

# Liberals asleep at gas switch

The fluctuating price of gas is enough to drive you crazy.

But so is the flippant "So what?" attitude of Energy Minister Dwight Duncan when he was asked about gasoline shortages. Some small towns had no gasoline at all and other Ontarians had their livelihoods threatened because the Liberal government failed to heed warnings 18 months ago that our supply of gasoline is very tight.

We have been fed reason after reason for the wild swings in price, which inevitably boil down to some variation of supply and demand. And while there is truth that the marketplace determines price there are ways of influencing the market.

The basic economic theory is affected by mismanagement, weather-related acts of God and misguided public policies which inevitably reduce supplies and affect demand. It is in these events that some of the wild swings in price have their origin.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina in August, 2005 there was a huge run-up in gasoline prices that resulted from the disruption of refining capacity in the southern United States. At the time I suggested that Ontario put in place a petroleum reserve to counter the effects of short-term disruptions to the supply chain.

Of course, the Liberal government dismissed my suggestion and carried on as if the problems caused by Katrina could never be repeated. Just last month a refinery in Nanticoke, south of Hamilton, sustained major fire damage and went out of production. The hole in the supply chain got bigger as a few major winter storms disrupted supplies coming in from Quebec.

The end result is dozens of closed stations, and a general shortage of gasoline in

**Ted Chudleigh**



Ontario which has forced the price to rise in only a few short weeks from the mid-70 cent per litre range to above \$1 in most markets.

The McGuinty Liberals failed to heed the Katrina warning and take the necessary steps to secure supplies of gasoline for Ontarians.

They could have taken several approaches to the issue. I suggested a petroleum reserve. They said no.

They could have worked to build a larger pipeline from western sources. Despite huge population growth in the GTA in particular, they don't think it is necessary.

They could have worked to standardize gasoline additive formulations so gas sold in the U.S. could also be sold in Ontario, or at least work to establish a protocol for U.S. gas in short-term emergencies. They ignored that approach.

It's now obvious that mismanagement of the energy sector is not restricted only to electricity.

Public policy gaffes need to be addressed. Man-made crises are simply unacceptable.

Maybe the solution is simple. The McGuinty Liberals need to actually care about the effects of their actions or inactions, and know what is so important when their mistakes impact the lives of ordinary Ontarians.

—Ted Chudleigh is the MPP for Halton



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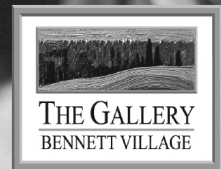
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