

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF FORMER PARLIAMENTARIANS

Remembering Bill Davis



SPECIAL EDITION OF
THE INFORMER

NOVEMBER 2021

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REMEMBERING BILL DAVIS

William Grenville Davis was the most consequential Premier in Canada in 100 years. His remarkable listening and negotiation skills resulted in the Patriation of our Constitution as well as creating Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. His vision, commitment and determination resulted in an Ontario rich in educational opportunities, an arts and culture awakening and an economically prosperous province which embodied compassion.

This Special Edition is a collection of anecdotes from former parliamentary colleagues, along with photos and biographical information. Stories reflecting Premier Davis' leadership, wisdom and humour are legion and legendary. This publication is only a sampling of those stories and his remarkable parliamentary tenure.

Parliamentary Life

Hon. William Grenville Davis

(July 30, 1929 – August 8, 2021)

Served in the 26th to 32nd
Parliaments

(June 11, 1959 - May 1, 1985)

Progressive Conservative Member of
Provincial Parliament

Riding of: Peel 1959-1967, Peel North
1967-1975, Brampton 1975-1985

Premier 1971 – 1985

Bill Davis was appointed Minister of Education in 1962 and Minister of University Affairs in 1964. He held both positions until 1971, when he became Premier. During his first term Bill Davis served on the Select Committee on Administration and Executive Problems of Government as well as 16 Standing Committees: Agriculture, Game and Fish, Health and Welfare, Privileges and Elections, Energy, Travel and Publicity, Municipal Law, Education, Mining, Highways and Highway Safety, Legal Bills, Private Bills, Government Commissions, Conservation, Labour, Public Accounts.

Student and Athlete

President, U of T Literary and Athletic
Society

Played a few games of water polo,
lacrosse, and football

Helped lead the Junior basketball
team to a title

Star high school quarterback who
then played football at U of T
with future cabinet ministers Roy
McMurtry and Thomas Wells

Graduated from the University of
Toronto and Osgoode Hall Law
School as a lawyer

Recommended reading: "Bill Davis,
Nation Builder, and Not So Bland After
All" by Steve Paikin (2016).

Political Career

William Grenville Davis's lifelong passion for politics began at age 15, when he attended a federal Conservative annual meeting.

His political career began when he was age 30 and only 4 years into a law career. Bill Davis was handpicked by cabinet minister and Interim Premier Thomas Kennedy to run in his riding of Peel, winning the seat in 1959. He nearly lost the election, due to former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker's decision to cancel the Avro Arrow, putting 14,000 employees, most of whom lived in the riding, out of work.

Just before he died, Kennedy reportedly told his successor Leslie Frost, "I've found a future premier of Ontario." - National Post, August 9, 2021

Asked to explain his electoral success despite his dull image, Davis summed it up in two words: "Bland works."

Nation Builder

In 1981, Bill Davis played a

major role in the patriation of our Constitution and in creating our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As a thoughtful listener and skillful negotiator, Premier Davis brought 9 Premiers and Prime Minister Trudeau together. They found the 'middle ground', resolved their differences, with the notable exception of Quebec, whose Premier (Hon. Rene Levesque) led a Party dedicated to separation from Canada, resulting in our country achieving its own Constitution.

Building A Better Ontario

Bill Davis was Ontario's "Education Premier." Under his leadership, the Province saw the creation of its college system, the establishment of new universities (York, Laurentian, Brock and Trent) and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, as well as the creation of TVOntario. He was committed to saving French school boards that would have folded for lack of funding, and he provided two additional years (grades 9 and 10) of taxpayer support to the Catholic school system.





Time for Bill and the kids to go boating

A Sampling Of Initiatives

(most of which remain nearly 50 years later)

First Environment Ministry in Canada

SkyDome – part of advanced urban planning

Purchased an energy company called Suncor, as a “window” on the oil industry

French-language public services where numbers warrant

Bilingualism in the courts and in the Legislature

Rent review to protect tenants from

being gouged by their landlords

Stopped construction of the Spadina Expressway, “If we are building a transportation system to serve the automobile, the Spadina Expressway would be a good place to start. But if we are building a transportation system to serve people, the Spadina Expressway is a good place to stop.” - Bill Davis

Stopped the building of the Pickering Airport, a project of the federal government, announcing that Ontario didn’t need or want the airport. Ontario would refuse to provide roads, water mains or a sewage system for it even if Ottawa paid the cost

VIEW FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Bill Davis

By Bob Rae

Hearing the news about Bill Davis's death this Sunday morning, many memories and thoughts came to mind. Twenty years younger than Bill, our friendship strengthened over many years. When I was a student at the University of Toronto, I would head across Queen's Park to sit in the gallery and watch debates in the Ontario Legislature. John Robarts was Premier and Bill Davis was "all things education". He would later shepherd the University of Toronto Act into law, which was based on a report on university government I had helped draft as a member of the Students Administrative Council. He claimed later to have remembered my sitting in the gallery of the legislature, which I have always thought quite unlikely. But, I realized in those days he was a consummate professional, and someone interested in change. "Reforming in order to preserve."

When I was elected to the Ontario Legislature after my election as provincial leader of the NDP, Bill Davis sent me a note saying that he could not be there for my first day as he had a dentist appointment. I sent

him back a note saying I knew from other sources he was having his teeth sharpened. It didn't take long for the partisan teeth to have their effect. He could be a sharp protagonist when he needed to be, but the culture at Queen's Park in those days was a combination of tough, barracking combat in "the Leg" and much greater interpersonal camaraderie when debates were over. At our first private meeting he went out of his way to talk about "the interests of the Province" and asked about my family. He once asked for help "across the aisle" with a tricky piece of legislation and once satisfied it was in everyone's interest to get it done, I gave him my word it would happen, as did David Peterson, my Liberal colleague in opposition at the time.

