

Editorial ? A good leadership race could really help the Tories

In one sense, it's unfortunate that the Ontario Progressive Conservative party has been forced into shopping around for a new leader with just months to go before the next election.

We doubt that was the route they would have chosen. But it is a fact that former leader Patrick Brown was obliged to step aside.

On the one hand, it could appear that the Tories have been forced to scramble. But on the other hand, they have a golden chance to attract considerable attention as the coming election campaign draws near.

The drama has already started.

Former Toronto City councillor Doug Ford was quick to announce he would be seeking the leadership and set aside his plans to run for mayor, the office his late brother Rob held for a term.

Then former cabinet minister Christine Elliott announced she was in the race, bringing her considerable experience at Queen's Park into the contest.

More recently, Caroline Mulroney has announced her plans to seek the job.

We readily grant there's still time for other hopefuls to put their names forward, so we are not ready to declare the field complete at this stage.

But what we have now produces an eclectic mix, and we believe is going to generate much attention.

Elliott has the most experience with the way politics are run in Ontario, having served in cabinet. And she is also the widow of former federal finance minister Jim Flaherty, which means added exposure to the process, not to mention valuable connections that would have been built up over the years. She tried for leadership of the provincial party some years ago, losing to Brown. It could be argued she's been out of the political loop for a couple of years, but we are confident that her interest is still there. Besides, there are examples of people who have left the political field for a while, and returned to be victorious. Brian Mulroney and Jean Chretien are two examples that spring readily to mind.

Ford comes into this race as something of an outsider, having devoted most of his political energies over the years to the municipal level of government. But he did acquire a profile when he served on City Council during the turbulent years his brother was Mayor. On the other side of the debate, that notoriety could spark negative reactions in some people.

Ms. Mulroney comes into the race as someone who has never been elected to office, although she has benefitted from appointments.

In 2014, she was appointed by Conservative Transport Minister Lisa Raitt to the Windsor Detroit Bridge Authority.

It's also true that she has an undergraduate degree from Harvard, as well as a law degree. But there are many who could argue that the biggest item on her resume is that her father was Prime Minister for nine years.

But as Justin Trudeau and George W. Bush have proven, having a famous father does not necessarily prevent one from being elected to high office.

The Progressive Conservatives are going to have a choice when it comes to who they pick as their leader in the coming weeks. The field so far is sure to generate interest.

And heading into an election, that interest could be very valuable indeed.