

# Your Candidates

## Election 2007

# Family, past and present, integral to Smith's goals

Laurel J. Campbell  
Staff Reporter

**POWASSAN** – When Monique Smith pulls out her ever present Blackberry, it's more likely to show off recent photos of her nieces and nephew than to check her e-mails and schedule.

Family is all important to Smith who has fond memories of times spent with her grandparents as well as the many and varied family outings with her brothers and parents, Dick and Marthe. Growing up in North Bay, she lived only blocks from her grandparents, "and my three brothers and I used to bike over to their place all the time when we were kids," she said. "Now I live right around the corner from my mother, who is still in the house I grew up in, and when I'm not in Toronto, I go to my mother's all the time for supper."

Smith's political career is testimony to how much her family has influenced her life. Her father, Dick Smith, served as the member for what is now the Nipissing riding for 12 years, first elected one week after Monique was born in 1965. While his name is legend in the halls of Queen's Park, something that is not as well known is the fact that Smith's grandfather, Cyril, a North Bay pharmacist, also tried his hand at provincial politics. Smith's mother Marthe challenged Mike Harris for the Nipissing seat in 1987. Though mom and grandpa weren't successful in their electoral bids, the blood of their political savvy also run through Smith's veins, predestining her to a political career.

"From the time I was really young, I knew I wanted to run for politics some day," said Smith. "I had a far different childhood from most of my friends and I certainly saw a lot of the riding when I was growing up. I can't count the number of church picnics, fairs and special events I attended with my dad, and we used to spend a lot of time on the First Nations' reserve. Those experiences gave me a special connection and bond with the whole area. Dad loved what he did, and of the four of us kids, I was the one that went to the most political events, candidates meetings and political visitations."

At the age of 12, Smith became a page at Queen's Park and has nothing but fond memories of the experience, though she admits her view might have been skewed by the fact that "everyone was really nice to me because I was Dick Smith's daughter," she said.

Smith, who received her elementary education in a French language school, graduated with honours from St. Joseph's College in North Bay, completing her undergraduate degree in political science at the University of Toronto. While at U of T she was accepted for a Rotary International scholarship and spent one year at the Université de Nice, France.

"Studying in France certainly gave me a broader perspective," she said, "and allowed me to immerse myself in French again. It was a way to see more of the world, and I think studying outside the country is a great opportunity for anyone. It certainly gave me a much better appreciation for our own education system and the stability of our work force. I was only in France for one year, but during that time there were 12 labour strikes. I also learned a lot about how much we take for granted in Canada, especially in areas of energy conservation where we are miles behind the Europeans, even then."

A 1991 graduate of Queen's Law School, Smith was called to the bar in 1993.

"Even though I always knew I wanted to

pursue politics, I felt law was a good point of entry for that," she said. "Growing up I never had any sense of gender boundaries, and even though I had three brothers, I was never led to believe I couldn't do whatever I wanted in life."

Smith worked at McCarthy Tétraut, a Toronto law firm, as an articling student and then a lawyer until 1997.

"I practised labour and employment law because I really like to be involved with people. Like politics, it's also a field where there are always changes taking place and I like new challenges and learning new things," she said.

In 1997, her natural lean toward politics resulted in Smith joining Dalton McGuinty's team as his chief of staff when he was leader of the official opposition. She also served as director of operations for the provincial Liberal campaign in 1999.

"That was a fabulous time," she said, "and I absolutely loved it." However, before she was ready to finally embrace her political dreams, Smith had one more area of interest to pursue to round out her self-imposed pre-election training period: the arena of Canadian arts and culture.

"I've always been interested in the arts, and as a teenager spent five seasons on stage with the Challenge program, the precursor of Toros," she said. "I never got to play the lead, but I did get a duet in the production of Barnum."

Appearing in such musical favourites as *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *West Side Story*, Smith says she has given up her theatre career "and I only sing in church now. I've always been interested in culture and attending art galleries and art shows, and I love to read."

After the 1999 general election, Smith joined the Association of Canadian Publishers (ACP) as executive director. The ACP is a national trade association representing over 140 Canadian-owned publishing houses across the country. As executive director, she travelled extensively promoting Canadian publishing and was a bilingual spokesperson for the industry in the national media.

"That gave me a great opportunity to see Canada from coast to coast and gain an appreciation of how diverse life is in our four different time zones," she said. "I came to better under-

stand cultural diversity; how all of our cultural groups are struggling, not only in publishing, but in film, recording and on stage. Of how difficult it is to manage a national organization."

