



Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians

# OAFP

Association ontarienne des Ex-Parlementaires



## **The InFormer**

Vol 5, Dec 2024

### **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE OAFP Distinguished Service Award - Oct 17, 2024 Queen's Park**



Group photo of OAFP members and guests attending the DSA award ceremony for Sean Conway, taken on the Grand Staircase [Callum Denault/OAFP].

## Message from Co-Chairs of the OAFP The Informer

Welcome to the final edition of our newsletter for 2024. We end on a very happy note, offering you the captioned video of the Distinguished Service Award presented to Sean Conway at an October 17 luncheon. Many members of Sean's family, staff and former colleagues attended to recognize Sean's amazing political and post political legacy.

Please click on [this link](https://youtu.be/3GiAnymxCB0?si=7ScK5-dDRuM8imlv) to watch the recording of Sean Conway's DSA: <https://youtu.be/3GiAnymxCB0?si=7ScK5-dDRuM8imlv>

As you can observe in the banner of this newsletter, the Board has decided to reintroduce the familiar name of our communication...The InFormer. As history of our Association tells us, one of our founders, Derwyn Shea, named it. David Warner took it to another level. Thank you David. We will endeavour to continue in that spirit.

The most important objectives of The Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians is to connect with former MPPs and serve your interests. In October we came together to honour Sean Conway with the Distinguished Service Award. Having served with Sean for over 8 years, a more deserving parliamentarian could not have been chosen. The award is much deserved not only for his contributions as an MPP, but for his knowledge of parliamentary history and his amazing oratory skills.

I—Caroline—observed first hand that when Sean spoke in the Legislature, his speeches were thought provoking and inspiring. We would make sure to go and listen because his eloquence was unmatched. Unfortunately today this thoughtful discourse is sadly missing within the political environment. Thank you Sean for the conversations we had and your advice when I was new to the world of politics. It was such a privilege and honour to have served with you.

Be sure to read the section on 'Information from the Board'. David Warner has prepared an outline of your Board's achievements in getting some changes made to how insurance is paid upon death of former MPPs.

We would appreciate hearing your comments, concerns and most of all suggestions. This is your association and the Board welcomes your thoughts.

We would like to wish all of you and your loved ones a happy, safe and healthy holiday season.

Co-Chairs The InFormer  
*Caroline Di Cocco*  
*Joyce Savoline*

## **Message from The Board**

### **Righting a wrong**

by David Warner

Tragically, three and one-half months before his 55th birthday, David Caplan, a former Member of Provincial Parliament, died. The death of this beloved husband and father was a severe shock to his wife and family. Another shock was experienced when the family were informed that the \$10,000 life insurance policy issued to every MPP and former Members would not be honoured. Inexplicably, there was a clause stipulating a minimum age of 55 for the policy to be valid.

As Chair of the OAFP, I approached the Legislature's Board of Internal Economy asking if they would intervene with the insurance company. The BOIE was cooperative and tried to get the decision reversed. No luck. I then suggested a plan B. The Legislature could issue a cheque to OAFP for \$10,000.

We in turn would write a cheque to the estate of David Caplan for \$10,000. This sounded like a reasonable and viable option. Sorry! Legal advice was that such a move was not legal.

It was deeply disappointing to not be able to assist a grieving family. Having a minimum age on an insurance policy made no sense. We couldn't help Leigh Caplan, David's widow. What we could do was lobby for a change in the insurance policy so that this unhappy situation could never occur again.

The Board of Internal Economy, to their credit, went further than having the age restriction removed. The life insurance benefit was raised from \$10,000 to \$50,000.

I came away from the experience once more solidly assured of the importance of the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians.

—David Warner, November 16, 2024

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DSA FOR SEAN CONWAY**

Judy Marsales (OAFP Chair) opened the meeting and delivered the land acknowledgement.

Joyce Savoline (OAFP Awards Chair) then took the floor and expressed pleasure at the turnout of this event to celebrate Sean. She explained that the purpose of the OAFP's Distinguished Service Award (DSA) is to recognize distinguished service by former Members. She noted the exceptional career, contribution, and legacy of Sean Conway.

