

'Now, that's democracy in action, isn't it?'

There's an old saying that people who live in tin houses shouldn't toss can openers. Enter Bob Rae, Toronto Liberal MP and former NDP premier of Ontario.

Ever since Prime Minister Stephen Harper prorogued the Commons until after the Olympics - in effect, missing only a few weeks of the Parliament Hill circus - Rae has been front and center in attempting to drum up public outrage over it.

More on Rae in a moment.

You know doubt read and/or saw on the weekend the rallies in various cities along with the accompanying headlines that "thousands" attended to protest. (Actually, most of the rallies drew only a few hundred. In Toronto, the largest, it was about 3,000. Whoopdeedoo!)

Still, when your correspondent was watching this festival of indignation on CBC News-world, the cameras never once that I saw panned to the "crowd," opting instead to do tighter shots of the speakers, an old media trick if there ever was one.

Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff - apparently forgetting that former Liberal prime minister prorogued the Commons several times, and even did it once to shut down a judicial inquiry - told the relatively small crowd on parliament Hill that the "demonstration shows that Canadians understand their democracy, care for their democracy, and if necessary will fight for their democracy..."

Perhaps. But if they really do "understand their democracy" they will know that proroguing the Commons - or the Legislature - is a legitimate and not-uncommon tactic and, like it or not, a perfectly legal and democratic action.

Which, of course, brings us back to Rae, the ultimate hypocrite.

In her Toronto Sun column on the weekend, long-time Queen's Park observer Christina Blizzard pointed out that it is Rae, not Harper, who is "King of proroguing."

We take you back to Sept. 6, 1990, when, for the first time (and, thanks to his terrible performance, perhaps the last) Ontario voted in an NDP government.

On Dec. 19, 1991, Rae prorogued the Legislature. Just like that. And the MPPs stayed out of the place until April 6, 1992, almost four months. It gets better. Or worse. Because on Dec. 10, 1992 - after just eight months of sitting - Rae again prorogued the Legislature, and again, the MPPs didn't return until April 13, a little more than four months later.

Even so, Rae wasn't finished. He prorogued the Legislature for the third time on Dec. 9, 1994, turning out the lights in the Chamber - and not even bringing in a budget that year (which is just as well, since he doubled Ontario's debt in just four years in office). Then, four and-a-half months later, he dissolved the Legislature.

Where were all the champions of democracy then? And how can Rae, given his own record - and Ignatieff, given Chretien's record - actually expect to be taken seriously over this media-fuelled "outrage?"

Another point, when you see Ignatieff, NDP Leader Jack Layton and Bloc Quebecois Leader Gilles Duceppe, all out there pretending to be champions of democracy, you may want to cast your minds back to early December, 2008 - just a few weeks after the federal election - when Layton, Duceppe and then Liberal leader Stephane Dion (in a deal signed onto by Ignatieff) cared so little about the election outcome that they agreed to a "coalition government."

Talk about undemocratic. Just weeks after the Canadian public demonstrated beyond any doubt that it did not want Dion as prime minister, this deal would have given the finger to Canadians and put him in the chair.

Unlike proroguing, which is used regularly by pretty well every political leader, this obscene coalition would not only have given the NDP six cabinet seats - something the electorate clearly did not want or imagine - and the Liberals 18 cabinet seats, but - here's the very worst part - it would give the separatist Bloc a virtual veto over the government.

Once again, Rae was at the forefront of this unholy alliance, and while Ignatieff, it is true, muttered publicly he was "not wild" about the idea of forming a government propped up by the separatist Bloc, when push came to shove he willingly signed on.

The outcome of this disaster, for the Liberals, was to eliminate their ongoing leadership race, bump Dion from his position, and deposit Ignatieff as leader without any input whatsoever from the party workers. Now that's democracy in action, isn't it?

As for Layton, who had the gall to preach against proroguing the Commons, he had not the slightest hesitation in jumping at the chance to be part of cabinet - which would have been the first NDP ministers in Canadian history - with absolutely no regard for the election which had just occurred a few weeks earlier. Where was his love of democracy then?

It's amazing these people can look at themselves in the mirror without throwing up.



National Affairs
Claire Hoy

Try a Sudoku if you need to kill some time

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that they are just part of life. Despite that, I try to avoid them when possible.

If I go into a store to buy something and find there's a long lineup, I tend to leave and go do other things, return-

ing when things aren't likely to be as busy. Sometimes, those other things involve little more than just walking around in an effort to kill time.

I think my aversion to waiting was born when I was about 11 years old. We were on holiday up north and I cut

my head open, requiring three stitches. My folks hauled me into the hospital in North Bay, and we were told we would have to wait for the doctor on call (evidently the only one in the city) to arrive. Fair enough. What wasn't fair was the wait took about five

hours, which did little for the mood of both myself and my parents. My dad enjoyed sitting around on his vacation time as much as the next man, but not in hospital waiting rooms. My mother was not the type to take such things in stride. She sent off a slew of angry letters when we got home. I suspect they didn't have much impact.

I did learn one lesson from the experience — If I have to go to a hospital waiting room, I make a point of taking a book or newspaper; anything to help kill time.

I once had some officious pain give me a hard time for packing a copy of the Toronto Sun in a hospital waiting room. I patiently explained one big advantage to the Sun — you get three Sudokus every day.