In 2003, armed with what, for some, would have been a lifetime of experiences, Smith felt she was finally ready to follow in her father's footsteps.

"My father died when I was only 13," she said, "and that was very difficult for me."

But memories of those childhood campaigns, her love of a challenge, and her intense interest in people saw her successfully win her father's former seat in Queen's Park where she proudly shows visiting constituents the marble wall where Dick Smith's name is engraved several times as a permanent reminder of his 12 years representing the people of Nipissing.

"I give a different perspective on my personal tours, having been at Queen's Park since I was 12 years old," she said. "There are many photos of my dad there, and that's something very special for me."

A true independent spirit, Smith says her single lifestyle "means I have no worries about family or children, I'm free to move about as required. And I really want to make a difference in people's lives."

Yet despite her hectic schedule, she is also the consummate aunt to nieces Kate, Sophie and Abigail and the newest member of her family, 11-month-old nephew Michael. The kids' latest pictures travel everywhere with her on her Blackberry.

Always her father's daughter, she is often seen at special events with Kate in tow, sharing those childhood experiences that meant so much to her during her father's political career. While Sophie and Abigail live in New York and are not as available to share aunt Monique's career, you can bet Michael will join her when he is old enough to appreciate the opportunities her future career may have to offer him.

Though the campaigning can be hectic, Smith says "I really enjoy the door-to-door visits and getting to talk to people about their concerns and issues. Personally, the most satisfying part of the job has been helping people that I meet, or who come to my office. That's the essence of this job, traversing the labyrinth of government to help guarantee a better quality of life for everyone," she said.

Though her down time is limited, Smith says her favourite private moments include "a walk on the beach, a hammock by the lake and a good Canadian book to read."



PHOTOS BY LAUREL CAMPBELL

**PUBLIC OUTING:** Monique Smith's niece Kate gets to spend quality time with her aunt and learn what it's like to be an MPP while attending Canada Day celebrations in Callander earlier this year. Smith says she attended many such events with her father during his 12 years as the Nipissing MPP and learned a true appreciation for the area and the people she has represented for the past four years.



**COFFEE CHAT:** Monique Smith enjoys many aspects of her position as MPP for Nipissing, but her favourite perk is talking one-on-one with her constituents. Seen here catching up on news with Powassan restaurant owner Tracy Raaflaub, Smith is as at home in the local coffee shop as she is in Queen's Park or at more formal political functions.

### 45<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary Celebration



Please join family and friends on  
**Saturday, October 20, 2007**  
from 7 - 10 p.m.  
at the Magnetawan Friendship Club  
to celebrate with us  
the 45th Wedding Anniversary of  
Eleanor and Harry Bell  
*Best Wishes Only!*

You are invited to an Open House  
for Royce and Norma Rowland  
to celebrate their 50th Anniversary  
September 29, 2007, from 1 - 4 p.m.  
847 Stillar's Rd., Powassan  
*Best Wishes Only Please!*

### East Parry Sound Community Support Services Program

## Diners Programs (Wheels-To-Meals)



"Come Out and Enjoy Great Food with Friends !!!"

NAME	PLACE	DATE <small>*meals served at noon (unless otherwise stated)</small>	COORDINATOR
Restoule Senior's Luncheon	Royal Canadian Legion Branch 639	Last Wednesday of each month	Della Norton 729-2119
South River Diners	Friendly Circle Seniors' Building	2nd & 4th Tuesday of each month	Lori Mitchell 384-7652
	Reneés Cafe	1st, 3rd & 5th Tuesday of each month	
Cottage Country Diners	Emsdale Community Centre	2nd Thursday of each month <small>(Including Summer Months)</small>	Alice Gibb 685-7450
Sundridge & Area Friendship Luncheon	Schneitzel House	All Wednesdays except for last	Ila Snow 384-5835
	Royal Canadian Legion Branch 467	Last Wednesday of each month	
Trout Creek & Area Diners	T. J.'s Restaurant	Every Thursday of each month <small>(Including Summer Months)</small>	Lori Mitchell 384-7652
Magnetawan Diners	Senior's Friendship Club	3rd Tuesday of each month	Vicky Short 387-3893

Seniors living in East Parry Sound District are welcome to visit any of the above luncheons. Please call the coordinator for further information regarding cost and transportation.  
The Diners Programs are subsidized by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
Sponsored by: Eastholme, Home for the Aged  
Box 400, 62 Big Bend Avenue, Powassan, Ontario P0H 1Z0  
Phone 705-724-2005 1-888-521-0000

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