Former recipients of this award have included the Hon. Bill Davis, Dr. Bette Stephenson, Margaret Birch, Lyn McLeod, Bob Nixon, Stephen Lewis, Roy McMurtry, the Hon. Bob Rae, and David Warner.

Joyce then introduced the three guest speakers:

### **GUEST SPEAKERS**

**Phil Gillies** (Progressive Conservative MPP for Brantford 1981-1987 and Cabinet Minister in the Miller government)

Mr. Gillies began by saying his words were coming from the heart. He first became aware of Sean's oratory while working as a staffer in Premier Davis' office, and would go into The House to listen to him. This was before Mr. Gillies himself was elected. He said other members of the time also had outstanding oratory skills, such as Stephen Lewis, Darcy McKeough, and also David Peterson. Those great orators in the Legislature didn't read from a script but might have only relied upon notes. Sean was very eloquent and worth listening to.

Sean's questions were also something to see, when he surgically took on a Minister. When Mr. Gillies went into Cabinet he was concerned that Sean would ask him a question, but it fortunately never happened. Sean's face was an open book as to whether he was bored, or disapproved, or whether he thought something was funny.

After the Liberals formed government in 1985, Mr. Gillies noted that Sean was given “one of the hottest” Cabinet posts, as Minister of Education. He had to implement the extension of full funding (beyond Grade 10) to Catholic high schools. Sean shepherded this policy through with great aplomb, even when the bureaucracy underestimated the cost.

In closing Mr. Gillies noted that Sean was a great parliamentarian with fine oratorical, analytical and administrative skills.

During his years at Queen’s Park Mr. Gillies noted that he didn’t encounter many Members with Sean’s skills. It was evident to him that Sean left a mark. In closing he congratulated Sean on this most deserved award.

**Dave Cooke** (New Democrat MPP for Windsor-Riverside 1977-1997, Senior Minister and House Leader during the Rae government)

Mr. Cooke began by thanking the organizers for asking him to speak. He remarked that next year will be the 50th anniversary of Sean’s first election.

Mr. Cooke stated that there was a time when Legislative Committees played a more important role, especially in the review of Ministerial estimates. Committees at this time also got more extensive coverage by reporters and the mainstream media.

He remembers Sean as a tough and informed questioner in these proceedings, and he feels lucky to have been elected at this time.

He also reminisced about the contributions and personalities of other former MPPs such as Stephen Lewis, Bette Stephenson - who he remembered as "The Queen of the hecklers", Jim Renwick with his legal background, Pat Lawlor, Dick Ruston with his rural knowledge, Darcy McKeough with his vigour, and Larry Grossman.

Mr. Cooke remembered the intensive Committee hearings and travel related to the separate school funding issue. He considers The 1985-1987 Accord period as a new age for Ontario where a lot was accomplished.

After 1990—when the NDP formed government—he remembers his role as House Leader when he introduced rule changes. Mr. Cooke also recalled Sean’s vigorous responses and memorable “one liners.”

Mr. Cooke also fondly remembered his role as a panelist on a TVO show with Sean and Janet Ecker.

In closing, Mr. Cooke stated that Sean was highly worthy of this award. He was pleased to call Sean his friend.

**Hon. David Peterson** (Liberal MPP for London Centre 1975-1990 and Premier of Ontario 1985-1990)

David Peterson began by sharing his favourite quip of Sean who called Bette Stephenson “Bismarck in a skirt.” He said this captured everything that we all thought, but only Sean was not afraid to say it.

Mr. Peterson then stated that he was pleased to be here and speak about his dear friend whom he owes a great deal. He also remarked that when both he and Sean were first elected in 1975, they knew very little.

He learned of Sean’s origins from the (Ottawa) Valley. When first elected in 1975 Sean “was a kid.” Mr. Peterson remarked jokingly that a lot of people from the Valley sometimes appear strange. He reminisced about travelling with Sean in the Valley, finding him to be a “backroads politician” with his love and knowledge of local people and history.

Mr. Peterson recalled that Sean is one of the finest orators in the history of this province. He also emphasized that Stephen Lewis and Stuart Smith were fine orators, and after today he wanted to include Phil Gillies.

