

## Leone banks on maturity

As the provincial election draws near, we as students should know the platforms of the candidates in our riding. Excalibur has interviewed three of the Downsview candidates: Laureano Leone (Liberal), Anthony Perruzza (NDP) and David Kenney (Libertarian). The PC candidate, Chris Smith, never got back to our reporters, so he has been left out of the feature. Please take the time to vote on an informed opinion.

Interview by Grayson Levy

**Excalibur:** What is your background and qualifications for being reelected as MPP for Downsview on September 6?

**Leone:** I had been elected in 1987. Before then, I had been involved in the cultural community. I have been President of the National Italian Congress for five years, and founding President of the Canadian Ethnocultural Council, which is an umbrella organization for all ethnocultural organizations. Overall, before '87, I was working in the community for 18 years. So, I had a social and political background. My main purpose was to work toward the integration of the Italian community and the ethnocultural community, so that they would become an active part of the Canadian mosaic. And, by profession, I am a pharmacist. I was educated in the United States.

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

**Leone:** I resent it, in fact, because it's not opportunism. We should know that the average life of governments in the last 32 years has been three and a half years. We could have waited another six months, and called the people of Ontario during winter. But I think Peterson wants to feel the pulse of the electorate right now, because many things are going on, especially the national situation after Meech Lake, in which he was involved. It is a national crisis because we have to redefine our status in Confederation. And, it makes a difference, for a leader, when he has a five year mandate, instead of six months or one year, especially when we had the experience in Meech Lake where things were changed by new leaders. Manitoba changed, New Brunswick changed — they changed the position signed by their predecessors. So, it makes a difference for a leader to propose and guarantee that whatever he says is going to stay for four or five years.

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

**Leone:** No, I'm happy. The present law is clear. The current provincial law prohibits business on Sunday and we are satisfied with that. It also gives municipalities the opportunity to decide based on their own special situations. In Toronto, we were lucky that Metro Council supported our position, and passed a law for no Sunday shopping. However, I'm terribly upset at the present situation, and I will do my utmost to restore Sunday as a day of rest. I'm going to hope that the Supreme Court will rule in our favour. There is so much you can do on Sunday, besides going to church — let's enrich our province's cultural activities, sports activities and family activities.

**Excalibur:** What commitment would you make to stop the chronic underfunding of Ontario universities? And, specifically, must the 40,000 students at York pay ever-increasing tuition fees, or is your government truly willing to sponsor higher education?



**Liberal:** Laureano Leone (right) spends time with his boss, David Peterson. Proud of his ethnocultural background, Leone has been working in the community for 18 years, has been MPP, Downsview riding, for three years and is ready to offer his political skills once again on September 6.

**Leone:** My parents were farmers and my father had to work hard in Italy to give me an education. So, I believe that education should be made available to every student. We need to give students who come from poor families the opportunity to study. There is a commitment from the Peterson government to have education next to health, next to housing as a primary issue. We realize that the needs are growing, and the money is just not. That's the big problem. And, what we have done is never enough, because education needs an extra amount of money.

Five years ago, we found education in very bad shape. I had participated in meetings of the Board of Education, but I never realized how blind we were to underfunding in our own province's capital. We had schools in Toronto, five years ago that made us look like some nations of the Third World. We have given millions and millions of dollars to bring these things up to date.

Unfortunately, we can only do so much, because every Minister needs more money than the Treasurer can allocate on a fixed budget. But, the commitment to education is there.

**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?

**Leone:** The Peterson government supports bilingualism. Whatever happens in the future negotiations with Quebec, there will be people who will be upset. But they are upset with some of the events of recent years. They are upset because of Bourassa's stand on unilingualism [French only] sign legislation in Quebec. Anglophones have been patient enough, and that was like a provocation. These people who have reacted — I think the majority of them will think twice. There are always some people who are against the worker state, unemployment insurance, for example, and there is a small minority of anglophones who are against bilingualism.

Knowing another language and another culture is an enrichment of the nation. In Europe, everyone speaks at least two languages. The benefit is there. We as government should encourage the teaching of the two languages and two cultures.

