

Editorial ? The perils of political polarization

Almost anywhere you look these days, terms like ?bipartisan? and ?consensus? seem to be missing ? and not just in Washington and Ottawa.

At Queen's Park, the word is that it's unlikely that anything much will be accomplished by the minority Liberal government of Premier Kathleen Wynne, with the opposition parties interested only in embarrassing the regime for its spending ?scandals? and preparing for an election they'll force this fall or next spring.

In the circumstances, it was interesting to read a Toronto Star story recently based on an interview with Roy McMurtry, Ontario's former chief justice, before that the province's attorney general in the government of Progressive Conservative premier Bill Davis, and now the author of a book, *Memories and Reflections*, in which he deplors the partisanship that dominates today's political scene.

?Now, free to speak his mind after his term of obligatory circumspection heading the Ontario courts, McMurtry's book provides a Red Tory elegy for the civility and moderation that have been twin victims of these toxic and partisan times,? the article said, adding that in an interview and speech at the recent book launch, he remarked at one point: ?If I sound like a disillusioned former federal Progressive Conservative, I am.?

McMurtry apparently has little time for the style and direction of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government, saying that many of the accomplishments and compromises of his era could never happen today, ?given the poisonous political attitude in Ottawa.?

In the book, McMurtry noted that he had been ?publicly critical of the intense lack of compassion in the federal government led by Stephen Harper. This trait, combined with the government's obvious political partisanship, has deeply divided Canadian society.?

We would be interested in his comments on the current state of affairs in the Ontario legislature, and the contrast he must see between the success of the Davis cabinet in piloting legislation during minority mandates garnered from elections in 1975 and 1977. Those minority governments managed to get plenty of legislation through the House, in large part because of getting support from either the Liberals or the NDP, occasionally taking steps perceived as to the left of the Grits of the day.

Normally, one would think the same success could be achieved by Premier Wynne, but thus far she has had no luck in convincing the Conservatives that they would benefit from co-operating with the government rather than delaying proposed legislation.

The Davis government had its share of scandals, but none so costly as the gas plant fiasco. However, taxpayers also wound up big losers in the energy field thanks to a decision in 1981, after an election in which the Tories had won a majority, to purchase a 25 per cent interest in Suncor when the stock was flying high. The investment wound up being so unsatisfactory that the NDP government of Bob Rae sold the shares in 1993 during a recession that had sent stock and oil prices tumbling.

Today, with an election as early as this fall still possible, the three parties at Queen's Park should start thinking more about the public interest and less about their own chances.

And since recent polling suggests that the most likely result of a snap election would be another minority government, we think it would be in the best interests of each party to develop at least the appearance of a willingness to pass legislation that's clearly in the public interest.

As we see it, an appropriate role for opposition parties is to examine carefully proposed legislation and work to improve it.

Walk for wildlife Saturday

Procyon Wildlife is hosting their second annual Walking for Wildlife fundraiser this Saturday (Sept. 28).

Registration will begin at 10 a.m. at the Palgrave Forest and Wildlife area on Finnerty Sideroad just west of Highway 50.

The trails are roughly 4.5 to 5.5 kilometres in length. Once participants have completed the walk, they will make their way to the nearby Caledon Estates Banquet Hall at Highways 9 and 50 for a buffet lunch at noon. A silent auction and prize draws will be held during the luncheon.

A minimum pledge of \$50 per adult (\$20 per child under 14) is required to participate. Sponsor sheets will be provided for those who wish to raise money. A prize will be awarded to the top fundraiser.

To register, call Procyon Wildlife volunteer Lindy at 905-406-0201 or email to lindytotty@rogers.com