

## **EXHIBIT B**

## **Kelly McParland: Ontario Premier Doug Ford should focus on the deficit and leave Hydro One alone**

**If Ford wants to prove allegations against him — that he's bully who wants his own way — he couldn't do better than to turn Hydro One into a political pawn**



Ontario PC Leader Doug Ford announces his intention to fire the CEO as well as the entire board of Hydro One, in Toronto, Ont. on April 12, 2018. Stan Behal/Toronto Sun/Postmedia Network



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Ontario Premier Doug Ford has a really good chance to send his young government's reputation and credibility straight into the dumpster. Having inherited a provincial power system that was grossly mishandled by two previous Liberal governments, he seems intent on doing the same with his own, young Conservative regime.

Ford might not be premier if not for the inability of premiers Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne to keep their fingers out of the affairs of the electricity business. McGuinty saddled it with a great heaping mountain of bad environmental ideas, which continue to siphon money from the pockets over overcharged Ontarians. Wynne went further, mismanaging its affairs directly from the office of the responsible minister, then selling off majority ownership in Hydro One in a deal that sacrificed rich annual payments for a one-time sum the government could immediately spend on voter-friendly projects.

The uproar over Hydro One contributed substantially to the collapse of Wynne's public support and the annihilation of the Liberals in June, when they fell from 55 seats to seven and Ford marched into office after just a few weeks as Tory leader. Bizarrely, he seems to have interpreted the result as evidence that voters weren't opposed to the meddling, just the meddler.

A report Friday indicated that Ford and Dean French — the chief of staff whose heavy-handed tactics have [already won him an ugly reputation](#) — are [butting heads](#) with the Hydro One board over who gets to be the next chief executive. Six independent board members reportedly want one of three women who each have extensive experience in British Columbia, deemed important because Hydro One is in the midst of buying a U.S. power company with extensive activities in the U.S. west. Ford, via the four board members appointed by the province, wants someone else, possibly Anthony Haines, chief executive of Toronto Hydro.

If Ford deliberately set out to prove all the worst allegations against him by his most vociferous opponents — that he's a stubborn, impulsive bully who wants his own way no matter how ill-considered or under-informed — he couldn't do better than to turn Hydro One into a political pawn to be jerked around by a bunch of appointees linked to the premier's office.

He's already wandered a considerable distance down that path by allegedly allowing French to throw his weight around with all the subtlety of a crowbar. Alykhan Velshi, a former chief of staff to Patrick Brown, Ford's predecessor as Tory leader, was hired in September as a vice-president at Ontario Power Generation, the utility that produces the power Hydro One distributes. On his first day at work he was informed he'd been fired, and officially left the job

on Friday, [reputedly at the insistence of French](#). Though Ford denied media reports of French's involvement, no alternative explanation has been offered, or details on the hefty severance Velshi is said to be due for a few weeks' work.

“As a private corporation, the board of Hydro One is responsible for their own hiring decisions,” a spokesman for Ford insisted, though the premier says he hasn't asked French about the claims.

If Velshi's main crime was his association with Brown it would surprise no one. Ford is not fond of Brown, who was forced from the leadership after allegations of sexual misconduct he denies. When Brown tried for a quick political comeback with a run for office in Peel Region, [Ford cancelled the vote](#). Instead Brown ran for mayor of Brampton, a thriving municipality west of Toronto, and [won an upset victory](#) in October. Just days after the election he publicly berated the premier for spiking a planned construction project in Brampton as part of the province's efforts to reduce spending.

If it all sounds like the plot line of a Netflix political intrigue, perhaps it's not a surprise. Ford came to office amid assertions — both from media and opponents — that he had little understanding of the office or the job, and was too used to getting his way. As a wealthy businessman in a family firm, he wasn't accustomed to being challenged, or listening to advice outside his circle of comfort. His short stint as a Toronto city councillor did little to challenge that view.

Treating Hydro One like an offshoot of caucus would go a long way to confirming the charges. Though the province owns a large minority share and has four seats on the 10-seat board, the utility is meant to operate independently, as well it should. Ford attacked it relentlessly throughout last spring's campaign, focusing his complaints on chief executive Mayo Schmidt, who he dubbed “the six million dollar man” over his healthy pay package. [Axing Schmidt](#) was one of his earliest actions as premier.

Schmidt served as proxy for Ontarians' belief that the power business had careened out of control after years of political meddling. The Liberals weren't the first to interfere with Hydro One and OPG, but they took the practice to new levels, with ambitious green energy plans that proved ill-considered and immensely costly, pushing up bills to thousands of customers. Ford is badly mistaken, though, if he thinks voters wanted to replace Liberal interference with Tory interference. What they want is a well-run, independent, professional operation that makes decisions based on the best and most effective means of providing affordable power. They don't want a premier who thinks he knows more about power generation than the people who spend their lives in the business.

Ford has his hands full trying to wrestle down the mammoth deficit he inherited. The outcry that has met his first few modest attempts demonstrates how tough it will be. He'd be better off focusing on the job he was elected for, rather than messing with utility that needs to be left to get on with the job.