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CHRISTIE BLATCHFORD, KEVIN DONOVAN AND LISA TAYLOR IN CONVERSATION WITH EDWARD KEENAN BEYOND THE HEADLINES: HAVE THE MEDIA TREATED MAYOR FORD FAIRLY?

Chairman: **Noble Chummar**

President, The Empire Club of Canada

Head Table Guests

Dr. Gordon McIvor, Executive Director, National Executive Forum on Public Property, and Director, The Empire Club of Canada; Daryl Chong, President, Greater Toronto Apartments Association; Capt. The Rev. Daniel Saugh, The Queen's York Rangers Regimental Chaplain; Haaruun Dhubat, Student, Ryerson University School of Journalism; and M.J. Perry, Vice-President and Owner, Mr. Discount, and Director, The Empire Club of Canada.

Introduction by Noble Chummar

Well, Mayor Ford is no stranger to being the subject of several news stories. The events that have transpired over the past few months have made the Mayor of Toronto an international celebrity. A video that, allegedly, shows the mayor of Canada's largest city smoking crack-cocaine has generated headlines around the world. That's probably the first time the word "crack-cocaine" has ever been used at this podium. News of the video, which was not produced by the journalist, has also raised questions, some of them for the first time in Canada on the way in which journalists and newspapers gather and report on people and events. Ethical journalism continues to be an increasingly salient issue as the topic remains at the forefront of Toronto's political and social landscape. Now, despite all of these reports and allegations, Mayor Ford recently has returned a poll of 49-per-cent approval, suggesting that he's almost as popular now as he was in 2010. This, no doubt, raises additional questions of his reelectability. How far should journalists go? Where's that fine line? These sensational stories have made newspapers and other media outlets millions of dollars. What is right? What is wrong? Who is right? Who is wrong?

To explore those questions today, we are fortunate to have with us a panel of celebrated journalists, who are not only directly engaged with this topic, but are authorities on the subject at hand.

Christie Blatchford has written for all four Toronto-based newspapers. She has won a national newspaper award for column writing, and, in 2008, won the Governor General's Literary Award for non-fiction. Christie is currently a National Post and Post Media columnist.

Kevin Donovan is the investigative editor at the Toronto Star and a senior reporter. He has won the Michener Award for public service. By the way, Governor General Michener was a president of the Empire Club of Canada. He has won three national newspaper awards, and three Canadian Association of Journalist awards.

Edward Keenan serves as the senior editor and lead columnist at the Grid Magazine in Toronto. An eight-time finalist at the National Magazine Awards, he was the top editor at Eye Weekly. He is a contributing editor at Spacing Magazine and writes widely on politics, sports, and culture.

And finally, Lisa Taylor. She's a good one because she's a lawyer. She teaches at the School of Journalism at Ryerson University. She spent a decade with CBC radio and television in a wide range of journalistic roles including co-creator and host of two nationally broadcast series. Among many other courses, Lisa, a former lawyer, teaches law and ethics in the practice of journalism. Take it away Mr. Keenan.

Edward Keenan

Thank you. Thank you Mr. President, members of the Empire Club. I'd like to thank you for inviting me and us here today to talk about this topic. I work at Grid Magazine, which maybe people think is a hipster magazine. At the risk of sounding like a hipster, I was into this Rob Ford stuff before anybody.

I wrote a profile of him in 2006, at which point we were already—those of us who were at City Hall—asking questions such as, “Is this guy for real?”

Actually, immediately after I wrote that profile, I started getting asked questions about whether this type of coverage was fair. It's a question that I've been discussing with people for a long time that's recently become a worldwide subject of discussion—whether or not the kinds of stories that tend to appear about Rob Ford are fair to the mayor. I think, as we've already heard, the panel is really well positioned to discuss that. I've heard questions about

fairness to the mayor about policy issues for a long time—transit, the budget, and his relationship with labour unions, but I've also for a long, long time heard them about stories that seem to be about his personal life. Stories about when the Toronto Sun published his mug shot on the front of the paper during the campaign or when he was thrown out of a hockey game continued after he became mayor, but they have been blown up, as we all know, in the last several months because of the reports of a video that appears, allegedly, to show him smoking what appears to be crack-cocaine. After that occurred, a series of investigations and crime stories essentially surrounded the video or the circumstances in which this video became public. We're lucky enough today to have one of the three people in the world who have publicly said that they've seen the video that kicked off that scandal. Kevin Donovan, with his colleague Robin Doolittle, who is also here, viewed that video and reported on it, and that kicked off the whole thing. So, I thought it might be interesting to kick off this thing by asking Kevin to tell us a little bit about the decision to publish that, the process of publishing it, and maybe that will lead us into some of the issues that we've been asked to discuss today. Kevin?