That exchange, early on in my time at Queen's Park, created more trust between us, which had actually started in some back channel conversations about the Charter and patriation when I was an NDP backbencher in Ottawa. When speculation mounted about a provincial election, he surprised everyone, including his caucus and Cabinet, by announcing his retirement.

After Frank Miller's election as Leader and what we all knew would be an election call, I made a point of going up to his MPP office and spending time with him. I knew he would have mixed feelings and, as I came to know myself, the phone suddenly stops ringing when the power has left the room. In Bill's case the phone calls never stopped. At so many points in our lives we just enjoyed chatting about the ups and downs of political life and the cavalcade of events passing before us. When he called me directly he would just start talking without introduction, "Robert, a word with you if I may," and then would ensue a dialogue on all things personal and political.

When my own surprise victory came in 1990, Bill Davis made a point of reaching out in the earliest days, and he was a constant advisor and mentor to me in what would prove to be a challenging time. We faced an economic crisis, a national unity crisis, and a new caucus and Cabinet with no governmental experience. He made it clear that he wished nothing but success for me and for the Province. "If you do well, we all shall do well." By that time he was serving on a number of corporate boards and he made a point of insisting that excessive partisanship was not in anyone's interest. There were things we did that he made it clear he disagreed with, but there were a number of measures of which he thoroughly approved. "Just don't quote me, Robert", he would chuckle on the phone, using that name more often than any other. With his own relationship with Brian Mulroney and Jean Chretien, and his own

experiences on the national unity file, he proved an invaluable counsellor on Constitutional issues. We spent many moments reflecting on what Ontario had to be prepared to do to bridge the many national divides that were becoming deeper and less easy to resolve.

One call stands out in my memory. I knew that Bill had refused to allow any buildings or projects to bear his name. I also knew that his father, Arthur had been the crown attorney for Peel County. The province had approved the construction of a new court house in Brampton, and so I suggested we name it "the Davis Court House". I phoned Bill to let him know we had decided on the name and he couldn't say no because we were honouring his dad. There was a pause on the line, and he broke up a bit as he just said "thank you". He called me back in ten minutes and said that it required ingenuity to make it impossible for him to say no. We laughed together many times about that.

When the government I led was unsuccessful at the polls in 1995, he was again among the first to call. He even recalled our earlier conversations in his office on the eve of the 1985 election, and once I had made my decision to leave political life in 1996 he offered some advice. "Your most challenging day in private life will be less exciting than your dulllest day as Premier." All of us who have known the joys of politics will understand what he meant. He also said that "whatever else happens you will always be a Canada manpower office". I came

to know the truth of that as well. He was intensely loyal to “his team”, but he had the broadest definition of who that included. He was a brilliant networker long before that term was invented.

Bill Davis's personal life was marked by the early tragedy of losing his first wife, the mother of four of his children, to cancer at a young age. His second marriage to Kathleen was a truly remarkable partnership, bringing much love and perspective to what mattered and what did not. Kathy Davis's humour and openness is rightly legendary. An American by birth she always joked with me that she was a Democrat and tried to keep the “progressive” alive in “Progressive Conservative”. The Davis family life had been extraordinarily rich, and it is what

gave Bill such a strong grounding in a profession which is bruising at the best of times. Devoted husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather, he doted on them all, as they came to dote on him. Known as “Dutch” they put up with corny jokes, his foibles, his asides, and his love of sports, because they knew none of these were as defining as his deep love of family, friends, decency and country. He has touched us all with his kindness and example and we can only repay that gift by living and loving as he did.

-- Bob Rae

**“He was a touchstone
for progressive
conservatism”**

By Kathleen Wynne

He was the 18th person to sit in the Premier's chair. I was the 25th. He, a truly progressive Progressive Conservative, I, a Liberal. Premier Davis was kind to me. He understood the job I was doing. He never let me forget that he thought my partisan choice was misguided but Party stripe never coloured our conversations. Except, of course, that he was clear we could only have our

chats up until six months before an election—after that, until the election was decided, we were on our Party teams.

Sometimes there was a specific issue, displeasure with a transit plan for Brampton or excitement at the idea of a university campus in Brampton—the specific issues usually pertained to Brampton and he just wanted me to know his perspective. But more often than not, the Premier would reach out to reassure me. “Don't take what they are saying too personally or too seriously,” was the gist of many of our calls.

I was always just a little bit nervous on those calls. This was the man who stood for all the strengths of Ontario and our place in Canada. It's not so much that Bill Davis was a particular hero of mine growing up, but he was the Minister of Education when I was in elementary school and Premier from the year I graduated from high school until I was a young mom of three kids. I respected him when I first met him because of his political achievement and his position.

After all, he had helped form my generation's idea of what the social contract in Ontario was; that government existed to do the things that people cannot do by themselves. He believed deeply in publicly funded education. He believed that government could open opportunity for all of Ontario's youth—that was the point of his vision of the community college system. He was affable,

congenial, and decent.