If we have to waste a lot of out time waiting for things, we might as well have some fun too, right?

Recycle your used batteries

By Richard Ehrlich
Chair of Battery Recycling Program
EcoCaledon
(Formerly Citizens for a Clean Caledon)

Reduce battery use with new rechargeable technology, and recycle your used household batteries at Caledon depots.

The average home has dozens of items that use batteries: Ipods, remote controls, digital cameras, cordless gadgets — the list gets bigger every year. Used household batteries cannot be discarded as regular waste for landfill or incineration. Environment Canada did some projections, and this year the toxic waste from 495 million discarded batteries will contain 747 tonnes of lead, 287 tonnes of nickel, 343 tonnes of zinc and 3501 tonnes of manganese. Canadians only recycle two per cent of household batteries, and thousands of tonnes end up in landfills.

The best way is to reduce this problem is to lower the number of disposable batteries used. The latest generation pre-charged low discharge NiMH rechargeable batteries such as Sanyo Eneloop, President's Choice Pre-Charged or Sony CycleEnergy act like alkaline batteries, and do not lose their charge in storage. They cost more than disposable batteries initially, but are much cheaper in the long run. I rarely use any disposable batteries at home or work, as I use Eneloop NiMHs for almost everything. New lithium rechargeable batteries will soon hold even more power. Disposable batteries are best for items that are rarely used, such as an emergency flashlight or smoke detector

Once a battery is depleted it needs to be recycled. Caledon is a leader in this area, and CCC has a unique program, where citizens can drop off all types of household batteries at participating retailers for proper recycling. To date, we have recycled more than 18,000 kilograms of batteries. Used household batteries of all types can be brought to one of the drop-off locations. These are: The Source (formerly Radio Shack) and Canadian Tire in Bolton, Berneys Pro Hardware in Caledon East,

Palgrave Postal Outlet, the Alton Gas Bar and the Cheltenham General Store. The used batteries are picked up by The Battery Broker and sent to various facilities for full recycling.

Used batteries can also be dropped off at the Caledon Community Recycling Centre or Home Depot in Bolton for hazardous waste disposal, but not recycling.

We at CCC EcoCaledon would like to thank all the people of Caledon for their excellent participation in this project, the first of its kind in

Ontario. We would also like to thank the participating retailers for their cooperation and expertise, and would encourage you to help support them. If you don't see the Battery Recycling Bin or displayed info, please ask them about it.

If you would like to be involved in this or other environmental projects in Caledon, we at CCC EcoCaledon would love to hear from you. You can reach us at info@citizensforacleancaledon.org or 905-58GREEN (905-584-7336).

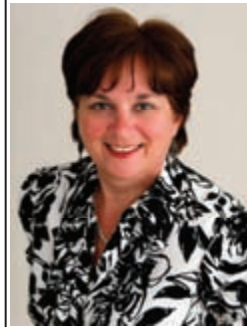


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"Reflections of the Past - Embracing the Future" By Bev Lashbrook

I've had 17 years to develop my thoughts for this column, the last one I'll be writing in our agency's monthly "How Do You See It?" feature. I've been blessed in my career to work within

Caledon Community Services. It is an exemplary organization that has served our community extremely well and in recent years has stepped up significantly with increased efforts to meet emerging challenges in health and social services. What began as a small information service has emerged as a model "community hub" that integrates transportation into our foodbank; crisis services into our health care programs; seniors' activation into voluntarism; poverty reduction into language learning for Canadian newcomers; and job training into youth outreach. In a nutshell, our "one-stop" service continuum succeeds because we don't see ourselves as the solution, merely as the facilitator of solutions that draws in our community and engages anyone with time and ideas to become a leader in Caledon's development.

Our leadership, from our board to our executive director to our management team to our staff and volunteers, is incredibly inclusive and listens well. I am so grateful to have been a part of this group and know that I am taking important learning with me to Huntsville where I am making a new home with my husband and settling in as the new executive director of Hospice Huntsville.

CCS has challenges ahead, no doubt about

it. We work closely with the Central West LHIN and seven other funders from all levels of government. Each of these funders have their challenges too, in an economy that is not exactly resource rich these days. I am confident that this organization's leadership will continue to thrive, do what is right and best for Caledon and represent our community's needs in ways that help secure a strong and healthy future. I am also confident that we will succeed only if community residents get involved and take an active role in the development of health and care services in Caledon.

A health centre is now being planned for Caledon (in Bolton) and CCS is obviously interested in supporting our LHIN in the work ahead. We have the option of being engaged and sharing what we believe is best for our community or sitting back and allowing some kind of service model to be thrust upon us. We have always preferred the former. This organization is full of very hard workers, people with innovative ideas, people who are well-informed and people who open our doors to an inclusive approach to community-building.

As I take my leave, I hope and expect to hear from my dear friends that my beloved agency is growing stronger. Be assured that I'll keep my eyes and ears open because I know I can borrow ideas and models that CCS is developing and transplant them in my new community of Huntsville! If I've learned anything in my tenure here, it is that CCS is resilient, Caledon is an all-embracing community, and there's an opportunity to create something here that is second to none. That's how I see it and that's exactly how it's been for me throughout my career here.

How Do You See It?

Tell us how you see it.

You can reach Bev Lashbrook, Director of Community Programs, at 905.584.2300 ext 202 or blashbrook@ccs4u.org

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