

Claire Hoy ? Lawsuit no sign of strength

It was former U.S. president Harry Truman who used to say that ?if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.?

He also featured a sign on his desk proclaiming, ?The buck stops here.?

Ah, for a politician with Truman's guts and integrity.

Which brings us, as you may have guessed, to Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne's decision to hide behind a lawsuit in an attempt to silence Tory Leader Tim Hudak and, for that matter, anybody else who has the nerve to suggest she played a role in the \$1.1 billion Liberal vote-buying exercise late in the last campaign, the one where they decided to move two gas plants under construction for the sole purpose of saving a few adjacent ridings.

Short-term, of course, the ploy worked. The Liberals did win the ridings in question, and then premier Dalton McGuinty managed to hang on to a minority government which subsequently went to Wynne after McGuinty bolted in disgrace and she won the Liberal leadership race.

Wynne has always maintained that she knew absolutely nothing about the gas plant fiasco, a claim which, as NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said again last week, is ?hard to believe.?

It certainly is. Not only was Wynne a senior minister in McGuinty's government, and therefore privy to political strategy, she was vice-chair of the Liberal election campaign. And since this was strictly an election issue based solely on partisan considerations, it seems a stretch to take her word for it that she ?like the taxpayers left picking up the tab ? was an innocent bystander in this sordid affair.

Hudak, you will know, isn't buying Wynne's claims of innocence. Nor is Ottawa Tory MPP Lisa MacLeod, both of whom have openly accused Wynne of being personally involved in the coverup of the affair and both of whom have been served with libel notices for refusing to withdraw their accusations.

Politics, as anybody who has spent more than five seconds in the game knows, is a blood sport. Opponents accuse each other of terrible things as a matter of course. They obfuscate, twist, turn inside out and otherwise stretch the truth of the matter beyond recognition as a matter of course.

They all do it, some with more flair than others, so for a politician to whine about it is tantamount to an NHL player crying that a guy on the other team gave him a body cheque or a baseball player appealing to the umpire that the called third strike shouldn't count because the pitcher threw it in too fast.

Wynne, who should be able to fight her own battles in the political arena, has instead brought in the lawyers and the courts hoping to muzzle Hudak and others, at least long enough to get past the next election, an event which is widely expected in the fall, unless, alas, Horwath continues her pathetic insistence of maligning the Wynne government out of one side of her mouth and propping it up out of the other for fear of going to the voters who ?let us remember ? have not been given the chance yet to pass judgment either for or against on Wynne's suitability for the office.

The legal to-do stems directly from a recent police report on the question of Liberal officials allegedly wiping the computer hard drives in the premier's office. The OPP so far say there is nothing on the record to indicate any files were destroyed after Wynne was sworn in as premier on Feb. 11, 2013.

But the police report also showed that a Liberal official gained special access to those computers for a six-week period that extended well into Wynne's takeover of the office.

She swears she had no knowledge of it. Hudak doesn't believe her and has said so repeatedly, ignoring threats of a legal suit, threats which became reality last week when the libel notices were delivered.

Far be it from me to pass judgment on who did what to whom in this matter.

But it surely isn't a sign of strength for a premier ? even if she is as innocent as Snow White ? to use the sledge hammer of a libel suit to silence her critics.

Let her go in the Legislature and demand that Hudak show clear evidence of his charges and, if he can't, no doubt the media would be only too happy to tell the world about it.

That's what real leaders do. They fight back, face to face. They don't wave writs around and bring in the lawyers to arbitrate what is clearly a political dispute.

One more thing: just as you're paying for the gas plant boondoggle to begin with, you'll also be picking up the tab for the court case. Neat.

