

Perruzza takes on Liberal incumbent



NDP Anthony Perruzza (left) gets close to Bob Rae for a moment or two. Perruzza is the young city councillor who is head-to-head against veteran politician Laureano Leone. He has criticized most of the Liberal platform and is anxious to give Downsview a new voice at Queen's Park.

Interview by Peter Stathis

Excalibur: What is your background and what are your qualifications for being elected as MPP for Downsview on September 6?

Perruzza: I am a graduate of York University. I was elected as a school board trustee in 1985 and served for three years. In 1988, I was elected as a municipal councillor for the city of North York. Presently, I am the NDP candidate for Downsview riding.

Excalibur: How do you respond to allegations that Peterson's call for an election is political opportunism?

Perruzza: It's complete opportunism. There's no other reason for it. He had two years left in his mandate. He should have governed for at least another year or year

and a half comfortably before even thinking about calling an election. He was right in the polls. He wants another mandate two years early at the cost of \$40 million.

Excalibur: Would you introduce any new legislation regarding Sunday shopping in Ontario or are you happy with the current arrangement?

Perruzza: No, I am not happy with the current arrangement. I felt that Peterson handed over the issue because it was too difficult to deal with from a provincial perspective or a political one. He handed it over to the municipalities; the courts basically threw it out and now you have a wide-open Sunday policy. It's not the Sunday shopping that I'm opposed to; it's the Sunday working. There is legislation proposed to protect people who prefer not to work on Sundays. I

would have maintained the standard they had before this fiasco.

Excalibur: What commitment can you make to stop the chronic underfunding in Ontario universities? Specifically, will the 40,000 students at York pay ever-increasing tuition fees or is your party truly willing to sponsor higher education?

Perruzza: Higher education is the answer to it all. I am in favour of reducing tuition fees — the cost to students in general. The formula is a complex one, but everyone should be entitled to a higher education. Students should not be barred because of monetary barriers. The government contribution has to be increased. And from a corporate perspective, they should be paying their fair share of taxes for education.

Excalibur: What is your party's stand regarding Quebec and the blatant unilingualism of some Ontario communities such as Sault St. Marie and Thunder Bay? Is bilingualism still a priority or is it outdated?

Perruzza: I feel that Quebec is different from the rest of Canada in many ways. They should be able to protect their language if they, as a society, decide to do that. We should be promoting those kinds of ideas, and not just with the French language, but with all the diverse ethnic groups who live inside and outside of Ontario. With some of these communities in Northern Ontario, we have to teach tolerance. They feel their rights are being infringed upon by French interests, but there really isn't a danger. People must understand that.

Excalibur: The no-fault auto insurance system has left accident victims unable to sue the driver at fault barring very serious injuries. Considering that this tactic will not reduce or even stabilize our insurance premiums, how is this system helpful for anyone but the insurance companies?

Perruzza: The Liberal government has given carte blanche to the insurance companies to write their own legislation. It's crazy. I think even the insurance companies were pleasantly surprised when the government defined the threshold that allows for lawsuits. I don't think they would have been that tough on themselves. The Liberals gave away the store on this issue. The no-fault system has to be changed quickly. We have to look for an alternative that will really keep premiums down while still providing security for people.

"recycling is only a two per cent solution"

Excalibur: Would you be willing to chase after companies who pollute the environment? To what point? What procedures would you set in place to accomplish this?

Perruzza: Yes. The mechanisms are a little complicated. Bob Rae is trying to simplify them. But yes, polluters should be made to pay. We should have strict legislation and enforcement. This planet is all we have.

Excalibur: Are you prepared to build more recycling plants in Ontario to accept the surplus of recyclable goods and curb environmentally consumptive industries such as pulp and paper? Are there any plans for a

new waste-reduction programme or modification of any current recycling programmes?

Perruzza: Recycling is certainly part of the answer. But it's only a two per cent solution. It's not the answer to the waste management crisis. This is something we've been grappling with at the municipality level. Transporting garbage and dumping it somewhere else is not an answer either. We have to start right with the packaging of goods. Policies have to be developed on a whole array of subjects so when a product or material finally comes through the chain and is discarded, it is something that is biodegradable. Deposits on bottles, cans, containers act as monetary incentive to reuse items. This idea has a lot of merit as well.

Excalibur: Do you believe that Ontario Hydro's plan to build more nuclear generating plants is a good decision? Should Ontario be encouraging citizens and corporations to consume less energy rather than carry on full-tilt?

Perruzza: Conservation — less energy definitely. We've been brought up as energy gluttons. We have such an abundance of it and we don't even realize it. If we travel abroad and run into shortages, we find it really inconvenient, whereas other people have become used to the idea that energy is in short supply and they conserve much better than we do. It's a mindset more than anything else.

Excalibur: In light of the Oka land battle and racially-inspired police violence, what kind of leadership can you offer on native and minority group claims for a more representative justice?

Perruzza: They have to have a voice in the political process. They cannot be excluded and ignored. They must be integrated in policy decision-making like everyone else.

Excalibur: What areas do you feel you still have to improve to attract undecided voters?

Perruzza: The property tax issue in Downsview is a big issue. If people are undecided, when they see what the Liberal government has done to their property tax, they'll scream. Clearly, we plan to show them.

Excalibur: What do you feel are the weaknesses of the other candidates?

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