

"The Compensation Conundrum: Does M.P.P. Compensation Determine the  
Composition of the Ontario Legislature?"

by

Kimlan Hokan  
2008-2009 Intern,  
Ontario Legislature Internship Programme (OLIP)  
1303A Whitney Block,  
Queen's Park,  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1

Phone:416-708-8319

Email: [kim.hokan@gmail.com](mailto:kim.hokan@gmail.com)

[www.olip.ontla.on.ca](http://www.olip.ontla.on.ca)

Paper presented at the 2009 Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political  
Science Association, Ottawa, Ontario, Wednesday, May 27th, 2009.

In recent months the issue of compensation has predominated the public discourse in North America. Calls for salary and benefit concessions on the part of unionized workers and public angst over large corporate executive payouts appear to be taking hold of the public imagination in new and impassioned ways. Ontario legislators are not isolated from this discourse as scandals around ministerial expenses accounts and the misuse of public funds are perennial favorites of opposition parties and the news media. The Ontario government's recent decision to freeze MPP salaries until 2010 in order to "demonstrate that we are being prudent fiscal managers of taxpayer dollars" is reflection of the inherently controversial nature of legislator compensation.<sup>1</sup> However, while MPP compensation may be subject to considerable controversy, the realities of the issue are often shrouded in mystery and misinformation. Compounding the problem is the fact that political imperatives tend to preclude open and honest debate about compensation and politicians themselves are typically inclined to be critical of improvements to compensation in order to make short-term political gains, albeit to their own financial peril.

The vitality of the Ontario Legislature hinges on the caliber of its members, which is in turn determined, to a significant extent, by the compensation that is extended to provincial legislators. This essay charts the course of M.P.P. compensation in Ontario and analyzes the implications of the contemporary compensation plan on the composition of the Provincial Parliament. In order to analyze the effects of the contemporary compensation scheme it is important to understand the historical context in which this system emerged. The first half of this paper will trace the social and political developments from which the current M.P.P compensation plan emerged. I will then provide an analysis of the implications of the current compensation scheme on the fluidity of the legislature's membership.

## I

In the years preceding the 1973 Ontario Commission on the Legislature, also known as the Camp Commission, the composition and operation of the Ontario Legislature reflected the relative societal and bureaucratic simplicity that characterized the province during the first half of the twentieth century. During this time, the Ontario Parliament operated as a part-time legislature, was made up largely of farmers and functioned under a parliamentary schedule that accommodated the farming calendar.<sup>2</sup> David Warner, former speaker of the assembly recalls that until the late 1960's, Ontario M.P.P.s held an annual card game at the Royal York Hotel to celebrate the annual payment of \$3,000 that

---

<sup>1</sup> *McGuinty Government Announces Further Restraint Measures*, News Release, Ministry of Finance, December 2 2009

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Todd Decker, Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Thursday April 23rd 2009

members received each spring. The celebratory card game Toronto's most refined establishments was reflective of the fact that the vast majority of M.P.P.s were financially self-sufficient during this era.<sup>3</sup>

The Ontario Commission on the Legislature, also known as the Camp Commission, marked a turning point in the professional status of Members of Legislative Assembly. In 1974, the first report of the Ontario Commission on the Legislature delivered the most comprehensive study of M.P.P. compensation to date. The report outlined the unique labor position of elected representatives, analyzed the existing compensation regime and made recommendations that drew on comparisons with other jurisdictions. A central impetus for the report was the burgeoning complexity of society and government bureaucracy. From the outset, the commission identified this trend as the primary rationale for its existence and held that:

“Put most brutally, government and its administration steadily increases in complexity, size and resource. Reports, studies, and expertise proliferate. Few legislative proposals are clear-cut...surely the time has come to recognize that the disbalance, not so much towards the government but towards its highly knowledgeable bureaucracies, must be countered by stepping up the resources, facilities and services of the Legislature and the legislator.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus the Commission recognized the need to enhance the resources of the Legislature and its members in order to maintain the relevancy and effectiveness of the provincial parliament in relation to an increasingly complex Ontario populace and bureaucracy.

