

A TALE OF THREE TORIES: CLEMENT, WILSON AND FORD

Say one thing for Conservative MP Tony Clement: When he finally got around to announcing the unholy mess he had gotten himself into, he didn't pull any punches.

Recently, Clement told the Prime Minister's Office he had repeatedly sent sexts, including images and video, to someone he met on the internet, who he thought was a consenting adult female. Turns out the consenting adult was actually an internet extortionist who was trying to blackmail Clement - seeking \$75,000 in exchange for not making the intimate images of Clement public.

When he finally got around to admitting his really foolish mistake he confessed everything. He resigned from the Conservative shadow cabinet and then from Andrew Scheer's caucus.

Clement's very public undoing was complete and humiliating and must have been awful for his family. He is apparently "seeking treatment." But his mistakes were just that. He is infinitely human and fallible, like most of us. At least he didn't try to obfuscate and prevaricate. Doug Ford cannot make the same claim.

When Ford first heard that his senior minister and ally Jim Wilson was in serious trouble, the premier's brain trust issued a terse press statement. "The Honourable Jim Wilson has resigned as Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation, and Trade, effective immediately. Wilson will also be resigning from the Progressive Conservative caucus to seek treatment for addiction issues."

Immediately, red flags went up in newsrooms across the province. Why would a senior minister resign from caucus to get addiction help? It's an occupational hazard in politics, hardly a reason for ending your career.

With every media bloodhound on full alert and government sources in full leak mode, it soon became apparent there was much more going on. Wilson was accused of sexually inappropriate behaviour toward political staff. Even when that was reported in numerous media sources, the Ford brain trust wouldn't comment. And so the story festered.

Finally, Ford cabinet minister Lisa MacLeod admitted to reporters the real reasons behind Wilson's flame-out. Even after that, the premier himself would not comment. Finally, Ford acknowledged he didn't tell the whole truth, but says he did so to protect the identity of the alleged victims.

What Ford and his advisers did was give this story long, strong legs. They could have simply told the truth from the beginning and chances are it would have died a natural death, as the Tony Clement story probably will. Now that we know Ford didn't tell the truth from the outset, it's fair to wonder what else he isn't saying. A top aide, Andrew Kimber, resigned at the same time as Wilson, facing the same sort of allegations. And guess what? Kimber's wife was chief of staff to Wilson. The official line is all this is just a coincidence.

Then again, the official line would still be "addiction treatment" only if not for those media bloodhounds.

The moral of the story, even though it's unlikely Ford and friends will get it, is this. Clement made terrible mistakes. He admitted everything. Jim Wilson made terrible mistakes. His proxy, Doug Ford, tried to mislead Ontarians about the extent of those mistakes and was caught red handed.

Whose credibility sustained more damage?

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REPEAL OF BILL 148 HURTS THOSE WHO EARN THE LEAST IN OUR COMMUNITY

44,500 LIVING BELOW LOW-INCOME MEASURE, WRITES SABIHUDDIN



SARAH SABIHUDDIN
Column

The decision to repeal Bill 148 slams the door on the people who earn the least in our community. Going beyond ideology, we need to look at the evidence. You'll find no statistical evidence that the workplace reforms and minimum wage increase caused widespread job loss or economic damage. In fact, this July, six months after the last minimum wage increase and when labour reforms took effect, Ontario's jobless rate

dropped to 5.4 per cent, the lowest it has been since the year 2000.

There is no doubt that the minimum wage hike and employment reforms hit the profit margin of some companies, led to some layoffs and some companies halted plans to expand their operations. However, for every piece of anecdotal evidence showing negative effects on a business, you can find anecdotal evidence of low-wage workers who were better off right here in Halton Region. These changes were made to put more money in workers' pockets and less in employers' pockets and for good reason.

This is a local issue. In Halton Region, we have 44,500 people living below the low-income measure. The majority of these individuals are already work-

ing full-time hours, making minimum wage. With this change, how can they pull themselves out of poverty?

Under Bill 148, workers will lose paid sick days, labour laws will be gutted to restore exploitative practice, make it harder for workers to unionize, remove the right to equal pay for equal work, on top of cutting the wage increase. By taking away these basic protections that aimed to put more money in the pockets of low wage workers, the government will hurt our minimum wage workers, including local women, workers of colour, young families and newcomers to Halton.

Sarah Sabihuddin is the Halton Poverty Roundtable director of community engagement.

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