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CanadaWatch

PRACTICAL AND AUTHORITATIVE ANALYSIS OF KEY NATIONAL ISSUES

SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE 1999 ONTARIO ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The Harris second term: Is the revolution over?

BY PATRICK J. MONAHAN

Patrick Monahan is a professor at Osgoode Hall Law School, York University and co-editor of *Canada Watch*.

In this special issue of *Canada Watch* we have assembled a range of commentators from varying viewpoints to analyze last year's Ontario election campaign and the prospects for the second term of the Harris government.

As a number of our commentators point out, the election campaign was essentially a referendum on the first term of the Harris government. The implementation of the 1995 "Common Sense Revolution" (CSR) program, with its emphasis on tax cuts and smaller government, had provoked an unprecedented wave of protest and social division in Ontario. The 1999 campaign provided the opportunity for vocal opponents of the CSR agenda to throw the Harris government out of office after just a single term.

In early 1999, Harris's prospects for re-election looked uncertain at best. Polls indicated that the government was running second to the opposition Liberals under Dalton McGuinty, who seemed poised to capitalize on the opposition to the government's controversial program. Recent electoral history in the province (with successive majority governments

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Ontario's new conservative coalition

BY SID NOEL

Sid Noel is a professor of Political Science at the University of Western Ontario.

Between 1985 and 1995, Ontario elections produced a revolving door of short-lived governments, with each of the major parties having a turn in office before being unceremoniously ushered out by what one disappointed ex-premier called a "cranky" electorate. In 1999 the Progressive Conservative government of Mike Harris that was elected in 1995 seemed set to follow its Liberal and New Democratic Party predecessors through the exit, since it had ruffled many feathers with its radical right-wing agenda (the "Common Sense Revolution" (CSR)) and seemed to lack widespread support. Instead, Harris and his party accomplished what the others could not: they won a second straight majority government.

The government's re-election—which ensures it a run of at least eight straight years in office—is a sign that the period of revolving-door government in Ontario is over. It may also indicate a return to the historic Ontario norm, for, despite occasional interludes of electoral

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FEATURES

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going down to defeat in 1990 and 1995) seemed about to be repeated.

How did Harris manage to pull a victory rabbit out of the electoral campaign hat on June 8?

While our commentators offer a variety of answers to that question, one common theme emerges: the government was able to reassemble the coalition of voters that had brought it victory in 1995. As political scientist Sid Noel points out in his analysis, that coalition comprises older voters, more male than female, with above-average incomes and education, many of whom are employed in information-based occupations. Although stereotypically concentrated in the 905 code area surrounding Toronto, their presence is also significantly large in other suburban areas and in small-town Ontario. For this group of voters, as Environics vice-president Jane Armstrong argues, economic and fiscal issues assume primary importance. The government's performance on these issues enabled it to overcome widespread dissatisfaction with its handling of health care and education.

While the Conservative election victory cemented the reforms implemented in the first Harris term—particularly the 30 percent cut in provincial income tax rates—the question is what to expect for the next four years. Again, although our commentators offer a range of opinions on this question, it is apparent that the government's agenda will be much more modest and narrow in the second term than it was in the first.

In part, this is attributable to the 1999 "Blueprint" campaign platform, which pales in comparison with the 1995 CSR manifesto. While promising an additional 20 percent cut in provincial income tax rates and "law and order" initiatives such as a crackdown on "squeegee kids," the 1999 platform offered little on the key issues of education and health care. Indeed, in an attempt to blunt criticism from its opponents, the government's main message was simply that it would spend more money in these key areas.

The 1999 platform offered little on the key issues of education and health care.

Since the government's campaign platform was the product of extensive polling and opinion research (as both Fred Fletcher and Robert MacDermid point out in their commentaries), the government clearly believed that this message of "more spending" was necessary in order to secure its re-election. But the result is that the government lacks a mandate to implement any further restructuring in these areas, which will make implementation of significant change extremely difficult.

One cannot help but contrast the initial six months following the 1995 election to the corresponding period in 1999. In 1995, the government hit the ground running, calling the legislature back into immediate sitting. By late July, less than 60 days after the election, it had tabled a "mini-budget" imposing major cuts in proposed government spending, particularly in the welfare area. In contrast, in 1999, the legislature was not called back into session until over four months after the election. The short fall sitting featured a modest legislative agenda before the legislature went back into recess.

Thus, all indications to this point are that Mike Harris's second term is likely to be much different than his first. Yet the issues and challenges facing the government—particularly in the area of education and training—appear even more pressing today than they were four years ago. As many of our commentators suggest, how the government responds to those challenges will continue to be keenly watched, not only in Ontario but across the country.

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Ontario and the global challenge

BY PETER WOOLSTENCROFT

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After four intense years, marked by sharp new policy directions, violent protests and mass demonstrations, and a six-month pre-election period saturated with government and Conservative party advertising, quiescence seems to have enveloped Ontario. Autumnal commentary about Ontario politics has been an elaboration of one theme. The "Common Sense Revolution" (CSR) of 1995 has died, replaced by managerial preoccupations—the politics of tidying up.

The premier's rare visibility and the lack of stirring avowals and rousing denunciations (other than of squeegee kids) from his cabinet colleagues prompted the view that the revolution is over. The potency of the received wisdom apparently was of sufficient bother that the scribes who produced the recent speech from the throne took pains to assert that the party in government was not the government, but rather opposed to government; this in a document with over 80 references to government.

The commentators' easy consensus that exhausted revolutionaries have become functionaries and routinizers is unfortunate. It diverts attention from a number of compelling decisions that are before them. Perhaps the commentators may be excused; in the election the parties barely said anything beyond increased health and education spending.

The Tory election strategy was straightforward. Of likely voters, for example, they had a lock on 35 percent, 45 percent were unalterably opposed, and 20 percent were uncertain. If half of the last group voted PC, victory was assured. The subtext of the Harris campaign was powerful and reassuring—Ontario, compared with 1995, was much healthier, evidenced simply by its mantra "jobs up, taxes down."

Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty's campaign, initially faltering and marked by an unimpressive debate performance, caught fire in the last stages. The effect was to deflate the NDP vote, outside of the ridings where the party was the clear leader, by consolidating opposition votes in the Liberal camp.

The commentators' easy consensus that exhausted revolutionaries have become functionaries and routinizers is unfortunate. It diverts attention from a number of compelling decisions that are before them.

Four things are noteworthy about the election. Mike Harris broke the pattern of one-term majority governments that had marked the last three elections. Second, strategic voting (where voters pass over their preferred choices in order to defeat, say, the Tories) was unusually important. The NDP, with its vote plummeting eight points to 12.5 percent, won nine seats. The Liberals increased both their vote and seats, and in so doing achieved their second-best overall result since World War II. Third, despite the intensity of Ontario's politics in the last few years, voter turnout was in the low 60s, consistent with the last four elections.

Last, Tory triumphalism has obscured the narrowness of the election. To be sure, the PC vote increased marginally from 1995, to just over 45 percent. However, the transposition of 1995 results on the new seats shows a drop from (more or less) 73 seats to 59.

What lies ahead? Electorally, much rests on the NDP's ability to recover. Failing an NDP revival, the theory of party competition suggests that the Tories will move to the centre in their policy choices, if not in rhetoric. Smoothing the rough edges of the CSR makes it harder for the Liberals to stir hostility.

However, the Tory government faces severe policy challenges. Their bedrock commitment is to continue cutting taxes. The party's manifesto promised a 20 percent cut to personal income tax and a 20 percent cut in the province's share of municipal taxes. A balanced budget is slated for the next fiscal year.

The premier said this past summer that $1 billion will be cut from government spending, but not from education or health, which will have a 20 percent increase in the next four years. The Harris government has already made significant spending cuts in a number of ministries, so it is difficult to see where more reductions will come from.

Post-secondary education is a big problem for the Tories. For three decades Conservative, Liberal, and NDP governments have maintained that there will be a place in an Ontario institution for every qualified student. That policy has resulted in one of the highest participation rates in the world.