In its first report, the Commission defined the role of Member of Provincial Parliament as a full-time occupation and concluded that despite the fact that “there lingers in Canada and Ontario a slightly unsavory aura around the phrase a “full-time politician...that day has gone in Ontario, at least in terms of ‘easy-in’ then ‘easy out’ politics.” The necessity of redefining M.P.P.s as full-time workers was evidenced by dramatic increases in the volume of constituency case work that members contended with and shifting demographics within of the Legislature where the average age of members had steadily declined and the average education and technical qualifications of members increased. These demographic shifts combined with the expanded role played by M.P.P.s, functioned to increase the financial sacrifice experienced by the average Ontario legislators in the 1970s since they were more likely to find it “very difficult to take up a career again at anywhere near the income level of those in similar circumstances who had not gone into politics.”<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Interview with David Warner, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (1990-1995), Monday April 4 2009

<sup>4</sup> Ontario Commission on the Legislature, First Report, May 1973, p.9

<sup>5</sup> Ontario Commission on the Legislature, First Report, May 1973, p. 15

Complementing the Commission's redefinition of provincial legislators as full-time workers was its recommendation of an enhanced compensation scheme for Ontario M.P.P.s. Having discovered inconsistencies amongst the salaries received by different Ontario legislators, the Commission called for the establishment of a common compensation index that would establish salary standards for each of the various legislative roles performed by members.<sup>6</sup>

Beyond recommending standardized salaries for various the various roles performed by legislators, the Commission identified major inconsistencies between the compensation received by Provincial legislators and their counterparts in the private and public sectors, and made several recommendations aimed at reducing these disparities. For example, recognizing that travel was a significant component of an M.P.P.'s job, the Commission proposed "that Members of the Legislative Assembly be placed on the same basis, with respect to travel and accommodation, as their counterparts in the community at large when they travel away from home for business reasons."<sup>7</sup> Further to this, the Commission concluded that M.P.P.s were significantly under compensated and faced an extremely high opportunity cost in taking on the role of elected representative in that:

"No popularly elected representatives will ever be paid salaries equivalent to those received for comparable endeavor in the private sector. Indeed, while the Private Member inhabits the same world and works in the same environment as the civil servants of the Province, most of the latter enjoy larger incomes, broader benefits, better pensions, with job security in the bargain. This is not to say that civil servants are overpaid, but obviously means to say that, by any comparable measure, the elected politician is underpaid."<sup>8</sup>

Having concluded that MPP compensation was inadequate, the Commission put forth a test" against which modifications to MPP salaries to be measured. The test held that M.P.P. salaries should be:

- 1) Neither so large as to be, of itself, an inducement to any to enter politics
- 2) (Not) so modest as to demand an unreasonable sacrifice from those who have means yet who are determined to enter public life.
- 3) Should appeal to some who prefer their politicians to be underpaid as testimony to the need for sacrifice in public life-which it would appear, a few still find reassuring and worth of re-emphasis.<sup>9</sup>

Using this test, the Commission went on to recommend the provision of travel allowances, enhanced administrative resources, increased salaries and a severance allowance for all Ontario legislators. The inclusion of a severance allowance in the

---

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p.61-64

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p.25

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p.26

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p.29

recommendations reflected the commission's acknowledgement of the unique realities in that:

"The important difference between the defeated Member and the dismissed employee is that the latter will almost certainly enjoy a reasonable period of time when he will have received either unemployment insurance, or separation pay, or both. The member will have neither, even though he faces the same problems – perhaps more of them – such as an abrupt loss of income with continuing expenses and obligations, the cost of removal from Toronto and his office at Queen's Park a, and the cost of job-hunting itself. And, of course, the longer the Member has served before his defeat, the more difficult the re-entry and re-adjustment processes are likely to be."<sup>10</sup>