He also remarked that Sean was like Winston Churchill in that, contrary to perceptions, he worked very hard behind the scenes on his spontaneous speeches. Mr. Peterson also noted that Sean was “a bit of a ham.”

Leading up to the pivotal 1985 election, he noted that Sean was always there, always loyal, always positive, and always honest. He remarked that his wife Shelley loves Sean and that he was kind to her on all occasions.

Sean was always there to help carry his burdens. Sean played a key role in the negotiations leading to the Liberals forming government in 1985, along with Ian Scott and Bob Nixon.

Mr. Peterson also recognized Sean's great leadership in his handling of the complex and contentious legislation which extended funding to separate schools. He noted that this legislation involved contentious issues associated with history, teachers, constitutional matters, and multiple court challenges.

He said that Sean has great anecdotal knowledge and remarked that he should write "the definitive book."

In closing, Mr. Peterson expressed his thanks for being invited to show his respect and affection for Sean. He trusted Sean in his demanding role as First Minister and for this he is eternally grateful. Mr. Peterson concluded in saying, "We should also be grateful for interfacing with one of the great parliamentarians such as Sean."

### **Presentation of Distinguished Service Award**

Judy Marsales (OAFP Chair) presented Sean with the OAFP loon sculpture award. She also thanked everyone for coming out and expressed congratulations to Sean.

### **Response by Sean Conway**

Sean began his remarks by thanking Joyce Savoline and the OAFP for organizing this luncheon. He also thanked his family, friends, former staffers, and colleagues for their presence. Sean also specifically thanked the three guest speakers.

Shortly after the pivotal 1985 election, David Peterson told Sean that he wanted him to go see Dr. Ed Stewart, Premier Davis' longstanding Deputy,\* and that he has something for you.

\*Mr. Stewart served as Deputy Minister to the Premier and Cabinet Secretary from January 1976-July 1985. He unfortunately passed away on Sept 25, 2004.





At this meeting Dr. Stewart indicated that he was going to start taking ministerial briefings and he was directed to sign a ministerial oath of confidentiality. Sean indicated that following his previous time in opposition he didn't realize how government actually works, particularly the executive branch of government, and how complicated it was.

The commitment had been made to begin implementation of full separate school funding on September 1, 1985. Mr. Conway remarked that we were three months away from this deadline, there was no legislation, and we were entering a time of a potentially unstable minority government. The cost estimates were also an issue.

He also knew from his studies of pre-Confederation Canadian history at Queen's University how sensitive and complex the denominational school issue was.





At the time, newly elected MPP Ian Scott was also very knowledgeable on this issue. His great grandfather was responsible for the Scott Act of 1863 which established the historical framework for denominational schools.

Separate school funding was a priority for the new Liberal government. They took office on June 26, 1985, and the enabling legislation was introduced on July 2 of that same year.

As a result of this experience, Mr. Sean Conway noted that he was effectively a Minister but did not belong to any government. Happily he noted this issue got resolved.

Sean reminisced about the electoral results in Ontario since 1975. He particularly noted the tendency to call early elections when in government, and that the results may not always correspond to what the government of the day expects.

He also commented that in the 1985 election, the Ontario Liberals came to power with a set of relevant policies and the support of the NDP as set out in The Accord agreement.

He offered anecdotes about former Members including Stephen Lewis, Stuart Smith, Jan Duszta, Charles “Bud” Godfrey, Jim Renwick, Donald MacDonald and unique Members at the time such as Eddie Sargent and Elmer Sopha. He noted that in Parliament you meet a wide variety of people.

With respect to women, Sean stated that they are still underrepresented. He fondly recalled female former Members such as Bette Stephenson, Margaret Campbell, Marion Bryden, and Evelyn Gigantes.

Sean spoke about the four roles of Parliament: to make a government; to make it work; to make it behave; and to make an alternate government. He also emphasized the important role of individual Members.

He emphasized the importance of the energy policy file for Ontario, and advocated that there should be a permanent Standing Committee on Energy at Queen’s Park. Sean also emphasized the importance of Legislative Committees, such as his experience with health and constitutional affairs which served as valuable learning experiences.

