

Bill 65 passed on May 10, 2000 during the 37th Session, founded the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians. It was the first Bill in Ontario history to be introduced by a Legislative Committee.

The *InFormer*

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF FORMER PARLIMENTARIANS



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Interview: Leona Dombrowsky

M. P. P. Liberal, Cabinet Minister Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington 1999-2007
Prince Edward-Hastings 2007-2011



“It is critical to have an understanding that everything we do has an impact, either positive or negative on the environment.”

Leona Dombrowsky’s interest in politics started with dinner table talk when she was young. While her parents were not involved in partisan politics, they were always interested in the issues of the day and hence Leona, growing up in the French Settlement north of Tweed, developed an interest in politics.

Fast forward a few years and Leona has graduated from university, married and has 4 children. A local Catholic school trustee, who was retiring, suggested that Leona should run for trustee, using the persuasive argument, “You can be directly involved in developing the programs which affect your children.” One cannot get a closer result than winning by one vote and that is exactly what happened in Leona’s first election. And so, an impressive political career began with a one vote victory!

Based on your experience as Minister of Environment, what do you think are the major environmental challenges we face?

“While we have come a long way in the past 30 to 40 years, we still need to come to terms with the fact that everything we do today impacts, not only our environment, but the environment of our children and grand-children. We need to be vigilant to ensure we do the right things to protect our environment for generations to come.”

You held three Ministerial portfolios, Environment, Agriculture and Rural Affairs and Education. What are some notable achievements during your tenures?

“As Minister of Environment, I introduced what was called the ‘Spills Bill’. In the Sarnia area, chemical spills in the St. Clair River caused water contamination that affected municipalities downstream who relied on the river as their source of drinking water. When there was a ‘spill’, municipalities had to shut down their water supplies. The new legislation meant there was a protocol in place aimed at preventing spills into the river, as well as provisions that required the company responsible for the spill to reimburse municipalities for their costs.

As Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, I was able to bring all the agriculture partners to the table to address serious food safety issues. The Animal Health Act was introduced to respond to animal health events in a timely manner and to control serious diseases and other significant hazards in the agriculture industry. Under this Act, reporting regulations were created to address emerging animal health hazards, like Avian Influenza.

Finally, as Minister of Education, I had the privilege of introducing the Full Day Learning Act which brought full day Kindergarten to Ontario schools. This was the most significant program to be introduced in Ontario schools in a generation. It was innovative in that it brought together a ‘teaching team’ of kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators, and it requires a ‘play-based’ approach to early learning.”

What do you miss about your life at Queen’s Park?

“It was so satisfying to be able to help constituents who needed assistance. People are always so grateful when you are there to help during a stressful time. I miss the people I got to know throughout my riding and also the staff and other MPPs at Queen’s Park.”

Editor’s Note:

Leona Dombrowsky is now a Justice of the Peace. Her husband is retired, so they have more time to enjoy their four children and four grandchildren.

Interview: Steve Mahoney

1978 – 1987 Mississauga City Councillor and Peel Region Councillor

1987 – 95 M.P.P. Mississauga West Liberal

1997 – 2004 M. P. Mississauga West Liberal (Cabinet Minister)



There is a fervour in his voice as Steve Mahoney talks about how he arrived at political involvement.

The political bug bit early on. Perhaps it was being the “driver” for his dad, who was National Director of the Steelworkers of America and a good friend of David Lewis (former Leader of the C.C.F., later N.D.P.). Or maybe playing the role of Tommy Douglas in a high school “mock election”. He won the election at Richview Collegiate - a role played so perfectly that it garnered complaints from a couple of parents that he was a Communist. Perhaps delivering election pamphlets for Andrew Brewin, a New Democrat M.P. aided the zest for politics.

Whatever it was, the effect was nearly four decades of being an elected representative.

You have been elected municipally, provincially and federally. How would you compare the experiences?

“I liken the three levels to professional hockey; going from Junior A, to serving your community. A Councillor gets the job done at home, an MPP deals with bigger Provincial issues, and being an MP and a Cabinet Minister provides you with an opportunity to see things from a much wider perspective. Issues are tackled by going to China or a country in Africa. Working across the most wonderful country in the world, and recognizing the importance of the Caucus process was always a vibrant experience.”