My respect for Premier Davis grew as I came to know him as a man. He had overcome such pain and agony in his private life but had continued to serve. I came to love my encounters with him and Kathleen—it was so obviously a loving partnership and so clearly the heart that had supported those decades of service

The passing of Premier Davis leaves a big gap in the political landscape of Ontario. As long as he was alive and engaged, he was a touchstone for progressive conservatism. His good opinion mattered. More than that, he was a reminder to all of us, of all party stripes, that decency and flexibility, not vitriol and ideology, built this beautiful province. - Kathleen Wynne
- excerpts from Air Quotes Media, August 10, 2021



Image of Premier Wynne and Bill Davis at his 90th birthday

Most Important Politician

By David Peterson

Bill Davis was the most important politician in Ontario in the past 50 years. I will leave it to others, more objective than I, to chronicle his career and achievements.

Even though, for obvious reasons, I was not close to Bill, I would like to share two occasions with him that meant something to me:

Shortly after I was elected as a young man in 1975, I had my first personal encounter at a Press Gallery function with Bill - he, being the Premier, and me, a lowly backbencher. He obviously knew I was from London and we discussed politics in the context

of a man I knew and admired very much, and who he knew much better and admired very much, John Robarts.

We talked about life in the legislature and he said to me, and I remember this well, "One of the things that I have always done is go back to Brampton every night." This spoke loudly to his commitment to family and his personal values.

Shortly after I became Premier, I phoned Bill for advice. The advice I remember him giving me was to "always look like you are in control, no matter what is happening around you."

He was a wise and good man. - Premier David Peterson



Unveiling of Bill Davis' portrait at Queen's Park

NEWSPAPER HEADLINES

'Canada has lost a giant' – National Post

'He just radiated decency' – Toronto Star

*'A nation builder; Former Premier's reach went far beyond
Ontario's borders' – Toronto Sun*

*'Bill Davis, pragmatic Ontario Premier dies at age 92' – New
York Times*



Interesting way to drive to Queen's Park

BOTH SIDES OF THE AISLE

"An entirely admirable human being. One of Canada's greatest statesmen"
- Brian Mulroney
(Anecdotes from Former Members)

Stephen Lewis

I have always felt extraordinarily fortunate to have served my political apprenticeship with Bill Davis as Premier. It's hard to imagine a more decent adversary. When compared to the political dynamics today, the Bill Davis era was astonishingly civilized. As much as we did verbal battle across the floor of the legislature, we maintained a friendly and harmonious relationship in the aftermath. It just wouldn't be possible to summon such civility today.

On a number of occasions, the Premier extended himself graciously --- most graciously --- abandoning the instincts for political battle. One example has fixed itself in my mind.

For the NDP, occupational health and safety became a clarion call, particularly in the world of asbestos. I'll never forget when we were debating

the spread of asbestosis in a community in Northern Ontario where a particular plant was guilty of spreading disease. On one exceptional day that I'll never forget, the Premier sent me a note across the floor saying that he was closing down the plant. It was an entirely unexpected decision, and amazingly thoughtful in letting me know in advance.

But that was Premier Davis: a political leader of kind and generous disposition. Sure, we disagreed ideologically in ways that could never be bridged. But an atmosphere of intellectual and political generosity prevailed because that was his every instinct.

You can tell that I loved the man. Unselfconsciously.

- Stephen Lewis

Mayor John Tory

One of the great gifts of my life was the broad and long-lasting relationship I was privileged to have with the Honourable William G. Davis.

He was the leader of the political party I belonged to for almost 40 years and of course he was Premier for 14 years. He was my boss when I worked in the Premier's office. He

was my colleague at the law firm where we both worked. He was my supporter when I was Leader of the Opposition and as Mayor of Toronto. And most important of all he was my friend.

As a result of this long and multi-faceted relationship, I find it difficult to write about substantive achievements as opposed to writing about the man himself but in some respects they blend together.

More than 50 years ago it was Minister Bill Davis who understood what technology would become to our graduates and to our economy and he established and grew our college system which today is a foundation block of one of the world's best public post-secondary systems. It is a major contributor to our economic success today well beyond technology.

He had the foresight to create an anti racism secretariat decades ago and later was one of the champions in favour of an entrenched Charter of Rights and Freedoms, getting ahead of the extraordinary diversity and the challenge of inclusion that is in front of Ontario today. He often spoke up for minorities and acted on his words.

He created North America's very first Ministry of the Environment recognizing in the 1970's that we had to do a better job of protecting our natural heritage. He worked hard to achieve an Acid Rain Treaty with the United States and made a powerful statement about cities being for people not cars when he cancelled the Spadina Expressway some 50 years ago!

The list goes on. But the list isn't just a list. It helps you understand the essence of this wonderful man who gave most of his adult life to public service. A man who cared about human and minority rights. A man who cared about lifting people up, starting with the great equalizer - education. A man who treated absolutely everyone with respect and who demonstrated, including in 6 years of minority government, that you could work together with everyone and get things done for people.

Mr. Davis's greatest gift, beyond his balance and his intelligence was his humanity and his humility. He took his job seriously but never himself. If he came into the office on a given morning and that day's newspaper contained a large scathing headline, he would pick up the paper, turn to the sports page and immerse himself on the assumption that we would tell him what he needed to know about the headline.

He always kept his feet firmly planted on the ground, helped by an insistence that he return home to Brampton every night. He also stayed well away from a lot of pomp and formality. I remember one time we were on the way to open the Central Canadian Exhibition in Ottawa and we were late. A local OPP officer was driving, and he thought lights and sirens were a good idea. Mr. Davis, who would never ask for that, literally crouched down in the front seat, too shy to say anything to this well-meaning police officer but horrified anyone might see him in a car with the lights and sirens going.

His idea of a gourmet lunch was to go to the Queen's Park dining room and have scrambled eggs and bacon and on a big day, perhaps a scoop of vanilla ice cream. And who will ever forget the sight seen by many, of one of the most powerful elected representatives in all of Canada happily riding his lawn mower on Main Street.

