

# Caledon Citizen

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## Editorial

# Could our premier maybe look before he leaps?

Premier Dalton McGuinty has announced he wants to change the way daily business is started at the Provincial legislature at Queen's Park, and that specifically means doing away with the traditional recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

We can see a certain amount of merit to this idea. The premier is evidently trying to make the process in the legislature more inclusive, or at least make it into something that he deems to be more inclusive.

But we have to wonder about the way he's going about this. In the first place, why did this idea come up last week without warning. And why is it evident that there was no consultation with any of the the MPPs around.

MPPs we consulted gave no indication they knew this was coming, nor had they heard any calls to have the prayer dropped.

"Zero, not a single statement," declared Dufferin — Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones. "It came out completely out of the blue."

"It is important that we respect and maintain the traditions and history of the Ontario legislature," she declared. "Part of that tradition is opening the parliamentary day with the Lord's Prayer."

So we are left to wonder what the fuss is all about.

True, the Lord's Prayer is basically a Christian tradition, and not all members of the legislature are of that faith, nor are many of their constituents. But it's recitation is a tradition that has been around for more than a century, one that is important to many in Ontario and one that does no one any harm.

The Lord's Prayer, in essence, praises God, pledges devotion, asks for His help, asks for His forgiveness for failure and promises to forgive others. Where's the offensive part of that?

And if it was offensive to anyone, why has there not been more outcry before now? For that matter, why hasn't there been any outcry?

It could also be argued that any kind of prayer in such a setting might be out of date, or redundant. It is true that Peel Regional council still opens its meetings with a generic prayer, recited by one of the members, and the council in the Town of Caledon some years ago adopted an area-specific version to recite at its meetings.

But in nearby King Township, councillors don't have any prayers recited at the start of their meetings, and things seem to go reasonably well. And there are no such prayers spoken at York Regional council either.

According to a report in Thursday's Toronto Star, the Lord's Prayer is recited at the start of council meetings in the City of Brampton and Mississauga, but not Toronto. There, they start their meetings with what is known as a minute of "personal reflection."

The House of Commons in Ottawa adopted a non-sectarian prayer a couple of years ago.

No one has suggested the Lord's Prayer should have a monopoly on the expressions of faith in the legislature. Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory said as much in the letter he issued to McGuinty in reply to his announcement.

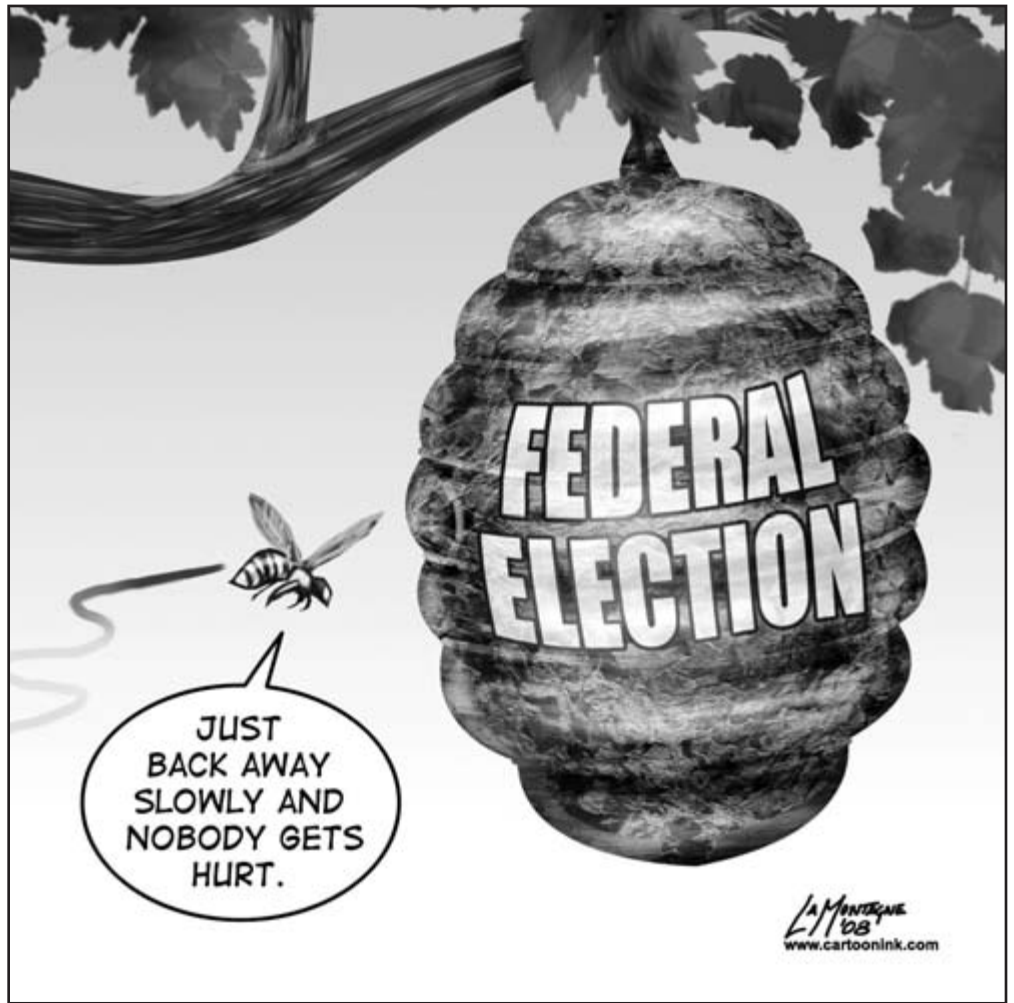
"Part of respecting the tradition of the legislature is keeping the Lord's Prayer," he stated. "That doesn't mean we wouldn't be open to other prayers being added, but a starting assumption that we would eliminate the Lord's Prayer would not be acceptable to us."

