government is giving Toyota \$34 million for expansion, while HHS must cut \$25 million from its budget. Cars over health care. As long as we know where government priorities lie.

GLENN GLASS, DUNDAS