The funding approach taken by Harris has been to increase tuition fees, allow tuition deregulation in selected programs, and target funds in certain fields, such as electrical engineering and computer science. The basic operating grant has been untouched, so that Ontario

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has fallen far behind American and other Canadian jurisdictions. With tuition and special funding factored in, Ontario ranks fourth or fifth in Canada.

Because of the demographic boom, higher participation rates, and workplace demands the increased demand in the next decade for post-secondary education will be astronomical. Estimates from the Council of Ontario Universities (which represents the province's publicly funded institutions) suggest that the system will have to expand by 30 to 40 percent. At a time when the supply of new professors is clearly insufficient for the positions that have to be filled, newly minted PhDs are receiving offers from leading American and European universities far beyond anything that Ontario's universities can match.

There is also the question of the appropriateness of Ontario's approach to economic growth. The government's preoccupation is the province's ability to compete globally; its core belief is that lowering taxes, cutting redtape, and easing regulatory requirements will attract the investment necessary to sustain economic growth.

One test case will be in the area of research policy. Quebec, British Columbia, and Alberta have disavowed a laissez-faire approach. Leading American states have taken the flagship route by using public investment to position their institutions as world leaders. Ontario has taken a few halting steps toward the development of a research policy, but it lags behind most jurisdictions.

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Ontario will soon make decisions that will have enormous consequences. It may retreat from its commitment to publicly funded higher education by allowing private universities to operate freely. Another route is to change Ontario's community colleges (which are much cheaper on a per-student basis than are universities) into degree-granting institutions. These policy instruments may solve the funding problem but do not address the research infrastructure issue. Reduction of high participation rates is possible through inertia. Without significant funding changes, by the mid-2000s high school students will need averages in the 80 percent range to find a place in Ontario's universities, where high-quality programs will be few.

The Ontario Tories talk about international competitiveness, high-value industries, a highly skilled workforce, and their goal of ensuring that the province is the pre-eminent place for investment and economic growth.

The question: Will Ontario's rhetoric about being ready for the new knowledge-based economy be matched by the appropriate policies?

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volatility, throughout its history, Ontario has tended to elect long-term governments. In the 20th century it has also tended to elect Conservative governments. The period of electoral volatility from 1985 to 1995 was clearly an exception, and in 1999 a new equilibrium appears to have been established.

When the Harris Conservatives were first elected in 1995, their victory resembled previous Liberal and NDP victories in that it resulted from a sudden late upsurge in voter support. It was by no means obvious that the coalition of interests that brought the Conservatives to power would not quickly disintegrate, just as earlier Liberal and NDP coalitions had done. In 1999, however, not only did the Conservatives retain the same share of the popular vote (45 percent) that they won in 1995, their support was based on the same regional and socioeconomic sections of the electorate. The new Conservative coalition has thus proved to be much more solid than the constructs that briefly propelled the Liberals and NDP to power but proved too evanescent to keep them there.

The demographics of the new Conservative coalition are well known. Members tend to be somewhat older than the electorate as a whole and fewer are women. They also tend to have above-average incomes and education and to be employed in technical, professional, managerial, financial, and other information-based occupations. Many are highly skilled workers in advanced manufacturing industries. Double-income families are the norm. They are stereotypically concentrated in the 905 code area surrounding Toronto, but every city in

Ontario has similar suburbs whose residents have similar life-styles and concerns. Their presence is also significantly large in many small-town and rural areas.

They are home-owning, investing, upwardly aspiring members of the middle class and, not surprisingly, they tend to hold conservative views on a wide range of social issues. Mike Harris's revealingly apt term for them is "quiet, hard-working Ontarians who obey the rules."

In most respects, the new Conservative coalition resembles the Republican coalition that holds sway in many US states, including Ontario's neighbouring states of Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania. The most important difference is the absence in Ontario of an organized, US-style "religious right" with strong links to the Conservative party. Though there are numerous ridings where US-style church groups play an active role in mobilizing the Conservative vote, the coalition's ideological markers, on the whole, have thus far tended to be more exclusively secular than those of its US counterparts. What they share above all with American conservatives is a prevailing conviction that government is not a partner in their prosperity but an obstacle to it.

There is one area, however, where their negative view of government runs squarely up against their experience as Ontarians and their knowledge of the lives of their American neighbours, and that is health care. While desiring lower taxes and less government spending in general, they also see spending cuts to the health care system as a threat to their personal security and well-being. This dissonance was something the Harris Conservatives picked up on in their polling and correctly identified as a threat to their re-election prospects. In the year before the election, the health care pump was primed with announcements of restored spending, claims of new spending and pledges of even greater spending in future.

This theme was carried forward into the 1999 election campaign in which the Conservatives stuck for the most part to two main messages; the first promised further tax cuts and the second promised more spending on health. These commitments were two of the key factors in keeping intact the coalition that had brought them to power in 1995.

Harris's impressive victory has made him the most powerful Ontario premier of the modern era. . . . [U]ntil he decides to step down, his personal power will be virtually unrestrained. More than ever, there will be no aspect of his government's policies or priorities that will not bear his personal stamp.

The third factor was a skillfully crafted and lavishly funded advertising campaign—including an unprecedented volume of advertising in the pre-campaign period, before campaign spending limits could take effect. The pre-campaign included a barrage of both government-funded and party-funded ads designed to counter the misgivings of many potential supporters who felt that the government was on the right track but was "moving too fast" or "not listening." It also prominently featured a television attack ad designed to fix in the minds of voters a negative image of the then little-known Liberal leader, Dalton McGuinty. The effect was to derail the Liberal campaign even before the election had been called.

Elections are not only won, however; they are also lost. The Liberals ran an erratic, perplexing campaign and the NDP was in obvious disarray from the beginning over the issue of "strategic voting." Neither opposition party seemed to understand that merely being against the Harris government was not enough and that they needed to give voters some positive reason to elect them.

Finally, there is the contribution of Mike Harris to the Conservative victory. To a degree that is remarkable even in an age of personality-based politics, he personifies his party—to supporters and opponents alike—and in the Conservative campaign his name and image were everywhere front and centre. There was no "Harris team" to praise or blame, no sharing of the media spotlight, no pretense that anyone else in the party mattered.

The campaign, indeed, often seemed to be about nothing but Mike Harris. Hostile protesters dogged his every public appearance, paying unintentional homage by crying for the television cameras "Stop Harris-ment!" as though he were personally the sole author of their discontent. The leaders of the Liberal and the NDP parties paid him back-handed tributes by day after day making him the obsessive focus of their attention, allowing him to eat up their precious television time, to the neglect of their own and their parties' messages.

Harris's impressive victory has made him the most powerful Ontario premier of the modern era. His caucus is indebted to him for their seats, his cabinet ministers for their jobs, his back-room advisers for their future patronage sinecures and lobbying contracts. None of these will offer the slightest resistance to his wishes and, until he decides to step down, his personal power will be virtually unrestrained. More than ever, there will be no aspect of his government's policies or priorities that will not bear his personal stamp.

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The 1999 Ontario election

BY E. JANE ARMSTRONG

E. Jane Armstrong is senior vice-president of the Environics Research Group.

It has often been said that governments are defeated, not elected, that voters are more likely to use their ballot to punish an incumbent government than to reward a political party for policies or a campaign performance that they actually like. And, in many ways, that was the fate that befell a number of Ontario's governments, including Frank Miller's Conservatives in 1985, David Peterson's Liberals in 1990, and Bob Rae's New Democrats in 1995. It was also the fate that some pundits—and other vested interests—predicted last spring for Mike Harris's Conservatives a government that forced a possibly record number of controversial policies on what has traditionally been a mild-mannered electorate.

In Ontario in 1999, however, an entirely different scenario emerged. The Mike Harris government was re-elected. In fact, for the first time in 32 years, Ontarians elected back-to-back majority governments. The Conservatives won 45 percent of the popular vote, a slight improvement over their performance in 1995. The opposition Liberals increased their share of the popular vote to nearly 40 percent, up from 31 percent in 1995. The New Democrats dropped to 13 percent, their worst showing since the 1950s.

