

Hazel fires salvo at Harper's leadership

*"Gathering her brows like
gathering storm, Nursing her wrath
to keep it warm."*

Tam O'Shanter – Robbie Burns

BY RICK DRENNAN

This was going to be easy. A cakewalk. Preaching to the converted.

When the Mississauga Board of Trade invited Canada's Industry Minister Tony Clement to visit its office on December 12 to address some of Mississauga's top business leaders, he was representing a Conservative government that many in the room were very comfortable with.

After all, the Stephen Harper-led party had shrunk the deficit and was in the process of reducing corporate taxes – the Holy Grail to bean-counters.

The Conservatives had received a moderate mandate to rule a minority parliament in the recent election, and it had even elected a Tory (Bob Dechert) in the *Erindale riding of Mississauga*.

It sliced through the Gordian Knot of Liberal red that had dominated the local scene for more than a decade.

Hell, Harper was trying out new yoga positions to pat himself on the back because Canada was not as bad off as the States when it came to the economic meltdown.

Clement even stated that we had the lowest corporate tax rate of any G7 country.

The MBOT group almost broke into sustained applause when he dropped that little bon mot.

The Conservatives under Clement, Harper and Finance Minister Jim Flaherty were pro business. The MBOT was really really pro business. And Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion, another invitee to the confab, was really really really pro business.

Celebrating her 30th year in the mayor's office, she was on record as saying she would do cartwheels to bring business to this City – and help these industries flourish.

Doing cartwheels as she approaches her 88th birthday in February is an image that few could imagine, but then again, few in the room wouldnt put past her either.

Anyway, you get my drift. Clement was addressing a room of like-minded people, mostly supporters.

Except one.

The aforementioned Hazel.

While Clement fielded a few softball questions about the economic meltdown and how his government was responding to it, our sulky dame was gathering her brows like a gathering storm, and nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

Like the scorned woman in Burns' Tam O'Shanter, she waited politely for the minister to finish.

Then, extricating her head from her hands, and opening her prehistoric eyelids to reveal eyes burning with passion, she began to talk. Or yell. Or lecture. The decibel level in the room was about the same as three jets landing simultaneously in a near-by parking lot.

She called out Prime Minister's response to the economic meltdown "pitiful."

She blamed him, not the Liberals, NDP, or Bloc, for the formation of a coalition that still might bring down the government when the budget is trotted out later this month.

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