

I Think I May Just Want Michael Ford's New Job



by Geoffrey Clarfield

The nephew of the newly reelected premier of Ontario (Doug Ford), has just been appointed Minister of Multiculturalism and Citizenship for the Province of Ontario. Many newspaper articles have pointed out that this appointment seems nepotistic at best and corrupt at worst.

And so yesterday afternoon, as I was going for my daily walk, I had a fantasy that someone approached me to apply for Michael Ford's job. Here is what I thought about.

Ontario and its mega city, Toronto, are home to one of the world's most multicultural societies. You can feel it in the air when you walk the streets of downtown Toronto and visit its suburbs. You will hear people speaking almost every major language in the world and, many of its minor languages. You will see restaurants serving food from all over the world and,

you can hear musicians from almost every country on the face of the globe. And so, dealing with these peoples as citizens and voters is no small thing. To handle this complex society, you need to have a lot of skills and knowledge. Here are just some of them.

1. Needs to know a lot about “cultures”

The word culture as we use it now is an anthropological term worked out by social and cultural anthropologists during the 20th century. Culture is what constitutes our conscious and unconscious mental software that we use to participate successfully in the wider society that we are born into or, joined as an immigrant.

I have lived and worked in Canada, the USA, Grenada and Guyana in the Caribbean, Guatemala and Argentina, the United Kingdom and Western Europe, Israel, India, Nepal and about nine African nations. All in all, I spent 20 years working and living overseas. Every one of these countries has immigrant groups here in Ontario and I can say with some confidence that I understand them and the academic literature about them, reasonably well.

2. Needs to be multilingual

Canada is officially a bilingual state which encourages immigrants to keep their native language and teach it to their child at schools and places of worship. Having grown up in the Jewish Community of Toronto, I was sent to such enrichment courses given by any number of synagogues and learnt to understand Biblical Hebrew and speak relatively fluent modern Hebrew and so I am familiar with the dynamics of ethnically defined communities. The Greeks and Hungarians of this city have a similar system. I also speak some Arabic, a lot of Swahili and a tribal African language called Rendille. Having spent 17 years working as a development researcher and project manager in Africa, I am conversant with the challenges that

face Africans and African Canadians. I speak reasonable French and can report to the Premier that anti-Semitic incidents in Canada have gone up exponentially and no one is doing anything about it.

3. Needs to know the literature on multiculturalism

There are two sides to this. The first is the reading of what anthropologists call "ethnographies," systematic description of cultures and their dynamics which leads us to better understanding of "others." I have been reading and writing about these issues for decades. It is largely based on descriptions of the daily life of a community with the goal of understanding the semi explicit "world view" that gives a culture its distinctiveness, such as the role of the Ethiopian church among Ethiopians and their national epic the Kibre Nagast which allows us to understand their unique social psychology. The second is that of cross-cultural communication. I know this literature well.

4. Needs to understand Canadian history and its legal traditions.

Today Canada, all its media, and all of its institutes are committed to erasing history and portraying Canada as a patriarchal state of white, racist supremacists who have "systemic" power over the rest of us. The only antidote to this is teaching and advocating for teaching Western history as an exploration of the development of the human rights that we talk about today. They did not come out of nowhere. (The colleges and universities of Ontario are vigorous in the support of BDS. Israel Apartheid Week actually started at the University of Toronto here in good ole multicultural Ontario).

I have been speaking and writing about this for years and it is an uphill climb. Every immigrant and citizen needs access to this narrative as it is being suppressed.

5. Needs to know how government bureaucracies do and do not

work.

Having had the following clients, the UN, Canadian, Italian, Swiss, Kenyan and Tanzanian governments and NGOs like the Rockefeller Foundation, I am well aware of how bureaucracies do and do not work. Access to and the creation of baseline research is essential to measure bureaucratic effectiveness, and bureaucracies must have visions goals and benchmarks to evaluate performance, something I have done as an international development project designer and manager for decades.

6. They must be worldly.

What this means is they must understand world history, such as the war in the Ukraine, and how it will and will not impact policies and practices here in Toronto and Ontario and that affect those who were born here as well as those have come here to live and work. I began this kind of reading when I was a teen and have not stopped as one can conclude from browsing my articles in the National Post, the Globe and Mail, the Epoch Times, and the New English Review where I am a contributing editor.

7. Must Understand Immigrant and Refugee Issues

I have spent more than five years advocating for the Yazidi, a monotheist indigenous people of Iraq who have experienced horrendous persecution in their homeland. I have helped to bring a thousand refugees to Canada, worked closely with Catholic Diocese of the GTA on this issue and worked on these issues at every level. And so I am familiar, firsthand with the ins and outs of immigration (Federal) and resettlement which is often Provincial. I also worked as the supervisor of a project for the homeless of the GTA and know a few things from the "street up," not the top down.

If by now the reader thinks that this article is simply an opportunity for me to boast in print, let him or her remember

what they do every time they apply for a new position. They list just some of the skills and experience they believe their employer needs to know so they can carry out the position as advertised. I have done that here.

Actually, I doubt that Michael Ford's position was advertised. I doubt there was a hiring committee and if so, I would like to know who the other candidates were. I would hope that Michael has all the skills and experience that I have referred to above and perhaps even more. I certainly hope he immediately takes on the rise in anti-Semitism here for if that is allowed to fester, then the reality of multiculturalism is a dismal failure.

I am hoping that under the transparent laws and processes of governance here in Ontario I will have the opportunity to send in my resume and hope that during the job interview, I will be given the chance to reflect and expand upon my more than three-decade history of designing, implementing and managing public sector projects for a variety of multi-cultural employers. Ok I have made my most unlikely pitch.

But seriously, as a voting citizen I will watch with interest for signs that Michael Ford has the kind of experience and understanding of the cross-culture issues mentioned here and that challenge our local, provincial and federal bureaucracies in the fight against an evil that just does not go away.

If Michael needs any advice, he should know that my door is always open.

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