

OPINION

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Same old, same old

Sitting governments— at either the provincial or federal level— must look forward to Auditor General reports the way the rest of us anticipate a root canal from a dentist with a bad case of the shakes.

Usually such reports detail how the government and agencies under its purview waste taxpayers' hard-earned money. Such was the case this week when provincial Auditor General Jim McCarter's report outlined a litany of problems with the way Dalton McGuinty's Liberal government spends tax dollars.

Among the lowlights:

- Children's Aid Society (CAS) assessments for vulnerable children were not done in time in 73 per cent of the cases
- One CAS executive received a \$2,000 gym membership and an additional \$2,600 for a personal trainer
- Two senior CAS executives were given SUVs worth \$53,000 and \$59,000
- 725 doctors, no longer licensed, were still submitting OHIP claims
- 5.7 million red and white health cards, which were to be phased out by 2000, will take another 14 years to convert to photo ID cards
- One teacher spent \$52,000 over two years using a school board purchasing card. Included in that total was \$4,000 spent during a summer break on DVDs, eyeglasses and Christmas lights.
- Three senior school board staff members went to Las Vegas for a four-day conference but stayed a week and charged \$660 for a one-week car rental
- There is a 7,000-case backlog of fraud investigations involving OHIP cards

While Auditor General reports are predictable for their detailing of poor fiscal management by governments and agencies, the reaction of those governments and agencies is equally predictable.

To that end McGuinty didn't disappoint, vowing he will take steps to fix the problem while admitting "we have not been getting good value for our dollars".

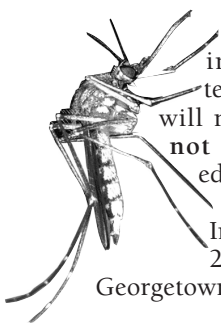
Jeannette Lewis, executive director of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies says her agencies will "act swiftly" on the report.

Now that the government has had its hand slapped and various employees have been "outed" we can be confident that OUR money will no longer be spent foolishly.

That is, until we get next year's Auditor General's report.

Something bugging you?

Send us a letter!



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

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Every floor will soon require smoke alarms

Dear editor,

Re: Smoke alarm law reminder.

Every year in Ontario, people die in fires that could have been prevented. These fires occur in homes and communities just like Halton Hills. Tragically, in many of these fatal fires, there is no smoke alarm warning to alert the occupants and give them the precious seconds they need to safely evacuate their home.

As Chief of Fire Prevention and Public Education of Halton Hills, I am very disturbed by these facts because I know that most home fires can be prevented by taking care when cooking, smoking, using candles or heating your home. I also know that most of those lives could have been saved if the homeowners had installed smoke alarms in their homes and kept them in good working order. Halton Hills Fire Protection & Prevention Services will do everything within our power to prevent a fire tragedy from happening in Halton Hills.

I urge all residents of Halton Hills to make sure they have working smoke alarms on every storey of their home and outside all sleeping areas. This is the law in Ontario and this fire department will be enforcing it.

For homeowners, tenants and individual landlords, non-compliance with the Fire Code smoke alarm requirements will result in a ticket for \$235 or a fine up to \$50,000. Compare this with the cost of a smoke alarm, which can be as little

as \$10.

When someone dies in a fire, it is not only a tremendous loss to the family but the fire department and the entire community. I never want to read in the pages of this newspaper about a resident of Halton Hills dying in a fire. Help protect yourself and your family from fire by

Outgoing regional chair offers her thanks

Dear fellow Halton residents,

Although I am stepping down from this political office, I am not stepping away from being a proud Halton resident! I have often said that ours is a community with an exceptional quality of life— one that is envied the world over.

It has been my pleasure and my privilege to have served as your Regional Chairman for the past 12 years. I have never felt that this was a job; rather, I felt it was a calling. If I have achieved success at all during my terms in office, it is not because of any one thing that I have done. Rather, I have been fortunate to have had the support of a great many people to uphold the programs, policies and the intrinsic values that make our Halton community such a great place to live.

Our residents are served by a dedicated and professional Halton staff and I know that this commitment and customer service will continue. Thank you to the staff both past and present, the community leaders with

installing the required number of smoke alarms, testing them each month and replacing the batteries at least once a year.

Any questions, please feel free to call me at 905-873-2601 ext. 2102.

Harry Olivieri,
Chief of Fire Prevention
and Public Education

whom I have worked, my fellow council colleagues and to the residents and business associates who together, have contributed to building our 'healthy Halton'.

Joyce Savoline,
Former Halton
Regional Chairman

Chong's conviction impresses reader

Dear editor,

How great to have a MP with conviction representing us.

After years of our government giving away the country and our industrial base to foreign interests, it is great to have someone like Michael Chong stand up for what he believes in.

Unfortunately, I did not vote for him the last time, but will the next time for sure.

Chong for Prime Minister!

Marinus Pater,
Georgetown