He expressed concern about the recent state of democracy in the United Kingdom and the United States. He stated that democracy does not survive on its own.

He concluded by thanking the OAFP.

## **ATTENDEES AT THE LUNCHEON**

A broad selection of former Members and other guests totalling some 58 persons were in attendance at this luncheon. This shows the respect—across party lines—for Sean and his substantial contribution to parliamentary affairs at Queen’s Park. Many of those in attendance, including Mr. Conway, travelled substantial distances into Toronto to attend.

Mr. Conway—born and raised in Barry’s Bay—served as the MPP for the Ottawa Valley riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke from 1975 to 2003. When first elected he was 24 years old and a “green” graduate student

enrolled at Queen's University in Kingston. Sean later served as Government House Leader, Minister of Education, Colleges and Universities, Mines, Government Services and Skills Development. He played a key role as Minister in the extension of full funding to separate Catholic high schools in Ontario.



After elected office, Sean has had a distinguished career in academia, education, legal affairs, and public policy. In 2019, he was awarded the Order of Ontario.

Invited guests included several members of Mr. Conway's family and former staffers. Among family were his sister Sheila Reesor, nieces Lauren and Carly Conway, and sister-in-law Mary Conway.

Former Members in attendance included:

Charles Beer, Jim Bradley, Marilyn Churley, Mike Colle, Dave Cooke, Steve Gilchrist, Phil Gillies, Chris Hodgson, Cam Jackson, Ron Kanter, Frances Lankin, Floyd Laughren, Jeff Leal, Wayne Lessard, Rosario Marchese, Judy Marsales, Deb Mathews, Doug Moffatt, Steve Offer, John Parker, the Hon. David Peterson, Gerry Phillips, Doug Reycraft, Lou Rinaldi, Joyce



Savoline, Monique Smith, George Smitherman, Gordon Walker, and John Wilkinson.

As an anecdote, Bree Wilkinson—the son of John Wilkinson—was in attendance and was a former student of Mr. Conway at university.

Several of the former Members above had to take time out of current professional positions and political offices that they hold - after Queen's Park - at the municipal/regional or federal levels of government.

Among existing Members, John Fraser MPP (Ottawa South) was present at the base of the Grand Staircase at the beginning of this event.

### **Media Coverage of Sean Conway's Award Ceremony**



From left to right: Former Premier David Peterson, former Liberal Education Minister Sean Conway, former PC MPP Phil Gillies (Brantford), and former NDP MPP Dave Cooke (Windsor-Riverside). [Steve Paikin/ TVO]

Seasoned TVO journalist Steve Paikin was also in attendance. [In the opening lines of an article](#) on this OAFP luncheon, Paikin remarks:

“Sean Conway has forgotten more about Ontario political history than the rest of us combined will ever know. He was also, nearly four decades ago, the architect of one of the most complicated and controversial policy implementations in the province’s history.... [i.e. public funding of Separate [Catholic] high schools].”

[An article in The Eganville Leader](#) noted that this award recognized Mr. Conway’s “legacy as one of Ontario’s most distinguished parliamentarians, a man whose contributions to public service, education and civic life have left a lasting impression on his local community and on our province.”

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The OAFP expresses its gratitude to the Speaker, the Hon. Ted Arnott, for kindly providing wine for this event.

Special appreciation is also due to Joyce Savoline, David Warner, and Callum Denault for their fine work in organizing this luncheon.

The OAFP also wants to express its heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the three guest speakers from each of three major political parties at this function as noted above, who took time out of their busy schedules and who also travelled into Queen’s Park, to pay tribute. They all reminisced in a positive way and shared political anecdotes that demonstrated their sincere respect for Sean across party lines.

This event most positively shows the value of the OAFP to Ontario’s political life and legacy.

## OMEGA TRIBUTES

It is with heavy hearts and fond memories that the OAFP honours those who have unfortunately passed away since our last entry of *The InFormer*.

We pay tribute to their decades of commitment to public service, on behalf of all Ontarians.

**Mike Farnan (January 29, 1941 - June 24, 2024; 83 years old)**



Mike Farnan—an Irish-born Ontario politician—represented Cambridge for the NDP from 1987-1995.

