

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? Wynne?s ORPP a mindless money-pit

The first time Premier Kathleen Wynne sat down for what she agreed beforehand was to be a private meeting with Prime Minister Stephen Harper, she emerged to complain that Harper didn't agree with her plan for an Ontario pension plan and that ? oh the pain of it all ? he actually ?smirked? at her.

Ever since, never missing an opportunity to slag the prime minister, she has complained that Harper doesn't like her.

Is it any wonder?

So there she is, in the midst of a federal election campaign, claiming that Harper doesn't care about Ontario ? an absurd claim given the number of projects his government has agreed to fund, including her rapid transit dreams ? and that we'd all be much better off if Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau emerged as prime minister.

The chances of Trudeau actually winning the election are, at best, remote, which means that whoever wins ? either Harper or NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair ? is somebody that Wynne, using (abusing?) her office as premier of Canada's largest province, has actively campaigned against. Does she think this will help her in her future dealings with Ottawa? Really?

When Harper dropped the writ to open the official campaign ? given that the three main party leaders had already been unofficially campaigning for months ? Wynne said Harper ?thinks Canadians can be bought.?

This is the same politician who, as a senior member of the previous Liberal administration (and co-chair of the subsequent provincial election campaign) sat silently by while Dalton, McGuinty) cavalierly blew more than \$1-billion of your tax money to move a gas plant to another riding just so he could save the nearby Liberal-held ridings. (Consider the current coverage of the great Senate ?scandal? which, at the end of the day, amounts to public misspending of about \$1-million, a pittance of what McGuinty and Wynne have wasted on their ill-fated energy programs. But we digress.)

Quite apart from an obvious personality clash ? it's clear they don't like each other ? the main bone of contention is Wynne's madcap scheme to force beleaguered Ontario working people to contribute to her Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP), on the rather specious grounds that there is a ?crisis? which her government needs to address so that future generations will be able to look after themselves in their dotages.

There is no crisis. And the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) isn't going to disappear. What's more, pension plans are not meant to guarantee that after retirement the living is easy. Their sole purpose is to supplement incomes, to make certain that nobody is in such dire straights that they can't feed and clothe themselves.

And here's the thing: at her recent news conference announcing her grand plan, she admitted that she has no idea how much her plan will cost to administer.

Well, given the record to government plans, you know it will cost hundreds of millions, money taken directly out of the pockets of working Ontarians and fed into the giant government bureaucracy, all supposedly in the interest of making your golden years more comfortable. Remember, this comes from the head of a government which has shown itself to be the least able of any government in this country to keep spending in check and manage the programs it already has inflicted upon us.

And what do you suppose this significant added tax will do to most Ontarians who are already busy trying to pay down their mortgages, put food on the table and hopefully send their kids to university?

As National Post columnist Matt Gurney wrote on the weekend, ?Every dollar I lose to the ORPP is a dollar I would have used to pay off my house or build my savings ... with no guarantee my children will ever see it.?

Naturally, much of the mainstream media ? particularly the Harper-hating Toronto Star ? have accused Harper of being ?mean-spirited? and ?partisan? to sign a blank cheque for Wynne's ill-considered plan.

It's an odd thing. When Harper disagrees with somebody he's being partisan. No credit for actually believing something. But when a Liberal suggests something they are motivated, not by partisanship, but by the public good.

There are a lot of other reasons to be upset with Harper, but his opposition to this mindless money-pit called the ORPP is not one of them.

Quite the contrary, actually.

