

What sort of leadership is Tory showing?

On the question of political leadership - which Ontario Conservative Leader John Tory claims is his strength - the late American politician Adlai Stevenson once quipped: "It's hard to lead a cavalry charge if you think you look funny on a horse."

Now Tory may have deluded himself into thinking he knows how to ride a horse past the opposition barricades, but anybody watching his riding skills so far would have to fairly conclude that he fell off his horse at the start of the last election campaign and his chances of effectively remounting are, at best, remote.

You will know, of course, that even delegates at the Conservative Party of Ontario's annual conference in London on the weekend gave Tory a less-than-enthusiastic approval rating - kind of a one-handed clap - when almost one-third of the 1,308 delegates suggested it was time for their lead cowboy to ride off into the sunset.

If that wasn't bad enough, alas, Tory - who has always pushed the theme that "leadership matters" - once again displayed his weakness in that area by dithering for several hours after the vote before deciding to maintain his status as an unwelcome guest in the leader's stirrups.

For somebody who wants to be premier - and who may have been, had he not singlehandedly killed the Tories with his lamebrained policy on funding faith-based schools in the last election - Tory should have been prepared for an instant response to whatever the outcome was.

This is not rocket science. Hell, even then federal Tory leader Joe Clark knew enough in Winnipeg in 1983 to step down and call a leadership convention when he received the same 66.9 percent vote as Tory did this weekend.

What's more, Clark, unlike Tory, was up against a vicious, internecine campaign on behalf of Brian Mulroney's leadership aspirations to undercut his leadership.

Apart from one or two openly hostile delegates, Tory faced no such well-financed and highly-organized campaign to oust him, yet he still didn't fare any better than Clark.

But wouldn't you think that a leader, a real leader, would have sat down with his advisers BEFORE the vote and determined what his response would be depending on the various possible outcomes of the vote?

Wouldn't a real leader know in advance what level of support he needed to maintain his comfort level in the job?

Would a real leader have to huddle with his wife and with former premier Bill Davis - like Tory, an incurable "pink Tory" himself - and keep the delegates guessing for several hours about his decision?

What sort of "leadership" is that?

Tory, who went into the last campaign ahead of Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty in the polls - and even managed to lose his own seat in the process - is a wealthy man who obviously isn't in it for the money.

He's also a particularly nice person, a decent and honest person. He's just a lousy leader, that's all.

He complains that people upset by his delay in deciding his future should not "confuse thoughtfulness with indecisiveness."

They're not.

A decisive leader, as mentioned above, would have already decided what he was going to do depending on the outcome of the vote.

What's more, somebody more in touch with the grassroots of his party would have had a pretty clear idea of what the vote was going to be.

Perhaps had Tory been a tad more "thoughtful" before putting all his partisan eggs in the basket of publicly funding faith-based schools - certainly a legitimate position in principle, but a political non-starter - he wouldn't be in the mess he's in.

Had he not completely screwed up the last campaign, the Tories may not have formed the government, but there's little doubt that had they run a good campaign, they could have at least held McGuinty and his Liberals to a minority and put themselves in a strong position to win a majority next time out.

Now, they have no chance of doing that, not with a leader who even one-third of the most dedicated party people think is a dud as a leader. If the loyalists don't want him as their leader, why should the general electorate want him?

Tory is right about one thing, however, leadership does matter.

Pity he isn't showing any.



National
Affairs

Claire
Hoy

We all need the occasional favour

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white stuff on the ground. The upshot was, he and his machine both entered the ditch.

Beth saw it from the window, and mentioned it to me.

The rider of the machine pulled himself out of the ditch and he seemed uninjured, although from his mannerisms, he was clearly not too pleased with himself, or with fate. He tried to pull his snowmobile out of the ditch, without much success.

"He looks like he need a hand," I said, grabbing my coat and boots, and I headed out to perform my good deed for the day.

The man I encountered was pretty much what I was expecting. He was angry and frustrated, largely with himself, and very embarrassed. He and I tried to pull his rig out of the ditch, but we two simply couldn't muster the necessary muscle power.

The man looked around at the other chalets, most of

which were occupied and clearly had people inside (we could see TVs on through the windows of many of them) He then muttered something about all these people who must have been aware that he was having problems, yet only one came out to offer assistance.

I eventually called Beth on my cell phone and asked her to call the property manager for some assistance. A man appeared a couple of minutes later, spent a moment or two lecturing the snowmobiler on how he was trespassing, and the gent receiving the admonition replied with the appropriate "I have sinned" expression. Then the three of us pitched in, and got this fellow on his way. His machine did sustain some damage, but all were confident that he would be able to get to his nearby destination.

