

Grits can't defend waste of tax money

How would you advise your provincial government to spend \$190 million, assuming they might listen?

Use the money to pay down the provincial debt? Cut taxes to stimulate the economy, and encourage job creation? Invest in an infrastructure project that strengthens our long-term economic competitiveness or protects our environment?

A good case could be made for any of these three approaches, or some combination of them. Alternatively, \$190 million would easily build and largely equip a brand new 60-bed hospital in Wellington-Halton Hills.

Or, it could pay the salaries and overheads for about 380 new doctors for a year. Another idea might be using it to pay for the costs associated with hiring approximately 1,900 new police officers for a year.

Or you could burn the \$190 million by canceling an unpopular gas-fired electricity plant which was being built in Mississauga, just days before a election.

In a decision that can only be characterized as outrageous, this is precisely what the McGuinty Liberals decided to do last September. They did it for one reason: to prop up nervous Liberal incumbent MPPs in the Mississauga area who feared the loss of their seats in the October 6 election.

It gets worse. No one in the cabinet will assume responsibility for the decision or the resulting \$190 million cost to taxpayers

Ted Arnott



and/or hydro ratepayers.

In an attempt to explain what happened, just days ago two cabinet ministers were quoted as saying the Liberal "campaign team" decided to pull the plug on the Mississauga gas plant.

You'd be right to ask: how exactly did the Liberal "campaign team" acquire the authority to make a decision like this, and incur this massive liability on behalf of Ontarians? Or put another way, who elected the Liberal "campaign team"?

People will wonder if the Ontario Liberal Party should be reimbursing Ontario taxpayers for this \$190 million campaign expense. And do they really expect us to believe that Premier McGuinty himself didn't sign off on it?

I had the opportunity to question the Minister of Energy, Chris Bentley, on the record in a Legislative Committee on July 11. Three PC caucus colleagues asked pointed questions as well. The minister's answers were less than satisfactory.

But then, how could anyone explain this disgraceful abuse of taxpayers' money in a satisfactory way?

—Ted Arnott is the MPP for Wellington-Halton Hills

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