

stouffville comment

Brad Ward's message not quite enough

Brad Ward, minister without portfolio in the finance department at Queen's Park toed the party line into Stouffville last week at a poorly-attended Chamber of Commerce breakfast. He said his government is committed to holding the deficit, and offered these three cures to what ails the debt-plagued province in the new budget.

1. Expenditure reduction. The NDP will cut 2.4 billion in programs and 1.5 billion reviewing ministry operations.

2. Social contract with 900,000 public sector employees.

3. Tax increases - Ward calls them "fair but necessary."

Ward also said his department's goal is to maintain a AA-credit rating.

What is missing is a true job creation program. *jobsOntario* is a start, but MPP Ward was speaking of the Ontario Training Adjustment Board as if would be a cure-all. In fact, the board has not received its mandate yet, and likely won't be running until the fall.

More government job initiatives are needed now. Not more rhetoric.



Join the newest lobby group: A.A.R.G.H.

We are being gouged and I, for one, am tired of it.

In fact, I think I will start a lobby group to protest this gouging. I think I'll call it A.A.R.G.H. - the Association Against Ridiculous Gas Hikes.

Our mission will be simple. To stop people from buying gasoline from Thursday evening to Tuesday morning.

I was in a store across from a gas station last Thursday. I saw the price sign outside the station extolling a 49.9¢ per litre cost at the pumps. I thought to myself, "Don't forget to fill up on your way by."

I was in the store for five minutes. When I came out, the

sign had miraculously changed to 55.5¢ per litre.

I was livid. In what other business do prices jump by five cents in five minutes?

That five minute lapse would cost me more than \$2 were I to fill up.

Every weekend, gas prices shoot up to snag unsuspecting travellers on their way to the cottage, or out for a Sunday drive.

The oil companies all know we are on to them, so they jack the prices on Thursday, and leave them up there until Tuesday, to ensure they get everyone who drives more than 10 kilometres a day.

MINUTE WITH MAIR

andrew mair

Imagine the stink raised if grocery stores upped their prices between the time you picked the items off the shelf to the checkout line. So why do we put up with it from gas stations?

The oil companies state the price hikes are due to fluctuat-

ing oil prices. Hogwash.

The price hikes are due to our laissez-faire attitude about our cars and what we'll pay to make them go.

If we stopped buying gas from Thursday to Tuesday, and instead, bought gas at mid-week and filled spare gas cans to tide us through the weekends, we would soon see prices remain stable.

Of course, the alternative is that the gas stations would boost their prices throughout the week.

The ultimate solution would

be to legislate fair pricing. But that would be a lot to ask with the government serving the oil companies breakfast in bed.

So that's where A.A.R.G.H. comes in.

Membership is free.

To join, just follow this initiation ritual.

Whenever you see price jumps at the pumps, fill up, walk into the kiosk and as you pay, yell at the top of your lungs, "AARGH!"

If enough people did this, the oil companies would get the message soon enough.

This one's for you, Chris

They told me it was inevitable that one day I should find myself writing this column.

When the great white space on the screen matches the great white space between the ears, you know it's time to write about the difficulty of finding anything to write about.

One of the biggest problems confronting this scribe is that a rich source of material is rapidly becoming inaccessible.

My children have undergone the transformation from being flattered at seeing their names in print to looking up lawyers in the Yellow Pages every time I mention them.

Any minute now they'll pick up an article about voice appropriation, and I'll be left with the old man and the cat as my sole sources for literary lampooning. And even my husband must surely have his limits, although

thus far he has suffered in stultid silence.

As I reflect on devices to fill my allotted space, it occurs to me that even if I should finish this piece in time for my deadline, there is no way I can transfer it onto a disk, since all my disks have mysteriously vanished into *The Tribune's* editorial black hole.

Then again, lots of topics these days are off-limits if you don't want to offend people.

Race, sex, the demon alcohol or the latest activist group are subjects it's not wise to pontificate about unless you can afford extremely expensive legal

advice. That's what so useful about my husband. I know we can't afford the lawyer he so desperately needs to keep his name out of the paper.

Sometimes I even have to cross the Atlantic, in a literary sense, and use my extended family as foils.

As luck would have it, our circulation in Essex, England is zero.

Still, there's always a ray of hope out there somewhere when the muse fails to strike.

The other day I was sitting at a meeting trying, unsuccessfully, to contribute some meaningful morsels of wisdom, when a friend asked me what she had to do to get a mention in this column.

Well, Chris, now you know. Just catch me during a lull in the proceedings at Chateau Gilderdale, and your wish is my command.

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