Take the Bill Davis values, the humble, warm, caring personality, his respectful treatment of everyone and his incredible foresight and you have the recipe for an incredible Premier at

a time when a fast-changing Ontario needed someone special. He was missed after he left office and he is missed now but he leaves behind his most important legacy comprised of a wonderful family who share his values.

His was a life well lived and his accomplishments benefited each and every one of us as they will benefit our children and grandchildren. We were lucky to have him in public life. I was lucky to have him as a friend.

- John Tory



Premier Davis speaking at Mayor John Tory's swearing in ceremony



Constitutional Talks, 1981

W. Darcy McKeough

Bill Davis was able to stay in power through two minority governments, regain his majority, and last for fourteen years as Premier. Few politicians of any stripe or jurisdiction in the modern era had his capacity for recovery and longevity. Davis is a straight arrow guided by his background as a United Church progressive. His great strength was knowing when to make a decision and when to delay, usually the latter. "Decisive he never was nor pretended to be, concluding early on in his twenty-five year political career that today's crisis could probably benefit most from a cooling off period rather than a quick solution," said Sally Barnes in her book *Bill: A Collection of Words and Pictures*. "He never

dramatically killed ideas or projects with which he disagreed or he believed would not succeed; he just let them slowly suffocate while they waited for the required approval.

I don't think Bill Davis has a mean bone in his body. On the political spectrum he was slightly to the left of centre; ministers such as Roy McMurtry, Bob Elgie and Larry Grossman, were further to the left. Tom Wells was about in the same place on the spectrum as Davis, but the rest of us, me in particular, were somewhere to the right. There were times when Davis was too cautious for me, and we certainly didn't see eye-to-eye on every issue. But the fact that that he kept such a diverse group working together as a team was his greatest strength and the reason for his durability. Few are the politicians

as canny and accomplished as he. Whenever I was meeting with someone, if Bill Davis came into the room and joined the group, I always stood and called him "Sir".

When I was a Minister in his Government, I had many meetings where I expressed my views

as to policy and legislation. He would ask many searching questions and sometimes disagreed with my thinking. But when a decision was made, I had his full support.

I like to think I was a loyal member and Minister. But what is very certain is that Mr. Davis backed me one hundred percent and that is something I will forever remember and treasure.

-W. Darcy McKeough



Premier, Mrs. Davis, my wife, Joyce and myself. It was taken in 1982 when I was a Governor of the Stratford Festival, when Joyce and I hosted them for dinner and theatre.

I will cherish the times we spent together. He was an extraordinary person who will be greatly missed in our country.

- Mayor Patrick Brown

I cannot think of anyone who had a greater impact on Ontario in the past 60 years. From 1959 to 1985, Bill Davis served the residents of Brampton, Ontario, as its Member of Provincial Parliament. He was elected at age 29. He served as Minister of Education from 1962 to 1971 and Premier from 1971 to 1985. In his retirement, he served on numerous boards and committees. His guidance and wisdom were sought after by many people, including myself. He grew up in Brampton and made lasting contributions in this city as

well as across Ontario and Canada. He was always accessible and worked hard to deliver programs and services for the community. While he crisscrossed Ontario, he was always our best ambassador, as most speeches mentioned Brampton three or four times.

Premier Davis liked to say "Show me a good doctor, a good lawyer, a good whatever and I will show you a good kindergarten teacher, a good high school teacher and a good university professor. There is no more important commitment that a government can make than to education."

As many know, Premier Davis had a passion for the environment and Northern Ontario. He was an environmentalist before it was fashionable to be green. He was



Mayor Brown and Premier Bill Davis relaxing at the cottage

responsible for the creation of the Ministry of Environment — the first ever in Canada. He protected the Niagara Escarpment and brought in environmental assessment legislation for the public and private sector for the first time ever in Ontario. In the mid-1980s, Mr. Davis served as Canada's Special Envoy on Acid Rain. He worked hard in support of the environment.

In 1972, he appointed Margaret Birch as the first female Cabinet Minister in Ontario. Birch told Steve Paikin years later that she'd never faced sexism while in Cabinet. Why not? "Bill Davis wouldn't have stood for it," she said. He was always ahead of the times. He was a women's rights advocate at a time when it was

rare. He introduced Ontario's most progressive labour legislation in Ontario history, which remains intact today.

Bill Davis taught me about decency. He governed minority parliaments with success by understanding that there is no monopoly on a good idea. While I was in Provincial politics, Bill Davis's counsel was the one I courted most. In the summer of 2016, I was kindly invited to visit the former Premier at his cottage in Honey Harbour. His advice, insights and thoughts are a national treasure. He once called me because he felt I was being too partisan in question period attacking a Liberal scandal. He reminded me to be more generous. Davis governed with honesty, and he



Bill Davis receiveing the key to Brampton from Mayor Brown



Bill Davis and Mayor Brown at Key to City of Brampton ceremony

reminded me to be more generous. Davis governed with honesty, and he was principled in his leadership. He earned the respect of all Ontarians. When I faced adversity in politics, it was Bill Davis who told me to keep my chin up, who attended my wedding and lent me his confidence and support in my mayoral election campaign.

I likely would not be in public office today without his unwavering friendship. I am so glad that we were able to celebrate his accomplishments by awarding him

the Key to the City of Brampton in November 2019.

His legacy in Ontario is unmatched. He built the modern-day Ontario as we know it. I will cherish the times we spent together. He was an extraordinary person who will be greatly missed in our country.