Kevin Donovan

Sure, thanks a lot, and thank you for having all of us here today. I'd like to start by saying I wish I had the video. If I had the video, we would have shown it after that fabulous Empire Club video, but we're not there yet.

A picture is worth a thousand words. I guess a video would be worth a thousand words. I'll give you four words: The video is real. I saw it. Robin saw it. Did you notice the stir, Robin, when people heard you were here? We saw it, and everybody would like to see it. Just very briefly, it all came about because the Star has been looking into activities of Mayor Rob Ford for quite some time. Robin and I published a story with the full backing of our editors in March about the Garrison Ball, and how Mayor

Ford was asked to leave because he was incoherent, stumbling, rambling, and clearly impaired. We wrote that story.

That story prompted a phone call to the Star on April 1, an interesting day. We were told that there was a video of Mayor Ford, and Robin and I, with the backing of our editors, set out to try to get that video. We saw the video. We saw it three times as we've described in the pages of the Toronto Star. It is absolutely real. I can guarantee you, in my 30-year career, I've never seen anything so dramatic and so upsetting as a person who believes in this city and thinks that we need to have good leaders in our city. We saw the video. We then set about trying to get it.

We were not able to get it, but Robin and I with the help of colleagues at the Star began reporting on the story—trying to find out what we could find out about the people behind it. In the midst of doing that, Gawker, the U.S. website, published the story. I think it was about 8:15 p.m. on a day in May, and Michael Cooke, our wonderful boss, summoned all of us in. I think I was on a soccer field coaching at that time. We all came into the Star, a whole bunch of us, everybody who's at our table here today, and we got to work.

We contacted the mayor. We tried to get comments from everybody involved. The mayor's chief of staff hung up on us. We received "no comment" from the mayor. We took a letter to his house and to his brother's house. It was classic Ford lack of response. We did everything we could in that three-hour period to try to get a response. We felt that we had no choice with the news already blazing around the world about the existence of this video, to tell what we had seen, what Robin and I saw. It was very clear that we had to publish that story, and we did.

Since then, all of us, including my great colleague Jayme Poisson, who's here with many other people from the Star, my whole investigative team has been involved in it. Working on doing stories and publishing more stories. One of the best is simply the story about how the mayor's people close to him were trying to find

the video. Why do you try to find a video if a video doesn't exist?

Edward Keenan

That leads to a lot of questions, I think—some for journalists, and some for people who are not professional journalists. One of those is that you were working on a story; you were still working on it. There may be an assumption that some people make that, if you're still working on it, it's not ready to go yet. But it became ready to go immediately after Gawker published their similar report. Why is it that you're suddenly more confident, or can you explain to people—I think I have an understanding of it—a little bit about that decision to publish before you were entirely ready to publish.

Kevin Donovan

Well, we were still trying to get the video. That's what was going on. We held out a lot of hope that through some sort of moral assuaging we could get these people to turn over the video. As I'm sure many of you know, they were asking a great deal of money for it. The Toronto Star was not prepared to pay for it. We thought there might be another copy of the video out there. So that's what we were trying to do, but when Gawker published its story Robin and I had seen the video. Christie, you have been on many overseas assignments. You've been to Afghanistan; I've been to Afghanistan; we've seen things, and we've written about them because we've seen them. Long before there was video there was instant ability to email a digital image; that's what journalists have been doing. We've been travelling around the world looking at things. We felt that because Gawker had published its story and put it out there, we would be remiss in not saying, "We saw this too." The only thing in that story that I think people miss is that we're saying it is Mayor Rob Ford. We're saying he is smoking what appears to be crack-cocaine. That is the one thing that we can't prove because, as his lawyer told us that night, how do you know what somebody's smoking when you're looking at a video? The issue here is what he is

smoking. We described how he was acting, and how he was incoherent, rambling, and appeared to be impaired. Trust me, the man was impaired. I just don't know what got him impaired.