Would you describe a memorable moment during that time?

“At the time of the Mississauga train derailment in 1979, I was acting Mayor in the absence of (Mayor) Hazel McCallion. She returned promptly and took over. Margaret Marland, also a City Councillor who later became an M.P.P., worked with me as we made all necessary phone calls. There was a fear that the chlorine gas would seep into the water and sewage systems. What we didn’t know at the time was that the gas had exploded in the air, killing lots of birds. When people evacuated the city most of them thought they would be back in a day or two, so they left their pets behind. We worked with the Animal Control operations from Mississauga, Brampton and Etobicoke, and with the help of volunteers managed to feed the stranded pets.

At one stage I found a vantage point overlooking the city. What an eerie feeling to see no cars, no people. Nothing, just an empty city. Even my own family had moved out.

Running for the Leadership of the Ontario Liberal Party in 1992 was exciting. While I didn’t win, I met thousands of Ontarians across the Province and it was exhilarating to deliver a speech in front of 3,000 people at Copps Coliseum in Hamilton. And to share in the drama of a leadership convention was an amazing experience.”

Editor’s note:

As a result of the derailment, more than 200,000 people were evacuated in what was the largest peacetime evacuation in North America until the New Orleans evacuation in 2005. And no fatalities or serious injuries occurred.

What were a couple of the biggest challenges during your political life?

“I was appointed Secretary of State for Crown Corporations. My task was to get every Province and Territory to sign on to an agreement with Canada Mortgage and Housing regarding a program to provide more affordable housing. The agreement needed to be completed within 12 months. The last province to sign on was Ontario. They were quite reluctant, however Chris Hodgson and I were able to work together. We met the deadline and became good friends.”

Any advice for those young people who might consider a political life?

“It is helpful to have some life experience before being elected. Remember that when elected you represent everyone, not just those who voted for you. The old saying about all politics is local is absolutely true. It is important to be a team player. About 5 to 7% of the vote is personal, the rest is because of your Party and your Leader.”

What has life been like after politics?

“Busy, fulfilling, rewarding, along with a scary time when I had cancer. Months of radiation treatment cured the throat cancer, but an emotional time for me and my family. I had the privilege of being Chair of the W.S.I.B. for 6 years. This was the most political job I ever had. I was appointed, not elected. I then took on being President & CEO of the Radiation Safety Institute of Canada. Working on health and safety issues became a passion. You quickly realize that there aren't accidents in the strict sense of the word. The injuries and deaths have a cause, they are preventable. I continue today to run Mahoney International Consulting.”

Why were health and safety issues such a passion?

“While serving as Chair of WSIB a story was pointed out to me. In 1937 a man named William Wallace Currie was diving into the locks at Sault Ste Marie to plant dynamite to deepen the locks. His son was running the equipment on the surface and said to him, “Dad there is a storm coming. It may not be safe for you down there”

His reply was “If I go down there I am going to get wet, and if I stay up here I am going to get wet. But down there I get paid. Down he went. Lightning struck the equipment, travelled down to him where he was imploded in his diving suit. He died on the way to hospital. He left his wife Josephine and his youngest daughter Annie on survivor benefits. I didn't know this story before becoming Chair of WSIB. William Wallace was my Grandfather. Josephine was my Grandma Jose and Annie was my Mother who just passed away at 93 two years ago. This only served to fuel my passion for prevention of injuries, fatalities and disease in the workplace.”

Editor's note:

The political bug which bit Steve also bit his wife, Katie, who has recently retired from Mississauga City Council after 23 years as a Councillor. The Ward she represented is now in the hands of Steve and Katie's son Matthew. There has been a “Mahoney” in Ward 8 in Mississauga since 1978, and still counting.