- Patrick Brown (Mayor of Brampton and a former leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario)

Alan Eagleson

We became friends in 1957 and our friendship grew stronger over the next 64 years. I admired

Bill for his political wisdom, for his gentle attitude towards everyone he met, but mostly for his love for his wife Kathleen and his children. - Alan Eagleson



In Black Tie. In 1976, Bill hosted a black-tie dinner in my honour. One hundred guests attended at the Albany Club. To recognize my service as President of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party from 1968-76, he presented me with a portrait by Ken Danby



The Danby Portrait



Team Canada returned from our victory over the Soviet Union on October 1, 1972.

At 6 pm, on that day, Premier Davis welcomed our team at Toronto City Hall Square. Bill is on the far right. Tony Esposito and I are holding Paul Henderson up, so that he can be seen by the crowd. - Alan Eagleson

How I ended up working in Premier Davis' office

By Phil Gillies

I was 22 years old at the time of the 1977 election and working as an Intern at the PC headquarters. I was the gopher for the head of advertising and communications.

One day I was called into the senior brass's office and thought that perhaps I had done something wrong. Far from it.

They told me that the local P.C. candidate in Brantford had dropped out of the race and asked me to step in as the replacement. They assured me that I need not worry about winning, as the Party had come 3rd in the previous election. Yes, I could have a day off to attend my graduation at Western and yes, they would find me a

car for the campaign, since I didn't own one!

I placed 2nd in the election. I was then hired as a researcher in the Premier's office. It was in this role that I took on another job that no one wanted: organizing the P.C. Caucus Christmas dinner. What great fun trying to sort out who wanted to sit with whom (and who did not want to be seated beside certain others!)

On the night of the event, I met Premier Davis at the hotel front door and briefed him on the itinerary. He told me that he and his wife were tired and wanted to leave early. He asked me to allow an interval of 15 minutes after he had spoken, then quietly leave the room and reappear shortly thereafter, come to his table,



Premier Bill and candidate Phil Gillies

and announce that there was an important phone call for him. I did as asked.

When I reached the table - where everyone was having a thoroughly uproarious time - and delivered the message, the Premier's response was, "Who is it?"

I was stunned! I quickly realized that all the members of the Cabinet were in the room, so it would do no good to name any one of them as the caller. I quickly blurted out the name of the only person I could think of who likely wasn't there: Dr. Ed Stewart, head of the civil service. Davis thanked me, and we left the room.

On the way out he whispered to me, "Gotcha, didn't I!"

In 2014, having been away

from Queen's Park for 27 years, I ran for election in Brantford. Mr. Davis called and asked me what he could do to help. He quickly agreed to special guest for me at a fundraiser in downtown Toronto. But it did not end with that. By then well into his eighties, he also came down for a rally in Brantford during the campaign. With his drawing power the hall filled to overflowing for the event. It was heart warming to see so many people coming out to see Bill Davis.

I learned later that mine was the only campaign outside of Brampton that he visited. I know I owed that extraordinary courtesy to his deep and abiding loyalty to those who had served him.

- Phil Gillies



Bill Davis campaigns for Phil Gillies in 2014

Mayor Jim Watson

I've always considered Bill Davis one of my generation's best and most accomplished Premiers. I had the honour of serving in Premier Dalton McGuinty's cabinet, and I was struck by how similar the two men were when it came to leadership styles.

However, my first real contact with a Premier was Bill Davis as a seventeen-year-old high school student at Thornlea

Secondary School in Thornhill, Ontario. I had pitched the local cable station in Richmond Hill with the idea of hosting a show from a teenager's perspective called "Youth Viewpoint".

To my delight and surprise, the station accepted my idea and my brief foray into television began. Over the years, I interviewed the likes of Arnold and

Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Al Waxman, Mr. Dress Up, Lloyd Robertson, Miss Canada, and the owner of a wrestling bear (who brought the bear into the studio)! My ultimate goal was to land an interview with Premier Davis.

After a few typewritten letters and a few more pestering calls, one day I received a call from his press secretary (I believe it was Sally Barnes, if my memory is

correct), advising that I could have fifteen minutes with the Premier in his office at Queen's Park.

Here I was, a teenage "nobody" who was given the chance to interview the Premier of Ontario. I am sure my questions were pretty basic, but he was a true gentleman and very patient with my fellow teenager camera operator.



Cub reporter, Jim Watson age 17, interviews Premier

Premier Bill Davis was a great leader and statesman, and it was true honour to meet him and to see him take the time to answer a few questions for an ordinary teenager. One of the small ironies of this souvenir picture I have is Mr. Davis smoking his trademark pipe in his office.

Never in a million years would I have thought that I would one day

sit in that same office, discussing with Premier McGuinty as his Minister of Health Promotion, the passage of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act that banned smoking in offices!