Thus the first Report of the Ontario Commission on the Legislature represents a defining moment in the conceptualization of the Ontario Parliament as a vital and complex institution, the efficiency of which was dependant on the existence of adequate financial and administrative supports for its members. The reports of the Commission were also reflective of a broader populist movement that viewed legislator compensation as inextricably linked to the diversity and thus inclusiveness of legislatures. As Peverill Squire notes, in the mid-to-late 1960's proponents of legislative professionalization, such as the Citizens Conference on State Legislatures, gained prominence throughout the United States as the belief spread that legislative professionalization would allow for the diversification of the white, male upper-class stronghold of state legislatures spread.<sup>6</sup> Ontario's experience with legislative reform can be seen as an extension of this populist impulse in that the Commission clearly recognized the implications of legislative professionalization on the occupational and/or class diversification of the legislature. The Commission held that a key consideration in the determination of compensation was the reality that:

If the political system is to be open to all aspirants, and if personal wealth or occupation is not to determine whether or not public office can be sought, a key consideration must be that of providing an income which will allow any elected member to be reasonably self-sufficient."<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, the reports of the Commission garnered controversy due to their populist subtext. Both former speaker David Warner and a former Northern Ontario M.P.P. who was heavily involved with the commission recall that support for the Commission's reports at Queen's Park was informed by the class background and social status of members at the time. Both of these former members assert that support for Commission's report tended to lag amongst conservative members who were typically be financially well-off, was mediocre amongst Liberals who generally drew on farming income and strong amongst members of the NDP who generally had experience in wage-earnings occupations prior to their arrival at Queen's Park. Warner also opines that the

---

<sup>10</sup> Peverill, Squire, *Legislative Professionalization and Membership Diversity in State Legislatures*, Legislative Studies Quarterly, XVII, February 1992, p.69

<sup>11</sup> Ontario Commission on the Legislature, First Report, May 1973, p.29

minority government of 1975 enabled the adoption of most of the recommendations put forth by the Camp Commission.<sup>12</sup>

While the reports of the Ontario Commission on the Legislature provided the basis for the introduction of a much more extensive compensation scheme, developments around the MPP compensation since these landmark reports have tended to be ineffectual and in some instances have negated the compensation gains that emerged from the Dalton Camp Commission and reignited some of the most pressing fundamental compensation paradoxes that the Camp Commission sought to rectify.

In the years following the Ontario Commission on the Legislature, adjustments to MPP compensation required amendments to the Legislative Assembly Act. The last amendment to act was made in 1991 under the NDP government. Five years later, the regulatory scheme governing MPP compensation experienced a dramatic transformation with the election of the Conservative government led by Mike Harris. In 1996, the Harris government repealed the Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act (LARRA) and replaced it with the M.P.P.s Pension Act. The M.P.P.s Pension act did not contain the significant provision under LARRA that:

“A member who has contributed in respect of five or more years of service and who has attained the age of fifty-five years is entitled to an annual allowance during his or her lifetime upon his or her ceasing to be a member.”<sup>13</sup>

Under the M.P.P.s Pension Act a registered pension plan was established whereby the Legislative Assembly contributed an amount equal to 10% of the Member’s salary (base plus ministerial and additional) to a pension account in his or her name. The funds in the account were to be invested under the direction of the Member based on a menu of available investment options and contributions and investment accrued tax-free until used to provide a pension.<sup>14</sup>

The introduction of a significantly less lucrative legislator retirement income plan under fit nicely into the “common-sense revolution” platform that swept the Harris Conservatives to power. The rhetoric that flew from the elimination of M.P.P. pensions reinforced the common sense revolutions’ central tenant that large government was detrimental to the province and the curtailing of government spending and hegemony was imperative to Ontario’s future vitality. In announcing the M.P.P.s Pension Act, Finance Minister Ernie Eves declared:

“In the Common Sense Revolution we promised: ‘We will end sweet deals politicians have created for themselves...M.P.P.s’ pensions will be abolished and replaced with an RRSP program similar to those used

---

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Mr. David Warner, Former MPP and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (dates ect.)