The Conservatives were re-elected for many reasons, including the power of their election campaign and the reputation of Mike Harris as the most capable leader and one who had proven—in spite of vociferous opposition—that he will actually do what he had promised to do. More important, we believe that the Conservatives won because they were able to reassemble the neo-conservative plurality that brought them into power in 1995 (just as Brian Mulroney had done at the national level in 1984 and again in 1988).

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These Conservative victories echoed the success of the British Conservatives and the American Republicans in the 1980s, a time in which the "new" political ideas all seemed to come from the right of the ideological spectrum. This was a marked change from the previous half century or more, when the popular perception was that the impetus for change began at the far left, pushing the national debate toward the centre and against a so-called right wing that dug in its heels in an often futile effort to preserve the status quo.

Most of these neo-conservative governments—in particular those under John Major in Britain, George Bush in the United States, and Kim Campbell in Canada—eventually defeated themselves because they were perceived as either arrogant or incompetent, and after the mantle of leadership had been passed from the political titans of the 1980s—namely, Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, and Brian Mulroney. But, although the power of government shifted to political parties that were nominally to the left, the political agenda as a whole had moved so far to the right that the new governments felt they had no choice but to promise—explicitly or implicitly—that they would continue their predecessors' neo-conservative policies, albeit in a supposedly more compassionate and less ideological manner.

The 1999 Ontario election certainly saw shades of the same scenario, as the provincial Liberals attempted to position themselves as a party that was as conservative as the Conservatives on fiscal issues, but more compassionate and less ideological in other areas and less confrontational in their approach to governing. But, in the end, they were unable to capitalize sufficiently on widespread concern about health care—and, to a lesser extent, education—to successfully steal a portion of the softer Tory vote. The Progressive Conservatives, for their part, countered these efforts by making significant moves toward the political centre, primarily by their promise to increase health care funding. In addition, one cannot discount the effect of the anti-Harris vote being split between the Liberals and the NDP. Even though the NDP collapsed under the pressure of strategic voting, among other things, there were still enough votes cast their way (instead of toward the Liberals) to reduce the chances of a Liberal win.

But let's look beyond what went wrong for the Opposition parties and examine what went right for Ontario's Tories. Going into the election campaign, Mike Harris and his Conservatives, according to our research, were in second place in the polls (and had been for most of their mandate). For much of the time, however, the party was a close second to the Liberals and Environics' quarterly Focus Ontario survey found the Ontario population to be deeply divided on the main issues of the "Common Sense Revolution" (CSR).

For almost all of the Conservatives' mandate, about half of Ontarians were satisfied with the government, the other half were dissatisfied, many very dissatisfied. About half thought the government's pace of change in restructuring education and health care was about right (or not fast enough), and the other half thought the pace was much too fast. About half described the government's spending cuts as appropriate, the other half thought they were too severe. About half supported the Tories' tax cuts, the other half were opposed.

As we intimated earlier, there were two broad areas of consensus that seemed to bode ill for the Progressive Conservatives: large majorities of Ontarians, including significant numbers of self-described Tory supporters, *disapproved* of the Harris government's handling of health care and education. Top-of-mind, these were two of the leading issues on the public agenda. But—and this is key to understanding their eventual victory at the ballot box—the Progressive Conservatives never lost their reputation as the party most capable of handling the economy and fiscal issues. This allowed them to keep their core supporters, no matter how controversial their legislative agenda, and it was from this base that they were able to remobilize the neo-conservative plurality that had first discovered them in 1995.

This neo-conservative plurality is composed primarily of two groups. The first might be described as voters whose political philosophy is fiscally oriented. This group is dominated by men, the province's more affluent citizens and homeowners, and residents of the 905 suburbs of the Greater Toronto Area. The second group is bound together more by psychographic traits than by shared demographic characteristics. Its adherents believe that previous governments have often caved in to special interest groups, particularly public sector unions, and that government-sponsored social assistance programs have created a poisonous climate of resentful dependence and willful abuse of public generosity. This latter group was especially drawn to Progressive Conservative promises to implement teacher testing, to require social assistance recipients to pass drug and literacy tests before being eligible for welfare, and to rid city streets of "squeegee kids."

As a group, many of these neo-conservatives are inured to, if not pleased with, the inevitable force of global commerce, culture, and communications on their lives. They stand in awe of the power of the American economy to innovate and they question whether the traditional Canadian emphasis on equality and quality of life should be allowed to get in the way of American-style prosperity and Darwinistic struggle in a fiercely competitive world. Indeed, some of these neo-conservatives believe it is not only inevitable, but also desirable, that Canada will eventually be integrated into the United States, with the first symbolic step being our adoption of a common—that is, American—currency.

Certainly, many see themselves primarily as taxpayers and consumers rather than as grateful or complacent denizens of a social welfare state. By virtue of its plurality consensus, it is a way of thinking that has become predominant in Ontario's political culture and, indeed, in that of Canada as a whole. And it is within this context that the Ontario Conservatives were able to replicate their 1995 victory in June 1999.

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The question is, what sort of stamp will it be? Surprisingly, the answer to that question is not as clear as one might think, given his early reputation.

The Mike Harris of the 1999 campaign was a different public figure from the Mike Harris of 1995, and a more interesting one. The earlier version, simplistic "Chainsaw Mike," was still on display, pushing the divisive hot buttons of "crime," "welfare," and "union bosses." As well, his Blueprint platform contained a miscellany of new sops to his party's right wing, from mandatory drug testing for welfare recipients and a crack-down on squeegee kids to recertification for teachers.

But on many occasions during the campaign there was also on display a more moderate, pragmatic, even conciliatory Mike Harris, whose penchant for plain speaking took a very different turn. This was strikingly evident in the televised leaders' debate: "That is a complex issue," he would say, or "I wish there was a simple answer to that." He may have scored no debating points, but his words had the ring of being an honest response to the realities of governing. Four years earlier, he would probably have recited some half-baked line from the CSR.

At other times in the campaign, he expressed what to many were surprisingly unequivocal commitments to the maintenance of Ontario's public health care and education systems, in terms that were reminiscent of an earlier tradition of progressive conservatism. These statements are bound to upset his party's neo-conservative ideologues. They are also statements from which his Liberal and NDP opponents can draw no comfort: it was a similar concern for the prosperity and common well-being of all Ontarians that kept the old PC dynasty in power for 43 straight years.

There will inevitably be tensions in the Harris government during its second term in office and these are likely to polarize around pragmatists (mainly elected MPPs and ministers) and ideologues (mainly unelected backroom advisers). The party's future, however, will be determined largely by Harris. He has proven himself to be an excellent party manager and, if he uses the next four years to fine-tune his CSR, which a large coalition of Ontarians now supports, and to groom a successor to carry on his leadership, the Conservatives could remain in power for a very long time.

The NDP and the election

BY JUDY REBICK

Judy Rebick is former president of NAC and co-host of the CBC TV program *Face-Off.*

The New Democratic Party has never asked me for advice on electoral strategy. The common wisdom in the party is that those of us on the left are hopeless idealists without a clue about getting elected. The party leadership has almost always looked to the right for their strategies. I write in the vain hope that since they haven't been doing so well lately they might reconsider that direction.

In my view, the NDP did so badly in the last election because they didn't offer a clear alternative to Mike Harris. The problem became apparent in the leaders' debate. Howard Hampton did the best job as a debater but came across as cold and uncaring. This is a serious problem for a party that presents itself as the one that is the most caring and compassionate. Of the three, it was Hampton who should have reflected the anger of those who Mike Harris has cut out of participating in Ontario's democratic process. This was not a government like any other and it should not have been a debate like any other. Hampton needed passion. He needed a tough and sustained attack on Harris for the brutality of his government, for his exclusion of the poor, of working people and their unions, of teachers, of health workers, of anyone who doesn't agree with his government.