To the Davis family - Thank you for sharing Bill Davis with our Province and country, and may he rest in peace. - Mayor Jim Watson

John Gerretsen

I remember meeting Bill Davis at the official opening of the OHIP building here in Kingston in 1983. At the time I was Mayor of Kingston (1980 to 1988). As we chatted before the official events started he told me that he always invited the local member to join the official party on stage. It did not matter

to him whether the person was a government member or a member of the Opposition. To him the local member mattered in that community. I always tried to follow his example during my eleven years as a Cabinet Minister in the governments of Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne. He respected politicians of all political stripes.- John Gerretsen

Gerry Philips

It was 1978, I was Chair of the Metropolitan Toronto School Board. I was called to a meeting with Premier Davis at Queen's Park to discuss an important educational issue. I hoped the meeting wouldn't run too long since I had another "important meeting" to go to. The meeting with the Premier went well. It was professional, friendly, and very productive. The meeting ended and I thought I would be on my way to my "important meeting". But the Premier then started a casual conversation with me----can't remember the detail but it was about my family,

my background, and the Argos. This went on for 20 minutes or more---just the two of us. I am laughing to myself, thinking----here I am chit chatting with the Premier of Ontario---he seems to not have a care in the world---not rushing off to meet with important people----and I am up- tight about the trivial meeting I am going to. I hope I learned a lesson from this very decent man. Know what is important----keep life in perspective----treat others with respect. - Gerry Philips

Dr. Charles Godfrey

I was seated at the rear of the plane, about to fly from Ottawa to Toronto when Bill Davis entered. He greeted passengers on entering and worked up the lot with humorous remarks, much to their enjoyment. When he

arrived at my seat, he welcomed me to the House and agreed we didn't need a Pickering airport and that my record in the RCAF qualified me, plus the fact that I could work with the PC doctors. I was embarrassed but laughed. - Charles Godfrey

Sam Cureatz

In 1975 I graduated from Queen's law school and was called to the Bar. I started to work for a wonderful fellow Richard (Dick) Lovekin, who

was 20 years older and had solo law practice. He had run for the Liberals under Bob Nixon and lost. He said that, since he knew the Liberals in the area, I should get to know the

So I did. It is a long story, but at 28 years of age I was suddenly the Progressive Conservative candidate for the Riding of Durham East.

Dick said, "Great! - all that is free advertising for the firm - but DO NOT get elected!!!!"

Well, I knew nothing about politics at the grass roots level but the local Association sure did. Especially Doctor Peter Zakarow, who later became my dentist. Peter had worked on the campaigns of Mike Star, who was the Federal member from Oshawa and was in Diefenbaker's cabinet until Ed Broadbent beat him.

In order to attract some attention to me (an unknown candidate), Peter and the team arranged to have the Premier and his wife fly into the riding by helicopter and land at a supporter's farm just outside a village called Orono (being between Hwy 401 and

Peterborough). So the Premier flew in and he and his wife were put in a pony wagon. A campaign supporter and I (much slimmer then and with dark hair) directed the guests to the speaking area.

Well, I guess the novelty paid off with me winning by 114 votes and beating a popular NDP member, Doug Moffatt. I carried on for three more elections, but after 14 years my wife and I and our three boys had had enough. I did not seek election in 1990.

- Sam Cureatz (Q.C.)



Premier Bill campaigns for Sam Cureatz in 1977



Steve Paikin visited the cottage when writing "Bill Davis – Nation Builder, and Not So Bland After All". Gathered with Bill and Kathleen are all 5 children and 11 of the 12 grandchildren. Steve is centre front.

Jean-Marc Lalonde

I have some wonderful memories of Bill Davis. I had lost a candidate nomination to Don Boudria. Bill Davis approached me about running for the Conservatives. I ended up turning down his offer. A few years later Bill Davis and I were both honoured

by Toronto Mayor, Mel Lastman, for our service to the Francophone community in Toronto. I have a lot of respect for Bill Davis. He was a real gentleman.

- Jean-Marc Lalonde



Image of Bill Davis and Jean-Marc Lalonde

Frank Klees

Having been recruited at the age of 24 as the "sacrificial lamb" for the Riding of Essex South, I had the privilege of campaigning with Bill Davis in both the 1975 and 1977 elections. It was during the 1977 election campaign that I naively "took a stand" on a policy that was contrary to the party's position. I went so far as to call the Premier at his home on a Sunday night to share my wise reasoning. The Premier listened, and responded with the words, "Thank you Mr. Candidate. We will make a statesman out of you."

I interpreted that comment as a compliment and felt rather proud of my efforts to give wise counsel to the Premier, although to no avail.

It was some two years later when chatting with Darcy McKeough that I told him about that conversation and I realized what the Premier was really telling me.

Darcy said, "Do you know what John Robarts' definition of a statesman was?"

"No," I responded.

"A dead politician."

And that explains why I didn't hear from the Big Blue Machine for the rest of that campaign.

The Premier and I had many a chuckle in the ensuing years over that blessing. He was truly a great man.

- Frank Klees



Premier Bill introduces candidate Frank Klees in 1977

Patrick Reid

I was first elected in 1967, Canada's 100th birthday. The then Premier was John Robarts, probably the most respected Premier in Canada at the time. The Opposition was quite in awe of him, and rarely questioned him. Bill Davis was in contrast rather bland and not a very good debater in the Legislature. Tim Reid was the Liberal education critic, and of the same calibre as Davis. When the two of them started debating education matters, the Legislature emptied out! In those days, members usually

stayed in their seats for all debates.

It was a time when money was flowing into government coffers, and the role and reach of governments expanded quickly and initiated many progressive measures.

Davis then was very bland.

When Mr. Robarts said he was retiring, the Conservatives were campaigning to replace him. The Tories had a very strong cabinet and there were multiple candidates. The two leading ones were Davis and Alan Lawrence from Ottawa. The Liberals hoped

that Alan Lawrence would win as we thought he would be easiest to defeat. Davis was the front runner but barely squeaked through in a long night of voting.

In Davis' first election, 1971, professional polling was first used in large measure by the Tories. The Catholic school question became the election issue, and Davis won a good majority. (See Steve Paiken's article on "The Two Lions"). Davis was still not comfortable in the Legislature, and was bland, rather boring. This changed when Hugh Segal joined the Davis inner circle and helped Davis change into a master of the Legislature, humorous and no long boring

speeches.

