

'Precious few concrete examples' given

It was former Canadian prime minister William Lyon MacKenzie who said: "The promises of yesterday are the taxes of today." Which brings us, of course, to the current spat between the federal Conservatives and Liberals about just how much Liberal Leader Stephane Dion's serial promises would cost Canadians should they be foolish enough to elect him to the top job.

On the one hand, the Liberals claim they would bring in a "balanced budget. How would they do this? Well, according to Liberal finance critic John McCallum, a one-time chief economist for the Royal Bank of Canada, "We would phase our plans so as never to go into deficit."

The Tories, however, issued a 65-page report on the weekend entitled "In Search of Priorities," in

which they claim that meeting the Liberal promises would plunge the country \$62.5 billion deeper into debt over the next four years. But that, of course, is based on the rather sticky notion that, if elected, Dion would actually live up to his promises.

But even if he only instituted a portion of the things he has pledged to bring in, the rather obvious truth - routinely ignored by politicians and much of the media - is that when government spends, they're spending our money. And when they raise the money that they spend, the bulk of it comes from - tada! - taxes. Industry Minister Jim Prentice claims that Dion "has a spending problem. Ever since he became leader of the Liberal party, and indeed even before, he has been criss-crossing the country, making spending commitment after spending commitment, promising tax dollars to special interest after special interest, writing IOU after IOU.

"There's a price tag involved when you commit to new government spending each time you stand at a podium, give an interview or issue a press release," said Prentice. "Canadians deserve to know this price tag. After all, it's their money." For his part, McCallum characterized the Tory report as "a \$62-billion lie ... I've never seen such a shoddy, inaccurate, let alone dishonest document."

Really? It's not hard to accept the notion that the Tories likely put some extra spin on the Liberal promises, but to hear McCallum tell it, the whole thing is a "lie." Does that mean the Liberals haven't promised any spending initiatives at all? And beyond the predictable partisan political rhetoric, McCallum offers precious few concrete examples of where the Tories numbers are wrong and/or grossly exaggerated.

Dion, for example, has promised to implement the Kelowna Accord for Aboriginals and, by general agreement, that carries with it a \$5.1 billion price tag over the next five years. No argument there with the Tory numbers unless, of course, Dion has no intention of honoring his promise.

Dion also promised a national child-care program, which the Tories say would cost \$5 billion over five years (which seems rather low to me), but McCallum jumped on that, claiming the Tories were "double counting" by assuming the Liberals would try to eradicate all child poverty in their first year in power. Actually the Tory report doesn't assume that at all. They give a five-year cost, not one year. What is McCallum talking about?

Dion also promised - time and again - to honor the discredited Kyoto Protocol. That comes with a \$10.9 billion price tag over four years. Is McCallum denying that too? Then again, Dion signed the Kyoto Protocol originally when he was in the Liberal cabinet, only to ignore it completely. Perhaps he plans to follow the same strategy should he ever get back into government again.

The Tories list 86 specific promises that Dion has made. All of them are on the public record, so it wouldn't be difficult for McCallum to back his claim that the list is all "lies," except, of course, for the small point that they aren't lies (unless Dion is lying about his intentions, that is). Prentice challenged the Liberals to "come clean" and tell the taxpayers how much their promises would cost.

As a former banker, McCallum can't be used to having to explain his spending promises to the public, but he does say that come the election - which may not be that far away - the Liberals will tell the taxpayers what's in store for them.

We can hardly wait.



National Affairs

Claire Hoy

I'm still a romantic, I think

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nity newspapers takes a lot out of a fellow, you know).

"I don't want you getting me anything for Valentine's Day," she said, in her best wifely tone. "You have too much to do as it is."

My first thought was she had gone into the kitchen cupboard and found what she wasn't supposed to find. But I quickly realized that would have been unlikely. That's just not Beth's way of doing things. Had she found the gift, she would not have

let on. That way, she'd let me think she was surprised.

So after she went to bed, I did a bit of puttering about downstairs, and took a couple of minutes to arrange everything for the surprise that I was assuming was still alive.

It was, at least I think it was, from the reaction I received in the morning.

It hasn't always been that way with me. In fact, there was a time when I considered Valentine's day to be something of a chore.

My mother always left lit-

tle cards for us that morning, and when I started high school, my father angrily dressed me down one year for not getting her a card.

There were also the card exchanges in class Valentine' afternoon in the elementary grades, and us boys in the '60s didn't mind swapping such cards back and forth. It was a lot more fun than reading, writing and number-crunching.

As I got older, and came to realize that girls were not as yucky as I had once believed, I seldom got the

urge to be overly romantic, largely because there wasn't anyone who sparked the REALLY necessary urges.