Hampton is quite a passionate man. I assume he dampened his natural tendencies on the advice of his handlers. In fact, the 1999 Ontario election marked the ultimate triumph of the handlers, pollsters, and spin doctors over anything resembling real politics. Maybe they thought that if Tony Blair could win with spin doctors so too could Hampton.

Voters who consistently told pollsters that health care and education were their top concerns returned a government that has done more to threaten universal health care and public education than any government before it. This election was not fought on issues, it was fought on leadership. Without a clear programmatic alternative, Harris won as the strongest leader.

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What was the alternative presented by the NDP in the last election? As far as I could make out, the only real difference between the NDP and the Tory program was that the NDP was going to spend a little more on health care and education. So anxious were they to impress the fiscal conservatives with their promise of a balanced budget that the NDP often alienated their own potential supporters.

In the middle of the campaign, I attended an all-candidates meeting in Ottawa organized by the daycare community there. The audience was initially very supportive of the NDP. Then the NDP candidates outlined how they couldn't spend any more on child care than the rather modest amount they had outlined in their election platform. After all, it is very important to be fiscally responsible. Individual candidates indicated that they had sympathy for the young mothers, who took to the microphone explaining their struggle to continue their schooling given the long waits for subsidized spaces. But, what could they do? The Liberals, however, responded to the issues raised by the audience and promised to have another look at their plans for daycare. After the meeting I overheard a number of young women saying that before the meeting they had planned to vote NDP but now they weren't so sure.

It is true that voters have been persuaded that fiscal responsibility is very important in a government, but that doesn't mean that the NDP has to cave in so completely to a balanced-budget approach that their election campaign talks more about dollars and cents than about caring and compassion.

Harris has created an intense polarization in Ontario, evident in the popular vote. He has also created a level of protest and discord unprecedented in Ontario's history. Huge groups in society—teachers, union members, and poor people—feel excluded by his government. Unfortunately, many of these groups also feel alienated by the NDP. The divisions go back to Bob Rae's social contract. For a while, Hampton attempted to paper over these divisions with support from groups like the auto workers and the teachers. Then came strategic voting.

Most of the same labour groups that saw Bob Rae's social contract as a betrayal supported strategic voting in the last Ontario election. The idea was that progressive groups would chose the candidate—Liberal or NDP—in each riding who had the best chance of defeating the Tories and campaign for that person.

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Political communication and public discourse

BY FRED FLETCHER

Fred Fletcher is a professor of political science at York University.

When the Harris Conservatives introduced their "Common Sense Revolution" (CSR) in the months before the 1995 election, they intended not only to change the nature of election campaigns in Ontario but of governance as well.

These changes involved not only major policy changes—restructuring health care, education, and local government, not to mention reducing the rights of unions, and proposing balanced budget and referendum legislation—but also changes in the nature of political communication and public discourse in the province.

The 1999 campaign and the nature of the government's political communication in their second mandate suggest that they are succeeding. The shift from consensus-based politics to a polarized discourse may well be permanent. Certainly, election campaigns are unlikely to be the civilized affairs of earlier decades, where the governing party rarely mentioned the names of the other party leaders. Indeed, the Conservatives ran in 1999 as if they were in opposition.

The communication strategies of the Harris Conservatives can be traced to their campaign strategy in the 1995 election and have remained remarkably consistent into their second mandate, despite indications after their second victorious campaign in 1999 that the government's post-election approach would be more "managerial."

The consensus-building style of the Davis years (1971-85) was succeeded by a somewhat more confrontational approach during the Liberal (1985-90) and NDP (1990-95) governments; but this was more a matter of policy disagreements and personal rancour than of deliberate policy. The Harris strategy, brought to Ontario by Republican political consultants imported from the United States, was a more deliberate, research-driven approach, designed to differentiate the Harris Conservatives from the front-running Liberals and to polarize the electorate.

The Greater Toronto Area suburbs share some important attitudes with the US "edge cities" that were tapped by the Conservative campaign.

This strategy, which involved, among other elements, extending the election campaign, relying heavily on television, and scapegoating various groups, has not only altered electoral and governmental communication but has changed the nature of political discourse in the province. In addition to stimulating an unprecedented level of public protest, the strategy also encouraged the emergence of a right-wing populist discourse that had been suppressed by the pre-existing social consensus around a moderate, "red Tory" approach to public policy.

The central communication strategies of the 1995 campaign—centralized control of a simple message, extensive pre-writ campaigning, heavy reliance on targeted television advertising, the use of "hot button" or wedge issues to polarize the electorate—were carried over into the policy communication processes during the first mandate and remained the key principles of the 1999 campaign as well.

What might be called the "suburban strategy" of political communication is described in some detail in an interesting recent book by Stephen Dale, *Lost in the Suburbs: A Political Travelogue.* This strategy plays on the fears of many suburban voters.

Dale compares the suburban voters targeted effectively by the Republicans in the United States with the "905 voters" who have provided key electoral support for the Harris Conservatives. Dale suggests that the Greater Toronto Area suburbs share some important attitudes with the US "edge cities" that were tapped by the Conservative campaign: a privatized, compartmentalized style of life; alienation from community and government; a sense (not supported by evidence) that there is "a wave of criminal activity moving north from the big city" (at 299); a "highly leveraged" lifestyle, marked by a high level of personal debt and a degree of economic insecurity, exacerbated by stagnant personal incomes.

In 1995, the promise of tax cuts, deregulation, and reduced government spending resonated with these voters, whose faith in government action had been eroded by recession and threats of increased government activity in areas such as employment equity, anti-racism education, and smoking restrictions. Despite the economic growth of the late 1990s, the insecurity remained in 1999, but the emphasis in the Conservative campaign shifted to crime and social control, symbolic actions that would not involve significant public spending.

Both the 1995 and 1999 campaigns were heavily dependent on television.

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In 1995, the Conservatives flooded the airwaves in the Toronto suburbs with comparison ads aimed at the alienated suburban voters, with great success. Suburban voters, who often work long hours and face long commutes, are best reached by television, with ads targeting a small number of emotive issues—a strategy employed with considerable success by the Republicans in the United States. As Dale demonstrates, the 1995 Harris Conservative campaign, including both policies and strategies, was an "off-the-rack" version of the successful Republican campaigns.

The innovations likely to have the most lasting effects are those that changed the nature of campaigning in the province—extending the campaign, abandoning consensus politics in favour of polarization, and imposing tight central control, not only on local candidates but on the premier and key ministers as well.

Both illustrate well the benefits of an extended campaign. In 1995, the Conservatives built a strong foundation for the campaign, releasing the CSR document, holding constituency meetings, and preparing materials, including campaign videos, in advance. With the advantages of government, the Harris people made unprecedented use of government advertising, aired some pre-writ party advertisements, and altered campaign regulations to benefit the party with the most financial resources.

In 1999, the Conservatives used government advertising to try to shore up support for their policies in health care and education, to reinforce the image of teachers' unions as unrepresentative or obstructive, and to promote Mike Harris as a tough and credible leader. One advertisement alleged that "union bosses"—a favourite phrase of the government—wanted to protect "higher taxes, bigger classes [and] less time teaching kids." The government settled a libel suit brought by the Ontario Teacher's Federation by, in effect, admitting that the ad had incorrectly characterized the union's position.

The government advertising, paid for by public funds, struck many observers as more clearly partisan than any previous government advertising in Ontario. In his 1999 annual report, the provincial auditor responded to complaints about the ads by recommending that the province adopt clear guidelines distinguishing government from partisan advertising, as New Zealand has done. Reading between the lines, *Toronto Star* Queen's Park columnist Ian Urquhart interpreted the auditor as concluding that "the Tories clearly crossed the line separating legitimate government ads from partisan political ones" (November 17, 1999). The New Zealand guidelines distinguish between ads designed to explain government policies or inform the public about services, rights, and liabilities, which are legitimate, and those "designed to secure . . . popular support for the party-political persuasion of the members of the Government." The ads attacking critics of government policy were clearly unprecedented in Canada.

