

Open sesame

Politicians, especially our federal ones, love to throw around the word “openness”.

In the midst of the most recent election campaigns Stephen Harper’s Conservatives vowed to operate a more “open” and transparent government. And how has that worked out so far, folks?

The Liberals and New Democrats, in their time in the Opposition benches, can often be heard complaining about the lack of “openness” from the Harper government whether it be about Omar Khadr, Afghanistan detainees or Helena Guergis.

So, last week, when the board of internal economy (an all-party committee of MPs that controls Commons spending) were asked by Auditor General Sheila Fraser to allow her to do a “performance audit” they quickly rebuffed her.

The MPs stated that the Commons’ own auditors have stated that “appropriate oversight practices and procedures are in place.”

They may well be, and if so, there’s no harm in letting Fraser confirm that, right?

Kevin Gaudet, director of the Canadian Taxpayers’ Federation, is right when he said, “When they (MPs) hide their spending like this, all it does is further fuel public cynicism.”

Running the House of Commons cost taxpayers a cool \$440 million last year and an additional \$93 million was spent on the Senate. That’s more than a half a billion dollars the public should be assured is being spent wisely—and properly.

We’re sure most MPs have nothing to hide when it comes to their expenses, but trying to keep the auditor general at bay only serves to stoke the public’s low perception of MPs and raises questions as to why the books can’t be scrutinized by someone who is skilled at finding wasteful spending.

After all, it only a matter of openness.

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 Anonymous letters will not be published.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. Publication is not guaranteed.

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WEB POLL RESULTS

An all-party committee of MPs has refused the Auditor-General’s demand to examine MPs’ spending habits. Should the Auditor-General have the authority to conduct a performance audit of federal politicians?

- Yes (93%)
- No (7%)

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Letters to the editor

Trash drop-off a nice experience

Dear editor,

I just had to tell you how happy and impressed I was with my experience at the free drop-off of waste materials at the Robert C. Austin Operations Centre recently.

Never having done this type of drop-off before, I prepared myself for what might come next. Well, I was absolutely thrilled with the experience. I arrived at 10:30 a.m. to a lineup of approximately eight ahead of me.

A delightful man told me, once it was my turn, which laneway to take where my paint cans could be dropped off.

I then made my way down to the next gentleman, who instructed me to take the next laneway marked with bright orange cones. This fellow also had a huge smile on his face.

Next I met a young gal who guided me to the next intersection where a young fellow asked me what type of items I had, and with that two more young, smiling guys opened my rear car doors and moved the 10-gallon cans into a container.

I have no idea if these guides and helpers are volunteers or full-time employees, but either way they really made a huge difference with their happy attitudes and smiles. Within 10 minutes I was in and out. Thanks to all.

Cathy Clark, Georgetown

Raw milk warning

Dear editor,

Ashgrove Women’s Institute is writing because of our concern regarding Michael Schmidt’s raw milk co-operative and applaud the recent action taken by the Attorney General to appeal the decision.

Women’s Institute (WI) was formed in 1897 to promote and teach rural women and provide information to improve household home sanitation to better understand a more scientific care of children and raise the standard of health in our communities.

The following letter was sent to WIs from the president of Federated Women’s Institute of Ontario:

“I represent a group of farm, rural and small urban centre women who would like to remind readers that we have government regulation for very good reason. In the past, children became ill or died from drinking unpasteurized milk. Salmonella, E.

coli, listeria and tuberculosis were transmitted. It is irresponsible beyond belief that parents might subject their children to the risks of unpasteurized milk.

There are safer ways to acquire the benefits of the enzymes and good bacteria found in raw milk. It is a myth that there are enzymes beneficial to humans in raw milk, as any enzymes present are broken down and rendered inactive in the human stomach and digestive tract. The way to get beneficial bacteria associated with dairy products is in the wide variety of probiotic cultured dairy products, such as yogurt and probiotic milk beverages. In these products, the cultures of “good” bacteria are the only ones present.

This is not a freedom of choice issue, as the law is there to protect the health of society at large. The Attorney General’s appeal details that private contracts do not allow individuals to opt out of public health legislation.

Government, do your job! Pasteurization works to kill harmful bacteria but preserves the best of what milk has to offer.”

Carol Innes, president of Federated Women’s Institution of Ontario and Mary Jane Wingfield, advocacy co-ordinator