

## **A MESSAGE FROM THE OAFP CO-CHAIRS January 2024**

The Association sincerely wishes all of you, your families, and friends a happy and healthy New Year.

One of the reasons the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians (OAFP) was founded was to foster connections between former MPPs. We are grateful for your continued support of the OAFP through membership renewal, we also invite you to participate on the board and at the events such as the AGM as well as other events when possible. For the former MPPs who are not yet members, we encourage them to join, and do our best to contact them. If you know former MPPs who have not joined the OAFP please forward them this Communique or provide to us their names.

We hope you enjoy reading about the awards event that took place on Nov. 30 of 2023 and the other information provided in this newsletter. This communique is our current means of communication, and it will appear quarterly.

We want to thank Jerry Richmond, a former researcher at Queen's Park, and Callum Denault, our talented TMU journalism student, who are providing valuable assistance in the production of this publication.

In the future, we will strive to include topics of interest to you, and we welcome your feedback. We look forward to hearing from you.

Co-Chairs Communique Committee,  
Caroline Di Cocco and Joyce Savoline

**You can reach us at:**

[oafp@ola.org](mailto:oafp@ola.org)

To the attention of Communique Committee

## **INVOLVEMENT IN THE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE**

Your Executive has created a Nominations Committee in anticipation of our annual election of Directors at the upcoming AGM. We welcome a geographical balance in the membership of the Executive, and we encourage all members to volunteer their service.

We're planning a very active upcoming year and your talents and advice would be put to good use!

If you are interested, or if you have any questions, please send me an email at [stevegilchrist@hotmail.com](mailto:stevegilchrist@hotmail.com). Thanks for your consideration!  
Steve Gilchrist, Chair, Nominations Committee



Attendees of the Luncheon

On November 30, 2023 the Association sponsored a stimulating and well attended *Outstanding Legislator Award 2023* luncheon to honour three (3) distinguished former MPPs.

The award recipients were *Elizabeth Witmer (PC)*, *Evelyn Gigantes (NDP)*, and *Elinor Caplan (LIB)*. All three had distinguished and varied public service careers. All served in the demanding role of Ministers of Health. Each of the honourees were presented with a plaque and mini-loon sculpture from the Association.

### **FESTIVE SEASON DECORATIONS AT QUEEN'S PARK**

With this event occurring close to the Holidays festive season (2023), a select photo is included to showcase the stunning decorations around the Grand Staircase in the Ontario Legislative Building.



## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

*Judy Marsales (Chair, OAFP)* welcomed the attendees and delivered the land acknowledgement.

*Joyce Savoline and Marilyn Churley (Members of OAFP Awards Committee)* described the background on the Outstanding Legislator Award. *Ms Churley* noted that former Speaker *David Warner*, who played a major role in "holding together" the Association, was the recipient of the *Distinguished Service Award* in October 2023.

A moment of silence was observed in memory of *Darcy McKeough* who passed away on November 29, 2023. He was a prominent PC Cabinet Minister in the Robarts and Davis eras, known as the "*Minister of Everything*" and "*The Duke of Chatham*." He represented Kent West and Chatham-Kent in southwestern Ontario between 1963-1978. He was also a friend and mentor to *Monte McNaughton* (former PC MPP).



*Tobacco Ceremony*, 1975, by Blake Debassige of the M'Chigeeng First Nation. Room 228, Ontario Legislative Building, where the luncheon was held.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE AWARD PRESENTATIONS

The format of the Award event consisted of Guest Speakers (3) for each honouree, represented by a former Member from each of the three major political parties, followed by acceptance remarks by each honouree as highlighted below.



This event demonstrates the non-partisan respect and comradeship of the OAFP. This was one of the original objectives when the organization was established in 2000.

## **AWARD TO ELIZABETH WITMER**



### Remarks by Guest Speakers

*Janet Ecker* (former PC MPP) paid tribute to Elizabeth, her original career as a teacher and the many portfolios which she held. She served in these roles with grace, integrity and distinction. Janet described Elizabeth as a "genuine article" in the best traditions of democracy.

