(22) Ontario Politics and Government: A Reading List

Because G.P. Murray Research Limited is often requested to provide background information about Ontario politics and government, we compiled the following list of nearly sixty books to help clients and subscribers better understand the historical context and significance of day-to-day developments at Queen’s Park.

Ontario’s traditional pre-occupation with national politics formerly militated against attention to provincial affairs, on which the past literature was pitifully thin. But there has been substantial recent growth in this field, with the publication of many worthwhile books by politicians, academics and journalists.

This book list, which is briefly annotated and divided into basic categories, does not pretend to be at all comprehensive. In particular, it does not include the increasing specialized literature which addresses many important policy fields, such as energy, local government and taxation. For the sake of simplicity, we have not listed individual articles from scholarly journals, which are often not readily accessible outside the academic world.

We acknowledge with thanks the help of the many academics and other aficionados of provincial politics who commented on the initial draft of this list. We assume full responsibility for any errors and omissions as well as for the judgements offered in the annotations.

Those books which are in print can be ordered from a good bookstore – such as the excellent Ben McNally Books at 366 Bay Street, Toronto, ON M5H 4B2; tel. 416-361-0032; e-mail info@benmcnallybooks.com. Many of the older books are, of course, no longer in print but most are obtainable in libraries. Call GPMRL at 416-367-3777 if you have queries about the availability of any items on this list.

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G.P. Murray Research Limited has updated this list from time to time. If you wish to suggest additions to or deletions, please contact Graham Murray via email or by telephone: graham@gpmurray-research.com / 416-367-3777 x 111.

(Note that the above introduction was updated in January 2013 but because the last overall revision of the reading list itself was in August 2001, it does not cite books published since that date. Another update is warranted but the “substantial recent growth” in publication of books on Ontario noted above has in fact waned considerably in recent years, making for relatively few recent omissions. There are, however, three books written by TV-Ontario’s Steve Paikin over the years 2001 to 2005 which deserve to be inserted into the book list now without waiting on the time to complete a comprehensive revision. Also included is Michael Bryant’s autobiography.)
GENERAL


Thomas J. Courchene (with Colin Telmer), *From Heartland to North American Region State* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) – This provocative analysis, from Canada’s most industrious intellectual trail-blazer, made a considerable splash. It argues that Ontario’s increasingly north-south trading orientation has weakened trans-Canada connections relative to transnational North American interactions, eroding Ontario’s support for equalization payments and other east-west national programs.

Stephen Dale, *Lost in the Suburbs: A Political Travelogue* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1999) – Ottawa writer Dale, who has lived in the Orange County hinterland of L.A., plumbed the ‘905′ area to identify the source of the PCs’ suburban strength. His reflective and well written study reviews planning theory, talks to political activists (working in the 1997 federal general election in Vaughan-King-Aurora) and explores the impact of high-cost, high-stress life in Toronto’s edge cities to which the Harris government this year responded with its ‘SmartGrowth’ strategy. Writing just after the 1999 provincial election, Dale expected that “urban/suburban voting splits” would be here to stay (though V-K-A’s political allegiance changed dramatically in the June 2001 provincial by-election).


John Ibbitson, *Loyal No More: Ontario’s Struggle for a Separate Destiny* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2001) – Ibbitson followed his *Promised Land* with this analysis of the ever more conflicted relationship between the Ontario and national governments, arising from the historic strife between Queen’s Park and Ottawa and now charged by the predominantly north-south polarity of Ontario trade. The author currently is Ottawa bureau chief for the *Globe and Mail*.

Eli Mandel and David Taras, eds., *A Passion for Identity: Introduction to Canadian Studies* (Toronto: Methuen, 1987) – Contains a chapter by Robert Drummond on whether there is an ‘Ontario identity’.


Hugh Thorburn, ed., *Party Politics in Canada* – 5th ed. (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1985) – This comparative politics text includes an essay by Robert J. Williams on Ontario’s federal and provincial party systems.

Graham White, ed., *The Government and Politics of Ontario* – 5th edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) – This is the latest edition of a text initially published in 1975 under the editorship of Donald C. MacDonald. The best known compilation of academic essays on the subject and widely assigned in the growing number of university courses on Ontario politics, this book covers fundamental forces, governmental institutions, the political process and important recent changes. (Previous editions of this text, all out of print, also contain many interesting and important essays.)


Randall White, *Ontario Since 1985* (Toronto: eastend books, 1998) – The newest addition to Ontario political scholarship is a sequel to Randall White’s *Ontario: 1610-1985*, now in its fourth edition. White’s latest, 320-page book sketches basic trends to explain how Ontario developed ‘yesterday’ and then outlines the Peterson, Rae and Harris regimes which have governed the province ‘today’.

**ELECTION RESULTS**

Centre for Election Studies, Department of Political Science, University of Waterloo (E-mail: ces@artshh.watstar.uwaterloo.ca.) – Canada’s most complete collection of provincial and federal election results.