<sup>13</sup> Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. L.11

<sup>14</sup> Legislative Assembly of Ontario, *Guide to Members' Allowances and Service and Members' Support and Caucus Staff*, Fall 2007

by professionals in Ontario. The tax-free benefits paid to politicians will also be abolished they will be paid a straight salary, just like ordinary Ontarians.”<sup>15</sup>

Beyond the rhetorical appeal of the M.P.P.s Pensions Act, the initiative also gave evoked fierce resistance and resentment amongst both opposition members and the Conservative caucus itself. One former Conservative member who served in the legislature for over twenty years and eventually reached the highest rank within his party condemned the repeal of the LARAA and the elimination of MPP pensions. This former member who, like all of the other members of the Conservative caucus, was compelled to support the enactment of the M.P.P.s Pension Act, maintains that the Act was nonsensical in that the reasoning behind the traditional provision of moderate M.P.P. pay was that provincial legislators generally sacrificed the best earning years of their life and therefore required a pension so could retain a “back-up” source of personal income following their legislative careers. Another Conservative Member who was elected to office over twenty five years ago and continues to occupy a seat in the legislature maintains that the M.P.P.s Pension Act was an unfortunate fiasco in that it failed to garner the political support for which it was initiated and at the same time had an extremely detrimental effect on many of his colleagues who experienced tremendous difficulty finding work following their legislative careers.<sup>16</sup>

The Conservative government of the late 1990’s also marked the beginning of an effort to shift the management of M.P.P. compensation to an independent external body. In 1996 the Harris government established the M.P.P. Compensation Commission, which was comprised of private consultants who were charged with the task of reviewing the M.P.P. compensation regime. At the same time a Speaker’s Commission on M.P.P. compensation was (also) established and tasked with making recommendations on the issue, albeit in years in which the province experienced a balanced budget. In 2000 the Speaker’s Commission on Compensation delivered its first recommendation, which called for MPP salaries to be increased to \$113,000. Much of the report echoed the sentiments of the Camp Commission and sought to rectify the same contradictions that the Camp commission held to be paramount considerations in the determination of MPP compensation. For example, like the Camp Commission, the Report of the Speaker’s Commission on Members’ Compensation maintained that:

“Compensation levels should be such that not only the “rich” can afford to take on public service” and “compensation levels should not result in a standard of living less than similarly “qualified” community people would expect to receive.”<sup>17</sup>

The report received a mass of media coverage and, as one neutral legislative official recalls, “it arrived on the scene like a red balloon and...no one wanted to take it on”<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> *News Release: Government Gets Rid Of Gold Plated Pensions*, April 10, 1996, <http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/english/media/1996/mppfi4.html>

<sup>16</sup> Information obtained from interviews with two former cabinet minister under the 1995-2001 Conservative government.

<sup>17</sup> Report of the Speaker's Commission on Members' Compensation, June 14 2000, p.3

<sup>18</sup> Interview with a non-partisan official of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario

This official also recalls that, since the Commission's recommendations were not adopted, M.P.P.s grew increasingly frustrated and disgruntled about their salaries, which had remained stagnant at \$78,007 since 1996 despite the fact that the overall cumulative wage increase in Canada was an average of 2.8% per year and the salaries of Toronto District School Board teachers, Deputy Ministers, and Union officials were generally in excess of \$100,000.<sup>19</sup>

In 2001 the Conservative government moved to further delegate the responsibility of MPP compensation to an independent third party with the introduction of Bill 82, *An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act to provide an arm's length process to determine members' compensation*. Bill 82 established a clever scheme whereby the Integrity Commissioner was charged with making recommendations on MPP compensation. The act also held that once the Integrity Commissioner's recommendations were to come into force upon being tabled in the house of the Legislative Assembly.<sup>20</sup>

Prior to the election of 2003, the Integrity Commissioner released the first report mandated by Bill 82. Despite the removal of provincial legislators from the report's primary recommendation that MPP salaries be increased by 25%, the proposed pay increase soon became an election issue and all three leaders wrote to the new Integrity Commissioner with requests that the salary increase be terminated.<sup>21</sup> In response to these demands, the Integrity Commissioner withdrew his recommendation, issued a short term recommendation that Members salary be raised by 2.7% and permanently linked to the Ontario Industrial Average Wage Index to a maximum of 7% and committed to produce a report making long-term recommendations for MPP compensation.<sup>22</sup> Following the election of 2003 the Commissioner's recommendation that Members receive an increase of 2.7% to match the Consumer Price Index was precluded by the passage of the MPP Salary Freeze Act, S.O. 2004, c.2 in the Spring of 2004. After the expiry of the Salary Freeze Act in April 2005, members received a CPI based increase of 1.9% and in April 2006 they received a CPI based increase of 2.2%.<sup>23</sup>