In one of the Question Periods, he was routinely not answering the question and going off on one of his tangents, when I called out "Bland Bill". He looked over at the Opposition benches and said, "Bland works."

The bland stuck with him, along with his Brampton schtick.

Bill Davis always treated me well and always was respectful and helpful when he could be. He was a thoroughly decent man and a gentleman.

- Patrick Reid

The Premier, the Mentor, the Friend

By Cam Jackson

After 36 years of elected public service I am often asked, who has had the most influence on my political career. That would be Premier Bill Davis. His recent passing has seen the end of an amazing era of statesmanship in both provincial and national arenas.

Joining the PC party in my early teens gave me quick access to prominent MLAs like Education Minister Bill Davis. By 1969 I had been elected Hamilton Area PC Youth Chair and sat at council with John Tory and Dennis Timbrell who happened to be Toronto Area PC Youth Chair. Interesting to note, we all voted for Bill Davis on the final leadership ballot in 1970. With an election around the corner, the Premier had built a coalition of talent from all leadership

camp. The Big Blue Machine was born. It was my great fortune to be recruited as part of the Youth Policy Team with additional field organizer responsibilities for twenty-two ridings outside Toronto.

Armed with a small budget, we created a series of campaign posters with youth appeal. The ad agency produced the now famous St. George (Davis) slaying the Spadina dragon. The next was a montage of endangered domestic species as the Premier appointed my MLA George Kerr as the first Minister for the Environment in North America. The third poster was never revealed to the public. The PC government had just announced the lower voting and drinking age to eighteen. The poster was of a beer can with a cool caption. The Premier took one look, bit down on his pipe and said: "Cam... My mother would not approve." That ended the discussion.

Premier Davis was the most grounded public figure of his day. He was loyal and supportive of his friends and colleagues. His love of family and family time together gave him a moral compass enabling him to successfully navigate the turbulent waters of three successive minority governments. He was the best role model you could imagine. In 1984 I won the PC nomination for Burlington South and was excited that I might be part of the next Bill Davis Caucus. You can't imagine my disappointment when he and Kathleen announced his retirement.

True to form, the Premier did not retire from public service nor grow distant with his friends and supporters. He kept on top of issues. On one such occasion I was having difficulty with my second of four

tries to create the first Victim's Rights Legislation when I received a letter from Chicago. It was from the Premier offering me words of encouragement to stay the course.

Bill Davis found time to be supportive in so many ways. He and Kathleen attended several of my MPP fundraisers including my time as Mayor of Burlington.

When Davis left Queen's Park as Premier, I made a point to only address future Premiers by their official title 'Premier' out of respect for this remarkable leader with the most significant office, in the most important Province in the Confederation. We are a better Province today, thanks to the extraordinary life-long contributions of Premier Bill Davis.



Cartoon featuring Cam Jackson, Bill Davis and John Tory

Linda Jeffrey in the Brampton Business Times, June 22, 2009

I remember the first time I spoke with Premier Davis – it was November 2003, when the phone rang. I picked up the receiver and the voice on the other end was Mr. Davis offering his congratulations on winning my first Provincial election. Mr. Davis, a local icon, was making a personal call to me – a Liberal – to offer advice on the new role I was about to assume. Days later, I remember asking his son, Neil, whom I knew well from my days on Brampton City Council, “Neil, would your Dad really meet with me to help, or was he just being polite?” Neil confirmed that his father was genuine in his offer. I’d never met anyone like Mr. Davis, an individual who sees politics as an honourable calling

and who manages to cross party lines effortlessly, making friends and developing strong alliances wherever he goes.

Mr. Davis was always someone I respected from afar and, over the years, I’ve learned how much we have in common. For one - we both want what is best for Brampton. We continue to see each other at a variety of events and, whenever he gets the opportunity, he finds a way to publicly point out that I am “philosophically misguided”. He’s a brilliant politician who shows his great sense of timing, particularly once he’s at the podium and given a microphone. He frequently shares with his audience, in a conspiratorial way, he feels sure that I am just on the verge of considering a move to the right.



Bill Davis presents Mayor Linda Jeffrey with Chain of Office and Gavel

I never used to spend much time considering what colour outfit I wore to a public event, but since Mr. Davis began these public musings about my possible defection to the other side, I always ensure that I am wearing something red – more for his benefit than mine.

I've also learned how diplomatic Mr. Davis is, and how extraordinarily gifted he is in remembering the stories and people surrounding events that shaped our Province. He's a classy individual, a gentle man, and very humble about his accomplishments, but he also exhibits shameless glee in his attempts to tease me about being a Liberal. I enjoy the verbal sparring and banter we share – after all there is no downside to being centered out by the former Premier of the Province of Ontario.

Mr. Davis is the kind of politician that I someday aspire to be. He's a community builder that seeks to join good policy with good politics. As a Member of Provincial Parliament, Mr. Davis earned the respect of the Bramptonians he had the honour to represent. Later, when he served as Premier, Ontarians from across this Province came, not only to respect Mr. Davis, but also to genuinely like him, which explains his continued popularity today. Congratulations Mr. Davis as you celebrate fifty years of public service.

- Linda Jeffrey (Article from 2009 Brampton Business Times)



Copeland family celebrating new Copeland Forest Park

George Taylor

The group picture was a meeting by the Copeland family celebrating the Ontario government's purchase of 4000 acres forming now the Copeland Forest Park. In the picture are some Cabinet Ministers and Deputy Ministers and numerous local dignitaries primarily municipal politicians and myself and one

other person at that time who later became the infamous Bill Player. The family selling the property resided in Elmvale. I showed the picture to the Premier at a cabinet meeting explaining that I don't know what opposition members would do with this, if anything, but I had brought it to his attention."



