

Claire Hoy ? Another spending scandal



Margaret Thatcher, who knew something about irony and overcoming long odds, once quipped, "It's a funny old world." Indeed it is.

Take most of the media headlines from last week's federal budget for example. It was generally dismissed as "boring" or "doing nothing," etc., not just by the opposition, which is standard fare, but by almost everybody who covered it.

Why? It seems the Tories were found guilty of "wait for it" the heinous crime of balancing the budget. Horrors! Imagine, not announcing a host of expensive ways to sink the taxpaying public further into debt. Imagine, focusing on getting us out of the hole that wanton government spending (including the incumbents) has dug for us. The nerve.

For decades, your humble correspondent has railed against Government by Charge, the overwhelming practice by politicians to spend money "your money" that they don't have, all the while urging Mr. and Mrs. Beleaguered Taxpayer to watch their own personal saving habits so that when retirement comes they'll be able to afford it.

Now those dastardly Tories are actually boasting about clearing off the deficit and trying to pay down the enormous outstanding government debt. Have they no shame?

Contrast the negative coverage of their responsible spending with the routinely blasé approach toward Ontario's freespending Liberal government under the aegis of Kathleen Wynne.

One assumes the general public isn't as happy about Liberal wastrels as the media seems to be, since the ruling Liberals once again were trashed in two byelections last week "one going Tory, the other NDP.

But on the media front, you'd be hardpressed to find somebody who enjoys more positive coverage overall than Wynne "as did Dalton McGuinty before her" despite the fact they are working overtime to turn Ontario from a traditional economic powerhouse to a potential economic wasteland.

It's not all their fault, of course. Ontario has suffered because our traditional manufacturing base has been overtaken by events, particularly in the energy field.

That being said, however, the McGuinty-Wynne regime has done everything it could to make a bad situation worse. (Wynne's promise of a made-in-Ontario pension plan is the just latest multi-billion-dollar-boondoggle- in-waiting.)

While the federal Tories have been far from perfect in many areas "and let's face it, Harper isn't exactly a warm and fuzzy guy" they certainly have their had economic priorities in order.

Not so the Ontario Liberals.

The worst boondoggle of all, of course, has been their so-called "green energy" program. It was supposed to create jobs and stimulate the economy, but it has done the opposite. Even the European Union and Germany "both of whom bought into the alternative energy hysteria in a big way" have formally announced they're cutting back on huge subsidies for solar, wind and other renewable because of the "staggering costs." If you don't think that applies to Ontario, check you latest energy bill.

Indeed, Ontario is in such dire straits from Liberal fiscal mismanagement that even though the number of welfare recipients in Canada has declined markedly since the mid-1990s, not so in Ontario. How bad is it? In 2012, 7.6 per cent of Ontarians were on welfare, the second worst record in Canada behind only Newfoundland. Now there's a point of pride, eh? It gets worse.

Senior writer Bob Hepburn, writing last week in the Toronto Star, pointed out something that the rest of the media "for reasons I don't understand" continue to ignore, i.e. the scandalous increase in executive pay raises and growing use of lobbying firms paid

with tax dollars by Ontario's 14 Community Care Access Centres (CCACs), which govern home care in Ontario. (This is a totally separate scandal from the well-documented ORNGE failures.)

People love to attack private sector CEO salaries. Well, Hepburn writes that since Deb Matthews has been health minister, CCAC executive salaries ?have skyrocketed while low-paid workers who actually deliver services to patients haven't seen their incomes rise in a decade ??

How bad is it? Less than 50 cents of every tax dollar earmarked for home care actually reaches those who deliver services to patients. The average salary of the CEOs is \$234,000 a year, an unconscionable average hike of 12 per cent a year over the three-year period. (Has your salary gone up 36 per cent over three years? Not likely.) At the same time, many personal health support workers earning under \$20,000 a year haven't had a raise at all. Nice.

One example: Caroline Brereton, CEO of the Mississauga Halton CCAC, which serves Georgetown, makes \$229,890, a 47 per cent increase over her 2009 predecessor's pay.

No wonder Ontario is drowning in a sea of Liberal-red ink.

Isn't it time NDP Leader Andrea Horwath quit coddling them and let the voters decide their fate? What is she afraid of, for heaven's sake?

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