The 2006 Report of the Integrity Commissioner turned marked a turning point in the protracted effort to establish a fair mechanism to determine and manage MPP compensation. The Commission's most significant recommendation was as follows:

---

<sup>19</sup> Hon Gregory T. Evans, C.M., O.Ont., Q.C. Integrity Commissioner, *Report Pursuant to Section 1 of the MPP Compensation Reform Act (Arm's Length Process)*, 2001p. 9 – Appendix D

<sup>20</sup> *Bill 82: An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act to provide an arm's length process to determine members' compensation*, Chapter 15, Statutes of Ontario, 2001

<sup>21</sup> Hon Gregory T. Evans, C.M., O.Ont., Q.C. Integrity Commissioner, *Report Pursuant to Section 1 of the MPP Compensation Reform Act (Arm's Length Process)*, 2001

<sup>22</sup> Hon Coulter A. Osborne, Integrity Commissioner, *Report of the Honourable Coulter A. Osborne Re: MPP Compensation Reform Act*, March 9 2004

<sup>23</sup> *Report of the Honourable Coulter A. Osborne Re: MPP Compensation Reform Act*, December 2006.

“Given the obvious relevance of compensation arrangements in place at the federal level (particularly salaries), it would make sense to link provincial members salaries to the salaries of members of parliament.”

Furthermore, the Commissioner rejected the idea of a 100% linkage to the compensation received by Members of the Parliament of Canada but voiced a preference for “establishing provincial members’ salaries at some reasonable percentage (less than 100) of the salaries of their federal counterparts.”<sup>24</sup> Following this recommendation the Ontario government adopted a formula whereby members’ salaries are set at 75% of that of their federal counterpart. While this compensation formula has set the stage for the more measured management of MPP compensation, the onslaught of media attention garnered by the 2006 M.P.P pay raise suggests that the compensation formula is likely to be negated by the political imperatives with which all politicians must contend. In recent months this was evidenced by the passage of Bill 162, which placed a freeze on MPP salary in order to demonstrate government restraint in a time of economic malaise in Ontario.

With the adoption of the Integrity Commissioner’s 2006 formula recommendation it would appear that Ontario Parliament has finally arrived at a reasonable means managing the tricky task of determining compensation and that the financial lot of an MPP will cease to experience stagnation. However, the outstanding issue of MPP pensions continues to have a considerable impact on the membership of the quality of the Ontario Legislature.

## II

Despite its release over thirty years ago, many of the compensation challenges outlined in the First Report of the Ontario Commission continue to afflict the Ontario Parliament. Integrity Commission Gregory T. Evan’s 2001 report echoed the Camp Commission’s finding that M.P.P.s face burgeoning responsibilities and workloads and Commissioner Evans made the following observation:

“Members’ duties have expanded in the last decade. Our continuously changing economic and social situations create complex issues, the solutions for which require input from Members who have the necessary experience, skills and knowledge.”<sup>25</sup>

Despite the clear need for highly skilled legislators, the absence of a pension for Ontario legislatures is a chief cause of the stagnating composition of the Provincial parliament. As Commissioner Evans has observed, the transition from the former defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan meant that:

---

<sup>24</sup> Osborne (2006) p.13

<sup>25</sup> Evans, 2001, p.7

“Members from 1995 forward had virtually no pension plan if one were to recognize the purpose of such arrangement to be the provision of some income security in their retirement years for members who were defeated or who retired.”<sup>26</sup>