In defending the ads, government spokespersons argued that the government had no choice but to respond to critics, who were advertising themselves, and critical media (like the *Toronto Star*). It is the timing of ads, in the runup to the election, and the use of public funds that raises ethical and policy questions.

The Harris strategists also broadcast television advertising in the pre-election period paid for by the Conservative party, before the party spending and advertising limits came into effect (when the election was called). The most important of these was an ad characterizing the new Liberal leader, Dalton McGuinty, as "not up to the job" of premier. This widely disseminated ad was important because it helped to "define" the opposition leader before he had a chance to create his own image, since Ontario voters pay little attention to opposition parties until an election is called.

In particular, this ad signaled an important theme in the Conservative campaign—not only that McGuinty was not a strong leader like Harris, but that the election of the Liberal party might jeopardize economic recovery in Ontario—an appeal that had particular resonance for suburban voters.

In both 1995 and 1999, the Conservatives worked hard to control the agenda, concentrated on a few major themes that were packaged as the "message of the day," often with illustrative images or gimmicks, such as the "spendometer," controlled party communication from the centre to ensure that all candidates followed the script, and "narrowcast" particular appeals to target voters. Neither the additional tax cut proposal in 1999 nor work for welfare had broad appeal, according to the polls, but they shored up support among key groups, alienating primarily those who would not vote Conservative in any case.

The innovations likely to have the most lasting effects are those that changed the nature of campaigning in the province—extending the campaign, abandoning consensus politics in favour of polarization, and imposing tight central control, not only on local candidates but on the premier and key ministers as well. Other parties will be forced

to respond in kind, and Ontario elections in the immediate future at least will be driven more by money and advertising than in the past, and by appeals to self-interest rather than competing concepts of the public interest.

In terms of governance, these strategies have carried over into the way in which the government conducts business between elections as well. Unlike previous Ontario governments, the current government has reduced the powers of the legislature, cut back dramatically on consultations with stakeholders and on public hearings, and centralized control of media relations in an attempt to focus all government communications on a few simple messages. Recently, for example, Robert Fisher, host of Global Television's *Focus Ontario*, ended a broadcast by thanking Guy Giorno, a key figure in the premier's office, for "permitting" the government house leader to appear on the program.

During its first mandate, the government renamed the coordinating committee of cabinet the Policy, Priorities, and *Communications* Board and required all government policy proposals to be accompanied by a communication plan with a clear message related to the CSR, often accompanied by government-funded polls measuring support for the policy not so much in the general public as in the key geographical and demographic constituencies supportive of the Conservatives.

Given a determined and well-funded Conservative party in Ontario, it may well be that other parties will have to adopt many of these communication strategies to compete.

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Needless to say, the NDP was strongly opposed to the idea, believing that it would lead to the election of more Liberals than NDPers. My own view at the time was that the only way strategic voting could work would be if the parties themselves accepted it. In other words, if the NDP would cede to the Liberals in certain ridings and the Liberals to the NDP in others. When it became clear that this would never happen, the strategic voting approach was doomed to failure. There were other problems as well. Who would decide which candidate to support? How would this information get communicated to voters? And why would most voters listen to those groups? Nevertheless, since it had little impact, it did not damage the NDP's electoral results. I have talked to a couple of people who do this sort of number crunching and they see no evidence of NDP loss because of strategic voting.

The only way strategic voting could work would be if the parties themselves accepted it. In other words, if the NDP would cede to the Liberals in certain ridings and the Liberals to the NDP in others. When it became clear that this would never happen, the strategic voting approach was doomed to failure.

Beyond the divisions produced by Rae's social contract, most of the people struggling for social change in this province do not see their interests and concerns reflected in the NDP. No doubt, NDP back-roomers believe that the loss of core activist supporters, whom they see as out of touch with modern realities, is the price the party has to pay for increasing its popular support. But where is the evidence? Whenever the party has run on a third-way right-wing program, it has lost.

Nevertheless, a winning strategy does not mean returning to the bad old days of social democracy. Mind you, David Lewis's corporate welfare bums campaign of 20 years ago seems pretty relevant today.

The only way a social democratic party can win electoral victories in most provinces, including Ontario, is to identify with the majority of the people who are struggling to keep their heads above water in an increasingly polarized society. Harris and others have managed to convince a lot of these people that tax cuts, attacks on the poor, and a survival-of-the-fittest society is in their interest. The NDP's job is to outline a different road, a road to social solidarity rather than social division. The best way to do this is by identifying with those fighting for social change.

Instead of a few million dollars difference here or there, the NDP should be putting forward a radical new direction, a real alternative to the autocratic, slash-and-burn politics of Mike Harris and Jean Chrétien. The elements of this alternative are being developed around the world: participatory democracy, economic democratization through taxing finance capital, and shorter working hours are among the ideas that the NDP could develop. The "Days of Action" in Ontario and, more recently, the massive demonstrations in Seattle against the World Trade Organization show there is a mass base for alternatives to neo-conservative politics. The NDP should be riding this wave of protest rather than standing on the shore with the other two parties watching it go by.

Money and the 1999 Ontario election

BY ROBERT MACDERMID

Robert MacDermid is a professor of political science at York University.

Elections are complicated events that defy anything more than incomplete explanations. We know that, in the end, the Tories won the election by a close, yet safe, margin. They were helped by the enormous edge they had in raising funds and by an almost flawless campaign. Between the beginning of 1995 and the end of 1997, the Tories raised $27.7 million to the Liberals' $10.2 million and the NDP's $8.8 million. The 1999 campaign, the third with much the same cast of strategists, showed that the Tories have learned most of the lessons the American campaign industry has to offer, including being in perpetual campaign mode, using TV advertising, and collecting large sums of money between elections. They also learned that changing the rules of the game to their own advantage can never hurt.

The Tories had a welcomed problem—they had a large number of wealthy corporate and individual contributors who wanted to give money to the party, but whose largesse was limited by the cap on the size of contributions. Between 1995 and 1997, the Tory central party got maximum contributions of $4,000 from 735 corporations and 58 individuals. By comparison, the Liberals had only 335 and the NDP just 42 maximum corporate contributions. From individuals, the Liberals got just 3 and the NDP got 6 maximum contributions. The NDP received a further 6 donations of $4,000 from unions. The Harris government, without the all-party agreement normal (though not required) for changes to the *Election Finances Act*, raised the contribution limit to $25,000 beginning in 1999, almost doubling the amount of money a contributor could give to a party in an election year. Under the new rules, the Tories collected $4.9 million dollars in contributions, 12 times the $408,556 the NDP collected and 4 times the Liberals' $1,266,650. The raised limits are a benefit only to the very wealthy. Most Ontarians could not imagine giving such sums to a party even if they were inclined to do so.

The changes allowed the Tories to spend $3.5 million on television advertising (double what they spent in 1995), while the Liberals could only spend $2.9 million and the NDP just over $1.0 million.

Campaign expenditure caps make raising substantial amounts of money pointless if they prevent a party from spending the influx of cash, so a second change the Tory brain trust initiated was to allow the parties to spend more money, raising the central party limit on spending from $2.7 million in 1995 (less than half of what they raised in 1999), to $4.5 million. Under the new rules, the Tories spent $4.0 million on the central campaign compared with $3.5 million for the Liberals and $2.1 million for the NDP. But the Harris changes did not stop at raising the limit, they also redefined an election expense. They removed from under the cap all polling and research costs and expenses for the leader's tour. (Is there *anyone* who thinks these are *not* election expenses?) Over the past four Ontario elections, the costs of polling and research during the campaign have often been below 10 percent of total party expenditures. In 1999, the Tories spent a whopping $1,337,680 on polling, or 23 percent of their total expenditures (those under and outside the cap). The Liberals managed to spend just $107,000 on polling, while the NDP spent $138,000. Adding these figures in, as they would have been in previous elections, shows the Tories spending $5.8 million, the Liberals $4.2 million, and the NDP $2.4 million. If the polling costs had been included under the campaign spending cap, the Tories would have had to curtail spending in other areas, specifically, on television advertising. The changes allowed the Tories to spend $3.5 million on television advertising (double what they spent in 1995), while the Liberals could spend only $2.9 million, and the NDP just over $1.0 million.

