

## National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? They're hoping to fool us again

There's an old saw around political and business circles that you can never buy a person who isn't for sale.

Apparently, Premier Kathleen Wynne thinks Ontario voters are indeed for sale since, as we saw in her hoked up Throne Speech last week, she is making a determined effort to buy enough votes in the next election to maintain power and openly use tax dollars ? your tax dollars ? to do it.

After all, it worked before. When her predecessor Dalton McGuinty found himself facing public anger over the cost of energy ? and other things ? in 2011, he introduced the grandly named Clean Energy Benefit.

This alleged ?benefit? ended in 2015 and, while despite its name it had no bearing whatsoever on clean energy, it did give consumers of hydro a 10 per cent government rebate. That was achieved by borrowing even more money ? from a government already seriously in debt ? to send along a little sweetener in the hopes that years of Liberal mismanagement of the hydro file would not result in a change in government.

Thanks partially to that perhaps ? but more so to an unbelievably stupid campaign by the opposition Tories ? the Liberals did manage to maintain their grip on Queen's Park and continue on their merry way spending us into oblivion.

Now Wynne thinks that she can do it again, using pretty much the same technique, i.e. maintaining shamefully high energy costs and borrowing more money to subsidize unhappy consumers by taking the provincial tax off their hydro bills.

At the same time as they are doing that, the Liberals pledged to spend even more billions trying to encourage Ontarians to use less energy. So on the one hand, they are borrowing money on a scheme that discourages cutting back on energy, i.e. tax relief, while on the other hand they are borrowing money to encourage consumers to cut back.

In any other field but politics, that would be grounds for dismissal.

Keep in mind that it is a direct result of Liberal mismanagement of energy that you, Mr. and Mrs. Beleaguered Taxpayer, already pay the highest hydro rates on the continent. Thanks to McGuinty's folly of awarding long-term contracts to select energy companies to supply alternative sources of energy, Ontario is not only paying more for the energy than it is worth on the market, but has excessive energy which it is in turn forced to sell at a loss ? at a loss, keep in mind ? to neighboring U.S. states.

Now Wynne wants to compound the problem, no doubt hoping that in 18 months from now voters will be thankful for their minor tax break and pay no heed to the fact they're being robbed blind thanks to Liberal incompetence.

High energy costs, as you likely know, don't only hurt your average domestic consumer, but they also discourage industry from either setting up new operations here or maintaining the ones they already have. Hence, the tragic demise of a province that traditionally could brag about being the engine of the entire country. At the rate the Liberals are going, we'll soon be the caboose, if we aren't already.

Just how bad have the Liberals botched the electricity file? Well, Canada's Consumer Price Index increased by 17.6 per cent over the past decade. During this same period ? wait for it ? the cost to consumers of buying a kilowatt-hour of electricity at peak hours rocketed from 10.5 cents to 18 cents. That's a 71 per cent hike, about four times the increase in the CPI. And that's not the worst part. Prices at mid-peak are up 76 per cent, while the cost in off-peak hours during this same period rose an astounding 149 per cent.

But rather than tackle the problem which they themselves created, Wynne's approach ? taken from the McGuinty playbook ? is to make our growing provincial debt even more dire by offering a token break on the provincial tax.

It may be that Ontario voters are as stupid and uniformed as the Liberals think they are.

Or, to quote the noted American pro-life activist Randall Terry, could it be a case of ?Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.?

Well, they fooled us once. Can they do it again?