In loving memory of Gerry Martiniuk

(August 5, 1937 – May 2, 2017)

Served in the 36th, 37th, 38th and 39th Parliament (June 08, 1995 -- September 07, 2011)



As the Progressive Conservative Member for the Riding of Cambridge, Gerry served as Parliamentary Assistant to the Attorney General, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister Responsible for Native Affairs. As well, he was on 4 Standing Committees (Finance and Economic Affairs, Administration of Justice, Regulations and Private Bills, Government Agencies).

“I have known Gerry since we were both members of the Preston - Hespeler Rotary Club. He was always a community minded person.

Gerry came to Preston (now Cambridge) to practise law. It wasn't too long before he was involved in his many community and charitable activities.

He got his political wings serving as an alderman on the Preston Town council. It was there that he was appointed to the Waterloo Regional Police Commission where he served a time as Chairman. He also chaired the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce.

While serving my time as MPP, Gerry was an active member on the executive of the Cambridge P.C. Riding Association. Gerry will certainly be missed by his family and his many friends and associates.” - Bill Barlow

“In 1995, the people of Cambridge elected him to the Ontario Legislature as a proud member of the Common Sense Revolution led by Mike Harris. Unlike many others in public life who come and go with the general tide, Gerry survived the reversal of province-wide voting patterns and was

re-elected three more times, serving a total of eight years on the government benches and another eight in opposition – a total of four provincial election victories altogether - before retiring by his own choice in 2011.

Gerry was a passionate representative of the town he represented. The degree to which Bill Davis built a career out of his passion for his town of Brampton could not hold a candle to Gerry’s commitment to the interests of his town of Cambridge. Which, apart from his obvious intellect, hard work, and gentle sense of humour, probably goes a long way towards explaining why the voters of Cambridge kept electing him to public office in election after election, regardless of which party was in general favour with the public at the time.

He was proud of his deep Ukrainian roots. It is a result of Gerry’s initiative that September 7 is Ukrainian Heritage Day in Ontario, marking the anniversary of the arrival of the first Ukrainian immigrants to Canada in 1891.

“When I reflect on my own time at Queen’s Park the memories that mean the most to me are of the fine people I had the privilege to serve with while I was there, and the profound respect I had for their intelligence, their work ethic, and their commitment to principle. Gerry stands tall in my memory in all three categories. He was the kind of politician who gives politicians a good name.” - John Parker

Annual General Meeting Recap

June 6, 2017

This year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) was an upbeat event from start to finish. The business meeting featured the election of some new board members: Judy Marsales, Rosario Marchese and Barbara Sullivan. Additionally, Mike Farnan volunteered to serve on a committee of the board. It was so rewarding to find members coming forward to help serve our organization.

More good news! Our Chair, Steve Gilchrist, announced that the Board of Internal Economy (BOIE) approved our budget request of an additional \$12,000.

The BOIE appears impressed by our campus program and is providing more money so we have the resources to continue expanding this important educational initiative.

A scrumptious gourmet lunch was followed by a unique event. We got to ask questions of someone who usually asks us questions. Robert Benzie, Queen's Park Bureau Chief for the Toronto Star, was our guest speaker.

He provided fascinating, objective observations of the current political climate in our province, with lots of time for questions. A lively, engaging discussion ensued.

This was another successful annual general meeting!

Hugh O’Neil Friendship Garden

“Come my friends and rest awhile”

A sizable group of family, friends, former and current politicians gathered on Saturday, May 13 for the unveiling of the Hugh O’Neil Friendship Garden.

The garden sits behind the Trenton Town Hall, nestled between the Trent Port Marina and the Roy Bonisteel memorial.

The main feature of the garden is a monument with a picture of Hugh and the inscription ‘Hugh O’Neil Garden, come my friends and rest awhile.’

The memorial also showcases a compass symbolizing leadership and direction. Five marble pillars surround the garden recognizing Hugh’s many roles and telling the story of his life as a family man, educator, entrepreneur, statesman, and community volunteer.



Hugh O’Neil served as the M.P.P. for Quinte for 20 years. After his passing in September of 2015, a group of friends and family wanted to find a way to pay a lasting tribute to someone whom the local press dubbed “Mr. Quinte”.

