

Autos Careers Classifieds Homes SUN TV

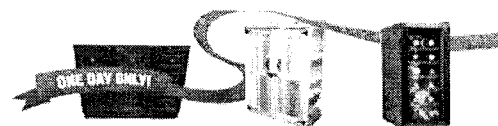
SUBMIT

Mark Your Calendar | MONDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2010

CYBER MONDAY

Great deals are on their way. Don't miss out!

www.homedepot.ca/blackfriday



Arts by Google

Why is Fantino chasing seat?

Ex-OPP boss surely will choke on PMO's 'micromanagement' leash if he wins federal byelection

By WARREN KINSELLA, QMI AGENCY

Last Updated: November 28, 2010 2:00am

NOV 28/10

To me, there's never been much question that Conservative candidate Julian Fantino is going to handily win Monday's byelection in a riding north of Toronto.

The question, instead, is why the hell Julian Fantino wants the job in the first place.

Fantino is nearly 70 years old. Until recently, he was the commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police. Before that, he was chief of police in Toronto, York Region and London.

Fantino — who, full disclosure, helped my family when we were facing a serious death threat a few years back, and who I unsuccessfully tried to talk into running for Toronto's mayor more than once — is a very capable guy. That's why Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty (for whom Fantino has a high regard, and vice-versa) tapped the long-time cop to be his top law enforcement officer for so many years.

Fantino knows how to run things. He's an extremely effective manager, too. The way in which he stickhandled the Caledonia standoff — and assorted native blockades in summers past — made crystal-clear that Fantino was born to be The Boss.

So why, then, does Fantino want to join the Harper government?

It's a minority government, after all — something that isn't highly conducive to long-term job security. Fantino could arrive in Ottawa in a few weeks time, and then be back on the hustings a few weeks later. Perpetual campaigning is not fun when you're nearly 70.

Fantino isn't the kind of guy who will accept PMO micromanagement with equanimity, either. Can you picture Fantino's reaction when a PMO minion rings him up to declare that a certain press release can't go out, or that he is no longer permitted to go on a trip somewhere? Ha!

Anyone who knows Fantino knows that he doesn't suffer fools and pinheads easily — and PMO regularly has an abundance of both.

Julian, ask Jim Prentice (now gone) or Peter MacKay (now almost gone): You'll be a cabinet minister in name, only. You won't actually have any power. Only Harper's PMO has power.

Now, has Fantino been offered a cabinet spot by Prime Minister Stephen Harper as an incentive to run? Of course. It's unlikely to be in writing, but you can bet three demerit points that Fantino wouldn't be a candidate if he hadn't been the recipient of a highly suggestive nod and a wink.

Fantino's Liberal opponent, meanwhile, has every reason to run. Tony Genco — who is a solid, dependable party stalwart, who knows his way around government — would be a terrific Opposition MP. He's clearly not running because a cabinet posting is in his immediate future. Genco is in the race for all the right reasons. He wants to serve.

But the numbers don't lie: Fantino could be campaigning with the Yogic Flyers, and he'd win.

The Vaughan riding was the personal fiefdom of the much-admired Liberal Maurizio Bevilacqua for two decades. Bevilacqua — now the area's mayor — could always count on massive pluralities to return him to Parliament. It was the Bevilacqua name, much more than the Liberal Party brand, that mattered most.

So why, then, have the Grits poured so much time and energy into the Vaughan vote? Michael Ignatieff has stumped there innumerable times. Even Ignatieff's chief operating officer, Pat Sorbara, helped run the Genco campaign (although it's unclear if she was on a leave of absence to do so).

Two Manitoba ridings also face byelections Monday, but they haven't received nearly as much ink. That's because the Grits know victories by Conservative and New Democrat candidates are almost guaranteed.

Fantino's victory is pretty much guaranteed, too.

The only question, really, is whether a fed-up Fantino will be trying to trade in that "guarantee" a few months from now to get his money back.

Buyer's remorse: Julian Fantino is about to experience it, big time.

— *Kinsella is a lawyer, consultant and Liberal Party spin-doctor. He blogs at warrenkinsella.com*

Copyright © 2010 Toronto Sun All Rights Reserved