

Ford's getting back to work!

by SHERALYN ROMAN

How do we know Ford is getting back to work? Simply turn on your TV, open up a newspaper, listen to the radio or check your ?X? and other social media accounts. We know, because Ford wants us to know. It's probably in his best interests to step in front of the cameras as he heads back to the legislature after an epic 10-week break. Do you know anyone, anyone at all that gets a 10-week break? Must be nice. Anyway, as I was saying, all these efforts to highlight Mr. Ford's return to work have been bombarding us day and night. One can't help but wonder however, are these announcements actually announcing anything new or by releasing this onslaught of information is the government merely trying to distract us? What work exactly is Mr. Ford getting back to?

Let's start with an obvious one. Tell me you are announcing nothing without telling me you are announcing nothing ? that's what came to mind as I listened to the announcement about ?removing tolls.? I knew enough not to anticipate this might apply to the 407 but to announce new legislation that will ?prevent roads from being tolled in the future? (unless of course that legislation is later repealed) is not actually announcing anything. The 400-series of highways are already NOT tolled (407 excepted of course) so essentially his Minister of Transportation in making this ?new? announcement is saying roads that already don't have tolls now will continue to not have tolls now, or in the future, or for at least as long as the PCs are in power. Umm, thanks?

While on the topic of tolls, one can't help but see this as an opportunity to remind the Premier that if indeed he was interested in making a real announcement about tolls he might have considered the removal, or at the very least the reduction, of tolls on the 407. Doing so would ACTUALLY make a difference, freeing up more truck traffic to use that highway and eliminate the need for building a costly, environmentally destructive, multi-lane highway through Caledon at the expense of whitebelt lands. And, while on the topic of the proposed 413, we're following closely the efforts of at least one Caledon councillor, Doug Maskell, to have a motion passed indicating Caledon does NOT support the construction of the 413. Stay tuned.

In another announcement about nothing, after acknowledging that many of us citizens are lazy (ok, maybe not his exact words) his government is removing the requirement to renew license plates. Seems that after removing sticker renewal requirements and fees, over one million Ontarians have since forgotten to renew their plates. Rather than encouraging those of us who did remember to do this because we take the privilege of driving seriously, and instead rewarding the bad behaviour, the premier simply said, ?now we are getting rid of the re-registration?? so people don't have to worry about that at all.? Much like the toll announcement there's no savings here, fees were already removed, and I rather think this is simply yet another window-dressing attempt to make his government look good.

Finally, how about all those ads espousing a seemingly great place to live that end with, ?And what if we told you, you already live here?? ?Here? being Ontario, presumably the greatest place on earth all because of the Ford-led PCs. These ads are (so it states in the fine print) ?paid for by the Government of Ontario.? As one reader reminded us recently, where does the government get its funding? Taxation. We the taxpayers are at least one primary source of funding for the government and to then turn around and spend money on telling us what a great job they are doing is egregious. It is, after all, the job we elected them to do. It's not just readers and the writer of this column who think so, either. Jay Goldberg, the Ontario Director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation says, ?this is not the sort of advertising that should be funded by public money.? Further, in an interview he also stated, ?We shouldn't be seeing these kinds of ads that don't really inform the public and are just really political puff pieces.?

According to records, a similar type of campaign run previously by the Ford government cost upwards of \$13 million. I can't help but think that's money better spent on things like health care rather than announcements about nothing. Oh, and by the way, Ontario law ?prohibits governments from using publicly funded advertisements to explicitly promote the party in power, or to denigrate the opposition.?

Whether or not Ford's announcements and advertisements are actually announcing anything is certainly debatable in my opinion. Bombarding us from every angle, a cynic might conclude these ads are simply a way to stay ahead of the naysayers who, once the

legislature is back in session, will attempt to hold Premier Ford and his PC government to account for other announcements that were made while the legislature was not in session. Like what you ask?

Amongst other things, perhaps Ford is trying to distract us from possible inquiries into the Staples/Service Ontario debacle. Getting an answer to that really will require Ford to get back to work.