A committee was formed and the concept of a Friendship Garden was suggested by a committee member because, as he said, “Hugh was a friend to everyone.” The committee then set about to raise the needed funds. \$80,000 was needed. A tall order perhaps, but given that Hugh had been an integral part of the Trenton community, raising funds for various groups, involved in the arts, military museum, assisting in the creation of the Afghanistan Memorial, the order was filled.



It was clear that Hugh’s wife, Donna, was pleased and proud with the unveiling of the Friendship Garden. She expressed deep gratitude to the local Councillor, Duncan Armstrong for seeing the project through from start to finish.

Among those attending were Jeff Leal, M.P.P., Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, former MPPs Jim Taylor, and George Smitherman (with his children).

It was a meaningful occasion and a fitting tribute to a man who was all about friendship.

Interview: Bill Murdoch

M.P.P. 1990 – 2011 Progressive Conservative Grey, Grey-Bruce



Bill Murdoch was elected for more than 33 years, 12 municipally and 21 at Queen's Park. It was a career which prominently featured honest opinions, freely given. Straight talk.

You had a political career of more than 33 years; 12 year at the municipal level and 21 years at Queen's Park. Why were you so successful?

"I tried to listen to people and do what I could to meet what they wanted. I spent lots of time in the Riding. Most people appreciate the personal touch."

What was your motivation to enter politics?

"I went to a one room school, up to grade 8. I then went to high school, in the Tech program. I was interested in being on the Students' Council so I could represent the interests of the students. I ended up being the first Student President elected from the Tech Program. The next step came about because my uncle talked me into it. He persuaded me to run municipally."

After serving for more than a decade as a municipal councillor, one year of which was as Warden of Grey County, Bill thought it was time to represent the good people of Grey-Bruce at Queen's Park. As a Liberal or as a Conservative?

"I didn't have a membership in any Party. I went to the local Liberal meeting. They were all a bunch of old guys, with the exception of Robert McKessock. I then went to the Conservative meeting, where I found mostly young guys."

Who were your role models?

"David McNicoll was on County Council. He was the person most influential in getting the Blue Mountain Resort developed. I admired how he got things done."

You served as an Independent MPP for six months. Tell us about that.

"It wasn't just one incident which led to me sitting for a while as an Independent. Partly it was the issue of John Tory's policy which he brought out during the 2007 election campaign, public funding of religious schools. I made it clear publicly that my constituents were against this and if we became the government and this was brought forward I would vote against it. The Leader wasn't too happy with me speaking out. But, it was what happened next that resulted in me sitting as an Independent.

In 2008 there was a Toronto Transit strike. The 3 Parties agreed to pass back to work legislation. The House held a special Sunday sitting to pass the legislation. However, I wasn't notified about the special sitting. I think John Tory knew that I would oppose back to work legislation and unanimous consent was needed to pass the Bill in one sitting. Later, at a caucus retreat I asked for an explanation as to why I wasn't informed. The Leader avoided answering my question, so I left the meeting. I was informed afterwards that I had been kicked out of the caucus."

Bill Murdoch sat as an Independent for about 6 months, during which time the Parties learned that they could not take his agreement on matters requiring unanimous consent for granted. Bill needed to be informed prior to making a decision about Yea or Nay.

What were some highlights from your time at Queen's Park?

"There was a time when the New Democrats did not have the number of seats required to have official Party status in the House. I worked out an arrangement with Peter Kormos (N.D.P. House Leader) whereby I would sit as a member of their Caucus for the purpose of official Party status. Before that could happen the rules were changed and the NDP kept their status.

Another memorable time was the Walkerton tragedy. Walkerton is in my Riding. The Liberals brought forward a motion to establish a Judicial inquiry. I informed the Premier (Harris), who was against having a Judicial inquiry, that I would be supporting the Liberal motion. The Premier ended up changing his mind and announcing there would be a Judicial inquiry. I met lots of nice people at Queen's Park. The biggest drawback was being away from my family so much."

Editor's Note:

The Walkerton tragedy was an outbreak of e. Coli contaminating the water resulting in 7 deaths and thousands sickened, in May 2000.