The importance of this the absence of a proper pension has been underscored by many longstanding members of the assembly who invariably recount stories of former colleagues whose survival in their post-parliamentary career hinged on the pensions they received. MPP Norm Sterling has a vivid recollection of the tragic suicide of a Liberal member who lost his seat and experienced a deep depression that was partially due to his inability to re-integrate into the workforce despite holding a PhD in theology. At the time former Premier Bob Rae observed that this tragedy “causes all of us to really reflect on some of the challenges and difficulties of public life as well as the difficult transitions that are involved in coming in and coming out of politics.”<sup>27</sup> Former Speaker of the Assembly, David Warner, recalls that a colleague of his, who served for fourteen years, was unable to find work for years and narrowly avoided destitution because of the pension he received.<sup>28</sup>

Presently, the absence of pensions influences the composition of the Ontario Legislature in two respects. First, the lack of retirement income security for members is increasing the Members’ predisposition toward high incumbency. Second, the absence of adequate retirement income security for members inhibits the entry of the young and middle-aged individuals to provincial politics; thus narrowing the pool of talent from which members of the Ontario Legislature are drawn.

The recent provincial by-election in Haliburton-Kawartha-Lakes is highly instructive as to impact of the absence of Members’ pensions on the fluidity of the membership of the Ontario legislature. M.P.P.s and officials within the highest ranks of the Conservative caucus maintain that the chief obstacle that the Conservative Party faced in locating of a seat for the Conservative leader John Tory to contest in the by-election was the inability of current members to sustain themselves financially following their legislative careers. One member of the Conservative caucus notes that this is a challenge for members across party lines and asserts that he is personally aware of a great many current members who “hang on to their seats simply because they have no income to go to.”<sup>29</sup> Ironically, former M.P.P. Laurie Scott received considerable criticism within her riding due to the widespread and erroneous belief amongst her constituent that her decision to give up her seat was the result of her receipt of an extremely lucrative compensation and pension package. The fact that Ms. Scott received the equivalent of approximately one year’s salary did little to counteract the circulation of cartoons and reports containing grossly exaggerated depictions of the compensation that she received.<sup>30</sup> Thus the Haliburton-Kawartha- Lakes by-election highlights both the low turnover within membership of the

---

<sup>26</sup> Evans, 2001, p.8

<sup>27</sup> Hansard, November 14 1995

<sup>28</sup> Interviews with Norm Sterling and David Warner

<sup>29</sup> Interviews with former and current members of the Conservative caucus.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with former M.P.P. (and Chief of Staff to the interim Conservative Leader) Laurie Scott, April 14 2009

Ontario Legislature membership that is caused by the absence of adequate retirement income security for members and the general public's tendency to hold harbor misconceptions about the compensation and pensions received by members of the Provincial Parliament.

The absence of sufficient retirement income security for M.P.P.s also presents major challenges to the ability of political parties to compete with the private and public sectors in the recruitment of highly skilled individuals. Even those members who tend to oppose increases to MPP compensation are quick to draw attention to extraordinary compensation packages received by public sector executives. One such member, Cheri DiNovo, points to the high salaries drawn by executive civil servants such as the President of the Ontario Power Generation who earned over a million dollars in salary in 2007 as evidence of "an emerging unelected and all-powerful powerful shadow government," the extreme power and authority of which overshadows that of elected representatives.<sup>31</sup>

Both Greg Sorbara, Former President of the Ontario Liberal Party, and Laurie Scott, chair of the Conservative Election Readiness portfolio, voiced similar views about the challenges that parties face in recruiting high caliber candidates to run in provincial elections. Sorbara notes that business owners experience considerable disincentives in running for office and asserts that his personal involvement in politics was made possible by his (unique) ability to remove himself from his commercial affairs. Similarly, Scott asserts that in her experience as a recruiter for the Conservative Party, the job insecurity inherent to serving as an elected representative coupled with the absence of a pension prevents many highly skilled and talented individuals from entering provincial politics. Scott also stresses that since (potential) legislators are overwhelmingly motivated by a desire to help others and have a history of involvement in their communities, "(they) are willing to made a sacrifice but that sacrifice cannot be unreasonably high." Scott also notes that recruitment for provincial parties is further challenged by the more competitive compensation that the federal government and many municipalities extend to their politicians.<sup>32</sup> MPP Norm Sterling asserts that the cost of serving as an elected representative at the provincial level is particularly high for younger people in their 30's and 40's who have young families and face the high opportunity cost of leaving their professions during what are typically the highest income-earning years of their lives. Sterling further points out that as a young lawyer he was willing to sacrifice the high salary that he earned in order to run for politics because of the extension of a defined benefit plan to all members during the late 1970s.<sup>33</sup>