At the risk of sounding uppity, or like I'm cruising for some kind of medal, I still wonder why I was the

only one who went out to render assistance.

I realize there was some danger involved. I didn't know this man, I had no idea if he was armed, fleeing from the authorities, carrying something illicit or in some other way posed a threat. From what I could see, he was just a regular guy who had found himself in a mess and needed some help. I think we have all been in a similar situation from time-to-time, finding ourselves in a jam, maybe of our own making, and requiring the assistance of one or more strangers to get out of it. I would sometimes wonder what right I would have expecting such help, unless I was prepared to render it as required.

In fact, I did require a bit of help later in the week. I was trying to get out of the new mechanized visitor parking lot at the York Region offices in Newmarket.

The problem was the tick-

et I was issued when I had entered the lot wasn't raising the barrier as it should. I was also feeling embarrassed as I realized a line of traffic was forming behind me. I was in a hurry to get where I was going, and I envisioned the people I was being forced to delay had similar commitments. The man in the car directly behind me realized I was having difficulties, and after a few tries himself, he said he was going into the building to alert security. While he did that, I walked down the line of vehicles, explaining the situation and what was being done. Some of the people appeared to be inconvenienced, but without exception, they were polite and understanding. As things worked out, we were all on our respective ways in minutes.

Many people wouldn't have been so understanding, or as helpful as the man who assisted me. Would they have gone to assist a snowmobiler in difficulty?

Our Readers Write

New school will face transportation problems

The following letter, addressed to Cathy Saytar, superintendent of education with the Dufferin - Peel Catholic District School Board, was submitted to the Citizen for publication.

I am writing this letter to you after the Feb. 13 meeting in Bolton regarding the proposed St. Michael Secondary School on Columbia Way.

Here are some comments to consider.

The board will provide bus transportation for students living beyond 4.8 kilometres from a school. Yet, the bulk of the students who may attend the proposed school live on the south hill of Bolton, and are likely members of the Holy Family Parish and attend holy Family School, plus others. Parents don't now realize that their children will need to walk to and from north hill each day to attend the proposed secondary school.

Similarly, families living in the valley of the village of Bolton, east and west of the corners of King and Queen Streets, will need to have their children walk to school, since many residences there are less than 4.8 kilometres from the school.

Weather conditions, which are now commonly unpredictable, will cause many youngsters to experience problems walking to

school within the 4.8-kilometre distance, affecting learning.

Youngsters walking to the north hill via Queen Street will discover that there are no sidewalks on the west side of the road beyond Laurel Hill Cemetery, and there are serious dangers to such youngsters due to the excessive traffic on Highway 50 (Queen Street North). Safety becomes a concern.

Many of the subdivisions on both the north and south hills of Bolton presently only have sidewalks on one side of the street, if at all. On Bell Air Drive, we don't have sidewalks on either side of the street. Such conditions are a problem.

Many families will soon discover after the school opens that their children will find walking to school less and less viable due to weather, the state of the streets, the absence of sidewalks, etc., and many parents will deal with this problem by driving their teens to school, adding to traffic chaos on the north hill of Bolton. Together with buses coming from areas beyond the 4.8 kilometre range, you can see the implications for Columbia Way and for the residents of the north hill in the village. Also, we'll see even more family stress, due to the school location and bus

issues.

You can appreciate then that the proposed site poses many problems for the board. The design info provided at the Feb. 13 meeting was interesting, but nothing was said that will correctly address the points I've outlined here. There are no easy answers.

My grandchildren attend

Get Caledon involved in Earth Hour

Last March 31, people in Sydney, Australia embarked on a campaign to raise awareness on the issue of global warming.

The goal of the campaign was very simple - to compel as many Sydney residents, businesses and politicians as possible to join together in turning off all non-essential lighting for one hour at 8 p.m. It was a great success, with more than two million people participating, including 2,100 businesses. In one hour, the draw on the electrical grid dropped by more than 10 per cent (the equivalent of removing 50,000 cars off the road that one hour).

Although the physical reduction on electrical demand was impressive, it was nothing compared to the symbolic effect this action had across the world. The

Holy Family School. Their family lives beyond the 4.8-kilometre marker. Probably, they will be able to have bus transportation in the future. What about the other families though? The board has a huge problem.

Joe Grogan,
Holy Family Parish,
47-year separate
school advocate

action of the City of Sydney received national and international attention. It proved that the collective action of individual residents and businesses could send a profound message to local, national and international governments that people care deeply about this issue and expect them to take real action to address it.

This year the campaign has cities from around the world (some very close to home) participating including Toronto (and many GTA cities as well), Tel Aviv, Chicago, Copenhagen, Manila, and all the large cities in Australia to name some.

The Town of Caledon will be discussing its possible participation at the March 4 council meeting. I

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