

Chef Pierre prepares some hot potatoes

Follow the bouncing budget ball — it stops nowhere

TAXES HAVE THANKFULLY not gone up as much as they might have so far this year, although we have yet to see the spring provincial budget. But that hasn't eased the ceaseless fingerpointing among the gang of three — the federal, provincial and municipal governments — regarding who is most guilty when it comes to separating citizens from their dwindling reserves of cash.

It's almost comical at times, really. Federal Revenue Minister Otto Jelinek recently told people to 'stop whining' and then whined about Ontario's spending.

Last week Halton North MPP Noel Duignan "The regions have become cash cows for provincial programs."

Giving Halton tax dollars to "a provincial bureaucracy that is \$15 billion in debt does not make a hell of a lot of sense."

Peter Pomeroy

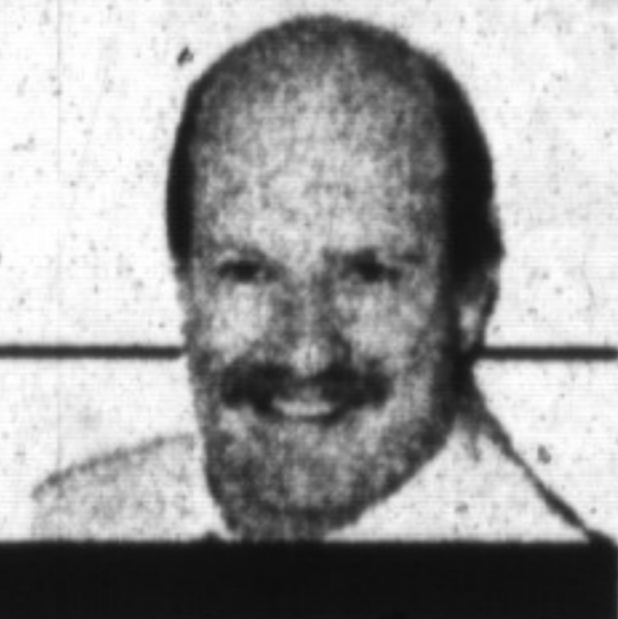
unveiled the final regional budget at a press briefing two weeks ago (served lunch, too). He proudly pointed out where Halton has cut back, then blamed the province, surprise surprise, for appropriating Halton's property tax money to foot welfare bills.

The rationale, according to chef Pete, was that property taxes were never meant to help pay the currently skyrocketing welfare tab. "The regions have become cash cows for provincial programs," he warned. And giving hard-earned Halton property tax dollars back to "a provincial bureaucracy that is \$15 billion in debt does not make a hell of a lot of sense."

So what does make sense, chef Pierre? The answer might unnerve fellow travellers up and down the right wing of Halton's corridors of power. The solution, according to our host, was for the province to leave Halton's money

VIEWPOINT

with ROB KELLY



alone so that regional government could have "the responsibility" for creating wealth with it.

Governments with the responsibility to create wealth? Sounds suspiciously like the NDP to me. Unlucky Pierre might get crossed off Conrad Black's guest list for this one. Halton would create newfound riches by improving the area infrastructure — roads, utilities and the like. I think that's also what the NDP plans on doing in their spring budget, if I am reading Mr. Duignan's hints right.

This is just what I was looking forward to in the middle of a recession — a fight among two government levels about who gets to control the most tax money for publicly sponsored so-called wealth creation programs.

Barry's about-face

Burlington regional councillor Barry Quinn either has a lot of political courage or all the backbone of boiled linguini.

A while ago Halton Region appointed two councillors to the area police commission, or police services board as it's now called (because policing is a service, you know, blah, blah, blah, fill in the appropriate politically correct nonsense here).

Burlington's Jim Grieve, who lost in the last municipal election when Walter Mulkewich beat him to become mayor, and Fred Oliver, who was dumped in a clear signal to police of political displeasure with their budget hikes, were replaced by Mr. Quinn and Halton Hills Mayor Russ Miller.