He was educated in Dublin, London (UK), and Montreal. He worked as a primary and secondary school teacher in London (UK) and Canada for 27 years.



During the Rae government, he served as Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services 1990-1991, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education, Minister without Portfolio with responsibility for Education and Training 1993-1994, and Minister of Transportation 1994-1995.

After retiring in 2002 he worked as a real estate broker in Cambridge. He also remained active in community affairs and local politics.

Prior to being elected to the Ontario Legislature he served as a local Councillor in Cambridge between 1982-1987.

On June 25, 2024 Cambridge City Council paid tribute to him and flags at City Hall were flown at half mast. Current Mayor Jan Liggett stated “a great human being died yesterday.” She also noted that he voted for a women’s right to choose despite being personally opposed to abortion. She thanked his family for sharing their husband, father and grandfather with the community.

**Sharon Margaret Murdock (June 29, 1946 – July 9, 2024; 78 years old)**

Sharon Murdock was a supporter of the NDP, culminating in her becoming the party’s Sudbury MPP during the 1990-1995 Rae government.

Even before joining politics, Sharon built her career around helping the community, working as an elementary school teacher between 1967 and 1979. During her last four years of teaching, Sharon also became a principal within the Ministry of Education’s Northern Corps, where she worked in isolated communities.



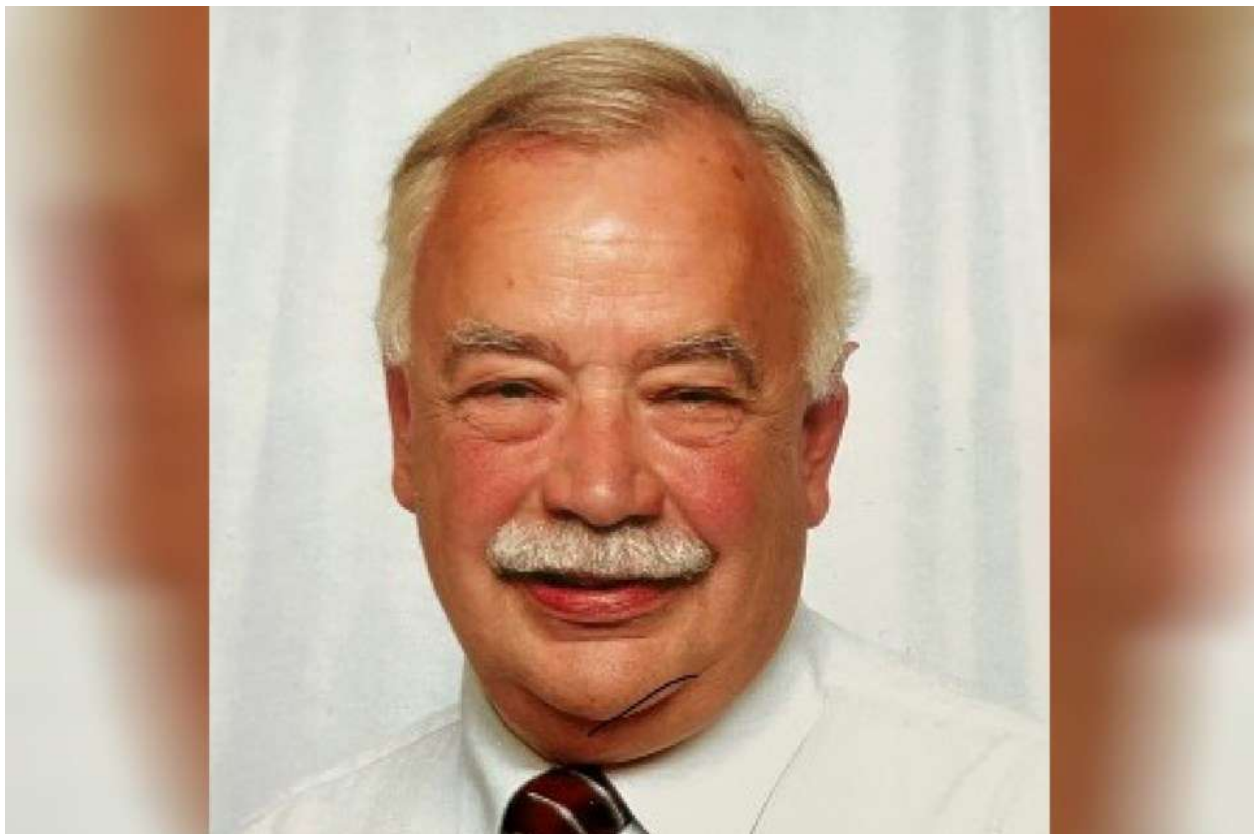
She earned her law degree in 1984, having studied at both the University of Windsor and Laurentian University. Sharon articulated with the Crown Attorney in Windsor for a couple of years, before being called to the bar in 1986. During the entire time Sharon worked as a teacher and later as a lawyer. Many of her friends remember her as someone who was a strong advocate for the NDP. She also served as Sudbury's first NDP MPP.