*Rosario Marchese* (former NDP MPP) noted that they both initially served as school trustees before entering provincial politics. He expressed respect for her and her decency. He remarked that she would probably be known today as a "Red Tory." He noted that she was also known to hire the best staff.

*Caroline Di Cocco* (former Liberal MPP) noted that Elizabeth had a prior career in teaching and was the first woman MPP elected in Waterloo Region in 1990. After retiring from provincial politics, she was appointed

Chair of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board in 2012 by former Premier *Dalton McGuinty*. Mention was also made of her strong Christian faith and devotion to family.

### Presentation and Acceptance of Award

*Elizabeth Witmer* first expressed gratitude to *David Warner*, recognition to *Elinor Caplan* and appreciation to *Evelyn Gigantes*.

She stated that she was humbled by the award and expressed her thanks. Elizabeth noted that her objective in public office was to serve and help people. When first elected as MPP for Waterloo North she hired the knowledgeable staff of the late *Herb Epp*, former Mayor of Waterloo and Liberal MPP for Waterloo North who retired from Queen's Park in 1990.

### **AWARD TO EVELYN GIGANTES**



Marilyn Churley (left) accepting the award on Evelyn Gigantes' behalf from Joyce Savoline (right).

## Remarks by Guest Speakers

*Ross McClellan* (former NDP MPP) paid tribute to *Evelyn Gigantes* as a journalist in Ottawa and as a strong feminist and woman in their caucus. She showed perseverance, character and hope.

He noted that she served as Minister of Health. Evelyn was involved in amendments to the *Ontario Human Rights Code* regarding sexual discrimination, advancing the right to chose on abortion, and the building of social and non-profit housing.

*Charles Beer* (former Liberal MPP) noted that *Evelyn* was an advocate for social justice, human rights, and housing. She was a committed Minister and worthy recipient of the award.

*Phil Gillies* (former PC MPP) spoke of her contribution and legacy in the recognition of gay and lesbian rights within the framework of the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. These measures served to equalize the playing field for many citizens.

## Presentation and Acceptance of award

*Ms Gigantes*, who represented Ottawa area ridings between 1975 and 1995 and currently lives in the area, was unable to attend this event. *Marilyn Churley* (former NDP MPP) accepted the award on her behalf.

Ms Churley initially recognized the contribution of *Anne Swarbrick* (former NDP MPP) who was present at this event. She then indicated that *Evelyn Gigantes* was honoured with the award and conveyed her thanks to the Association. Ms Churley also expressed thanks to the speakers.



## AWARD TO ELINOR CAPLAN



Elinor Caplan

### Remarks by Guest Speakers

*Gerry Phillips* (former Liberal MPP) initially honoured all recipients. He described Elinor Caplan as a giant in the *Liberal Party* and family. She

served in North York, Queen's Park and Federally. Gerry noted the Minister of Health is a tough position, and Elinor is a worthy recipient of the Award.

*David Warner* (former NDP MPP and Speaker) noted that it was a privilege to serve in the House with the three honourees and commended their diplomatic skills. He noted that in 1975 with the election of women there were at the time no women's bathrooms in the Legislative Building. He also paid tribute to *David Caplan* (former Liberal MPP) and son of Elinor who died in 2019.

*John Parker* (former PC MPP) paid tribute to her service, serving at all three levels of government and expressed his congratulations.

### Presentation and Acceptance of Award

Elinor stated that she was overwhelmed by the Award and thanked the guest speakers for their kind remarks. She reminisced on the challenges of serving as Health Minister. Elinor specifically mentioned the challenge of deciding to abide by the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Morgentaler case whereby OHIP would fund abortions. In closing she expressed her appreciation for the Award.



A miniature loon sculpture and a plaque were both awarded to each honouree. The Common Loon is Ontario's official bird.

## **OTHER ATTENDEES**

The current Speaker the *Hon. Ted Arnott* dropped in to congratulate the honourees. The Speaker's Office also graciously provided the wine for this luncheon.

