

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?

SNAPSHOT



A picturesque view of the Mill Pond. Have you got a great local photo you'd like to share? Email it to Steve LeBlanc at sleblanc@metroland.com

Robert Szyngiel photo

SHINING A LIGHT ON ABUSE AGAINST WOMEN

ONE IN FOUR WOMEN WILL EXPERIENCE VIOLENCE, WRITES BEAULIEU



DIANE BEAULIEU
Column

At Halton Women's Place, November signals one of the busiest months of the year as we engage in events that bring awareness and attention to violence against women and to Woman Abuse Prevention Month.

This month we "shine the light" on abuse against women to bring awareness to the problem.

The impact of violence on women and children has compounding effects and may have a negative influence on their lives for years to come. Statistics tell us that one in four women will

experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.

In the first eight months of 2018, 106 women and girls were killed across Canada.

On average, one woman is killed every other day in our country. Violence against women is an epidemic affecting women in every community regardless of age, economic status, race, faith, ability, nationality or educational background Halton is not exempt.

Halton Women's Place is commemorating our 40th anniversary - 14,600 days of opening doors, answering crisis calls, counselling, referring, supporting, empowering.

In 2017/18 we supported 730 women through our residential and community outreach programs. Our doors are open 365 days per year. We have 30 beds in Burlington and 22 in Milton and those beds are full every night and day. Our capacity this year has been between 95 per cent and 105 per cent.

Halton Women's Place stands in solidarity with abused women and supports them in understanding that they are not to blame or should hold no shame for their abuse.

We believe it is every woman's fundamental right to live in safety and security in her home and in her community - free from the threat of violence.

The courage of a woman alone is not enough. It takes the strength of an entire community to end violence against women.

You, too, can be part of the call to action. Please show the women in our community that you care by supporting Halton Women's Place and the women we are privileged to serve - every day of the year.

If you are an abused woman, call our crisis line at 905-878-8555 or 905-332-7892 or visit our web page at www.haltonwomensplace.com.

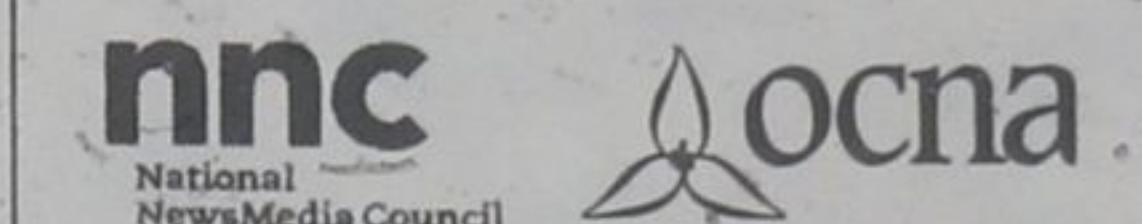
To make a gift to support the only women's shelter in the region, visit <http://haltonwomensplace.com/ways-to-give/make-a-donation>.

Diane Beaulieu is executive director at Halton Women's Place

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