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It won't always be a Liberal love-in between Ottawa and Queen's Park

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By [Robert Benzie](#)

There will be a honeymoon if Justin Trudeau is elected, but history suggests it won't always be a Liberal love-in between Queen's Park and Ottawa.

While Premier Kathleen Wynne has campaigned aggressively for the federal Liberal leader — lending him key political operatives and devoting much of her personal time to stumping for Grit candidates — she stresses Ontario's priorities must trump all others.

“There will always be provincial and federal interests that will clash at times,” Wynne said this week during a home-stretch blitz of Greater Toronto Area ridings with Liberal candidates before Monday's election.

“My job is to make sure that I stand up for the people of Ontario,” she said.

Wynne's relationship with Conservative Leader Stephen Harper has long been toxic — the two most powerful elected officials in Canada did not meet face-to-face for 396 days in 2014 and 2015 — and the 11-week campaign has only magnified the political discord.

Since the federal election was called in August, the premier has hit the hustings with a dozen Grit candidates, gamely saying she “would like to go to all of the ridings in Ontario” to help Trudeau if she could.

“We have an opportunity to elect a government that has a broad vision, that has a hopeful vision, and an optimistic vision of the future of this country — not a narrow, divisive vision, which is what we have . . . seen from the current federal government,” she said.

Harper, who never misses a chance to criticize Wynne, had equally withering words for her during an interview with Andrew Lawton of AM 980 Radio in London.

“I'm sure with the mismanagement by the Ontario government they will continue to run deficits, raise taxes, and cut benefits and services. That's what's going on,” the Conservative chief said Wednesday.

University of Toronto political science professor Nelson Wiseman said “it will be a different tone” if Wynne has to deal with Trudeau, who has promised to work with her on improving transportation infrastructure and boosting pensions.

“She’s going to get to meet with Trudeau and . . . they won’t go out of their way to attack one another. Harper had contempt for Wynne and he showed it,” said Wiseman.

But the director of the political science department’s Canadian studies program emphasized that premiers and prime ministers will never agree on everything.

“Look, the interests of the federal government and the provincial government are different and they’ve become more differentiated, if that’s the term, over time,” he said, adding Wynne is unlikely to get whatever she demands from a new regime in Ottawa.

“The federal Liberals will be constrained by the fiscal situation . . . and I don’t think Ontario expects to get everything it wants.”

Long-time political strategist Marcel Wieder, president and chief advocate of Aurora Strategy, said the mutual respect between the two Liberal leaders is good for Ontario — and could benefit the entire country.

“She’s redefining co-operative federalism with Trudeau,” he said.

Indeed, the Liberal leader has said if he wins the election he will join the premiers attending the United Nations climate change conference in Paris that begins on Nov. 30.

Wieder said that on issues like the environment and infrastructure, the two Grits “are generally are on the same page.”

“The federal infrastructure plan was cribbed right out of the (provincial) Liberals’ playbook,” he noted.

Of course, that doesn’t mean there won’t be bumps on the newly paved roads.