

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? Just another Liberal tax grab

With extremely few exceptions ? none of which come to mind ? the term ?honest politician? has always been a classic oxymoron. Even so, many politicians were at least straightforward enough to admit that a tax is, well, a tax.

Not Premier Kathleen Wynne and her crew, however.

That extra 4.3 cents per litre to fill up your car and the extra \$60 a year to heat your home isn't just another tax ? and certainly not a tax grab.

Rather, it's the price we must pay ? with joy in our hearts, apparently ? to save the world from ourselves.

Without it, it seems, climate change will doom us all.

If it wasn't such an obvious scam ? and a costly one to boot ? it would be laughable. The fact is, Wynne could completely shut down Ontario and the impact of carbon emissions on the world would be less than one-half of one per cent of global emissions. Indeed, her Ottawa pal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau could shut down Canada, lock, stock and barrel, and the total impact of carbon emissions in the world would drop by ? wait for it ? about 1.7 per cent.

Even so, in her costly desire to join the climate fear-mongering parade, Wynne has decreed that Ontario will now join California and Quebec as the only North American jurisdictions with a cap-and-trade system for carbon emissions.

Her government makes the absurd claim that making gasoline and heating fuel more expensive will mean less usage and therefore cut carbon emissions.

What nonsense. For starters, people still have to heat their homes and the extra \$60 ? on top of a series of other increases in the provincial Liberal budget ? is going to create hardship, but it's not going to make people shut their furnaces off in December.

As for the new gas tax, er, pardon me, earth-saving fee, the same thing applies. While there has long been a small mouthy militant bunch who do what they can to force people out of their cars, the fact is, most people need to drive. They drive to work. They drive to get their groceries. They drive to visit their families. They drive to the golf course. They drive all over the place. They still will, only it's going to cost them more and that, dear hearts, is a tax on driving whether Wynne wants to deny it or not.

As the old saw goes, you're not entitled to your own ?facts.? And the fact is ? just like the 70 per cent hike to seniors in getting their prescriptions filled ? the extra money for gas and heating oil is a tax increase.

This wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing if, in fact, it was going to have a tangible benefit on the world carbon emissions. But it won't. Period. Full stop. Which makes it just another Liberal tax grab.

Mind you, governments of all stripes have long ago started to pretend that government spending isn't really spending. It's ?investing? don't you know.

With that in mind, the Wynne government boasted that it will cut the deficit from \$5.7 billion last year to \$4.3 billion this year and zero the next year.

This is because, they claim, they have been so prudent in ?investing? your tax dollars, and we damned well should be appreciative. Nothing less than a standing ovation will do.

But just a minute. Have they really been wise ?investors?? Ah, no. Indeed, their proposed ?investing? this year will soar to \$122 billion, some \$6 billion more than they project two years ago.

As National Post columnist Andrew Coyne pointed out, their spending of \$8,500 per capita ? after factoring in inflation and population growth ? is still one-third higher than it was under Mike Harris and ? even more surprising ? some 30 per cent higher than Bob Rae's NDP government. (You'll remember Rae, before he found religion in the Liberal party, for trying to spend his way out of a recession and getting booted out of office for his efforts.) Yet, alas, his spending spree pales by comparison to Wynne's.

Worst of all, while they brag about wiping out the deficit ? and using the one-time sale of Hydro One to do it, along with significant increases in federal transfers from Ottawa ? the growth of the province's net debt, i.e. how much we owe, continues unabated, making it the largest debt, relative to GDP, of any jurisdiction in North America except ? of course ? Quebec.

No wonder Wynne and Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard get along so well. They're both hell-bent for provincial bankruptcy. And they both paint fiscal incompetence as a virtue.