Edward Keenan

You just touched on something. I was kind of surprised by the volume of people saying essentially if you can't produce a video then there's no story. That, to me, is never how journalism has worked. I can produce a video of very few of the things I write about. I go and I'm an eyewitness. Sometimes I record interviews. I try to record interviews. Sometimes I have my notes on what happened, but I very seldom can produce a video. Christie, in your understanding, if you don't have the proof, should you publish?

Christie Blatchford

Well, I think video is a function of the modern world. In the past we didn't deal with things like video. Kevin's quite right. People would rely on journalists to be the eyewitnesses. That's what our function is. I don't disagree with you that there was a large volume of people, there still is I think, who says, "Well, if you don't have the video, it's not true." I absolutely believe it of course. I know Kevin's and Robin's reputations. I know what good journalists they are. I know there's a video, or there was, and that you saw what you saw. I think for journalists it posed a really interesting conundrum because how do you report on something that you haven't seen? I mean, when I witness a battle in Afghanistan, I write about it. You could not match the story. You couldn't because you weren't there. Similarly, it used to be when a journalist had a scoop or an exclusive, other journalists couldn't develop a similar story on their own; they couldn't match it. It doesn't seem to matter anymore. For journalism, for journalists, the ground is somewhat shifting because now, with this story, I'm writing about something third-hand. I have no sources. I mean, since your first story, some of the people at the Toronto Sun have actually done some really good work on other aspects of it. The

Globe and Mail, as you may know, has done some other work. Let me just say on that, if anybody went to my high school, it wouldn't take them 18 frigging months to come up with bad stuff about me.

Edward Keenan

The only thing I disagree with is when you said the Toronto Sun has done good work because I haven't seen a single good piece of journalism out of Warmington.

Christie Blatchford

I'm not talking about Warmington. I'm talking about Sam Pazzano. It's a big police project, which is linked to an address, which is linked to the video. I'm getting a bit sidetracked. Some journalists were able to develop their own stories in the wake of the first Star's series of stories on this. Most of us, frankly, can't. I mean, oddly, as an old white broad, my connections, you know, in drug dealing neighbourhoods aren't really terrific. I think many of us are in similar straits. Instead, I'm writing about a video, which I know absolutely existed, which you guys saw, but I've never seen. Now, it looks like I'm never going to see it, and yet I'm kind of asking my readers to trust me because I trust you. And, I think that's odd.

Kevin Donovan

There are so many things in there. Asking readers to trust me because I trust the source of information is something that often comes up with anonymous sources. They're not anonymous to me or to most journalists who use them. The journalists know who those people are. They have a reason to trust their credibility, and so they use their own credibility as a stand-in. They say, "I can't tell you who this is, but trust me, this is good information." We're all sort of using not an anonymous source, but a source we trust because we can't see the video.

Christie Blatchford

I'm bootstrapping on your credibility. You were the witness, not me. It's just a weird kind of third-hand reporting, and it makes me uneasy.

Kevin Donovan

Gordon Sinclair, for example, a famous Toronto Star and CBC journalist, travelled around the world and he saw things. He saw things before there was video. He wrote about them. He bore witness. That's what journalists do.

Christie Blatchford

But his colleagues back home weren't matching it and saying, "Gordon wrote about this." That's the difference.

Kevin Donovan

You know what? They probably did.

Christie Blatchford

No, I don't think they did.

Kevin Donovan

They probably did. There's a tradition of following stuff the Toronto Star writes, I find. I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding.

Edward Keenan

I think Peter C. Newman had an anecdote about a big story he broke about a confidential document. I heard him speak about it. I didn't have access to the details. His story about how he got access to that confidential document is that he was invited to a cabinet minister's home. It was illegal to share this document. This person could be charged for showing it to him, so what he did was he invited him into his office and said, "You know, I have the documents here. I actually can't show them to you. It's illegal for me to show them to you. But I do have a meeting I have to take in the next room for the next hour or so. If you can just sit tight here while I go." Then he left him in the room with the document. Peter Newman didn't take photographs of that document. He didn't have original copies of it. He didn't have photocopies. He wrote notes based on reading it and reported those. The rest of the press would accept it as a fact. People would try to follow it by confirming or denying that the document existed, that it said this and all of that. But the rest of the press, traditionally, does not seriously

question the factuality of the report. We don't necessarily just re-report it, but we accept it as a fact for the ongoing conversation.

