

Liberals' budget nothing to laugh about

The recent Ontario budget is the work of a great comedic genius.

The McGuinty Liberals tabled a budget they say will be balanced a year from now. I'm not sure why they believe that, given that in three and a half years they have never been even close to correct in their projections, altering them eight times along the way.

Of course the best comedians are able to layer jokes upon jokes and Finance Minister Greg Sorbara is no exception. Not only does he project a balanced budget for this year but he extends the projection to the next five years. Now that's funny.

Remember this is the government that only once, by accident, managed a balanced budget, and that happened only after they raised your taxes and predicted a multi-billion dollar deficit. They can't manage taxpayers' money for three months, let alone five years.

Mr. Sorbara's insistence reminds me of the Black Knight in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* where the gruesome comedy comes from the knight's insane determination to keep fighting even though he is so inept and is being dismembered a bit more with every blow.

In fact only a \$22 billion increase in provincial revenues in the last four years has covered a massive spending spree by the Liberals that would embarrass even those proverbial drunken sailors. Provincial revenues now top \$91 billion, up from about \$69 billion in 2003.

With massive losses in manufacturing jobs and a growth rate that is ranked last in Canada, that revenue growth is in serious danger.

Budgets are becoming a sad joke, in that they are more and more political documents, rather than the pure expression of the public finances. The McGuinty Liberals didn't start it but they have taken the political budget to new heights.

Projecting surpluses for five years, removing social service pooling from GTA municipalities

Ted Chudleigh



over seven years, providing an escalating Ontario Child Benefit over five years, etcetera, etcetera; these are examples of a political direction. They do not constitute a serious explanation of Ontario's finances.

This budget also sprays a few more dollars into a large number of pots, spreading out the largess in order to score political points. However, there is no real plan for the spending, save a plan to get re-elected. I do not believe taxpayers' money should be spent in this manner.

Now, on a number of other issues such as property tax reform, it is nice to see the Liberals finally step up to address long-standing concerns, but time and again their response in woefully inadequate.

For example, a four year phase-in of property tax assessment increases sounds good, but in an expanding market, it really does little to protect homeowners in any meaningful way. Uploading GTA social service costs is a fix of a fix so its effectiveness in reducing property taxes remains to be seen. The question is, "Are you and your family better off due to this budget?"

This budget is really a love letter to the left from a Liberal government fearful after losing four by-elections to the NDP. It is not a serious document for taxpayers and while funny on the surface it actually inspires a kind of nervous humour among those people who are actually paying the bills.

—Ted Chudleigh is the MPP for Halton

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