Canada by being bilingual will be a culturally richer nation.

**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 pre-

miums, how is the system helpful for anyone but the insurance companies?

**Leone:** We consider that an accident is nobody's fault in the sense that nobody wants an accident, but they do happen. The present law protects those who are really injured. In the past, we had many small accidents that were abused. They cost the insurance companies a great amount of money. The people who were gravely injured were able, through a lawyer, to arrive at some kind of settlement. It's the same now. Because there is no fault now, however, both people are protected and the insurance pays for both people's damages, time off. . . . The insurance companies have promised the government that they will justify any increase in premiums. Over a few years, if we see that the insurance industry is taking advantage of this new law, we can amend and change it. It's a fair compromise.

"we live in a world where justice should be made available to everyone"

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

**Leone:** The environment. . . we are discovering that we are killing ourselves. We are destroying everything that we live for. If the government sees negligence in companies' practices and they do not cooperate, we will go with heavy fines and probably we will start to use jail terms for some of these people. It's a massive job. We should start with environmental education through to the enforcement of tough laws at the higher level. The government should also cooperate financially and administratively with big industries. This way they cannot threaten to close down and leave thousands of employees out of jobs.

**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 modifications of any current recycling programmes?

**Leone:** We should encourage industries to recycle and reuse on their own so they do not suffer economically. Otherwise, we are going to be suffocated by our own waste.

The environment is a problem for everybody — for the rich, for the poor, for the white, for the black — for everybody because we all have to survive.

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

**Leone:** We must educate people to save energy. We waste too much: water, food, electricity. In reducing the usage of thermo-nuclear energy, either it is done globally or there's no use doing it. What's the use of closing Darlington when across the lakes, the U.S. has their own? If something happens over there, we will suffer just the same. For example, Italy had a referendum prohibiting thermo-nuclear energy because of the disaster at Chernobyl. Now, Italy is short of electricity and is buying it from France's nuclear industry. This is a typical example. There's a sense of practicality here. Sure, I would like to avoid using nuclear energy, but if tomorrow we shut down our plants, we may have to buy electricity from the U.S.

**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?

**Leone:** They say, you need two to tango. First, we have to accept that native people have been neglected. With that in mind, I don't approve of violence on either side. Violent measures will not resolve anything. You can obtain the same thing without it; but it takes longer. We must convince the political, social and economic establishment that we live in a world where justice should be made available to everyone. We have seen the upsurge of Eastern European countries and the collapse of communist dictatorships and we have seen justice after 30 or 40 years. No violence, but compromise and persistence from the natives and minorities to have their rights recognized.

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

**Leone:** I'm offering my experience. Most of my professional life has been spent in the public. I have experience in the cultural and social communities and in business. You need a certain maturity and understanding to be able to give advice. We have some problems here in the area. I will see that nobody loses a job on account of the Ministry of Transport's decision to move. Talking with the premier, I have been promised that these people will be given the opportunity to find another job in government. I want to do something for pensioners under 65 whose medications are not covered by their benefits. I want to promote the recognition of handicapped workers when they apply for jobs in government on a merit point system.

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

**Leone:** No, I won't say anything more than that I have a lot of experience. I'll be 62 this September and the other young man [Perruzza — NDP] is 31. That speaks for itself. I don't say I am smarter; I just say I have knowledge and experience and maturity. Many people spend only two or three years in council. What can they learn in council after two years?

**Excalibur:** After the failure of Meech, what do you feel Ontario as a province should be doing to promote national unity?

**Leone:** We are to start all over. We have to do something to assure francophones about the preservation of their culture. We must continue with the bilingualism programme. Ontario is between the West which feels alienated and Quebec which feels betrayed. I feel we are going through a difficult family quarrel. No province really wants to separate. Every province has the power to carry out their own programmes and they want this autonomy recognized. Canada is a beautiful country, but it's too vast. So, it's difficult to bring together people. We have to guarantee, mainly to Quebec, that they are Canadians. The majority of people in Ontario and all over are for a united Canada.