

OPINION

Give us a break

It takes a lot of nerve for a government to simultaneously decide that not a penny of a \$13-billion federal surplus should be returned to taxpayers — or used to improve the state of health care or education — and then turn around and announce spending cuts of \$1 billion.

That shocking double-whammy was delivered last week by the Stephen Harper-led Conservatives.

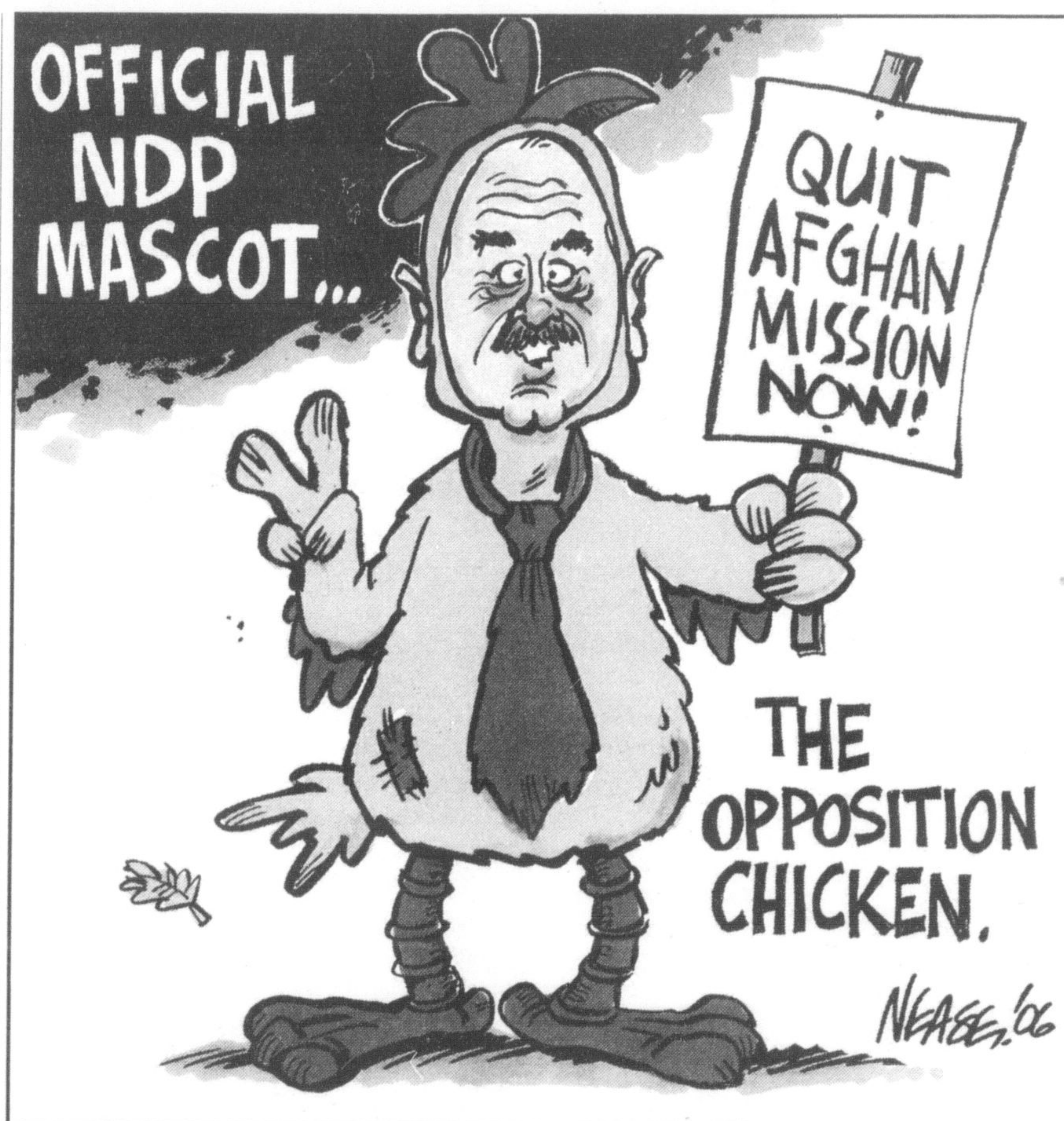
Instead of using the \$13 billion — \$5.2 billion more than Finance Minister Jim Flaherty forecasted just four months ago — for programs, or returning some of it to hard-working, over-taxed Canadians, the government will pay down a fraction of Canada's \$481-billion debt.