Among other former MPPs who attended were *Anne Swarbrick, Floyd Laughren* (who drove through inclement winter weather down Highway 400 to attend), *Ron Kanter, Cam Jackson, Steve Gilchrist, Mavis Wilson* and *Richard Johnston*.

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

*John Parker* (OAFP Secretary and Treasurer) noted that this award luncheon recognized public service and demonstrates respect for traditions. He expressed thanks to *Joyce Savoline* for her work on this event.

## **OTHER MILESTONES**

Members often receive recognition and awards for other aspects of their careers or contributions to public service.

The Association wishes to congratulate *Cheri DiNovo* (former NDP MPP) on her investiture (November 17, 2022) as a Member of the Order of Canada.

She was recognized for her advocacy for social justice with respect to transgender rights and the banning of conversion therapy.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The Association expresses its heartfelt appreciation to *Mobina Bhimani*, Executive Assistant, and *Joyce Savoline* for organizing this event.

Once again the OAFP demonstrates that former Members across party lines can come together to socialize and recognize the contributions of their colleagues to public service in the best interest of all Ontarians.



New bronze statue of the late Queen Elizabeth II by artist Ruth Abernethy (unveiled in November 2023) in the left front of the Ontario Legislative Building.

It depicts the Queen on the Throne in the Senate of Canada in Ottawa in 1977 while delivering a speech on Canadian unity.

## **OAFP Board of Directors**

Judy Marsales, Chair

John Parker, Secretary/Treasurer

Annamarie Castrilli, Education Foundation

Steve Gilchrist, Communications

Marilyn Churley, Events

Rosario Marchese, Education

David Warner, Past Chair

### Members-at-large

Joyce Savoline

Karen Haslam

Caroline Di Cocco

Randy Hope

Doug Moffatt

Cam Jackson

Mobina Bhimani, Executive Assistant

Email: [oafp@ola.org](mailto:oafp@ola.org)

Phone: 416-325-4647

Jerry Richmond, Writer

Callum Denault, Intern and Photographer

### Communiqué Co-Chairs and Board Members

Joyce Savoline

Caroline Di Cocco

## **Objects of the Association**

The Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians Act, 2000 sets out that, “[T]he objects of the Association are,

(a) to put the knowledge and experience of its members at the service of parliamentary democracy in Ontario and elsewhere;

(b) to serve the public interest by providing non-partisan support for the parliamentary system of government in Ontario;

(c) to foster a spirit of community among former parliamentarians;

(d) to foster good relations between members of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario and former parliamentarians; and

(e) to protect and promote the interests of former parliamentarians.”

## **OMEGA LIST**

For the calendar years below, the OAFP respectfully lists in alphabetical order former Members who passed away. We recognize and remember the contributions they individually made to public service in Ontario and the roles they played in representing the diverse interests of their constituents.

### **2022**

*Marion Boyd*

*Joe Dickson*

*Gary Fox*

*Charles Godfrey*

*Ron Hansen*

*Bob Huget*

*Carman McClelland*

*Bill Murdoch*

*Bruce Owen*

*Ed Philip*

*Alan Pope*

*Julian Reed*

*David Rotenberg*

*Larry South*

*Drummond White*

## 2023

*Edwin (Ted) Bounsall* (former NDP MPP for Windsor-Sandwich 1971-81); born November 6, 1935; died December 6, 2023.

*Andrew Brandt* (former Mayor of Sarnia and PC MPP for Sarnia 1981-90); born June 11, 1938; died December 22, 2023.

*Monte Kwinter* (former LIB MPP for Wilson Heights 1985-1999 and York Centre 1999-2018); born March 22, 1931; died July 21, 2023.

*William Darcy McKeough* (former PC MPP for Kent West 1963-67 and Chatham-Kent 1967-78); born January 31, 1933; died November 29, 2023.

This alphabetical list by name is of former Members who passed during calendar year 2023. The OAFP inadvertently may not be aware of all such passings during 2023 and we appreciate any further information in this regard that Members, their colleagues, friends and family may provide. We will respectfully include such information in later publications.