Do you have any advice for anyone considering a political life?

"Run locally first, but not on only one issue. As you go from local to provincial it gets more intense, so be prepared for that. Listen to everyone."

Maverick or an honest, fearless individual who is dedicated to representing his constituents regardless of the consequences - you be the judge.

Interview: Phil Gillies

M.P.P. 1981 – 1987

Progressive Conservative, Brantford



By the age of 7 Phil Gillies had immigrated to Canada from England, twice. The first time, at age 3 in 1957 when the family settled in Galt, Ontario. Within a short time Phil's parents separated, with Phil and his mom returning to England. A couple of years later Phil's parents reconciled their differences, Phil and his mom returned to Canada, this time the family settling in Brantford, Ontario.

When did you get involved in politics? Why?

“Whenever an election was called my mother would drop into the local Conservative headquarters to help out. I guess it was that role model which accounts for what happened during the 1967 Provincial election. I was 13, in grade 8 and our teacher, Miss Ingles conducted a mock election in the class. I was the PC candidate. I thought I could outdo the others by visiting the local PC election office and asking for buttons, literature and signs. The woman in charge said I could have what I asked for, but I needed to work for a couple of hours in exchange for the buttons etc. Great lesson! I helped out in their office, which just enthused me

more about campaigning, and I won the class election.”

The class election victory and helping at the local PC election headquarters obviously had quite an effect on Phil. When the 1971 Progressive Conservative leadership convention came along Phil attended, having been elected as a Young P. C. delegate. He supported Allan Lawrence and although Lawrence lost that race to Bill Davis, a few years later Phil was recruited by Davis’ team to be the PC candidate in Brantford for the 1977 election. Phil didn’t win that election, but he was hired shortly after to work as a researcher in Premier Davis’ office. He was elected as MPP for Brantford in the 1981 election at the age of 26.

No doubt it was a difficult decision after leaving the Legislature to declare your sexual preference. What was there about the political climate which made that decision difficult?

“Frankly, it would have been much more difficult to come out when I was in the House. To put this in context, it was a career-ender for almost anyone, particularly a politician, until the late ‘80s or early ‘90s to declare your sexual orientation.

Svend Robinson (New Democrat M.P.) was the first elected politician in Canada to declare he was gay and that was in 1988. What spurred me to action was when Premier Peterson brought in changes to the Human Rights Code in the fall of 1986. Evelyn Gigantes (New Democrat MPP) moved an amendment to include sexual orientation in the Bill. I recall meeting in the Leader’s office to discuss the PC position.

Well, discussion isn’t the right word to describe the acerbic atmosphere. Larry Grossman (Leader) was supportive but was concerned that if his former leadership rival, Dennis Timbrell was opposed there would be a split in the Party. In talking to Dennis I learned that he was supportive.

In the end, out of a caucus of 51 only 4 of us supported the amendment, Larry, Dennis, myself and Susan Fish. There were splits in all 3 Parties, with some Members not voting, however the amendment passed. There was, during the time the Bill was before the House a very memorable occasion. I joined Bob Rae and Joan Smith to speak to a rally at the St. Lawrence Market North. There were 4,000 gay rights supporters - the largest crowd I had ever addressed. What an event!

When I compare the angst of that 1986 debate with the fact that a change to the Code was made in 2013 to include transgender people which passed the House unanimously. We have come a long way as a society.”

You made an attempt to return to the Legislature after 27 years. Why?

“I have always had a sense of loyalty to the Party and have stayed involved. I was asked

to manage the campaign in Brant in 2011. We didn't win so when the next election came around in 2014 I was asked to be a candidate. While I didn't win we ran a great campaign, and it was wonderful to reconnect with all my friends and supporters in the Brantford area. I deeply appreciated Bill Davis offering to help and coming to speak at a rally on my behalf. He drew a large crowd and people were delighted to see him. Had I won I would have set a Canadian record for the longest 'sabbatical' between election wins for any politician, federal or provincial."

What pathways have you been following since leaving Queen's Park?