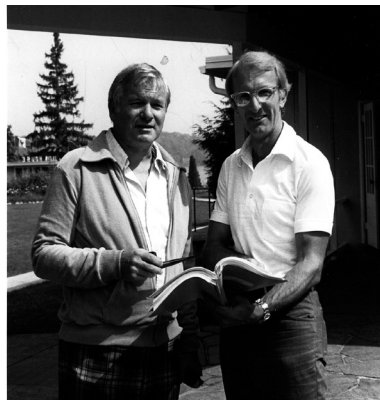
"This picture has been used before of the Premier canvassing with me in the Bradford area in the '81 election at the opening of which I had broken my leg."

- George Taylor



"At the Queen's Park meeting with the Queen on the front lawn. I was to introduce her to the Commissioner Ferguson. I was about to do it but slow on the draw having the Premier intervene into the introduction."

- George Taylor



"At a Cabinet retreat Dennis Timbrell then the Minister of Health announced hospitals that were up for closing and he named the Grace Hospital in Penetanguishene. The Premier said. "That George's hospital was not going to be closed." and it didn't."

- George Taylor

Memories of Premier Bill Davis

By Jim Foulds

(NDP MPP, Port Arthur, 1971-1987)

More than any other politician I encountered, Bill Davis knew what political power was all about and what he wanted to do with it.

If ever there was a political leader who practiced the art of the possible and the profitable, it was Bill Davis.

In 1971 it was possible to stop the Spadina Expressway. So he stopped it.

In 1971 he also said "no" to full funding for Catholic Separate High Schools.

Both decisions were politically profitable.

Thirteen years later, on the eve of his retirement, he threw the most astonishing Hail Mary pass in Ontario political history. Over the personal objections of his Education Minister and his own Deputy Minister, he unilaterally reversed his own Separate School decision. He simply felt that to extend full funding to Catholic Separate Schools "was the right thing to do, constitutionally."

Whether you agree with that decision or not, that's political power. And using it.

The legendary loyalty - if not hero-worship - of people such as John Tory and Hugh Segal, the admiration of TVO's Steve Paikin, and the unconditional support of his wife, Kathleen Davis, says volumes about the man's decency.

I scraped through the 1977

election by 339 votes. So, during the 1981 election, I had the honour of Premier Bill Davis visiting three times to try to gain the seat for the Conservatives. At the Italian Hall annual banquet, we publicly exchanged quips. He teasingly used the diminutive "Jimmy" to put me in my place. I called him both "Premier" and "Bill" to show we were friendly, if fierce, opponents. My majority increased to 1,374 votes.

For almost forty years, two personal memories of Bill Davis have stuck with me:

In October of 1982, the Premier held a reception in honour of President Constantine Karamanlis of Greece. His right-of-centre party, the New Democracy Movement, had been instrumental in establishing parliamentary democracy in Greece after the military junta of 1967-1974. When Davis introduced me as the Deputy Leader of the New Democratic Party, President Karamanlis - picking up on the similarity of our parties' names - took me for a political kindred spirit. Both Bill Davis and David Peterson took great delight in telling him otherwise. [The accompanying photograph captures the moment.]

The second memory is a much more personal one. When I made my maiden speech in the spring of 1972, my seventy-year-old mother flew the 1,200 kilometres from Thunder Bay to Queen's Park to be there for it. Except from across the floor of the Legislature, I had never met Bill Davis. At one point during that week, my mother and I were standing outside the main door of Legislative Chamber while the Premier was finishing a



Left to right: President Constantine Karamanlis of Greece, Premier Bill Davis, (foreground) Jim Foulds, David Peterson in an animated discussion comparing political philosophies.

scrum. I don't know where I found the nerve. I walked over.

"Mum. I'd like you to meet the Premier Bill Davis."

"Bill, I'd like you to meet my mother, Dorothy Foulds."

Caught off guard, he became stiff, awkward, and almost blushed. But he responded in a most courteous way.

"Mrs. Foulds, I'm very pleased to meet you. I'm sure you're very proud of your son," he said to her with the graciousness for which he remains well known. And then he honoured me with his trademark

playful dig, "although, of course, he's quite misguided in his political philosophy."

There's a shy and mischievous person hiding in there, I realized.

"I did my best," Bill Davis once told Steve Paikin.

His best was better than most.

- Jim Foulds



Premier Bill Davis with his wife Kathleen

Acknowledgements

This Special Edition of The InFormer was created by two talented Interns, Cassandra Earle and David Cassels. Proofreading of all the excellent articles submitted by former Members was accomplished by John Parker, Linda Jeffrey and David Neumann. The editor is David Warner. Beautiful family photos were provided by the Davis family. The final scrutiny prior to printing was done, as always, by Mobina Bhimani. The high quality printing was carried out at the direction of Ashok Jain, Print City.

Anecdotes and photos were provided by:

Mayor Patrick Brown, Sam Cureatz, Alan Eagleson, Jim Foulds, John Gerretsen, Phil Gillies, Dr. Charles Godfrey, Cam Jackson, Linda Jeffrey, Frank Klees, Jean-Marc Lalonde, Stephen Lewis, Darcy McKeough, Hon. David Peterson, Gerry Philips, Hon. Bob Rae, Patrick Reid, George Taylor, Mayor John Tory, Mayor Jim Watson, Hon. Kathleen Wynne.

Steve Paikin, TV Ontario, warrants a special thank you for photos and background information.