The expenditure on polling is a window on the Harris election machine's inner workings. Such a large expenditure would have permitted daily polls of substantial size, 500 to 1,000 interviews, throughout the entire election. Campaign polling should not be confused with the horse-race polls produced for the media. Rather, it is about testing campaign messages and assessing how a party's core voters are reacting to the messages, it is about determining how voters are relating to the leaders and how what the leaders do and say can be altered to appear more favourable to core voters, and it is about assessing the effect of advertising and fine tuning the messages. Being able to spend unlimited funds on polling gives a campaign the opportunity to manipulate and tailor messages to their strengths and their opponents' weaknesses. Flush with contributions, the Harris Conservatives took full advantage of their changes to the spending rules.

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Defeating Harris: The glass is half full

BY ANDREA CALVER

Andrea Calver is the coordinator of the Ontario Coalition for Social Justice.

For those interested in social justice, the deep polarization of Ontario's electorate should indeed be comforting. Bleak? Maybe, but I'll take the evidence of success where I find it. The electorate's division represents a hardening distrust of the Harris agenda. Where there once was easygoing support for the incoming government, there is now a sharply divided province.

The question now is whether Ontarians will be hushed by a lullaby of welfare bashing and tax cuts. That's why activists must sound a wake-up call on these issues. It is the right thing to do and also makes good strategy. Two of the government's most potent and enduring platforms consist of demonizing people on welfare, combined with aggressive tax-cut hype. It goes to the heart of who they are, and if this nasty foundation can be cracked, the government will be very vulnerable when reassurances about health care and education prove unfounded. Then the Tories will be in deep trouble. Unlike the virtual enthronement of Alberta's Ralph Klein, Premier Harris is governing on borrowed time.

When Mike Harris was first elected in 1995, most Ontarians were delighted to see a change in government. Overwhelmingly, Ontarians felt the time had come to try new policies with a new party. Enough were willing to give the Harris government a chance.

Why then did Harris have a much harder fight for re-election in 1999? The "Common Sense Revolution" (CSR) was met by "counter-revolutionaries" who exacted a heavy toll on the government between 1995 and 1999. Ontario witnessed a diverse and widespread wave of discontent. Although the government was re-elected in 1999, it was with a much reduced majority in the Legislature. Ontarians of all political stripes are suspicious of this government recasting itself in kinder, gentler terms. The Harris government is somewhat chastened. It is required to be more cautious, and dares to attack only the very marginal—exhibit A: your local squeegee kid.

Slogans like "tax cuts create jobs" are proffered as fact. Although a truer statement may be that "tax cuts create inequality."

FOUGHT TO STANDSTILL ON HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION

The anti-Harris movement prioritized health care and education in the first term. Unions, front-line workers, groups like People for Education, and the Ontario Health Coalition fought hard and important battles. These issues headlined at most large demonstrations. Throughout the first term, massive events such as the "Days of Action," the OPSEU strike, and the 1997 teachers' political protest moved a critical number of people away from the Tories. Specifically, we succeeded in moving public opinion on both health care and education. Both became top public concerns, sometimes sounding mantra-like as though they were in fact one issue: HEALTHCAREDUCATION.

Of course, the constituencies directly benefiting from health care and education greatly exceeded both the numbers and power of any other single group of service users. The Tories were forced to run a series of expensive, government-paid ads to convince Ontarians that their policies would not hurt. Remember the now infamous "bandage ad"? The script compared successful health care restructuring to a child learning to remove a bandage quickly. "It'll hurt less" says the helpful TV mom. This was an argument the Harris government wanted to win. A death-bed conversion produced earnest Tory election promises to both protect classroom spending and to increase health care spending.

The trouble with HEALTHCAREDUCATION

Unfortunately, the anti-Harris movement focused too exclusively on the issues of health care and education. Despite heroic efforts on the part of groups like the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and Low-Income Families Together, welfare continued as a prime platform on which Harris could *gain* ground the tougher he was.

The Tories took the opportunity to play nice on health care and education, while marginalizing welfare and other services. Social assistance has always been the poor cousin of health care and education when it comes to a competition for the public's purse or sentiment.

HEALTHCAREDUCATION squeezed out other worthy and potentially politically damaging issues—including housing, child poverty, childcare, and the needs of women's shelters.

TAX-CUT HYPE

The connection between tax cuts and the cuts to health care and education

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were not properly cemented. We have not dispelled the many Harris myths on taxes. Slogans like "tax cuts create jobs" are proffered as fact. Although a truer statement may be that "tax cuts create inequality."

The Ontario alternative budget shows that the average household has lost ground by $28 under Harris's tax policies, when just some of the user charges and other fees that have gone up are offset against the tax cut.

Our vision of a socially just society costs money—specifically, money redistributed through the tax system. The Harris tax cuts and economic policies are bleeding our province of the capacity to provide adequate social services and programs to its people.

Smaller welfare rolls should not be the Holy Grail. In fact, there is evidence that caseloads are falling largely because of a decline in the number of successful applications, not an increase in the number of people leaving welfare.

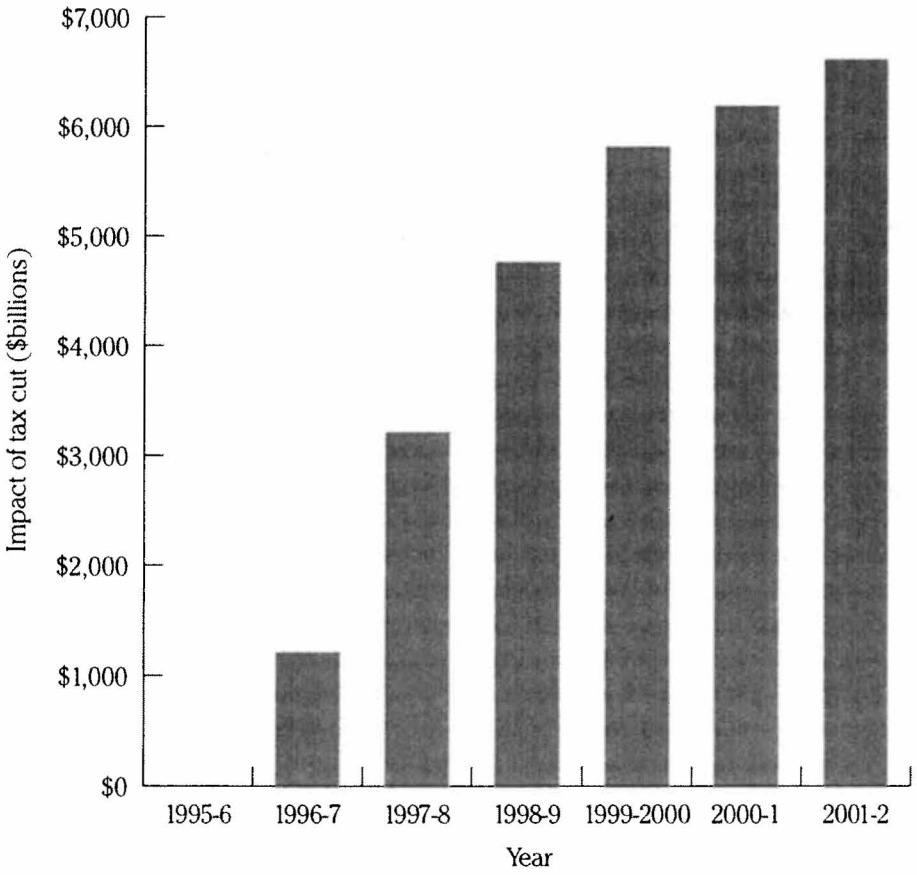
LESS WELFARE = MORE POVERTY

Although poverty is increasingly visible to Ontarians, our campaigns did not confront the Harris government's policies as a leading cause of poverty.