"I have always been involved in public relations and government relations. From 1987 to 90 I was with Hill & Knowlton. Recently I joined Enterprise Public Affairs, a company founded by Frank Miller, Sally Barnes and Hugh Mckenzie. In 2014 I ran the policy department for John Tory's Mayoralty campaign. Shortly after becoming Mayor, John asked me to serve as Secretary of his Task Force on Toronto Community Housing. I really enjoyed working with the Task Force Chair, Senator Art Eggleton, and the other talented people who made up the panel."

Would you share some of your fond memories from your time at Queen's Park?

"I particularly liked committee work, which is where I think most of the good collaborative work gets done in the Legislature. I think I really valued my work on the Select Committee on Pension Reform.

The Social Development Committee report on domestic violence was a landmark. Prior to the changes we recommended Police would not lay charges in family violence cases, the abused person had to do so. And most of the services for abused family members, the inter-val house system and other services, arose out of our report. But on the lighter side, we had some fun too. I recall an evening sitting when Patrick Reid (Liberal MPP) was filibustering a budget item. Andy Brant and I schemed to fill a water glass with vodka and have a Page deliver it to Patrick. Needing to 'wet his whistle' during his long speech, Patrick took a good swig of the liquid. He turned a range of colours, paused and then said 'I am not quite sure, but I think that for the first time in my life a Tory has bought me a drink!'"

Phil Gillies career, indeed his life is distinguished by his determination, commitment and the courage to stalwartly face adversity.

Interview: Sharon Murdock

M.P.P. 1990 – 1995
New Democrat, Sudbury



Sharon Murdock did not have a career path. Starting in 1979 she left a trail from a one room school in the bush to being Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Labour and onward to being a leader for Sudbury's United Way, with several stops along the way. Sharon's adventurous spirit and innate sense of social justice meant she would explore the worlds of teaching, arbitration, conflict resolution, law, business, and community development.

After high school Sharon worked in a number of jobs; from customer service rep at Bell to a skip tracer for an insurance company. "However, one September a school board official called saying that he had 3 classes without a teacher and would I help out." Since she had been hired without a teachers' college certificate, Sharon left Sudbury the next year to attend Teachers' College in Ottawa. After graduation, she returned to teaching. "After 8 years teaching in city systems, I left Sudbury and sold insurance in Toronto. Returning home one weekend I found an ad for a teacher with the Ministry of Education, Northern Corps. Off I went, to a remote location to teach 13 aboriginal students in a one room school. I loved it!" That summer she was asked to conduct workshops for teachers on how to teach in a multi-graded classroom. She continued to teach with isolated boards until she decided to attend University.

What really interested her, however was public relations, so a degree in Commerce seemed like a good idea. While in the Commerce program she developed a real interest in arbitration and mediation. "What I discovered was that successful arbitrators in Canada had a background in labour law

and conflict resolution..and weren't women.. I needed a law degree.”

Employment in Sharon's chosen field of arbitration/mediation was scarce, so, after Law school at the University of Windsor she articulated in the local Crown Attorney's office in criminal law. She was called to the Bar in 1986 and, once again, returned to Sudbury.

That same year, Elie Martel, M.P.P. for Sudbury East, asked Sharon if she would work for him as a Constituency Assistant. When Elie retired in 1987 and his daughter Shelley was elected in his place, Sharon stayed on as Constituency Assistant.

While Shelley Martel was campaigning in Sudbury East, Sharon Murdock was a candidate in Sudbury. Sharon lost the '87 election, but was determined not to give up. “I had been an organizer for Bud Wildman (MPP, Algoma) in 1975 and had the example of Elie and Shelley to follow. I thought I had the background and commitment to be a good M.P.P. for Sudbury.”

Sharon lost the 1995 election. “While I was disappointed at losing the election, I had family commitments. So, I stayed to look after my ailing Dad and started looking for work. It was a sad discovery that my political affiliation affected my chances of employment. Since I had not gone to law school to actually practise law, I really didn't want to go totally into that field. I ended up as a consultant for the Sudbury Training and Adjustment Board (LTAB), eventually becoming the Executive Director.”