Members surveyed for the purpose of this paper generally qualified their assertions that pensions undermine recruitment by stating that the increasing disempowerment of individual legislators is a further disincentive for many potential party candidates. These

---

<sup>31</sup> Interview with MPP Cheri DiNovo, May 7, 2009

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Laurie Scott, April 14 2009

<sup>33</sup> Interveiw with Norm Sterling, May 11 2009

assertions indicate that the continued relevance of the following comment on the legislator autonomy voiced by the Ontario Commission on the Legislature:

There is a recognizable current in public opinion, which believes that once a government's leadership is determined at a general election, then that leadership "runs" the province with a minimum of interference until the next election. When this opinion is pushed too far, it leave an inconsequential role in the Legislature for the ordinary Member supporting the government and only a peripheral, critical role for Members of Parties in opposition."<sup>34</sup>

Thus, the perception that individual legislature perform a highly circumscribed role coupled with the limited income security for members' once they leave office appear to function to inhibit a large number of individuals- particularly young to middle-aged professionals- from entering provincial politics.

This paper has outlined, in great depth, the financial limitations attached to role of Ontario Legislators and it would be prudent to note that far from being a group of overly disgruntled complainants M.P.P.s invariably exhibit enthusiasm for their jobs and characterize their work provincial legislators as fulfilling, stimulating, and generally worthwhile. That said, members from all three provincial parties have cited the absence of pensions for members' as a major hindrance to the personal lives of M.P.P.s , the recruitment of high caliber party candidates and the generally integrity of the provincial parliament. The reinstatement of pensions is likely to extend major benefits to the Ontario Legislature since:

"Given that the political value of legislative seats is likely to increase with the level of professionalization- as well as the personal or financial value- competition may increase proportionally. That is, more politically ambitious people will be attracted to service, especially those holding lower political offices."<sup>35</sup>

The groundwork for the reinstatement of pensions for provincial members of parliament was laid by the 2006 report of the Integrity Commissioner in he stated:

"I recommend that in the immediate future members' pensions and severance arrangements should be reviewed. Pension consultants should be retained for that purpose. At a minimum members should have no lesser pension than those accruing to members of the Ontario Public Service."<sup>36</sup>

However if history provides any indication of the future, the reinstatement of M.P.P. pensions will require a concerted effort on the part of political leaders to resist the urge to capitalize on the controversy that the reinstatement of pensions in sure to ignite.

---

<sup>34</sup> Ontario Commission on the Legislature, First Report, May 1973, p.4

<sup>35</sup> Squire, p.73

<sup>36</sup> Osborne, 2006, p.13

## Works Cited

1. Ontario Commission on the Legislature, First Report, May 1973
2. Bill 82: An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act to provide an arm's length process to determine members' compensation, Chapter 15, Statutes of Ontario, 2001
3. Hon Gregory T. Evans, C.M., O. Ont., Q.C. Integrity Commissioner, *Report Pursuant to Section 1 of the MPP Compensation Reform Act (Arm's Length Process)*, 2001
4. Hon Coulter A. Osborne, Integrity Commissioner, *Report of the Honourable Coulter A. Osborne Re: MPP Compensation Reform Act*, March 9 2004
5. Legislative Assembly Retirement Allowances Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. L.11

6. Legislative Assembly of Ontario, *Guide to Members' Allowances and Service and Members' Support and Caucus Staff*, Fall 2007
7. *Report of the Honourable Coulter A. Osborne Re: MPP Compensation Reform Act*, December 2006
8. *News Release: Government Gets Rid Of Gold Plated Pensions*, April 10, 1996, <http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/english/media/1996/mppfi4.html>
9. Report of the Speaker's Commission on Members' Compensation, June 14 2000,