Smaller welfare rolls should not be the Holy Grail. In fact, there is evidence that caseloads are falling largely because of a decline in the number of successful applications, not an increase in the number of people leaving welfare. And though workfare is politically popular, the government's claims simply don't add up. If the public is less concerned about a "growing gap," they ought to be concerned about a "truth gap."

A report on workfare, *Broken Promises: Welfare Reform in Ontario*, by the group Welfare Watch found that, far from offering people a "hand up," the program is actually hindering people's efforts to leave welfare.

Cumulative annual direct cost of tax cut



Source: Ontario Alternative Budget Working Group, Technical Paper #3, March 1998.

NEW ORGANIZING

We need to reach more people on more issues. Harris's second term will see a different style of opposition organizing. The challenge will be to hold on to the people who already oppose the Harris government while we build that group larger and larger. I travel all across Ontario and have been convinced of the critical importance of regional organizing in this pursuit. We also need to expand the organizing beyond health care and education. Anti-poverty organizing is now the fastest growing area of community-based activism in Ontario.

Among other things, electoral polarization has meant that the government is taking a different tack toward its opponents. Where once it was impossible to have a telephone call returned, many ministers are now seeking out their opposition for meetings. It is an acknowledgment of the difficulty of governing a deeply divided province. It is also a concession unimaginable in the first term.

At least the Harris government knows how close it came to defeat the last time round.

Setting a new course for education and training in Ontario

BY DAVID LINDSAY

David Lindsay is president and CEO of the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board.

Since the election of the Mike Harris government in 1995, Ontario's economy has been on the upswing. The province has enjoyed some of the strongest growth in the industrialized world. A record breaking 200,000 net new jobs were created in Ontario last year alone. Queen's Park was putting its fiscal house in order with an agenda of sounder fiscal management, tax cuts, and deficit reduction.

Most Ontarians who participated in the Jobs and Investment Board consultations in 1998 agreed that current economic conditions are relatively good. But there was also a strong sense throughout the province that unless people aspired to achieve greater success, our competitive advantages, productivity, and quality of life will slip further behind the global economic leaders. Mobile capital—and mobile human and technical talent—will increasingly migrate to more rewarding opportunities south of the border and elsewhere.

Three of the most powerful forces shaping Ontario's economic future are the ascendancy of knowledge-intensive industries, rapid and continuous technological change, and global integration. The ability of Ontario's employers, workers, students, and educational institutions to adapt to these change forces—and more importantly, to seize the emerging economic opportunities—will determine more than anything else will our success in the 21st century.

To meet the challenge, Ontarians collectively will need to develop a culture of lifelong learning. This means increasing the knowledge, skill, and participation levels of Ontarians across all age groups and life stages through a quality, market-responsive education and training system. Every segment of the economy, from individuals to businesses, organizations, and governments, will need to take ownership for the different components of the challenge.

Ontario's education and training system will need to implement at least seven strategic directions in the next five years.

Individuals need to be more responsible for managing their own long-term career and learning plans. Educational institutions and providers need to meet the expectations of their core clients—students and employers—by fostering greater entrepreneurship and innovation, and by being more responsive to the demands of the economy. Unions and professional associations need to take on more meaningful roles in implementing workplace training and apprenticeship programs. Businesses need to increase their investment in employee training, and to partner with colleges and universities on solutions to eliminate critical skill shortages.

Governments will need to make more strategic and results-oriented decisions about investing the taxpayer funds available for education and training. Governments will also continue to be responsible for setting and enforcing high standards in learning, brokering partnerships between business and educational institutions, and guaranteeing accessible education to all Ontarians.

In the first term of the Harris mandate, the government focused on the contentious—but essential—task of restoring the fundamentals to the education system. Education property tax rates skyrocketed 42 percent between 1985 and 1990, and went up another 20 percent between 1990 and 1995. Fiscal accountability and the value-for-dollar equation in the education system were in jeopardy. Ontario was spending more per capita on public education than most other jurisdictions in the world, but the province's students were being outperformed in interprovincial and international tests.

The overhaul of schools has produced a more demanding curriculum with emphasis on mathematics and science, standardized school report cards, and province-wide, performance-based student testing. The number of school boards and school politicians was cut, allowing administrative cost savings to be reinvested into classroom learning. The government stabilized education property taxes in its first term, and pledged to cut the residential tax rate by 20 percent over the next five years.

Restoring the fundamentals, however, is not the finish line. Ontario's education and training system will need continued restructuring to address looming demographic and structural pressures and to build competitive advantages for Ontario in the new economy. The Jobs and Investment Board consultations highlighted the most pressing concerns:

- Growth in Canada's technology-driven sectors is imperiled by critical skill shortages.
- Ontario's graying population will leave a smaller workforce to support

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a larger number of old people. Today there are approximately 5.5 people of working age for each person 65 or older. That number will drop to 3.7 people by 2021. Slower labour force growth will place a bigger onus on existing workers to retrain or upgrade to meet the skill demands of the new economy.

- Over one-third of Ontario workers do not belong to a traditional employer-employee relationship. Part-time employment is expanding three times faster than full-time employment, and one of every six workers is self-employed. A growing segment of the workforce is beyond the reach of conventional training programs.
- As a group, youth and young adults continue to be hardest hit by the unemployment problem. One in four Ontarians between the ages of 15 and 24 has never worked.
- As the baby boom "echo" moves into the 18-to-24 age group, college and university enrollment will grow by 18 percent between now and 2010. Post-secondary institutions face the additional burden of accommodating the "double cohort" of student admissions in 2003, resulting from the elimination of grade 13.
- Unequal access to information technology in some parts of the province raises the spectre of technological "haves" and "have nots."

To equip people with the skill requirements of the knowledge and technology-based economy, and to achieve excellence at all levels, Ontario's education and training system will need to implement at least seven strategic directions in the next five years:

1. **A market-responsive system.** An independent quality assessment organization for colleges and universities is needed to establish quality standards, assess performance, and report publicly on the results. Government funding of post-secondary institutions could be tied to the employment results of their graduates and other performance indicators. Comparative performance data could also assist prospective students in making informed choices about schooling options.

Businesses need to . . . establish a stronger presence in post-secondary curriculum development and funding, and provide increased . . . opportunities for students.

2. **Seamless education.** Colleges and universities will need to develop more collaborative programming and transferable credits to satisfy the growing demand for combined theoretical and applied education. With net international migration driving two-thirds of Ontario's population growth, a provincial accreditation system to validate education and training credentials from qualified organizations around the world is also overdue.

3. **Distance learning.** Internet-based learning will be a more powerful catalyst to expand access to education and training, by connecting homes and workplaces with a wider range of learning opportunities and labour market information than ever before. Development of a distance learning network and a province-wide digital library will encourage new partnerships between education and training institutions, communication service providers and software developers. Distance learning is also a key element in the strategy to expand classroom capacity, while minimizing the cost of new bricks and mortar capital.

4. **Entrepreneurship and innovation.** A curriculum that promotes entrepreneurship, creativity, and risk-taking—the hallmarks of an innovation culture—is needed in Ontario, beginning in the early years and continuing with business and management courses at the secondary level. Entrepreneurship is best taught through a combination of classroom training and exposure to real-world business success stories in the local community.

5. **Global dimension.** All elements of Ontario need to embrace the challenge of participating and winning in a global economy. Supporting initiatives include strengthening the international business content in secondary and post-secondary curricula, expanding foreign language training at the elementary and secondary levels, and opening more opportunities for international student exchanges and internships in international business settings.

6. **Private sector leadership.** Ontario employers consistently underinvest in employee training and apprenticeships, compared with their international counterparts. Businesses need to strengthen the corporate commitment to lifelong learning and skills upgrading, establish a stronger presence in post-secondary curriculum development and funding, and provide increased co-op, internship, and mentoring opportunities for students.

7. **Strategic expansion.** Government and partnership investments in colleges and universities need to be more targeted on correcting strategic "mismatches" between workforce supply and demand in fast growing, high-value-added sectors of the economy. A good example is the current "double the pipeline" initiative, aimed at increasing post-secondary enrollment in computer science and high-demand engineering fields.