When asked about fond memories from her days at the “Pink Palace”, Sharon had a mixed response. “I met some great people who have remained as friends over all these years. In my four and a half years, I went to one ball game and one ballet. There simply was no social life. I did realize early in the term that I would have enjoyed being a bureaucrat. However, I am proud of carrying the responsibility of 12 pieces of legislation, especially the Labour Relations Act and amendments to the proxy provisions in Pay Equity. It was a proud moment when my Bill was passed making the Loon the official bird of Ontario. The process had been started by David Peterson, but not finished. Matthew Conroy, the student who had won the contest to name a bird was sitting in the gallery the night the Bill went through.”

Volunteer work in Sudbury has kept Sharon busy over the years; she volunteered as President of the Canadian Mental Health Association – Sudbury/Manitoulin as well as St. Leonard's Half-way House. As part of the Leadership Development Team, she has worked with not-for-profit boards and Youth Leaders through United Way since 2003. Community capacity building is extremely important to her.

Sharon Murdock has indeed gone where there was no path. The trail she left is one of which she can be proud.

Interview: Rolando P. Vera Rodas

Consul General of Ecuador



Those in the running world know him as Vera, an accomplished marathon runner who competed in three successive Olympics (1988 – Seoul, 1992 – Barcelona, 1996 – Atlanta). Vera has won road races on 4 continents. In 1990 he placed 3rd in the famous Boston Marathon, with a personal best time of 2:10:46. Five years later Vera accomplished an interesting feat of winning two marathons in one year; the Los Angeles Marathon and Chuncheon International Marathon (South Korea).

Mr. Rolando Vera Rodas has been part of the Ecuador’s diplomatic corps for 4 years, serving for a while in Ecuador’s Ottawa Consular Office before being promoted to Consul General.

Although stationed in Toronto, Rolando Vera is responsible for consular affairs in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Nunavut.

“In the past 10 years Ecuador has made a change in its diplomacy. Today the Ecuadorian diplomacy is closer and more integrated to the immigrant community, which has allowed us to know the first source of its problems, needs, initiatives, and challenges. With this format we provide an important support to all our community.

It is possible to provide the needed tools and instruments to our immigrant community in order to keep their situation and life style in the most favorable way in the country that has received us, like Canada, without losing our close roots with the country in which we were born, Ecuador.”

I was surprised to learn there are Ecuadorians living in Canada's far north. I was further surprised to learn there are Canadians living in Ecuador.

The Consul General offered a brief geographic description of his country.

“There are five regions; the coast, the mountains, the rainforest, the Galapagos and outside the country.”

Perhaps it is not surprising that the warm climate, beaches, the Galapagos Islands, and the Amazon jungle have played a part in attracting more than 3,000 Canadians retirees.

What are the special challenges for Ecuadorians living in Canada?

“The challenge is for families, especially the new generation, to keep their language (Spanish) because it is through language that they will keep their culture and understand their history.”

What are the connections between Ecuador and Canada?

“Toronto and Quito have a twin city Friendship Agreement. There are more than 15,000 Ecuadorians living in the GTA. And, of course our two countries have had a good relationship for a long time.”

There is a two-way trade relationship, mostly in agricultural products. In 2014 that trade equalled \$565. million. Additionally, Canadian mining companies have investments in Ecuador and the Canadian government was the primary contractor responsible for building the new \$ 650 million Quito International Airport completed in February 2013.

What is it like for your family to be living so far away from their home country?

“My wife and I have two children, ages 7 and 9. They are having a wonderful experience here. They seem to enjoy the Canadian winter.”

Olympian turned diplomat. My impression is that those qualities which create an elite athlete, that of determination, discipline, goal-setting are a good base for a diplomat. Add to that an engaging, warm personality and your country is represented exceedingly well.

Mr. Rolando Vera Rodas, Consul General of Ecuador, in living out his dream of representing his country is, in turn, serving with honour and distinction.

Ceremonial Flag Raising Area



Last year the Courtesy Flag Pole area of the south grounds was refurbished to provide a better venue for flag raising events.