One of Sharon's first acts during the Rae government was to announce funding allocated towards helping Indigenous communities. Later, she would also successfully pass a Private Member's Bill which allowed the Nipissing University to receive its charter. Sharon was also instrumental in the work to declare the Loon as Ontario's official bird.

One of her biggest political achievements was the legislation which established that women are given equal pay for equal work. Her work has had positive impacts over the years.

As covered in CTV News, special tribute was paid to Sharon Murdock, by Jamie West the current NDP MPP for Sudbury.

**Michael Brown (April 18, 1950 - September 20, 2024; 74 years old)**



Michael served as the Liberal MPP for Algoma-Manitoulin for 24 years from 1987-2011. Before seeking office he worked as a funeral director in Gore Bay on Manitoulin Island. In this capacity, as appropriate, he provided funeral services for all faiths. He and his family lived in Kagawong on Manitoulin Island.

Later the family moved to Cookstown in Simcoe County where he lived at the time of his death. His funeral was held on September 25, 2024.

Highlights of his parliamentary career include serving as Deputy Speaker between 2000-2001. He later served as Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Between 2005-2007 he served as Speaker.

Later Michael served as Chair of the Board of Internal Economy and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister of Natural Resources.

During his time at Queen's Park he was affable, well liked and a gentleman.

**Allan (Al) Leach (December 9, 1935 - October 18, 2024; 88 years old)**



As a Progressive Conservative MPP, Allan held the former central Toronto riding of St. George-St David from 1995-1999 during the first Harris mandate. During this term he held the position of Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Major initiatives included the amalgamation of the component municipalities of Toronto, the revision of rent control, and the update of private property assessments in

central Toronto. Upon reaching the age of 65 in 1999, he made the decision to retire from elected office.

Previously, for over 23 years he held senior managerial positions with the Ministry of Transportation, GO Transit, and the Toronto Transit Commission.

Following his term in elected office he served on the Board of engineering firm SNC-Lavalin, was appointed to the Toronto Police Services Board and GO Transit Board, and was a Member of the St. Michael's Hospital Governor's Council. He also served on the Canadian Urban Transit Association and American Public Transit Association.

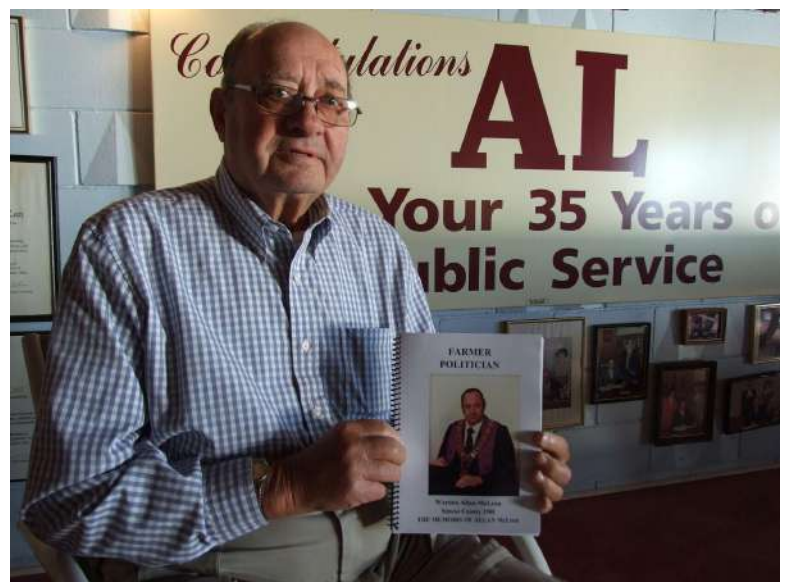
The OAFP pays tribute to his many years of public service particularly in the field of public transit in North America, and his term of office as a senior Ontario Minister.