There are alternatives to the Lord's Prayer, if people find that necessary. There are also other prayers that could be recited, possibly on a rotating basis, that could appeal to those of other faiths, while keeping the Lord's Prayer, both in respect of those people of a particular faith, and in respect of the traditions that formed the institutions that govern this inclusive society.

Maybe the time for prayer in the legislature has passed. If so, then so be it.

But would it hurt the premier to at least consult with people to see what they believe and would like to see?

Isn't that really the essence of being inclusive?



## I remembered Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day has come and gone, with the usual wide range of insincerely affectionate thoughts, often expressed in a form of shopping panic attacks, not quite as intense as what one sees at Christmas time.

Cynical, aren't I?

But I think there's a bit of truth in what I just wrote, at least for many people.

I, fortunately, am not part of that group. My wife regularly reads these columns of mine, so if I had been referring to myself, I certainly would have thought of something else to write about this week.

Traditions are something I can understand, and I am enough of a romantic to understand the need some people might feel to show some extra affection one day out of the year. But I believe it's even more true that people who really feel affection for each other usually show it just about every day, with maybe a little something extra this one day. Who needs to get too extravagant?

At the risk of turning stomachs out there, I can say that is the case with my wife and myself.

We try not to wave our mutual affection in everyone's face when we're together. Beth often accompanies me on assignments, and she's with me just about the whole day every Saturday. But we avoid the blatant stuff in public. Perhaps we could do a better job than we already do, at least in the eyes of some people.

My brother has been heard to mutter on occasion, "do they always have to act



Bill Rea

so (blankety-blank) married?"

So we try and behave in public, and we have had people notice and comment on how good we look together. It is true we've had more people approach Beth and offer condolences for the man she's stuck with, but I'm getting used to that.

When it comes to affection, I find it a lot more satisfying just knowing in my guts it's there. External signs, like a Valentine card, are nice, but they aren't needed.

I received a reminder of that last Wednesday, the day before Valentine's Day. I found myself with a bit of down time between evening assignments. I also realized, with a bit of a start, what auspicious day was approaching. Now Beth never forgets to at least get me a card on Valentine's Day, and since I've been a married man, I have done a good job of remembering too, usually getting something to boot, along the lines of flowers, or candy, or sometimes both, or sometimes something else.

As soon as I realized that I had better get something

for my beloved, an idea started forming in my head of what would be appropriate, and I knew there was store nearby that could accommodate me. I won't say anything more along those lines. Like I said, Beth reads these columns, and keeping her guessing a bit is part of the charm; at least I think it is.

At any rate, I was able to obtain what I was looking for, and next had to come up with a way of getting it into the house without Beth knowing what I was up to (of course I wanted to surprise her).

As I walked in the house, I was sort of planning to slip quickly out to my car after she had gone to bed, and set everything up on the kitchen counter, where she would find it when she came downstairs Thursday morning. That plan quickly changed when I walked in. I heard the unmistakable sound of water filling the bathtub upstairs, and I realized Beth would be thusly occupied for the better part of half an hour. I can be an opportunist when I need to be, so I dashed back out to the car, retrieved the stuff and snuck back into the house. I hid the crucial package in a cupboard under the counter, astutely reasoning Beth would not likely check under there.

That whole operation was accomplished before she even knew I was home.

A while later, as Beth was retiring for the night, she came up to me and told me she understood how busy I have been the last couple of weeks (editing two commu-

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