

Sober talk?

Ontarians vacationing in the United States are dumbfounded to find, when entering one of those liquor outlet stores, that a case of beer or a bottle of rum costs about half the price of what they can find at their local Beer Store or LCBO retailer.

Progressive Conservative Leader Tim Hudak is looking to capitalize on an opportunity. A Niagara resident, he has heard complaints about the cost of alcohol in Ontario and how it is more accessible in the United States. Recently, he promised if the Tories win the next election they will cut taxes and privatize the LCBO, a money-making giant that has turned over \$1.6 billion in revenue to the provincial government, and \$13 billion over the last decade.

Hudak is treading in an area former Progressive Conservative Leaders Mike Harris and Ernie Eves and former Liberal Premier David Peterson backed away from. All three promised to allow the private sector to get into the liquor business, something the Costcos, Walmarts, and other retail giants are just salivating to pounce on.

Despite the superficial appeal, privatizing alcohol sales has experienced a mixed bag of success. Alberta allowed the private sector into the game in 1993 and the public lost big time. The provincial government gave up \$1.5 billion in revenue, while the cost of beer, wine and hard liquor in Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan remain among the highest around.

At a time when Ontario is looking to cut its \$14.8-billion deficit, Hudak and the Conservatives are promising to cut taxes and provide more opportunity to the private sector. Didn't the previous Tory government make the same promises when they got rid of Hwy. 407 in what is now regarded as a fire sale?

Wasn't that a good deal?

WEB POLL RESULTS

(Go to www.theifp.ca)

Which of the following do you think will dominate the headlines in Canada in 2013?

- The world's economy (63%)
- Canadian politics (both provincial and federal) (17%)
- None of the above (12%)
- Global military conflicts (4%)
- Terrorism (4%)
- Environmental issues (0%)

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Letters to the editor

ER funds not part of hospital campaign

Dear editor,

I would like to thank *The Independent & Free Press* for sharing the good news of the \$730,400 that Georgetown Hospital will receive to improve wait times and effectiveness of care in the Emergency Department (ED) (*Area ER's get Christmas Gift*, Dec. 21).

I would remind your readers that while this grant will help fund the operating budget for emergency care at Georgetown Hospital, it will not be used towards Investing in Care—Close to Home, the \$6.5 million Campaign for Georgetown Hospital.

The recent grant is part of Ministry of Health funding for the operating budget of the hospital through the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN). The ED funding will be used to implement initiatives to maximize both the capacity of the Georgetown Hospital Emergency Department and patient flow through our hospital. The creation of a Rapid Assessment Fast Track (RAFT) area where staff can assess and fast track low acuity

patients was one of the initiatives the ministry funding has helped us to achieve in the past, and continue to implement.

The Foundation, on the other hand, raises private community support to help pay for specific equipment, construction and renovation projects. The Foundation does not fund salaries, supplies, pharmaceuticals, or any other ongoing operational expenses of the hospital. Over the past six years the Foundation has been the largest source of funds for medical equipment at Georgetown Hospital and the generous donations we receive are easily the largest source of funds for the expansion now underway to build a new ED and renewed Diagnostic Imaging Department complete with the first CT scanner in Halton Hills.

We still have \$1.4 million to raise for the Campaign and we are looking to everyone in the community to lend a hand in support of Investing in Care—Close to Home. Our thanks to everyone for their continued support of their community hospital. We can't do it without you!

K.C. Carruthers,
Executive Director

Georgetown Hospital Foundation

Teacher thanked

Dear editor,

To Julia Mounstevan, owner/ballet teacher at Strictly Dance.

I feel blessed to have my daughter attend your dance studio. What sets your school apart from the rest is what you teach—respect for self and others.

What you teach is to cheer for everyone—the other team, too.

What you teach is caring about each other.

What you experience is girls supporting each other.

Children learn what they live. At Strictly Dance they learn kindness, respect, discipline, healthy competition and, not the least of all, joy of movement.

Thank you Julia for who you are and your integrity, passion and commitment to our daughters.

Linda Samson, Georgetown

Send a letter

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