Along with new landscaping Smiling faces, handshakes, warm greetings. While the business section of our meeting is important, the truly enjoyable part is seeing former colleagues, many of whom we haven't seen for at least a year.

Last year the Courtesy Flag Pole area of the south grounds was refurbished to provide a better venue for flag raising events.

Along with new landscaping and the addition of a sound system, a multimedia interactive touch screen monitor was also introduced to the space. Visitors may use the touch screen to access a menu with a variety of information about the Legislative Building and grounds.

In addition, during flag raising ceremonies, the monitor display changes and provides a fixed display of the flag being raised and information about the country or event related to the flag. Information on the monitor is provided in English and French.

Margaret Campbell

A Caring, Compassionate Social Visionary



Margaret Campbell was the first Liberal woman to be elected to the Ontario Legislature, doing so in a 1973 by-election (St. George, Toronto Riding). She was then re-elected in 1975 and '77, losing in 1981 to the Progressive Conservative candidate, Susan Fish. During those 8 years at Queen's Park Margaret Campbell was the only woman in the Liberal Caucus.

This strong advocate for women's rights, and gay rights had served on Toronto City Council for 11 years, part of the time as only the 2nd woman to win a seat on the 4 member Board of Control. She would have been Toronto's first woman Mayor had she won the 1969 municipal election, but lost by 13,000 votes to the incumbent, William Dennison.

Margaret took a break from the political life, returning to the law and in 1971 was appointed as a Family Court Judge.

At Queen's Park, from 1973 to 1981 Margaret served as both a member and chair of several stand-

ing committees. She led the crusade for women's rights, as well as the fight for better health care and improvements to the justice system.

A glimpse at her background reveals that she was raised in Rosedale and attend Bishop Strachan School, University College and then Osgoode Hall Law School and was called to the bar in 1937. She married filmmaker and aviator Sterling Campbell in 1942. During the Second World War she worked in counter-intelligence for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

In 1984 The Margaret Campbell Fund was established to help raise funds in support of female Liberal candidates. One of the beneficiaries of that fund was Lyn McLeod, who later became the first woman Leader of the Liberal Party. When Margaret passed away in 1999, Lyn McLeod described her as as being both a “formidable” member of the legislature and a “caring, compassionate person” who was a “social visionary.”

Editor's Note:

Margaret Campbell was the first Liberal woman elected to Queen's Park. Her story deserved to be part of “Woman and the Vote 1917 – 2017”. She was overlooked. I apologize. What makes this omission more personally hurtful is the fact that I had the privilege of being a colleague with Margaret in the House. Margaret Campbell was a remarkable parliamentarian and, as well kind and thoughtful. Just ask my children (as they were then) when they were invited to watch the Santa Claus Parade from the best seat in the house, Margaret's office overlooking the parade route.

The following article about Margaret Campbell will be added to the electronic version of *Women and the Vote*.

Tributes In The House

The tributes in the House to our former colleagues who have passed away have a meaningful impact on the families and friends who are seated in the Speakers' Gallery. Below is a letter which we received recently from Mike Bolan's daughter.

Dear Mr. Warner,

Please accept my most sincere thanks for your part in the wonderful tribute in the Legislature for my dad Mike. It was an incredible day for my family and me, to have my dad fully honoured and celebrated by peers and colleagues for his contribution to public life. It was especially meaningful to have you, as former Speaker during his tenure, join us that day. Thank you also on behalf of my siblings and my children, who felt very moved by the tributes and easily recognized in the anecdotes the person they laughed with, admired, and loved dearly.

Please accept my best wishes for your continued work with the Former Parliamentarians and know how meaningful your work, and your presence, has been to my dad's memory and his family.

Sincerely and with gratitude,

Cathy Bolan

We realize that not everyone is able to attend these tributes when they occur. The tributes are held on Tuesdays or Wednesdays, at 10:30 a.m. Prior to the House sitting, the family and friends attending are invited to have coffee and cookies in room 195, usually gathering around 10:00 a.m. To date a member of the Board of O.A.F.P. has been there to welcome the visitors.

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