In some parts of our

world, such pronouncements might have been met with passive protests, demands for leaders' resignations, or, in the extreme scenario, violent upheaval. Here, the response seems to be a shrug of the shoulders, a sigh and the distinct sensation of *deja vu*.

While most of us have miscalculated our household budget at some time, we wonder how the government could miss the mark by \$13 billion in a single fiscal year.

Most of us can appreciate the logic in paying down the national debt, but the government's all-or-nothing approach is analogous to borrowing money from a relative to pay the rent or utilities, but then applying all of the cash to a credit card bill.



ReadersWrite

Send your letters to miltone@haltonsearch.com or drop them off at 875 Main St. E.

Homeowners shouldn't be made to pay for smart meter installation

DEAR EDITOR:

This letter is in response to Brian Chamber's recent letter entitled 'We need a drop in hydro rates, not smart meters'.

I agree that we shouldn't be paying to have 'smart' meters installed. Nor should they be mandatory. I've done everything that the government and Conservation Ontario have asked that I can.

I changed all the brand new bulbs in my house to compact fluorescents. I went and got a high efficiency washer and dryer. I got a programmable thermostat. I traded in my perfectly working but energy guzzling CRT computer monitor for a flat panel LCD.

I did this all at my own time

and expense. I set my thermostat at 27 degrees Celsius. Yes, really.

Now I'm told it's not enough. Now the powers that be are telling me that I have to pay to have a new meter installed that will punish my family. Perhaps you think I'm overreacting when I use the word punish, but I'm not.

I'm currently a shift worker. That means that I'm home during the day many times a month and at work on the weekends. If I elect to watch TV, or use my computer while I'm off, I will have to pay a higher rate.

My wife will no longer be able to look forward to help around the house because we'll

have to pay more for me to run the washing machine. I simply don't have the luxury of waiting for off-peak hours, because I'm not always at home during them.

When will Ontarians stand up and say enough? We're over-taxed and over mismanaged by all levels of government. Remember, it was government waste and mismanagement — with multi-million dollar expense accounts and 'golden handshakes' — that led to the hydro fiasco, not the consumer.

Let's get together and tell them we can't be held to a higher standard than them any more.

JEREMY PORTER
MOWAT LANE

Thanks for initial support of leash-free dog park

DEAR EDITOR:

This summer at a town council meeting, a pilot project to establish a leash-free zone for dogs was approved.

The leash-free dog park is to be located south of Main Street along the west side of Fourth Line, just south of the train tracks. One of the conditions council required was the organization of a local volunteer group to assist in maintaining the park.

Residents for Off Leash Opportunities (ROLO) took that message to heart and have since been busy forming the volunteer group,

Leash Free Milton. To help with start-up costs, we held our first fundraiser — a bottle drive — on August 8, which The Champion reported on with a picture and story in its August 4 edition.

On behalf of Leash Free Milton, I just want to thank The Champion for helping get the word out about our event.

And thanks so much to all the residents who generously donated their beer bottles, as well as to the volunteers who did the collecting and sorting, for making the drive successful.

BOB MCREAVY, VICE-PRESIDENT
LEASH FREE MILTON

Literacy column was appreciated

DEAR EDITOR:

Thank you to Champion reporter Melanie Hennessey for highlighting International Literacy Day in her recent column, and offering her personal experiences as a volunteer tutor with Literacy North Halton (LNH).

As Melanie mentioned, there's a certain satisfaction when you know you've helped someone grasp something they didn't understand before.

The support LNH provides students can only be done with the dedicated commitment of volunteers in the community, like Melanie. And we need more.

Literacy North Halton is currently recruiting volunteers to attend our upcoming training workshops. Volunteering to work with an adult who needs to improve their literacy skills is an opportunity to see your skills help someone achieve success.

Our students are members of the community who touch our lives. They are our neighbours, friends, family and colleagues. By assisting someone to upgrade their skills, you are opening doors to better employment opportunities, further training, increased independence and improved family literacy.

You are opening a door to a better community.

AMELIA STEINBRING,
PROGRAM CO-ORDINATOR
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