Christie Blatchford

Not to the degree that happened here. I've broken plenty of stories in my day, which were not as big as this but were substantial. I'm thinking of a story about a former police board member named Arnold Minors, who was also a race relations consultant for the Bob Rae government. This guy was teaching Crown attorneys that the Holocaust wasn't a racist act because it hadn't been committed against black people. I wrote about it. I wrote lots of stories about it. No one at the Star ever matched it. No one at the Globe ever matched it. No one could because they didn't have the sources that I did. The Crown attorney ultimately came to testify in my defence in the lawsuit that went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. There are plenty of stories that would never catch fire the way that this one did. Now, it caught fire partly because of the subject matter. You know, the crack-cocaine mayor, blah blah blah—but the other part of it is this thing, where we are now relying on somebody else. That's all. Maybe we're getting side tracked.

Edward Keenan

That's okay.

Lisa Taylor

To what extent were journalists from other news organizations not necessarily reporting on the allegations themselves, but reporting on the circus that was generated as a result of that? The day after the day of the mayor acting as if it were business as usual, saying, "I don't know what you're all doing here. This comes as such a surprise." Finally, the pseudo-denial that felt like something that perhaps someone's child might do when he gets into trouble. "I am not currently doing this. Trust me. We're done." I think a lot of the stories were at least at first, as other news organizations rather tentatively and holding their noses got

into this story, were much more about, “Is he going to say it? Is he going to acknowledge it? What’s he going to say about it?”

Edward Keenan

This raises another issue that’s part of this, which is where the line is between what’s his personal business and what’s the public’s business. I think, for many people, crack-cocaine, because it’s crack, is that street drug, that people get addicted to right away. You can’t just be a casual crack user. But, when we talk about substance abuse, when we talk about alcohol abuse, when we talk about crack-cocaine, it seems like these could be considered personal problems that a public figure could have that might not influence how they do their job, even to the extent that we report on the distraction, the circus around that—his refusal to deny this, or his whatever. If you believe that this is something that shouldn’t be reported on, or that the public doesn’t have an interest in, then the rest of those things are media created. When we talk about whether we’re treating the mayor fairly, maybe that’s the question that people ask. “Is this a legitimate matter of public interest?” How do we decide that?

Kevin Donovan

I think what we try to do at the Toronto Star is deal with issues that would or do appear to impact on his public life. There are pieces of information that we have that we’re not publishing because we consider them, at least for now, to be more about his private life. The Garrison Ball, the story that Robin and I did that got this particular phase of the Mayor Ford juggernaut going, was a very public event. It’s the Garrison Ball. It’s a very important event in Toronto. It raises money for Wounded Warriors, and many people, perhaps even some people who are here, were in attendance. At 5:00 o’clock to 6:00 o’clock in the afternoon, you don’t want the chief official of the city to be acting in a manner that ultimately gets him removed from the place. If somebody wants to go to their cottage and kick back, and I guess have some crack, whatever you might do, we’re not going to be doing that. We’re

not going to be looking into that. We are looking into things that are public events. When you’re a public person, and you signed on to be a public person, there is a certain decorum. I think that’s really really important, and you have to behave yourself. When you go to an event, you just cannot be seen to be anything other than a person to be respected. I think that’s what we focused on.

Christie Blatchford

That’s why I voted for Rob Ford, frankly.

Kevin Donovan

Because he’s more fun?

Christie Blatchford

Because I am more rare than you. You’re one of three people who have seen the video. How many will admit to voting for Rob Ford? I thought not. And by the way, I regretted it immediately. Part of the reason though was that he isn’t part of this prissy kind of sense that one must behave. I’m a person who used to take my top off on tables in bars. Sometimes in the presence of some Star editors, I believe. I’m just saying, we are the least likely group of people to say, “You must behave in a certain manner.” It wasn’t actually Rob Ford I voted for; it was a reaction to that kind of horrible prissiness. I am not expressing myself well today.

