

Can all Ford's promises be kept?

IT WAS PERHAPS APPROPRIATE that Premier-elect Doug Ford chose as his first task determining just what shape the Ontario government's books are in. And while he's at it, he should also seek expert advice on the financial risks posed by situations beyond his control.

We suspect Mr. Ford is thanking his lucky stars that his Progressive Conservatives didn't predict the financial consequences of carrying out all the promises he made in the election campaign, including cuts in income and gasoline taxes, reduction in hydro rates and elimination of ?halfway health care? without any public-sector layoffs.

One interesting omission in the platforms of all the parties was any contingency plan to deal with new tariffs and trade barriers imposed by the bully in the White House designed to bring Canada to its knees.

Just how costly to the economy the 25 per cent U.S. tariff on Canadian steel and 10 per cent on aluminum could be to Ontario was shown this week by the Quebec government's pledging of \$100 million in aid to that province's aluminum industry. And bad as that might be, the Washington demagogue's threat to impose tariffs on Canadian-assembled cars and trucks as well as Canadian-produced parts could virtually destroy two industries and produce massive unemployment.

With so many uncertainties, the wisest move for Mr. Ford when his government takes office June 29 would be to announce that everything is off the table until there is some certainty in the field of international trade ? something we won't likely see until after the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

And speaking of elections, perhaps it would be appropriate for us to make a few observations on the widely expected outcome, a PC majority government with the NDP as the Official Opposition and the Liberals reduced to one seat short of the eight required for them to be funded as an official party, despite having the support of one voter in five.

On the other hand, Green Party Leader Mike Schreiner made Ontario history by not only winning a seat in Guelph but by getting 45 per cent of the popular vote, roughly double the counts for the Conservative and NDP runners-up.

Another positive factor in the vote was the turnout, with about 58 per cent of eligible voters having cast ballots.

However, the overall result proved once again that our first-past-the-post electoral system falls far short of reflecting the parties' overall support. In this case, roughly six voters in 10 supported NDP, Liberal or Green candidates whose platforms were both remarkably similar and left of centre. But the Tories, with 40 per cent of the votes, garnered 76 seats and the other three with a cumulative 60 per cent got just 48.

Locally, there was surely no surprise in Sylvia Jones' re-election with more than half the votes cast, and as usual the main consequence will be a continued lack of concern at Queen's Park as to Dufferin-Caledon's unique needs, the only difference being that the party in power sees no need to waste money on a sure seat rather than seeing no point in pouring money into a riding that can't be won.

In the circumstances, we hope Ms. Jones will press the case for at least a couple of measures that would provide help for her riding's thousands of commuters, and particularly those in Dufferin County, without costing Queen's Park much in the way of funding.

The new government should instruct Metrolinx to immediately provide GO Transit bus service to Shelburne, and should offer to take over the Orangeville-Brampton Railway as the perfect test for low-capacity commuter services using a modern version of the CP Dayliners that used to make it from Owen Sound to Toronto in three hours.

And the government should proceed immediately with the Shelburne bypass for Highway 10 that should have been built at least 30 years ago.