

# TOLERATING DISSENT AND HEALTHY CRITICISM

*Posted on October 2, 2011 by Keghart*



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*The following commentary was received by Keghart.com on the eve of election day in Ontario. We are publishing it as a stand-alone article because it's more comprehensive than a regular, 200-word comment and touches upon issues related to our community beyond the narrow scope of the elections.-*

**-Editor.**

Posted by Simon, 5 October 2011

I have been reading Keghart.com's editorials and comments with great interest. They are refreshing and enlightening. You were able to break the political activism and lobbying taboo of our community which a handful of unelected and unaccountable people think are their God-given right and that no other Armenian should be "meddling," or get involved or express an opinion. Your editorials of last six months about the above subjects opened the eyes of our community and made them cognizant of the abuse and mismanagement of our most sacred issues. I am not surprised that you have been the target of such a vicious campaign launched by Bedig and his ilk. Unfortunately, the taboos do not exist only in Turkey and Azerbaijan, but also within us.

It is amusing to read Bedig's comments about "credibility" of the materials published by your editorial team and the "Armenians for Just Ontario." Does Bedig need more credible sources than the many members of the provincial parliament and some righteous staffers of the Liberal Party who spilled the beans on the anti-Armenian attitude of their leader? MPPs Peter Shurman and Michael Prue even spoke publicly about these issues in the presence of Bedig's friends and the whole community during this year's April 24 commemoration at the Armenian Youth Centre. Frank Klees is another member who I am sure has many more stories to tell about McGuinty and his policies vis-a-vis our community. What about politician David Caplan and his mother whom our genius lobbyists support blindly? I am wondering who is trying to take our community and your readers for fools. Bedig lectures us on the virtue of not "putting our eggs in one basket" and gambling the "Armenian Community's future." Before becoming righteous and starting his sermon he should pose that same question to his bright lobbyist' friends who last year put their eggs in the basket of George Smitherman during the last mayoral elections. Who did this ragtag group of activists and lobbyists consult in the Armenian community before gambling Ontario "Armenian Community's future"? Can Bedig tell your readers how did his friends try to "mend ties" with Mayor Ford after their royal screw-up? Or is it a state secret his friends can not divulge? I am confident that if his friends made serious efforts to mend our ties, we would have heard about it through the usually inflated press releases of his buddies. From what I have read in the Armenian media, it was Bishop Galstianian who met the mayor, congratulated him and mended the ties.

Every one is in agreement that there are many honorable members in the Liberal Party. The issue is not the Liberal Party but its leader. In the past large numbers of Liberals supported our cause. "Armenians for Just Ontario" alluded to that fact when they stated "It's relevant to mention that in 1986 Liberal Premier of Ontario, Hon. David Peterson, proclaimed 'I am pleased to recognize April 24,

1986 as ARMENIAN MEMORIAL DAY and to commend its observance." So the issue is not the Liberal Party but Mr. McGuinty and his policies. Let's not muddy the issue and confuse our people. I am wondering what did the less than handful of people who are hired by the McGuinty office, some of his ministers, and members do to enlighten their leader.

Once again, as Hayouhi did last week in responding to another article, Bedig falls in the same tarp of hasty reaction, name calling, uncivil discourse, and an attempt to deflect the focus of the discussion to a frivolous and unworthy topic. It would have been a much more beneficial and healthy dialogue if Bedig would have argued on the merits of the "Armenians for Just Ontario" article and your editorial which is the record of Dalton McGuinty vis-a-vis our community's vital issues. It would have been helpful if Bedig, his activist friends and McGuinty's Armenian staffers responded to the above MPPs and others well-documented facts.

Character assassination and uncivil outbursts by a handful of unelected and unaccountable egocentric individuals will not create dialogue and will not advance our community's interest. These individuals should learn to tolerate dissent and healthy criticism. After all, no one is infallible and we are living in a democratic country, not a totalitarian state.