Chief Election Office, *Returns from the Records, 1999* (Scarborough: Ontario Election Office, 1999) – Summary provincial results as well as detailed riding results are published following each provincial election. (Note that the adoption of the federal riding boundaries reduced the number of Ontario seats contested in the next election by 27, from 130 to 103, rendering meaningful comparisons with previous contests very much more difficult.)


ridings adopted prior to the 1999 election, together with detailed electoral histories of the provincial ridings (in by-elections as well as general elections), lists of candidates and riding demographic characteristics.


**GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS**


David R. Cameron and Graham White, *Cycling into Saigon: The Conservative Transition in Ontario* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000) – This well written analysis of the process by which the Harris PCs took over the Ontario government in 1995 is informed by extensive interviews with political and bureaucratic insiders. Key documentary sources are appended and the book, which adds substantially to the Canadian literature on governmental transitions, also provides clear explanatory notes on sources.


Edward E. Stewart, *Cabinet Government in Ontario: A View from Inside* (Halifax: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1989) – A trenchant analysis of the Ontario government’s central agency decision-making process in the Davis era, shaped by the changes proposed by the Committee on Government Productivity. Dr. Stewart served Davis as deputy at University Affairs and then Education before assuming the commanding role in the Premier’s Office. In 1975, Stewart was also named Secretary of Cabinet, heading the OPS until his 1985 retirement.

Graham White, *The Ontario Legislature: A Political Analysis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989) – A detailed assessment of how the Legislature is structured and works, which was
unfortunately published just before the sweeping rule changes adopted in October 1989. (Further important changes were adopted in 1997.)

See also the chapters by Graham White and Richard Loreto in Part II: Governmental Institutions of *The Government and Politics of Ontario* – 5th ed.

**HISTORY**


W.J. Keith, *Literary Images of Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) – An eclectic compilation, extending from the earliest European settlement to the works of Margaret Atwood, published in the Ontario Historical Studies Series.


EARLIER PREMIERS


A. Margaret Evans, *Sir Oliver Mowat* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) – A study of the leading figure of Ontario’s Liberal ascendancy who served as premier from 1872-96.


Charles W. Humphries, *‘Honest Enough to be Bold’: The Life and Times of Sir James Pliny Whitney* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985) – Scholarly biography of the Tory premier who governed in the decade preceding World War I.


Neil McKenty, *Mitch Hepburn* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967) – A pioneering biography of by far the most colourful premier Ontario has ever had.

Peter Oliver, *G. Howard Ferguson: Ontario Tory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977) – Among the best volumes in the Ontario Historical Studies Series, Oliver’s biography of Ferguson covers the recovery of the Tories after their 1919 loss to the UFO and traces the high-water mark of Orange domination of the province’s political system.

John T. Saywell, *‘Just call me Mitch’: The Life of Mitchell F. Hepburn* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991) – In another of the OHSS biographies of Ontario premiers, Saywell presents an absorbing analysis of the feisty and combative Liberal premier whose successive 1934 and 1937 victories and turbulent handling of provincial affairs immediately preceded 42 years of Tory rule.

**LIBERAL PARTY**

Michael Bryant, *28 Seconds: a True Story of Addiction, Tragedy and Hope* (Toronto: Viking, 2012) – An autobiographical account of the former Ontario Attorney-General’s road encounter with aggressive bike courier Darcy Sheppard which destroyed the former’s political career and ended the latter’s life.

Georgette Gagnon and Dan Rath, *Not Without Cause: David Peterson’s Fall from Grace* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1991) – A critical picture, replete with quotes from unidentified insiders, of how the Peterson regime stumbled into its disastrous 1990 defeat by the NDP.

Ian Scott, Q.C., with Neil McCormick, *To Make a Difference: a memoir* (Toronto: Stoddart, 2001) – The writing of this memoir, covering Scott’s distinguished legal career as well as his pivotal role in the 1985-90 Peterson government, had to overcome the severe obstacle of Scott’s 1995 stroke. The political memoir makes full use of his previously written unpublished diary of the 1985 election campaign and skilful interviewing by former York U. professor McCormick. This breezily written and often amusing book covers Scott’s heavy agenda of reforms to Ontario’s legal system and addresses how determinedly he separated his private life as a homosexual man from his public lives in the law and politics.

Patti Starr, *Tempting Fate: A Cautionary Tale of Power and Politics* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993) – An engaging though obviously self-serving first-person account of the fund-raising shenanigans known as “the Patti Starr affair” which did so much to besmirch the reputation of the Peterson government.

**NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY**


Gerald L. Caplan, *The Dilemma of Canadian Socialism: The CCF in Ontario* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973) – This work by the most prominent media commentator with NDP ties updates his graduate thesis, covering the Ontario fortunes of the CCF from 1932-45.


optimistic book by the long-time ONDP leader, covering his tireless efforts as a party organizer from the early 1950s through to his 1970 replacement as leader by Stephen Lewis. This new edition of MacDonald’s memoirs, originally published in 1988, updates his take on the party and the trade union movement.

