

Budget bore

Perhaps the best indicator that last week's provincial budget was truly unremarkable was that a day later no one was talking about it.

Like his federal counterpart Jim Flaherty did three weeks earlier, Ontario Finance Minister Dwight Duncan managed to play the recession card well—no great influx of new spending or drastic cuts were brought forward because, Duncan said, the economy is still too fragile for such action.

"We will not put job creation and economic growth at risk by cutting too soon," he said.

Instead, Duncan managed to pick on an easy target—public sector workers—in an effort to make his budget look good.

One million public service workers will have their wages frozen as the Ontario government digs itself out of a record deficit.

"All of us who are paid with public tax dollars have a role to play here. We're all in this together," Duncan told the Legislature as he warned civil servants cannot expect pay raises, although existing union contracts for nurses, teachers, and bureaucrats will be honoured.

The wage freeze—which could last beyond 2014—affects 1.06 million Ontarians in the "broader public sector," or about 16 per cent of the workforce.

With shortfalls forecast until 2017-18, Duncan said the Liberals had little choice but to move on public sector wages.

While there was some sabre-rattling from some union leaders, the fact remains any messy strikes won't occur until after the 2011 provincial election as contracts for doctors and teachers don't expire until 2012.

That allows the Liberals the chance to look tough now and the luxury of having the economy improve over the coming year when they can show their benevolent side with next year's budget... the one before the next election.

Letters to the editor policy

Letters must include an address and daytime telephone number. Anonymous letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 150 words and may be edited for content and/or length.

E-mail: jmcghie@independentfreepress.com
Mail or drop off: Independent & Free Press, 280 Guelph St., Unit 29, Georgetown, ON., L7G 4B1.

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Steve Nease

905-873-0301
Publisher: Ken Nugent
General manager: Steve Foreman
 (sforeman@independentfreepress.com)
Retail advertising manager: Cindi Campbell
 (ccampbell@independentfreepress.com)
Managing editor: John McGhie
 (jmcghie@independentfreepress.com)
Distribution manager: Nancy Geissler
 (ngeissler@independentfreepress.com)
Classifieds
 Kristie Pells
 (classified@independentfreepress.com)
Accounting
 Rose Marie Gauthier
Editorial
 Cynthia Gamble: News editor
 (cgamble@independentfreepress.com)
 Ted Brown: Photography
 (tbrown@independentfreepress.com)
 Lisa Tallyn: Staff writer
 (ltallyn@independentfreepress.com)
 Eamonn Maher: Staff writer/sports
 (emaher@independentfreepress.com)

WEB POLL RESULTS

Should Ontario lift its ban against the sport of ultimate fighting?

- Yes (37%)
- No (63%)

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Letters to the editor

Give generously when CASHh calls

Dear editor,

Cancer will never go away, cancer will shatter the defence mechanisms that we build up around us, cancer will kill some of us, but... cancer cannot cripple love, it cannot shatter hope, it cannot corrode faith, it cannot silence courage, it cannot invade the soul, it cannot conquer the spirit, and it cannot keep CASHh from helping those in need.

Cancer Assistance Services of Halton Hills (CASHh) has replaced many patients' anxiety about their crisis with hope for stress-free transportation, and other services, free of charge.

When you call or visit the office, you'll be embraced with kindness and empathy; and the knowledge that all your concerns will be addressed. To weigh the services CASHh provides, the drivers tip the scale. Their compassion and selflessness is unequalled.

Because you and/or your loved ones will need these services in some form in your life time, please give generously.

The April Residential Campaign is our major source of income, and when someone knocks on your door please say, "Yes, I can help", you won't regret it.

Please visit our website www.cancerassistance.org for information, or call our office 905-702-8886.

*Anna Mae Moore,
Residential Campaign Manager
CASHh*

Justice double blind

Dear editor,

On March 9 at a courthouse in Orangeville, Canadian justice was not served.

I am outraged and offended that the Crown saw fit to dismiss the speeding, drunk driving and cocaine possession charges in favour of the lesser careless driving charges that resulted in a milque-toast slap on the wrist and small fine for Rahim Jaffer.

While other Canadians have lost their driving privileges, both temporarily and permanently, suffered much larger fines for speeding and have been imprisoned and carry a criminal record for simply possessing marijuana, Rahim Jaffer has been able to tip the scales of

justice in his favour, thus enabling him to walk away from the police charges a free man and carrying no evidence whatsoever of the seriousness of his transgressions. He wasn't even given community work in the community in which he was arrested for breaking the law. That, at least, would have had the appearance of some recompense.

If it is the intent of the Tory government to "get tough on crime", then, we Canadians have been seriously duped, for it blatantly appears that the new rules are "tough on crime, except if you are part of the Conservative fold".

This case and the dismissal of the serious charges, though provincial in jurisdiction, prove unequivocally, once again, that we have a two-tiered legal system: one for those, who by virtue of their lesser economic position in society enjoy the full measure of the law when they transgress and one for those of better financial means who are allowed to negotiate their culpability.

What a biased and pejorative example to the young people of Canada. Justice has been double blind in this case.

*M. Kathleen Richards,
Georgetown*