Kevin Donovan

I don’t think you’re alone in that, because I think it’s interesting, but you once did a column—I don’t recall the exact wording, I’m sorry—but you had an analogy sort of like, “He’s always been the fat girl at Holt Renfrew, asking where the plus size section is.”

Christie Blatchford

Yes, that’s right.

Kevin Donovan

It’s a big part of his brand though. He says things that a lot of people think are outrageous, and he doesn’t observe the social niceties, and that drives a lot of people nuts. I mean, when we

talk about whether he's being treated fairly or not, we all accept that Rob Ford's word in that, "I'm an outsider, and I have outsider stuff, outsider attitudes that may shock you, but I just is who I is, right?" The thing is he's a fat girl whose been shopping at Holt Renfrew since the day he was born. His father was a member of the provincial Parliament, and a successful business owner. He is friends with the finance minister of Canada. The guy has never wanted for anything in his life.

Lisa Taylor

It's how he's designed his brand though. He has made certain things that might be off limits in the case of another politician what I would consider to be fair game here. I bet you most people in this room don't know the age or name of Stephen Harper's children, because that is not part of his brand. Some would, but it's not part of his brand. Rob Ford has positioned himself as "that guy." That loud, fun guy at hockey games. The guy who wants to talk publicly about his weight. You talk publicly about your weight but then you are distressed when others do. You talk about how your family is salt of the earth in Etobicoke, but then when someone points out that you're not, it's not fair game. It's no different from American politicians who we have seen present themselves as being the family-values candidates. They are fair game when we find out that they are anything but the family values type.

Kevin Donovan

A lot of people will remember, that in the election during which Rob Ford was elected mayor, a prominent candidate, David Miller's chosen heir-apparent was Adam Giambrone, who resigned for cheating on his girlfriend. This is what happened. It was front-page news in the Star. They had this anti-Giambrone vendetta, famously; no wait, that's Rob Ford.

Christie Blatchford

I think his offense was that he stained the couch in his office.

Lisa Taylor

Misuse of city property was the problem.

Edward Keenan

He lied about it. I mean, many, many people could not name Rob Ford's wife. I could, but I've never seen her. I've never met her. I've seen her at public events twice, but that's not part of his thing. Being a screw-up certainly is, right? The first time we heard about him, many people heard about him, it was at this hockey game. Then we see his mug shot. Maybe we've already accepted that. Does that make it more or less a matter of public interest when he does things that feed into that? I don't know.

Kevin Donovan

I think one of the things that people should try and recall is how many times Mayor Rob Ford has ever answered questions. As far as I'm concerned, the Toronto Star has had zero times when we have had any response from him on any of this. I think the last real mea culpa he did was related to the story the Post did on him at the ACC. He said he wasn't there, and it turns out he was there, and he apologized. He's made some mistakes in his life.

Edward Keenan

That was in 2005, I think.

Kevin Donovan

2005?

Edward Keenan

It was either 2005 or early 2006, because it was prior to my extended meeting with him.

Kevin Donovan

My feeling is that he does not want to engage with us at all. I think it's very clever on his part that he does not engage with us because if he did, and he started trying to explain things, then the onion would really start to unravel, and he won't do that. They will not respond to any questions. When you think of politicians, we do demand that they respond to us. I think that is very important.

I think they have to because we're paying them to lead our cities or our provinces or our governments, and they have to respond and he won't.

Christie Blatchford

I think there's no question that Kevin's and Robin's stories have been fair etc., but I think it's disingenuous to pretend that it happened in a vacuum. Editorially, the Star was aghast as were most of my friends that Rob Ford even had the temerity to run for mayor. How can you imagine? I mean really, that's what it was like. Certainly all my friends, and my little running group the next morning, all good Toronto Liberals, were just mortified. It was most delightful actually when he won, that one morning before he actually did anything.