Patrick Monahan, Storming the Pink Palace: The NDP in Power: A Cautionary Tale (Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1995) – A critical assessment of the Bob Rae regime by a law professor who had served as a constitutional advisor to Rae’s predecessor, David Peterson, and is a frequent media pundit, presently being among the Globe and Mail contributors who file columns on Ontario politics.

J.T. Morley, Secular Socialists: The CCF/NDP in Ontario, a Biography (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1984) – An academic study which posits the dubious thesis that parties have a ‘personality’ analogous to that of human individuals.

Bob Rae, From Protest to Power: Personal Reflections on a Life in Politics (Toronto: Viking, 1996) – The former premier’s well written bid to shape the historical record of the 1990-95 NDP government. [Rae’s best-selling book was reissued in 1997 as a paperback with an 11-page Afterword which quotes even more extensively from Edmund Burke and reiterates his scorn for NDP activists and trade unionists who are “more comfortable with the politics of protest than with the politics of power”.

Thomas Walkom, Rae Days: The Rise and Follies of the NDP (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1994) – A critical centre-left assessment of the Rae government by the Toronto Star’s former Queen’s Park columnist, who previously filed similar commentary for the Globe and Mail.

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Christina Blizzard, Right Turn: How the Tories Took Ontario (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1995). – This brief volume, the first book on the 1995 election, offers a friendly take on Mike Harris by the Toronto Sun’s Queen’s Park columnist.

Claire Hoy, Bill Davis: A Biography (Toronto: Methuen, 1985) – Given Bill Davis’s marked disinclination to reveal himself, this admiring but not wholly uncritical assessment of Davis by the former Queen’s Park columnist of the Toronto Sun is likely to be the closest thing to a rounded study of Ontario’s premier from February 1971 to January 1985.

Brooke Jeffery, Hard Right Turn: The New Face of Neo-Conservatism in Canada (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1999) – This book by a LIB activist and Concordia political scientist claims to be the first detailed analysis of neo-conservatism in Canada. The three chapters on the Harris PC regime in this remarkably tendentious diatribe are packed with mangled names, elementary factual errors, snide put-downs and bizarre misjudgements.

John Ibbitson, Promised Land: Inside the Mike Harris Revolution (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1997) – The first book-length analysis of the Harris government, by a Southam correspondent who is now Queen’s Park columnist for the National Post, offers an insightful and fair assessment of “a government in progress”, carrying the story up to August 1997.
Jonathan Manthorpe, The Power and the Tories: Ontario Politics -- 1943 to the Present (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974) -- A thoroughly absorbing tale of “how power is seized and held and passed on”, stressing the post-war Tory genius for refreshing the party’s image by selecting a new leader every decade, and presenting a study of the travails of the party in the early Davis era.


Diana Ralph, André Regimbald and Néree St.-Amand, eds., Open for Business / Closed to People (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1997) -- This compilation of 16 essays by “progressive scholars” (many of them social work professors from Ottawa) and various activists offers a hostile assessment of the Harris government’s first year in power, and proposes strategies to fight back against neo-conservatism by confronting its corporate supporters.

Hugh Segal, No Surrender: Reflections of A Happy Warrior in the Tory Crusade (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1996) -- The memoirs of the irrepressible Segal focus mainly on federal politics but also deal extensively with the Davis government, which this well-known commentator served as a political aide and senior official, handling important dossiers like energy and the constitution as well as playing key partisan policy and organizational roles.

Rosemary Speirs, Out of the Blue: The Fall of the Tory Dynasty in Ontario (Toronto: Macmillan, 1986) -- A study by the Toronto Star’s former Queen’s Park columnist, and past Globe and Mail bureau chief, of how the belated departure of Bill Davis set the stage for the Frank Miller government to be supplanted in 1985 by the Liberals, forming a minority government based on a written ‘accord’ with the NDP.

David Tsubouchi, Gambatte: Generations of Perseverance and Politics, A Memoir (Toronto: ECW Press, 2013 – An absorbing memoir by the Community & Social Services minister in the Harris government excoriated for suggesting that welfare recipients should hunt for dented cans of tuna. Tsubouchi survived his ordeal by Common Sense Revolution to acquire a reputation for decency and humour. Unlike most politicians, he fully credits the work of aides.

Gord Walker (with G.P. Williams), A Conservative Canada (Sutton West: The Paget Press, 1983) -- Walker attracted massive scorn for publishing this slim volume advocating a sharp right-turn away from the centrist course of the Davis PC government which he served as cabinet minister. Yet as Jim Coyle pointed out in an Ottawa Citizen column when the Harris government was formed in 1995, Walker turned out to be a pioneer in advocating smaller government, workfare, privatization, victims’ rights and every other central precept of the Common Sense Revolution.