

Caledon Citizen

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Fairness for taxpayers a key campaign issue

If any single issue is likely to dominate the campaign leading up to the Oct. 10 Ontario election, it's the one the Progressive Conservatives have labelled "fairness for taxpayers."

It's an interesting label, in that most of the opposition parties' attention in the last four years has been directed at the Liberals' failure to keep a pledge not to raise taxes, and specifically at the health care premium that was really an increase in income taxes.

The PCs' campaign document, *Plan for Ontario's Future*, has this to say under the heading:

"Income tax can be a fair, progressive form of taxation when it's based on how much money people earn, instead of their savings or the value of their home. However, income tax is also the single biggest government burden on people and their families. While governments need tax revenue to deliver services, every dollar taken by government is one that families cannot spend or save for their own needs and priorities. Higher income taxes also can prevent businesses from investing, employers from hiring, and consumers from spending. So, income taxes should be kept to a fair level - enough to fund our shared priorities. Unfortunately, Ontario saw the biggest income tax hike in history in 2004, when Dalton McGuinty broke his 'no new taxes' promise. Not only did he increase our taxes by \$2.6 billion a year, but he did so with an unfair, regressive tax that places a disproportionate burden on lower-income people. ..."

Another Tory theme has been a call for "truth in taxes," including a pledge to spend all the revenue from motor vehicle fuel taxes on improving our roads and transit systems.

That pledge, which Tory recently spelled out to reporters led to a Toronto Star editorial which suggested the promise involves "false simplicity."

"On the surface of it, the idea has considerable appeal. Ontarians would see more of their money devoted to clogged roads and badly needed public transit without having to pay any more tax," the Star editorialist wrote. "The only problem is that any gas tax money not currently spent on roads and transit is obviously spent on something else. Like health care. Or education. Or to fight climate change. What would happen to those areas if some of the money in their budgets were diverted to roads and transit? Tory

doesn't say."

The Star asserted that dedicating the \$8 billion a year in provincial revenue that comes from cars, trucks and fuel to roads and transit alone would mean taking a lot of money away from other key areas that also need the funds.

To date, only the Tory Conservatives have spelled out their platform, and as we see it, its main problem lies in the same area that led to problems for the McGuinty Liberals: promises that are undoubtedly attractive but will be difficult, if not impossible, to keep.

For example, voters are told a John Tory government will phase out the health tax "gradually and responsibly," and "replace high taxes by finding savings and efficiencies" while investing more than the Liberals in health care and education and yet continue to balance the provincial budget.

As we see it, the plan will work only if Ontario experiences an economic boom instead of continuing job losses in a manufacturing sector that has been so hard hit by the strong Canadian dollar and the export of jobs to Mexico and the Far East.

Although it certainly wouldn't be nearly as attractive a campaign pledge as either "fairness for taxpayers" or "truth in taxes," what we'd like to see one of the parties promise is tax reform - an arms-length inquiry aimed at recommending long-term tax policies that would give the provincial government and Ontario municipalities the revenue they need to finance their services while spreading the tax burden as fairly as possible.

The reform should extend beyond revenues that have a tax label and include sound policies on what are loosely termed user fees. As we see it, successive provincial governments of all political stripes have consistently increased fees for every type of service, far beyond the general level of inflation. Reforms in this area should include a rule that the fees imposed must never exceed the demonstrated actual cost of providing the service.

Of course, reforms at the provincial and municipal level could easily wind up being ineffective if the federal government adopted counter-productive taxation policies or simply cut back on promised grants and tax-sharing. Hopefully that won't happen.



Our Readers Write

Proud to have been part of network

As I retire after 30 years of providing home day care, I look back on very fond

memories.

Twenty-four of those years were spent in Bolton and for 17 years I was a member of the Bolton & District Home Child Care Providers Network. I have been honoured to serve as chairperson for the network and I am pleased that the good work of this group will continue.

Caring and responsible providers have always, and will continue to support, each other and to plan wonderful events for the children in their care. They are always eager to accept training opportunities that are offered. A huge, positive influence has been the Caledon Parent Child Centre/Ontario Early Years Centre. I have always greatly appreciated that all home child care providers are able to get together Tuesday mornings at the centre. The marvellous Tuesday staff have always supported and encouraged the network and I am confident that this partnership will continue to be strong.

I want to thank the network for many years of friendship and for the opportunity to work together with caring women to benefit the children in their care. I also sincerely say thank-you for the wonderful retirement party you gave for me. I thoroughly enjoyed seeing past and present members and CPCC/OEYC staff.

It goes without saying that I miss the children, but I want you all to know that I will truly miss all of you and the times we have spent together. I know that with dedicated original members and very capable leadership, your network will continue to grow and I am always proud to have been a part of the Bolton & District Home Child Care Providers Network.

Pesticide bylaw concerns

Regarding the Mayor's Report, 'Getting the answers you need,' by Marolyn Morrison, published in the Caledon Citizen July 25.

An Ottawa writer, I am Canadian honorary observer with the Pesticide Working Group in Washington.

While Caledon was one of the first municipalities to establish a pesticide bylaw, it is one of the weakest and most inadequate from among about 130 of such bylaws in Canada. A frivolous urban exposure to toxic chemicals, especially harmful to young children, is just as inadvisable in May, June and September as it is in July and August.

After all, there are alternatives. This writer has a weedless lawn maintained without the use of pesticides which, after all, came into vogue only a few decades ago, and from time immemorial lawns were maintained using non-toxic methods: mowing high, overseeding and applying an organic fertilizer that is non-toxic to beneficial organisms in the soil.

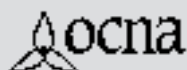
I am also concerned about the reference to a "qualified IPM applicator."

Such applicators are altogether too eager to apply pesticides. IPM is also aptly described as "increased pesticide marketing." An urban IPM is used as a ploy on the part of the industry to forestall the passing of meaningful and effective pesticide bylaws. No apparent reductions in urban pesticide use are likely to be achieved using IPM, a means for the chemical lawn application companies to retain an absolute control over lawn maintenance.

K. Jean Cottam, PhD
Nepean, Ontario

Barb Gorry

Caledon Citizen



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