Both Mr. Quinn and Mr. Miller made speeches about fiscal responsibility (nothing about creating wealth through police work, though) when they were pitching their candidacies to their fellow regional councillors. This was while Mr. Oliver was still in the running.

There's no question that Mr. Oliver was

snubbed — he'd been in the commission six years, loved it, and was a former Halton police deputy chief. Mr. Quinn and Mr. Miller should have taken that as a big fat clue, as they say in police work. Mr. Miller did. Mr. Quinn didn't, or wouldn't.

When the regional budget discussion swung around to police funding two weeks ago, Mr. Quinn came out as clearly cloned to Mr. Oliver's thinking on the matter. That is, he sided with the cops against the vast majority of the politicians. When it came down to a vote, Mr. Quinn and Mr. Oliver stood alone against the rest of regional council, a lonesome duo who wanted to piece off the police with an extra \$100,000 or so while the rest of council wanted to provoke a showdown.

I was kind of surprised that Mr. Pomeroy didn't run over there and begin choking Mr. Quinn with his chain of office. The regional chairman had, during his press lunch, said rather bitterly that he wasn't going to respond to angry calls from residents over tax increases anymore. Instead, "I'm going to give them the phone numbers of the Premier and the head of the police commission, and let the people respond (to complaints) who are responsible" for the hikes.

Not much later he sat in the regional council chamber, undoubtedly peeved, while one of the supposed new-breed police commissioners sent as an emissary by Halton council did an about-face and fretted about having "no other place to get the dollars from" in case rank and file cop wage demands are higher than expected.

It was obvious by the vote that council was surprised by, and not sympathetic to, Mr. Quinn's stance.

Maybe Mr. Quinn was intimidated by the police. "I felt like Daniel in the lion's den," he admitted of early commission meetings. Or maybe he just changed his mind and voted his conscience.

But I'd bet that the way things stand right now, Mr. Quinn has about as much chance of getting his police commission appointment renewed by fellow regional councillors as the Quebec Nordiques have of signing Eric Lindros.

Group helps parents deal with cancer

The common thread that connects parents of children with cancer can help families cope with the disease.

The benefits of sharing information and experiences with other parents has resulted in the formation of a self-help group for parents of children with cancer. The group will service both Milton and Oakville and will meet the last Wednesday of the month on a rotating basis between the two communities.

Organizers Kim and Craig Thomas have a three-year-old daughter, Jenny, who was diagnosed last year with leukemia. The group was established by parents following a Halton District Health Council study into services available to cancer patients and their families. The need for a parent group surfaced.

The inaugural meeting attracted six families. Ms Thomas says she's met many friends at Sick Children's Hospital where her child receives treatment, however she realizes there are some concerns specific to Halton residents which can't be addressed through the Toronto hospital.

One of the issues families affected by children with cancer is financial. According to Ms Thomas most women leave their jobs in order to be with their sick children. There are also travel expenses with frequent trips for treatment.

As well, parents face medical concerns and problems with siblings who must adjust to changes in the family.

"It's amazing to hear what one person knows and what other people don't know," says Ms Thomas.

This is where the support group becomes beneficial, the mother explains.

The next meeting will be at the Oakville Cancer Society, 635 Fourth Line, Unit 51, Oakville on Wednesday, Apr. 29, 7 p.m. The Milton unit office on Main Street will be the location of the May 27 meeting.

For more information call Kim Thomas at 878-1206 or the Milton unit of the Canadian Cancer Society at 878-5228.

CRIME STOPPERS OF HALTON

Intruder flees after waking woman

Halton Regional Police in Georgetown and Crime Stoppers of Halton are seeking the public's assistance in identifying the burglar responsible for entering a second-storey apartment on Mill Street in Georgetown.

On Jan. 10 at about 2:30 a.m., a woman awakened to find a man standing at the foot of her bed while her husband and granddaughter were both in the apartment asleep.

The suspect had already removed a VCR and VCR programmer from the apartment and stashed them in a bush area behind the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce on Main Street.

The suspect had returned and stolen a wallet containing \$100 cash from her husband's trousers when she was awakened. Once the suspect realized that the woman was awake, he fled the scene.



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