

Editorial

A mixed bag

With his appointments to cabinet Monday, Prime Minister Stephen Harper let it be known he won't be a shrinking violet while living in 24 Sussex Drive.

His choices could be dubbed the good, the bad and the ugly.

The Good: Harper opted for a smaller cabinet and strove to get representation from across the country even though he had no members from B.C., Quebec, or Toronto to pick from. Facing such limitations he managed to get a good mix, involving the few experienced members he had to choose from and bringing in some youthful exuberance.

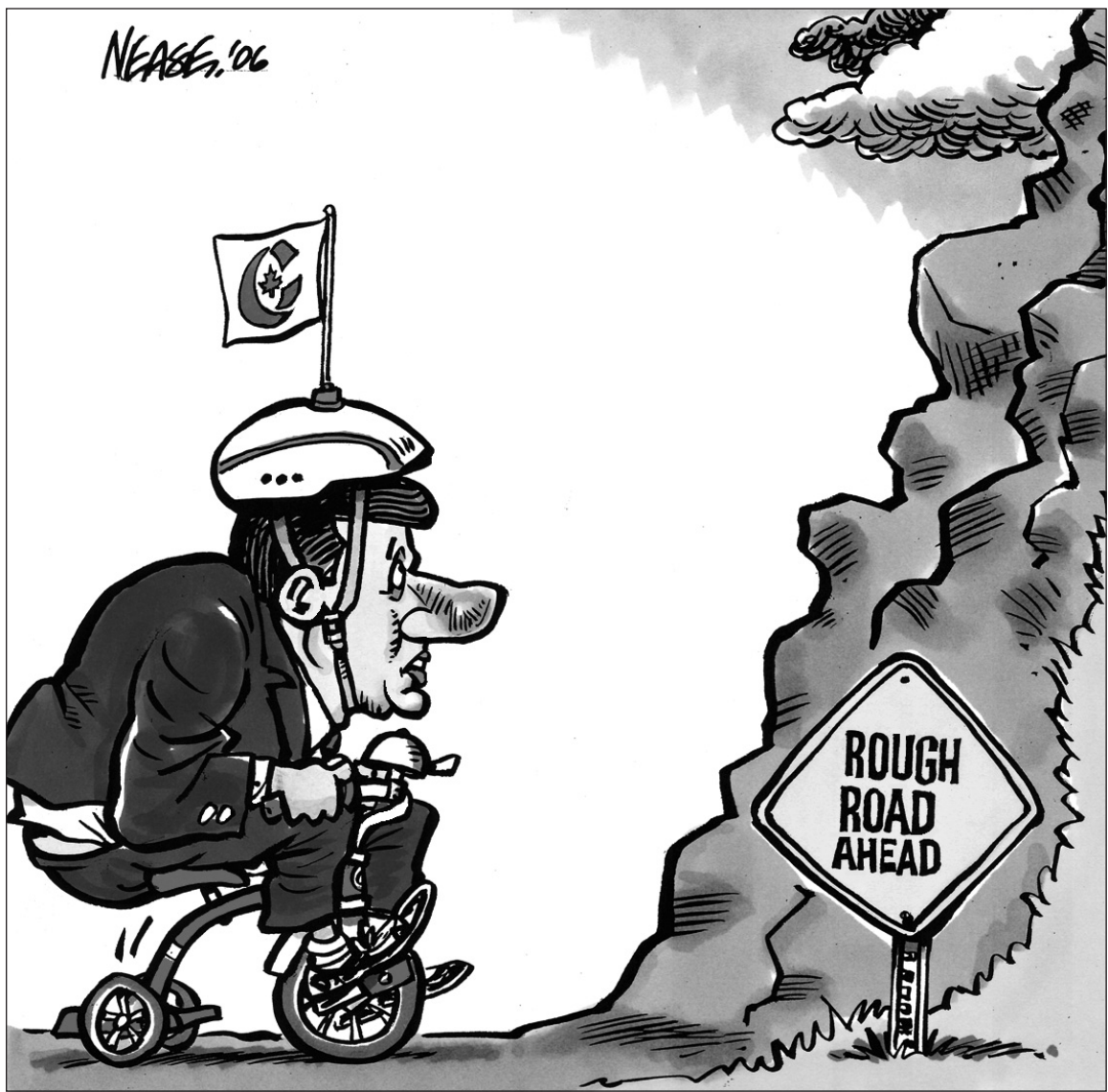
Included in that latter group was Wellington-Halton Hills MP Michael Chong who was handed the portfolios of intergovernmental affairs and sport. With the Turin Olympics on the horizon and Vancouver to host the 2010 Games Chong could find himself a busy man. We don't doubt he is up to the challenge.

