

Spendthrifts

Good decisions require good information.

That is the conclusion Ontario Auditor General Jim McCarter reached in a sometimes damning 2011 Annual Report, released on Monday.

In it, McCarter points to a disturbing trend that sees a number of provincial ministries suffering from a lack of “meaningful and reliable information.”

Highlights of McCarter’s findings include:

- Since 2002, consumers have paid a special debt retirement charge on their monthly electricity bill that was intended to pay off \$7.8 billion in what is called the “residual stranded debt” of the old Ontario Hydro. Since then, consumers have paid \$8 billion, but the minister of finance has never provided a public update on how much of the debt remains.

- Ontarians pay significantly more for auto insurance than other Canadians due to high accident claim costs. However, the commission that oversees the auto insurance sector does not know whether insurers are handling claims judiciously and paying out the proper amounts, and it needs better information on the impact of auto insurance fraud on claim costs.

- The Ontario Trillium Foundation provides more than \$100 million a year in grants to not-for-profit and charitable groups. While it has a well-defined grant review and approval process, the supporting documentation often could not demonstrate that the most worthy projects were funded for reasonable amounts or that the funds were spent for the intended purpose.

- On a per capita basis, Ontario spends more on legal aid than any other province but provides the fewest number of low-income residents with dedicated legal representation. Where is all the legal aid money in Ontario being spent, if not to assist those who need it most?

As we said, good decisions require good information but when it comes to the public purse wise spending is also crucial. This report indicates the McGuinty Liberals are failing miserably in this regard.

WEB POLL RESULTS

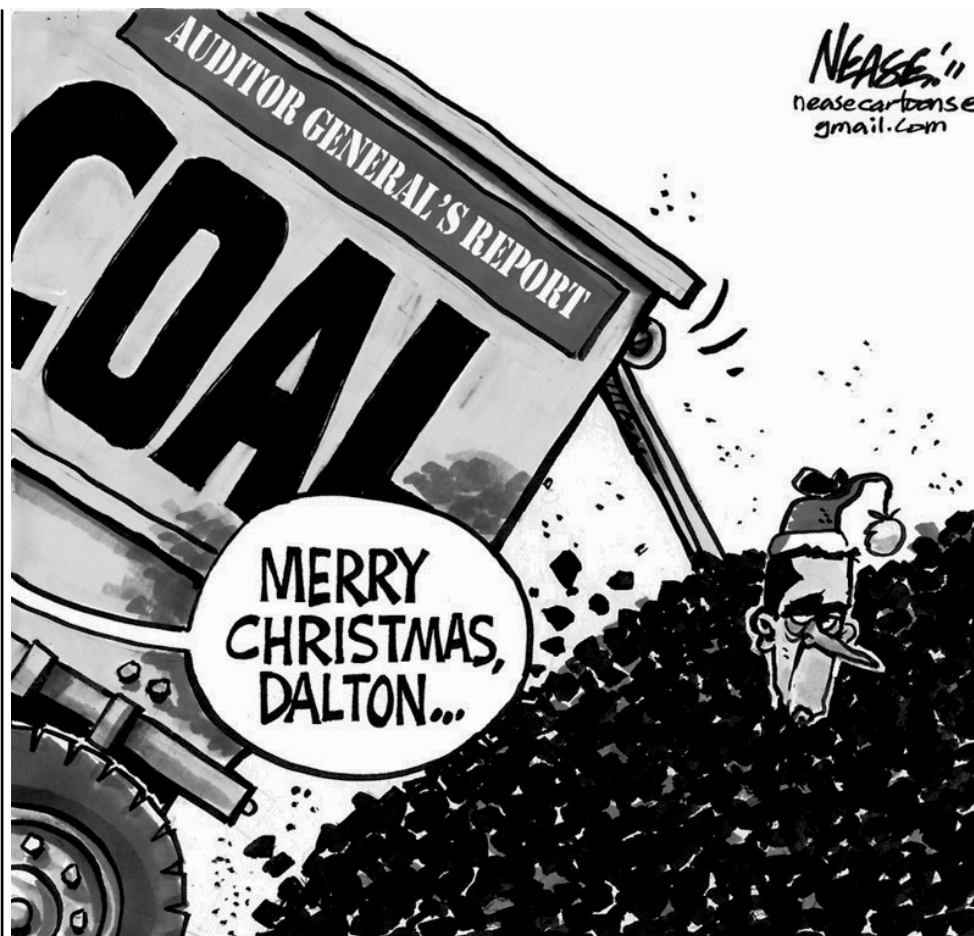
(Go to www.independentfreepress.com)

The Canadian Medical Association Journal recently recommended hospitals abolish parking fees. Do you agree?

- Yes. Charging patients and their families is nothing more than a user fee. (83%)
- No. Hospitals need this money to make up for the funding they don’t receive from the government. (17%)

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Letters to the editor

One time slot for ice is not enough

Dear editor,

In response to a Dec. 6 letter titled “Why build arenas if ice time available?”

The writer asked for an explanation from the mayor to the arena development doubters why one time slot was available late Friday. I thought I would save the mayor some time and provide some understanding of the situation.

I have two children who play Georgetown hockey. One of those children was on the ice at 6 a.m., before school, for a practice since after-school ice time is hard to come by.

That same child was in Erin last night and Orangeville two weekends ago for practice. We began our season practising in Milton, Brampton... anywhere ice time was available.

The previous season my son’s Georgetown team hosted all of our “home” games an hour away in Orangeville.

Are you getting the picture?

Clearly the doubters do not have children enrolled in skating programs.

Using this one late time slot as proof that new arenas are not needed in this town is just plain silly.

*Kim Stubberfield,
Georgetown*

‘Occupiers’ don’t deserve criticism

Dear editor,

Re: Editorial cartoon, Nov. 22

If you criticized the Occupy movement over the last weeks, please think again.

Do you really believe that ordinary people should have to struggle, perhaps working two jobs, or worse, search endlessly for one decent job, just to feed and clothe their children, or have them see a dentist regularly?

To those who dismissed the Occupy movement: remember that you are defending the very wealthiest, and their right to excess when so many, especially young adults, struggle.

We must ask our provincial politicians why the plan is to reduce the tax rate for corporations from 14% to 10% by 2013. That will place huge corporations at the same taxation level as our lowest paid workers.

Please think about those who get the short end of the economic stick, here and throughout our country.

Occupy Georgetown?

Ruth Loreto, Georgetown

Tech scam warning

Dear editor,

Beware a phone call from someone claiming to be from Microsoft or other tech companies.

They ask if your computer is running slow. They say they can help and have you turn on your computer, visit a website and download their software. This software gives them access to your machine; they can take your information and installs a virus. If you are lucky you will just have to reformat your computer. Many have had banking and credit card information stolen.

I hope that by being informed you can avoid this happening to you. If this has happened already get your machine to your favourite computer repair shop, notify your bank and credit card companies to watch for suspicious behaviour and change all your passwords.

The least you need to know: Don’t give any caller access to any personal information ever.

Alison Meeks, Georgetown