In fact, Beth was the first girl I ever bought flowers for on Valentine's Day. this was in the days when she was just my girlfriend, before she became my wife and girlfriend. I think she was more surprised when I handed them to her than I was that I had actually done something like this.

In some ways, maybe a day like this is a way to mark progression through life.

Our Readers Write**Major residential tax increases for Caledon residents**

The last municipal election in the Town of Caledon happened more than one year ago, in November 2006, and now they are proposing to hit us with a substantial residential property tax increase.

Here are some of the real reasons for this major tax increase that they are not telling you about. The Town wasted about \$ 47,500 on renovating the mayor's office and the CAO's office in a building which is only about six years old.

About 44.1 per cent of the proposed tax increase is for salary increases for staff, at a time when they say that they don't have enough money to pay for more infrastructure and services, and when the local fire department is begging for new equipment and upgrades. As well, the Town spent about \$411,000 of the taxpayers' money in 2007 on outside consultants' reports when they already have a planning department with a director and about 10 senior planners making a combined annual salary of \$1 million. Most of these reports were to simply confirm what they already knew, and in any case, most of them were simply shelved anyway, after completion. Why did the planning department not do their own research internally and make their own long-term planning reports to save us money? Why do they still not even have a long-term vision and a long-term strategic plan?

I have recently heard from our Regional Councillor for Ward 5, Annette Groves, that the economic development department at the Town has brought in next to no new business development in Bolton and yet they have a

staff of four, making an approximate annual salary of \$250,000. It seems that Groves, working with a couple of local doctors in Bolton managed to bring in three new doctors, two new dentists, and a theatre and adjacent commercial complex in Bolton. The Town's economic development department has done next to nothing to bring in any new business development in Bolton and only minimal efforts elsewhere in Caledon. Why does this department even exist, if not to encourage new business development and bring more investment, taxes, and employment jobs to Caledon?

The Town is spending on average \$150,000 annually on OMB hearings, and associated legal costs, when perhaps half of them are not even necessary, since the Town is not negotiating in good faith with the residential and commercial developers in the first place, which leaves the developers no choice but to go to the OMB. Actually, the Town spent a whopping \$1,327,853 of the taxpayers money on OMB hearings from 1997 to 2003 inclusive. As well, why is the Town contracting out legal services when we already have a Town lawyer and legal department?

Solmar Development recently built a whole series of brand new industrial and commercial buildings in the prestige business park in south Bolton, but it turns out that almost 95 per cent of them are sitting empty because the Town has not provided them with any real and meaningful assistance and encouragement in bringing in new business to Bolton or Caledon. Where is

the sense in this?

Why is the Town continuing to block or freeze new business growth and also residential growth in Caledon at a time when they know that they have to expand both the commercial and residential tax base to provide new and upgraded infrastructure and services, which they cannot now afford to all of the residents of the town? The Town says they are trying to encourage business and economic growth, but it appears that they are doing next to nothing to actively promote it, and encourage it, and make it happen.

The Caledon Centre for Recreation and Wellness is operating at only about 50 per cent capacity due to the lack of further financial assistance from the Town of Caledon for additional promotions and advertising. Apparently, the Town provided some \$7 million to \$9 million of the taxpayers' money for construction of this new facility only about five years ago.

It seems to me that what we are looking at here in Caledon is tax dollars wasted and inefficient staff and bureaucracy, very poor over-

Saturday's local film showing was a success

On behalf of Wanted Media and myself, I would like to thank all the people who came out to the Cedar Mains Farm screening Saturday night.

It was a great success and we had over 100 people attend.

I would like to extend this thanks to Empire Theatres, the mayor of Caledon, Klementine Designs, Sally Drummond, Barbay

all fiscal management, complete lack of proper long-term planning, lack of a long-term vision, a completely dysfunctional council, lack of proper communication with residents on very important issues and non-productive, inefficient and overpaid staff.

Where is the vision, long-term strategic plan and leadership skills at our Town council?

I think it is really sad that only about one-third of the eligible voters cared enough about their own community to actually go out and cast a vote in the last election. My own father fought for six years in the Second World War so that all Canadians could live in a free and democratic country where everyone has the right, privilege and opportunity of being able to vote freely.

We will all pay dearly for our lack of attention to what has really been going on over at the Town municipal offices for the last five years.

It's time to wake up Caledon, and time for more transparency and accountability in our municipal government.

Brian Stobo,
Bolton

Downey and Heritage Caledon for all their support. Also to Bret Teskey of Yestek Inc. for the fantastic poster design.

If there is anyone who was interested in seeing the film or would like to purchase a copy of the film, please contact Mark Magro at wantedmedia@gmail.com
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