

Editorial ? There are other ways to balance the Province's books

We live in rather cynical times, in which politicians, no matter what their political stripes, are considered fair game for any kind of shot.

Thus the Provincial government's announcement last week that a salary freeze for MPPs, which has been in place for several years will continue, at least until the budget is balanced, is something they should be able to get away with. And the government is telling us to expect things to be balanced in the 2017-18 fiscal year.

Not many people are likely to lobby for a pay hike for any elected official, and not many politicians are likely to complain too vigorously.

But Dufferin Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones had a point when she said the move will amount to "pretty small potatoes."

If government really wants to balance the books, there are two main ways to do it; either raise taxes or cut spending.

Although taxes, like death, are part of the reality we all must face and get used to as we go through life, none of us enjoy the thought of paying more, just as we don't like the thought of dying. But they are, alas, a necessity. But governments do have to be careful when it comes to tax increases, because politicians eventually have to face the electorate, and they sometimes will make it very clear that they will only stand for so much.

So that means cutting spending.

True, government spending, for the most part, goes toward items that it's assumed people want. Fair enough, but if the money is not there to pay for it, then there's a problem, namely a deficit, that adds to debt, resulting in the hole that so many governments find themselves in.

It is true that governments sometimes find the need to go into the proverbial hole. For example, demands increase on the public purse during recessions, and items government (especially at the Provincial and federal level) tax a lot, like income and consumption, tend to decrease. So a deficit during a slumping economy is pardonable, provided the government concentrates on getting out of the hole when things improve.

The current unbalanced books, despite what some of the cynical among us might want to think, was not the result of people like MPPs or public sector employees being over paid. It was simply a case of government spending money that it didn't have when it didn't need to.

That's what has to be addressed in order to balance the books.