

GENOCIDE RECOGNITION BY ONTARIO LONG OVERDUE

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 **Keghart.com Team Editorial**, 19 October 2011 

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As an independent voice in the Armenian community, Keghart.com would first off congratulate all the parties, including the Greens for their accomplishments and the exemplary democratic process they displayed during the election campaign, notwithstanding the occasional negative ads. We don't intend to speculate here on how Ontario's economy, healthcare and education will evolve in the next four years. These are the priorities of the majority of Ontarians, based on various polls and surveys. Discussions and prescriptions abound.

During the pre-election period Keghart.com's foremost concern, as an Armenian opinion outlet, was the issue of the Genocide of Armenians and whether the provincial government would finally do the right thing and join jurisdictions that have recognized the Genocide, including the Canadian federal government. The pre-election Liberal government had disappointed the Armenian-Ontario community on several occasions, despite many MPPs of the same party's support of motions to honor the victims of the first and amply-documented Genocide of the 20th century.

As pointed out in Keghart.com articles, the leaders of the two opposition parties have favored such a motion on three occasions. There is no reason to believe that they and their caucuses would retreat from their positions regarding the acknowledgment of the Genocide.

The new balance of power offers an opportunity to Armenian lobbyists--of whatever ideological inclination--to take advantage of the vulnerability of the minority government and make it clear to Premier McGuinty that the Armenian community will not tolerate the government's anti-Armenian stand. Now that the community is aware how the previous Liberal government conducted itself, there will be more disenchantment by Armenian-Ontarians. This may very well lead to abstention or outright opposition to Liberal candidates in future elections. After all, each party's primary objective is to get elected. That's the nature of politics, irrespective of philosophies and platforms. Granted, the votes that the community generates are not great in numbers, but ridings which depend on a few hundred votes to tip the balance may be in play in future elections.

It's probably not out of place to ask Liberal MPPs, who traditionally have been in favor of the community's concerns and are supported by Armenians, how come their voices are not heard when the matter of the Genocide of Armenians comes up in the legislature? Is it only lip-service that they provide to the community? Don't they feel, or aren't they accountable for their promises? What do they have to show beside empty promises? Have they taken a principled stand and faced their leader--who should feel shame for marking the Holocaust, the Rwandan Genocide, the Ukrainian Holodomor but dismissing the Genocide of Armenians?

We call our community leaders, foremost the Armenian National Committee of Canada (ANCC), the activists, all those who have connections with the Ontario Liberal establishment to tell Premier McGuinty and his close associates that the Armenian community is frustrated and angered by his actions and is determined to see Queen's Park back on track, eager to commemorate the Genocide of Armenians in no unequivocal terms, like preceding governments have done. Likewise, the leadership of the two opposition parties should be kept on our radar so that they don't renege on their promises but continue to support the just demands of the Armenian community. Finally, with their combined majority in the legislature and friends in the Liberal ranks lift the shame off Queen's Park.

The 100th anniversary of the Genocide is fast approaching. If Armenian-Ontarians are incapable of getting together--whether they be independents, supporters or members of whatever party in Ontario--and forge a strategy to realize our just demand then shame on us. Let's get serious and combine our efforts to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Genocide together and with our provincial legislature.

