

## Is John Tory aiming for mayor's chair, as he slams 'unnecessary' strike?

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John Tory is sounding like a Toronto mayoralty candidate for 2010, taking a shot at David Miller's handling of the civic workers' strike and issuing a mea culpa for his own mistakes as former leader of Ontario's Progressive Conservatives.

"I think this entire chapter is so unnecessary," Tory said at yesterday's Conservative leadership convention, where MPP Tim Hudak was elected as his successor.

"What it reflects is both sides involved, those who serve the public as employees and those who serve as leaders, have forgotten they are public servants.

"We did not have to have it happen this way."

While Tory humorously suggested he's had enough politics for a while after his troubled stint at Queen's Park – joking he'd have to spend the rest of his life sleeping in the bathtub at the insistence of his wife, Barbara Hackett – he did not rule out running for mayor.

"We'll have time to sort that out over the summer," he told reporters after a 20-minute speech to a crowd of several hundred at a Markham hotel.

The address began when he took the stage and wryly noted, "Some smartass has put one of my old 'John Tory for Mayor' buttons on the podium," and held the button from 2003 in the air.

Tory, who is now hosting a Sunday evening talk show on CFRB, quit the party leadership in early March after losing a by-election in the cottage country riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

It was his first and only shot at getting back into the Legislature after the disastrous 2007 provincial election campaign, where his controversial plan to extend taxpayer funding to religious schools was blamed for his party's stunning defeat.

"If you were disappointed by some of the events that took place on my watch, I was disappointed with you," he told the convention.

"There were times I was disappointed in myself."

Tory, who spent more than a year after the election without a seat in the Legislature, also lamented he didn't have "a fully united caucus and party" behind him, for which he partly blamed himself.

Tory was praised by party members at the podium and in a meandering and funereal tribute video for playing a key role in rebuilding the PCs after their 2003 defeat, erasing a large debt.

Former premier Bill Davis, whom Tory served as principal secretary years ago, called his protégé "the finest premier Ontario has never had."

Tory himself noted, "going to these things is the closest you get to your own funeral."