

The TORONTO PARTY

LEADING THE WAY

END OF THE LINE FOR LOCAL 113?

Original thinking over TTC coming from Queen's Park, not City Hall

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This is the official newsletter of The Toronto Party.

It's gotta hurt. After nearly experiencing shoulder separation patting himself on the back, Amalgamated Transit Union 113 president and 'business agent' Bob Kinnear, ran against a brick wall on Friday April 25, when two-thirds of TTC employees rejected the 13th hour contract he negotiated on their behalf.

Kinnear did what one would expect from a spoiled child; he took his ball and went home, arbitrarily shutting down the transit system without 48 minutes notice let alone the 48 hours he had promised earlier. The badly bruised union boss said it was to protect his members, a desperate cry from a desperate man who knows his presidency and the credibility of his union executive is in tatters.

More puzzling was the reaction from City Hall.

Despite both Global News and CFRB radio reporting that the vote could go sour days before it took place, both Mayor David Miller and TTC chair Adam Giambrone were caught off guard. Miller, whose staff, one week earlier, were anxiously spinning the Mayor into the contract narrative, was "disappointed" and "outraged" calling for Premier Dalton McGuinty to rescue his chestnuts from another self-inflicted fumble.

To his credit, McGuinty acted calmly, decisively and statesmanlike, ordering a rare Sunday sitting of the Legislature and introducing a carefully framed back-to-work bill that even Miller and Giambrone's colleagues in the NDP could support without losing face.

The TTC carries more than 1.5 million riders every business day and is an essential piece of the Toronto economy. The Premier wants the TTC declared an essential service. As flag carrying NDP'ers, Miller and Giambrone are hesitant to see any action that erodes union power at City Hall. But their union-buddy Kinnear may have pulled the rug from beneath them.

Even so, as thousands of abandoned transit users were scrambling to find a way home, Miller, facing his second strike since becoming Mayor in 2003, was on radio tossing cold water on declaring the TTC an essential service, using the old chestnut that arbitrated settlements are more costly.

Perhaps they are, but Conservative leader John Tory who knows a thing or two about solid employee relations has the solution, recommending that legislation making the TTC an essential service include a clause that recognizes the employer's (that would be the taxpayers') ability to pay.

Which is to say that all the original thinking concerning the future of the TTC is coming not from City Hall, but from Queen's Park. The McGuinty government has floated trial balloons about lifting the TTC from City Hall and transferring it to MetroLinx, the arms length transport authority set up to coordinate transport initiatives across the GTA.

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There are compelling reasons not to, including the fact that cash-strapped regional transit systems tend to hollow out the core in a well-intentioned but misguided attempt to dedicate greater resources to bus service in the suburbs. But given that on the night TTC workers said 'we're out of here, fend for yourselves', Giambone's response was, "unbelievable" and "we had a deal", there are equally as compelling reasons to embrace the Queen's Park vision.

Perhaps a different reaction would have come from a more experienced Chair, which begs the question, if Kinnear is "dead man walking" as president of union local 113, can Giambone be far behind?

Certainly the City's pro-union slant botched negotiations before they even got started, forgiving Kinnear and the transit union millions of dollars in penalties for an illegal strike, rather than using the fines as a bargaining instrument. As for guaranteeing that TTC operators would always be the highest paid in the GTA, what business would leave it to competitors to set their internal pay scale?

This is just the beginning. Miller has other contracts in the hopper including police officers and garbage

collectors. The police are an essential service, and the last garbage strike, under Mayor Lastman, lasted two weeks before former Premier Ernie Eves stepped in with back to work legislation, suggesting that McGuinty might have to carry the Mayor's water yet again.

There is little doubt that Miller is watching a potential third term bleed away with every misstep. But he is probably beyond caring. His recent 'national' campaigns on capturing one cent of the GST and a ban on handguns, plus reports he is learning French, suggest he is laying the groundwork to join fellow NDPer Bob Rae as a federal Liberal, and perhaps one day seek the Liberal leadership. Like Rae, he has already ripped up his NDP membership.

Watch also Miller's socialist executive to distance themselves from the Mayor as the next election creeps up. Case in point, Toronto Centre Councillor Kyle Rae abandoning Barbara Hall to suck up to Miller in the dying days of the 2003 election.

This is good news for The Toronto Party since we are the only alternative to self-serving Councillors who support even higher taxes to pay the salaries of even greater public sector union monopolies.



While it is back to the drawing board for TTC management and union local 113, the following options for the future of the TTC now need to be debated. They are as follows:

- Declare the TTC and all public transportation, in whole or in part, an essential service;
- Upload the entire TTC system to the province and create a seamless public transportation system across the GTA;
- Privatize some or all aspects of the TTC; or
- Improve technology so as to fully automate our subway system.



Last month, we reported that George Smitherman might seek to run for Mayor of Toronto in 2010.

Rumours continue to swirl about other prospective candidates as well. The following names have come to our attention.

- John Tory, current leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party
- Jack Layton, current leader of the federal New Democratic Party
- Dennis Mills, former Liberal Member of Parliament