There was that sort of sense of the Toronto establishment, if you like, people like y'all and me regarding him as a clown from the get-go. I'm not saying it's wrong. It's not as though the Toronto Star decided that, "We're going to take the high road and look at this guy etc." The Star and other papers have sometimes been unfair to him. I mean, posting a picture of him sneaking into Kentucky Fried Chicken, or taking pictures of him when he bought a mickey at the liquor store. I mean, quite frankly, he may be a public figure, but I think that is going too far.

Kevin Donovan

Okay. But the Star did not put a circus-size scale outside his office.

Christie Blatchford

I understand.

Kevin Donovan

And publicize his attempts to lose weight. Actually, the Star didn't decide that that would be the only time of any given week that he would ever talk to the press, right? This weight-loss issue becomes something that the Ford brothers, and they really did decide that issue together, decided it was of public interest.

They've made it an issue of public interest.

Lisa Taylor

It's interesting that you use the word "circus." That's really interesting because when the Cut the Waist Challenge was finally shut down, Doug Ford disparagingly said, "Oh, it's just turned into a circus." Well, yes, because you did in fact put the circus tent just outside the door. Journalists have a finely tuned nose for evidence of hypocrisy.

Christie Blatchford

Oh, please, hello! We do not.

Lisa Taylor

We all know we do too. We all know that Barack Obama has struggled with smoking cigarettes. It seems kind of light, given smoking crack, but still, with smoking cigarettes, we've never ever heard of him calling up other world leaders and saying, "Hey, let's have a butt-out challenge. It'll be so fun guys." That was his personal issue. He kept it a personal issue. You can't speak disparagingly of social programs after the Danzig Street shooting and say, "I'm just not into hug-a-thug programs," then later be seen in a photograph hugging a thug.

Edward Keenan

When we asked the question about whether the mayor's being treated fairly, that photograph is actually a good example because there is a photograph that was provided to Gawker and to the Toronto Star as evidence that a video existed. In that photograph there is one young man who has been shot dead in a sort of execution-style shooting, another young man who was shot at the same time but survived, and who is now under arrest during a gang and guns raid, and another young man who was also under arrest, and then there's the Mayor of Toronto. The circumstances under which the press came to own this photo, or have this photo, and the circumstances under which it was taken are maybe questions that we'd ask the mayor. There could be innocent explana-

tions, like, “I was visiting my old high school friend there at that house it was taken in front of, and these guys were walking by and asked me to take a photo.” No explanation is offered, right? Even when bigger and bigger questions that seem maybe more concerning come up, he still refuses to address the questions. It’s easy to imagine an innocent explanation, but that innocent explanation is never provided. I mean, in fairness to the press, do we have to read something into the fact that he won’t explain himself, because that’s the defining element of Rob Ford as mayor to me—he refuses to explain himself.

Christie Blatchford

Sure, but from the get-go, he’s the architect of his own demise in so many ways. I mean, he won’t speak to the Star. Does he still not speak to anybody from the Star? I assume that.

Kevin Donovan

It’s true, yes.

Christie Blatchford

He doesn’t make his schedule public, which is something he should do. In my view, every mayor should be holding weekly wide-ranging press conferences. If you did it every week, maybe the press wouldn’t always be asking about the crack video. Maybe there would be other issues. There’s no question he’s created the atmosphere, but I think that doesn’t lessen the burden upon all of us to try and still be fair to him. Just because he’s created, as they say in Quebec, the conditions that allow us to have a field day with him, I still think we have a responsibility to not do things like run pictures of him at KFC. I mean, in that story, I agree he created the conditions, but the scales told the tale as they always do with weight-loss. He was cheating. Do we have to have pictures of him cheating?

Kevin Donovan

I just want to go back about five minutes to the comment that I can’t let pass that the Toronto Star has a vendetta against Rob

Ford. We don’t.

Christie Blatchford

I didn’t say that.

Kevin Donovan

No, not you. Not you.

Christie Blatchford

Well, who made it then?

Kevin Donovan

I don’t think I said that. Anyway, let’s say it was in the air. It was definitely in the air.

Christie Blatchford

It was in the air.

