

Ford's TTC meddling is a step too far

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It's one thing for the premier of Ontario to ignore the mayor of Toronto, quite another for him to ignore the City of Toronto. Doug Ford has managed both and in the process, taken relations between the two to new lows.

This bodes well for neither. Sooner or later, Ford's shabby treatment of Toronto will come back to bite him where it hurts. In the meantime, his attack on civic governance and planned plundering of municipal assets has already weakened the city.

By treating Toronto as an extension of the premier's office, Doug Ford's Conservatives are meddling with the economic engine that keeps Ontario and Canada afloat, writes Christopher Hume. (CHRIS YOUNG / THE CANADIAN PRESS)

Not that the premier cares. Despite an unprecedented record of recklessness, Ford's delusional regime never tires of patting itself on its collective back and giving itself standing ovations whenever one of its members opens his or her mouth. But by treating Toronto as an extension of the premier's office, the Conservatives are meddling with the economic engine that keeps Ontario and Canada afloat. The city, which accounts for 20 per cent of the country's GDP, is too important to be left to the whims of Ford's hordes.

Yet because neither Canada's inadequate constitution nor the 1849 Baldwin Act before it recognize cities, they exist in a legal limbo as "creatures of the

province.” This rather embarrassing oversight usually goes unnoticed. But with Ford in control, it has become a major problem. Not that previous provincial governments brought much more enlightenment to the discussion; Ford’s predecessor, Kathleen Wynne, flatly refused Mayor John Tory’s request to toll the Don Valley Parkway and Gardiner Expressway on the grounds that would hurt Liberal popularity in the 905. But with the exception of Mike Harris, Ontario premier between 1995 and 2002, no provincial chief magistrate has employed the power of primacy to intervene into the governance of Toronto for purely political purposes.

Regardless, many Ontarians view Ford’s assault on Toronto with amusement. Hogtown, the city they love to hate, deserves everything it gets. For their part, Torontonians are too busy with life at the centre of the universe to pay much attention to what the hinterland thinks.

But when Ford starts plotting the takeover of the city’s subway system, Torontonians get twitchy. It’s bad enough he cut council nearly in half and presided over the sale of the a key waterfront landmark, the Hearn Generating Station, to deep-pocketed buddies. But to mess with the subway is a step too far. Adding insult to injury, Ford’s avowed intention is to expand the metro into York, Peel and Durham regions, low-density suburbs that are not only the perceived heartland of Ford Nation but places where subways would be ruinously expensive.

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