The Bad: Harper stunned many, and perhaps rankled even more, with the surprise inclusion of a Liberal defector.

Naming Liberal floor-crosser David Emerson trade minister only two weeks after he vigorously campaigned against the Tories and warned voters that a Harper government would bring massive cuts to crucial government programs, smacks of the lack of accountability Harper accused the Liberals of often and loudly.

The Ugly: Installing Tory organizer Michael Fortier in the Senate so he can act as public works minister—the very ministry that spawned the sponsorship scandal—smacks of cronyism—the very thing Harper rightfully lambasted the Liberals for.

The very fact Fortier was unelected is reason enough for him not to be part of Harper's cabinet. His appointment is a slap in the face to voters, as is Emerson's defection two weeks after the election.



Letters to the editor...

Making Ontario smoke-free an ongoing job

Dear editor,

This year's theme for the recent National Non-Smoking Week January 16-20 was "Where you work, live and play... even

better smoke-free."

But we need to work every day towards a smoke-free society for all Ontarians, as the government implements 100 per cent smoke-free legislation on May 31.

A longtime advocate for comprehensive anti-tobacco legislation, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario has been instrumental in leading public education campaigns to strengthen anti-smoking legislation affecting second-hand smoke, tobacco-related pricing, labeling, advertising and sponsorship. We commend the Minister of Health and Long Term Care, the Honourable George Smitherman, who brought in the Smoke Free Ontario Act and the Honourable Jim Watson, Minister of Health Promotion, who is working to implement it to make public places and workplaces smoke-free and reduce exposure to tobacco displays at the point-of-purchase.

We know smoking is a major

cause of death from cardiovascular disease. In fact, smokers have a 70 per cent greater chance of dying from coronary heart disease than non-smokers. Among people younger than 65, 45 per cent of coronary heart disease in men and 40 per cent in women is caused by cigarette smoking.

Stopping smoking however, can have immediate positive effects on heart health. In fact, the risk of coronary heart disease, including fatal heart attacks, begins to lessen immediately following stopping smoking. The risk of smoking-related cardiovascular disease is reduced by approximately 50 per cent within one year, and to normal levels (i.e. people who never smoked) within five years.

To find out how more about the effects of smoking on heart health or how to quit, visit www.heartandstroke.ca.

Rocco Rossi
Chief Executive Officer
Heart and Stroke Foundation

Carrying flag an honour, but it's irrelevant who does

Dear editor,

I am writing to express my displeasure with your comment on our Olympic athletes (Jan. 20 editorial, Poor sports).

While I agree that it is a HUGE honour to bear the flag at the opening ceremonies at the Olympics I feel that you were "offside" in talking about a "me-first" attitude.

A lot of these athletes make nothing, and in fact it costs them money to pursue their dream. The sacrifices these athletes make are far beyond the realm of what the average person can conceive.

For you to suggest they represent another country is absolutely ridiculous. They are declining a personal honour in the attempt to make sure nothing throws them off of their game and they can compete to the best of their ability. It's not about "me first", it's about doing well for both self and country.

The Olympics are by far the best sporting competition around and I'm sure all of our team will compete to the best of their ability. Who carries the flag is irrelevant and if a couple of athletes wish to decline the honour in an effort to compete at their best I'm behind them and the whole team the whole way.

Jim Faye, Georgetown

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor must include an address and daytime telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters **should not exceed 200 words** and may be edited.

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