The province's SuperBuild Growth Fund, which will invest $742 million this year for post-secondary institutions to expand and modernize in anticipation of the growing demand for learning is

setting the tone for future capital investments. To be considered for SuperBuild funding, colleges and universities will need to demonstrate the amount of partnership funding in place, projected student demand for the new facility and programs, and the project's impact on local/regional economic competitiveness.

In the final analysis, the success of an education and training agenda will not be measured by the size of government allocations to colleges, universities, and schools. Business investment levels in workforce training and in post-secondary partnerships are not the most critical measures either. Although a key thrust in education and training reforms is directed at implementing new and creative approaches to financing, success will be based on results—and assessing the results against widely accepted goals and benchmarks.

In the final analysis, the success of an education and training agenda will not be measured by the size of government allocations to colleges, universities, and schools. . . . [S]uccess will be based on results—and assessing the results against widely accepted goals and benchmarks.

Performance measures should have practical connections to the long-term strategic goals of Ontario's education and training system, emphasize results or outcomes instead of efforts or activities, be easily understood, and be flexible enough to allow for improvements. As a practical next step, the process of establishing performance measures should encourage Ontarians to converge, collaborate, and stay focused on the goal of strengthening the education and training system's contribution to long-term economic prosperity.

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The government also reduced the length of the election campaign to 28 days from what had usually been about 40 days. The TV advertising period of three weeks now made up a greater proportion of the total campaign. Being able to spend much more than the other parties on TV advertising gave the Tories an advantage in the shorter campaign. There was less time to discuss the government's record and a greater percentage of the campaign left voters open to the manipulation of advertising. The shortened campaign also helped the Tories fashion their fund-raising lead. A party with a large number of willing and wealthy donors requires only a few well-connected individuals to collect large sums of money rapidly. But a party that relies on many small contributions from individuals will need a longer period to collect large sums through techniques such as mail fund raising. The complete information on contributions is not yet available, but the fact that the Tories could raise 90.5 percent of their contributions in the form of donations over $100 while the Liberals and NDP raised 83 and 71 percent, respectively, in the same form suggests that the Tories were again able to take advantage of the rule changes they initiated.

Being able to spend unlimited funds on polling gives a campaign the opportunity to manipulate and tailor messages to their strengths and their opponents' weaknesses. Flush with contributions, the Harris Conservatives took full advantage of their changes to the spending rules.

What to make of all of these changes and their effects? The Harris Tories would not have initiated them if they did not see a benefit. The changes helped them to outspend their competitors by a wide margin and forced the Liberals to end the campaign almost $2.9 million in debt and left the NDP owing $1.9 million. For Ontario political parties, those are major debts that will require both the NDP and Liberals to intensify their efforts to raise money from corporations and that, in turn, will require policy concessions favourable to businesses and the wealthy. As we move toward more expensive elections, the policies of all parties will need to become more attuned to the wealthy who can foot the election bill.

The Harris legacy: A conjecture

BY DAVID CAMERON

David Cameron is a professor of political science at the University of Toronto

Is it too soon to begin thinking about the Harris legacy in Ontario? I am sure Mike Harris would think so. After all, he is only part way through his second term and—who knows?—he may yet run for a third.

But let's give it a try, anyway. Twenty years hence, what will people think was the most important thing the Harris government did during its term of office? There are certain obvious candidates.

One, clearly, would be the main plank of the "Common Sense Revolution" (CSR)—the simultaneous reduction of the deficit and taxes. The government has been successful in doing this partly through the blind luck of being in office when the provincial economy returned to health. Nevertheless, if politics is in part the mastery of events by will, Harris and his colleagues should be given credit for a bold—many said at the time, foolhardy—determination to do this, come what may, and for making people believe that they would do whatever it takes to achieve this double-barreled goal.

Another candidate would be the introduction and implantation in Ontario political life of the neo-liberal ideology, which has swept much of the Western world. It would have come to the province in some form and at some time in any case, no doubt, but the Tories imposed it on Ontario with an unapologetic exuberance that has clearly marked their tenure of office as a turning point. Neo-liberal thinking has become the defining paradigm of this historical moment, shaping the opinions even of those who oppose it, and cutting the channels within which most significant political debate occurs. It won't last forever, but there's no denying that it is very big right now.

A third candidate would be the basket of social-policy upheavals the government has inflicted on the province. The reorganization, consolidation, and program interventions in the health care and education fields were among the most controversial initiatives of the Harris government's first term. Yet, despite all the sound and fury, I do not think these policy shifts amounted to a root-and-branch transformation of our health and education systems. It is possible that the second term will see a deeper penetration and a more profound transformation of these policy fields but, so far, that has not happened.

Harris may have inadvertently breathed life into a sleeping giant, which will, in time, rise to challenge many of the existing institutions whose dominance we take for granted.

These are all plausible candidates, but I would pick none of them as the thing for which the Harris Conservative government will be most remembered 20 years from now.

I think this government will be remembered most for what it did to Toronto. I think that Harris may have inadvertently breathed life into a sleeping giant, which will, in time, rise to challenge many of the existing institutions whose dominance we take for granted.

For decades, government after government evaded its responsibilities in Toronto; the political structures of the Toronto area became increasingly obsolete as the metropolis grew. Finally, Premier Harris and his cabinet—almost casually, it seemed—decided to take the proverbial bull by the horns. Apart from the vaguest of references in the CSR to potential municipal efficiency gains, neither the bull nor the horns was prefigured in the Tories' 1995 electoral platform. Yet the creation of the new Toronto may prove to be the real revolution.

You may applaud or condemn what the Tories have done. You may lament, as I do, that a much stronger GTA authority was not created. But the long-term impact of this municipal restructuring is likely to be profound. And not only in Toronto proper—or improper, if you prefer. The 905 belt is already rethinking its arrangements, living as it does in the shadow of a giant—witness the proposals of suburban mayors to abolish regional government and reduce the number of cities in the region.

If the size of the electoral base defines the size of the political office, the mayor of Toronto occupies the biggest office in the land. Elected by a constituency of almost 2.5 million people, the mayor is without rival in the number of people he directly represents. What is more, the people he represents are an intensely concentrated, wealthy population with their hands on the country's most important levers of power in finance, industry, and communications. If the creation of the new Toronto makes it possible for this community to rise to a full consciousness of its power and its distinctive interests, the impact on the province and on the country may be profound.

Yes, I hear you saying, but the municipalities in this country, including the Municipality of Toronto, are political pygmies, with scant financial strength and few political resources, dependent

for their existence and survival on the provincial governments whose creatures they are. That is true, and the willingness of provincial governments to download real political power matching the offloading of social responsibilities is next to non-existent. However, events sometimes have a way of gathering their own momentum, and a reform designed with one end in mind—in the case of Toronto, shifting social responsibilities to the local level and forcing economic efficiencies—can have unintended consequences. Already you hear talk of making the GTA a province; the January issue of *Saturday Night* has a feature story on "Torontonia," developing this idea in some detail.

Just talk, you say. Yes, for the moment, it is. But very large metropolitan centres will be the magnets in the 21st century that attract people, money, and global linkages. The dispersion of power that is a consequence of the forces of globalization and of the implementation of neo-liberal ideology is being felt at the provincial level as well as in Ottawa. Who or what is receiving this power?

The Harris government's decision to endow Canada's largest city with a much more coherent political structure is freighted with significance for the long-term future of our province and our country.

People tend to think the recipients are the private sector, transnational corporations, international trade agreements and other regulatory regimes, and emergent global institutions. So they are. But large cities are the beneficiaries of this shift as well, and the Harris government's decision to endow Canada's largest city with a much more coherent political structure is freighted with significance for the long-term future of our province and our country. If I'm right, people in 2020 will look back and say of the Harris administration in Ontario: "That's when Toronto started to flex its muscles as a real political force in the country."

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DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS: FEBRUARY 28, 2000

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