Kevin Donovan

People think that the Toronto Star or perhaps other media have a vendetta. Let me just give you a little cook’s tour of our newsroom. There is no sign that says, “Here’s who we’re going to get this week or this month.” People always think that journalists are given marching orders. I run our investigative team. I’ve got great people on the team. We investigate all sorts of things. We did a big investigation a couple of years ago on ORNGE Air ambulance, which some of you may have read. It was something very much in the public interest. A lot of other media covered it. A lot of good things happened as a result. I was the one who ran that and did most of the reporting on it. I wasn’t out to get Chris Mazza or Ornge or the Liberal government. I happened to end up, by doing my stories, making them all look really really poorly. The stories that we’re doing now on Mayor Ford started in the way that all good journalism starts. You write a story, as we did, and Robin Doolittle gets a call suggesting we look into something. It happens to be a crack video of the mayor. We’d be fired, I would hope, if we hung up the phone and said, “We’re not interested in that.” One other comment which has come to my mind in the last few weeks is that I would much rather be here answering ques-

tions, as I'm always happy to do this, than answering questions in 20 years from people saying, "Why didn't you look into these matters?" That is really important, and the job of journalists and really all of us in society is to question power.

Lisa Taylor

People lose sight of that because journalism is in such a crisis of credibility, a huge crisis. I just want to point out, and I believe you three will back me up on this, I think people believe that journalists are very cavalier about deciding to advance a story based on anonymous sources, based on evidence that they cannot hand over. If you've never done journalism, you can't imagine how much journalists don't want to do that. They know that on some level, their credibility is going to take some degree of hit. Maybe only in certain circles on the periphery, but people don't want that. Reasonable news organizations do not allow that to happen unless they've reported the hell out of the story otherwise, and are really confident. I don't know that the public knows that.

Kevin Donovan

I think we're almost out of time but I did want to say that to that exact question of trying to be fair, I know many members of the Press Gallery at City Hall do bend over backwards.

Christie Blatchford

Generally speaking, or an effort to be fair.

Kevin Donovan

The mayor was on trial for conflict of interest. He could have been removed from office. We watched his full day of testimony, and we were all outside and it was sort of devastating to watch because he offered no real defence of himself. He was a spectacle. I was talking to a couple of other people—there were two journalists, reporters from the dailies who came up, and they had to file immediate reports, and they were just like, "Can you think of any way I can present this that doesn't look like I'm running

a hatchet job on the mayor?" Because, the truth appears to be a hatchet job. If I just report what I saw, my credibility is going to take a hit, and I find that that's often the case with the mayor.

Christie Blatchford

I agree, I think it is. And anybody who thinks newspapers are organized enough to have targets with people and goals to bring somebody down is foolish. Most organizations don't, and we don't either. However, I still don't think that we can make the case that the press has gone over the top, and I would say exhibit one in that regard would be the Star's coverage of an Ontario Press Council hearing a little while ago, which was basically given World War III coverage. Every nuance of Rosie Dimanno who, like me, is from another planet and actually tweeted for the first time in her life. The next morning, the sun came up in the west. That's all I'm saying. That coverage was excessive. So, if y'all, and us all, we all, want to keep our credibility intact, we have to be careful. I've been a member of the Ontario Press Council. This had hearings into complaints about unfair coverage against the Star and the Globe, and it was a fairly brief proceeding, I believe—at least the goal part of it was—it was a serious proceeding. I took it seriously when I was a member, and I think it was well deserving of coverage. What it wasn't deserving of was the blow-by-blow, "They're walking in the room now." You know, I mean, really? It's a Press Council hearing. So, that's Exhibit A.

Edward Keenan

So, we're actually out of time.

Kevin Donovan

We're trying to be transparent. The Press Council is an important organization.

Christie Blatchford

You guys never cover it ordinarily. Give me a break.

Kevin Donovan

We always cover it.

Christie Blatchford

When you're being slapped, sure

Edward Keenan

We're actually out of time, so in conclusion here, this debate like the rest of the Rob Ford story is not finished yet, even if our event is. You can play it 300-point type on the front page and it's good for business. Whether or not it's good for the city, whether or not it's fair?

Lisa Taylor

I don't know if it's good for journalism.

Edward Keenan

I don't know if it's good for journalism. I think Rob Ford sells papers. That's my experience.

Christie Blatchford

Not enough of them.

The appreciation of the meeting was expressed by M.J. Perry, Vice-President and Owner, Mr. Discount, and Director, The Empire Club of Canada.