Mr. Leach was born in Toronto. At the time of his death he resided with his family in Rye, New York (a coastal city in Westchester County within the New York City metropolitan area).

### **Allan McLean ( March 20, 1937 - November 20, 2024; age 87 years)**

Mr. McLean served as the Progressive Conservative MPP for Simcoe East from 1981 to 1999.

During his term of office he served on numerous Legislative Committees. Between October 1983 to March 1984 he was Chair of the Standing Committee on General Government and between May 1989 to July 1990 he was Chair of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.





He was appointed Minister without Portfolio responsible for Northern Affairs and Housing during the term of the Miller government.

He served as Speaker from September 1995 to September 1996 during the initial years of the Harris government.

Following his career in elected office in October 1999 he was appointed to the Assessment Review Board.

He was a devoted constituency politician who was proud of his rural roots and connection to the land. He had a jovial, down to earth personality.

Prior to serving provincially, he was a Councillor in Oro and was Warden of Simcoe County in 1980.

He was born on a family farm and continued to work in the dairy industry. He died in Orillia.

## **OTHER MATTERS OF INTEREST**

### **Confederation Painting in Rehab**



Normally above the Grand Staircase in the Ontario Legislative Building hangs a large (6 by 3.5 metres, or 19.6 by 11.4 feet) portrait of the Fathers of Confederation painted by artist Frederick Challenger which was unveiled in 1919.

The painting depicts a conference in Quebec City in October 1864 which ultimately led to the passage of the British North America Act by the British Parliament and the establishment of Canada on July 1, 1867. Challenger also painted another version of this painting in 1914 which is a mural in the Hotel Macdonald in Edmonton.



In August 2017, during the removal of scaffolding associated with nearby wall maintenance, a small tear was made in the canvass near the toe of the boot of Edward Whelan, a delegate from Prince Edward Island. Other notable delegates shown in the painting include John A. Macdonald, George Brown, Georges-Étienne Cartier, Charles Tupper, William Poe, and Samuel Tilley.



In January 2020, the massive painting was delicately removed and “sent to rehab” at Toronto Art Restorers Inc. The repairs will also include relining, cleaning, varnish, and restretching the canvass.

This painting at Queen’s Park is a copy of the original painting by artist Robert Harris, who was commissioned to paint it in 1883 by the Federal government. The original was destroyed in a 1916 fire that destroyed the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. To complete these copies, Challenger worked from Harris’ preparatory drawings.

### **Summer Travelogue Photos across Niagara**

In order to expand interest and knowledge of our province, the following photos reflect the beauty, diversity, and history of the Niagara Region. This area played a key role in the early development of our province and is still a world renowned tourism destination.



The power and majesty of Niagara Falls from the Canadian side of the river [Jerry Richmond/OAFP].



Fort Mississauga, Niagara-on-the-Lake.



Historic clock tower cenotaph (circa 1922), Niagara-on-the-Lake.





Ship transiting the Welland Canal's locks, heading towards Lake Ontario. This manmade waterway allows ships to by-pass Niagara Falls.



Turbine hall of the Niagara Parks Power Station (circa 1905). This power station pioneered our ability to harness the power of the Falls which transformed Ontario's economy.



Old Fort Erie

## ROYAL LEGACY



Facade of former Postal Station K (opened in 1936) in Toronto - at Yonge and Montgomery - during the brief reign of Edward VIII (see GR VIII inscription: Latin Edwardus Rex VIII) who abdicated on December 11, 1936. This former post office is today the site of a commercial/residential high rise building.

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