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Ford has returned to his original form: a deliberate lack of transparency, cherry-picking data and pandering to corporate interests.

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Ford's folly a return to form

Published on December 16, 2020 — in Opinion — by Trevor Hutchinson

Like a lot of people, I was pleasantly surprised at Doug Ford's handling of the COVID-19 crisis early in the pandemic.

Despite a couple of early missteps, he was fairly consistent in his messaging and worked well with the federal government — as it supplied the province billions of dollars in COVID support — avoiding the hyper-partisanship of other conservative premiers.

premier likes Kawartha Dairy ice cream. I do, too; it's the best and we all know that. But during the summer of 2020 we didn't need a selfie of our leader eating ice cream. Just like we didn't need another image of him doing that this week. We needed a leader heeding the advice of epidemiologists. We needed a leader who prized our health over "owning" the teachers' unions. Heck, even a leader who could look up "second wave" on Wikipedia might have done the trick.

Looking back, we shouldn't have been fooled by Ford's brief flash of competency. One of his first acts, only days into his term, was to eliminate the office of the Chief Scientist of Ontario. It was a clear nod to his base of developers and climate-change deniers: pesky things like science and facts won't get in the way of business. Later, he would be the first premier to fight, in court, the release of his ministerial mandates. (He is still fighting to prohibit us from knowing what he wants his ministers to do to our province.)

Ford has returned to his original form: a deliberate lack of transparency, cherry-picking data and pandering to corporate interests.

Take the staffing issues in long-term care (LTC) homes, as one example. Ford definitely can't be blamed for all of the problems in LTC — that is a historic and collective failure.



TREVOR
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But Ford stalled in the summer. Instead of concentrating on detailed plans for what he was told would happen in the fall, he took a "vacay" from responsibility. Buoyed by rising polls, he embarked on a campaign-style victory lap.

Don't get me wrong; I am glad that the

But he had months (and the federal funding) to get a new generation of personal support workers ready and adequately trained in time for the second wave. A second wave he knew was coming. A second wave he knew would hit LTC hardest.

Ford's plan? Remove 50 per cent of the work done by PSWs and have it done by Resident Support Aides, who will make on average \$16 an hour. Many experts believe this is the exact opposite of what is needed and is just further pandering to the LTC industry.

The folksy "I'm up all night"-isms will not help us. Thoughts and prayers are just that: thoughts and prayers. We need bold leadership. We needed it in the summer of 2020 and we didn't get it. But it's still possible to have it now.

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A graduate of the University of Toronto, Trevor Hutchinson is a songwriter, writer and bookkeeper. He serves as Contributing Editor at The Lindsay Advocate. He lives with his fiancée and their five kids in Lindsay.

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