

*Editorial*

# Money to burn

Between now and March when Finance Minister Ralph Goodale delivers the federal budget, multiple levels of government, social and special interest groups will be lining up at Parliament Hill trying to get their hands on some of the \$5.9-billion surplus the Liberals hope to have.

Goodale this week forecast the federal coffers to be overflowing with cash. In fact, the actual amount expected to be available, says the minister, is closer to \$9 billion.

A hefty chunk has already been earmarked to pay for health care upgrades and at least \$3 billion will be put into a rainy day fund, presumably to help pay down the nation's \$493-billion debt. It's not the first time the Grits have had cash to spend in Ottawa.

The federal budget has produced significant surpluses in each of the past seven years, dating back to 1997-98. That means the feds have been collecting far more cash by way of taxes than it needs to pay for government programs.

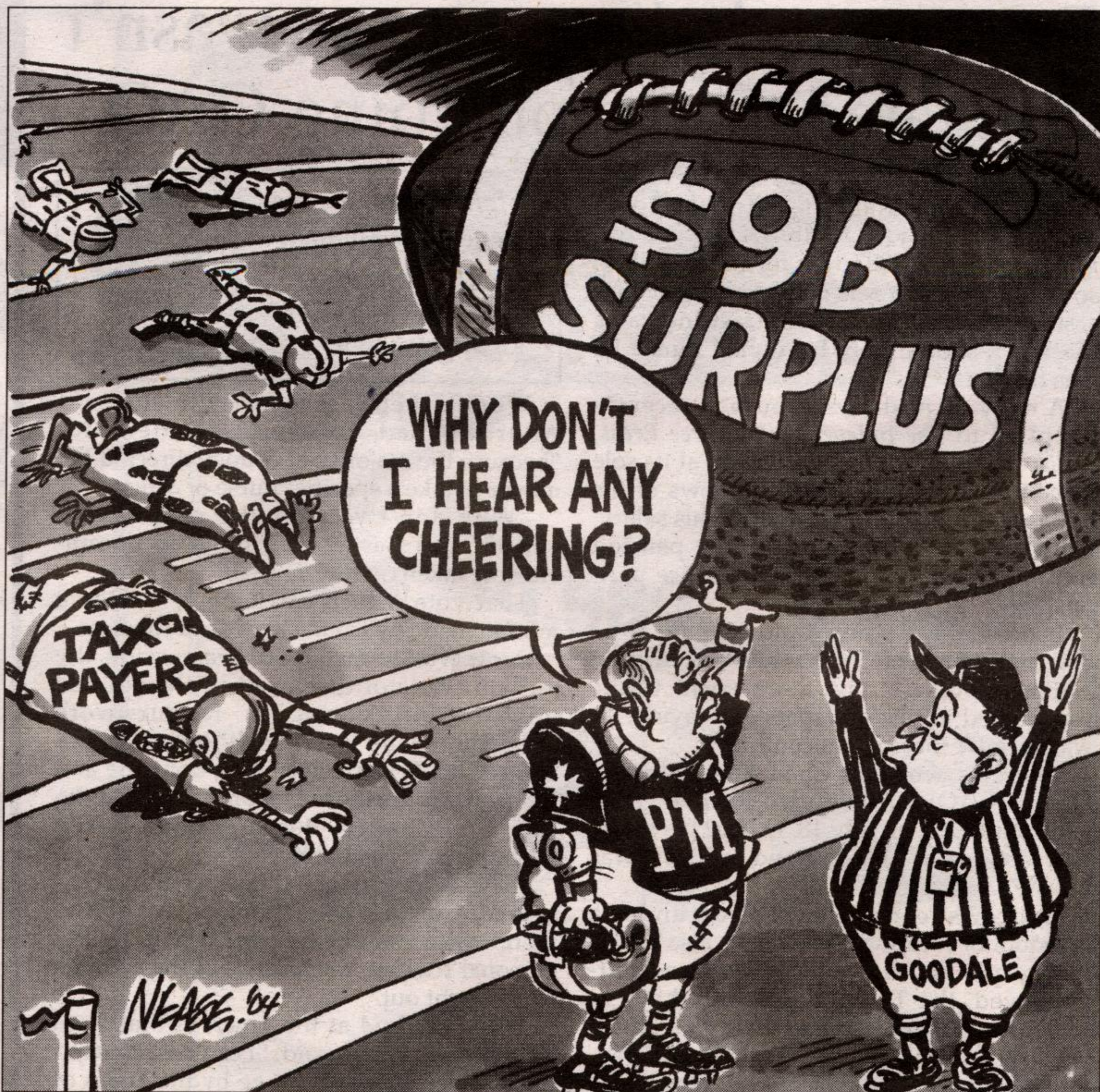
To the Liberals' credit, they've used much of that cash to help service our debt. Since 1997, we—by way of the federal government—have shaved \$61 billion off the debt.

Among the eight richest nations in the world, Canada now has the lowest debt-to-national-income ratio.

With at least \$3 billion likely allocated for debt service in Goodale's next budget, let's take the remaining billions and improve our infrastructure, health care and education.

Goodale will likely heed this advice. He has to. His minority government must get its budget through the House if it wants to continue to govern.

Goodale announced the surplus with a broad grin. We'll see if he, and the rest of us, are still smiling in March.



## Letters to the editor...

### Mom raises safety concerns...

**An open letter to our councillors:**

As a mom who is concerned with the safety of my children I was more than a little dismayed at reading that Halton

Region is considering reducing the safety of Maple Avenue for children on bicycles.

I am sure the councillor who suggested that children use other roads to cycle on meant well. However, I must gently berate that person for not thinking this through well enough.

Given the concentration of destinations for children along Maple Avenue they will simply use the route that is most convenient. As an example, look at the east side of Eighth Line south of Maple Avenue where a track is worn into the grass from cycling, even with a sidewalk on the other side of the road. Unless enforcement prevents it, children will take the most convenient path. Maple Avenue is the most convenient path for many children destinations. Maple Avenue is NOT an industrial road.

As councillors charged with ensuring the safety of all our children I must ask in the strongest terms that all of you spend a little more time on this issue and find a solution that is foremost a safety solution for the children who will use Maple Avenue on bicycles.

Lina Addeşi, Georgetown

### ...and local councillor responds

Lina,

Thank you for your letter of concern for the safety of cyclists using Maple Avenue.

As you may know the report calling for a narrowing of the roadway and the installation of grass medians for the length of Maple Avenue, thus eliminating any place to cycle, was referred back to regional staff and the consultant.

On Oct. 7, I met with staff and the engineering consultant and had them re-look at the plan to see if it was possible to create space for cyclists, not at the expense of safety for pedestrians but more likely, at the expense of the grassy median.

As a result, the engineering consultant has been asked to take the design away and come back with some modifications. What was proposed was to eliminate the grass on one side of the road and put in an asphalt bikeway above the curb. That is to say, immediately beside the sidewalk with a curb separating it from the roadway.

This solution was not possible for the entire length of the street.

However, where it is not possible, there is an alternative route. The alternative is proposed to run along Charles Street and make its way to Park Avenue and then to Main Street where it can rejoin Maple Avenue.

We are now awaiting the design from the consulting engineer. I am hopeful that he will be able to accommodate cyclists and that council will approve the modified design.

Thanks again for sharing your concern.

Jane Fogal,  
Regional Councillor  
Wards 3 and 4

### Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor must be signed and include an address and daytime telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 200 words and may be edited.

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