

Opinion

Get the people mad and lose the next election

When the dust finally clears from the filibuster at Queen's Park delaying the passing of the Toronto megacity bill, about the best that can be hoped for is that maybe the ruling Tories learn a lesson.

Like it or not, Bill 103 will be passed, even if it takes the reading of some 13,000 amendments, and Toronto's six municipalities will be amalgamated into one. Personally, I think that stinks.

It's unlikely, though, that Mike Harris and his government care what I think, or for that matter what the more than 70 per cent of people who voted against the megacity think.

However, there will be a price to pay for this kind of arrogance. The worst thing a government can do is make the voters angry.



Viewpoint

Alan Shackleton

Just ask Jean Chretien.

He's been asleep for the last four years and if he and his government stay that way, re-election seems certain.

The speed, and apparent disregard for public opinion, with which the Harris government has moved on a number of controversial issues is scary.

Workfare, along with massive changes to education and health care, have come along so fast that people have no time to

make sense of the moves, let alone react. Anyone who disagrees is branded a "whiner" or a "special interest" group.

This government is so utterly convinced that it is right, and that it knows best, that it marches ahead with its Common Sense Revolution with a near-religious fervor.

Listen to the comments of York East Tory MPP John Parker who has been promised by his constituents that he will be finished, if he votes in favor of the megacity. "I'll be casting a vote on the basis of what's right regardless of the political consequences."

As he goes down in political martyrdom, I suppose Parker can console himself with comparisons to Joan of Arc.

I see this as just one more example of gutless politicians

toeing the party line instead of listening to their constituents. Honestly, don't they realize who the boss is here? It's you and I, we the voters, this is our government — not theirs.

The provincial Tories don't realize what a broad spectrum of opposition they have stirred up. The megacity bill has become the lightning rod for the frustration of voters, but it goes across the board on a variety of issues.

People who are mad make it a point to cast a ballot, and the history of elections recently (David Peterson's Liberals in Ontario in 1990 and the federal Conservatives in 1993) is that arrogant governments get voted out and punished by voters.

This is the lesson Mike Harris and company may learn in the next provincial election.

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Good Samaritans getting scarce

You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you cannot know how soon it will be too late.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

We all want to have a reputation for generosity. And we'd all like to buy it cheap.

-Anon

I've been thinking what a rough ride we'd give the Good Samaritan if he was unwise enough to show up nowadays.

For anyone whose Bible lore is rusty, the Good Samaritan was the subject of a New Testament parable.

Basically he was the only guy who bothered to stop and help a man who had been held up and savagely mugged by thieves. "Good Samaritan" has come to be a term that we bestow on anyone who shows generosity or compassion towards the poor

and downtrodden. And it's a term that you don't hear a whole lot these days.

It's certainly not a term that would spring to the lips of Sylvia Stayton, of Cincinnati, Ohio. Not if she was looking for ways to describe Municipal Court Judge John West. Ms. Stayton, a grandmother, was hauled up in court before the judge for a pre-trial hearing recently. Her lawyer was seeking dismissal of the charges. The judge said no way. Ms. Stayton will stand trial for obstruction and disorderly conduct.

And what did this wild-eyed harridan do to get cited? Lie down in front of the mayor's limousine? Burn her bra on the Cincinnati courthouse steps?

Nah. Sylvia Stayton was charged when she put 15 cents into two expired parking meters. She was trying to do a good turn for the drivers of the cars, neither of whom she knew. A Cincinnati cop who was writing out a ticket for one of the cars ordered her to stop feeding the meter. She refused and I guess she might go to jail as a result. The judge will issue a ruling next week.

Then there's Ron Seaward's tale of woe. Seaward was driving from Toronto to London, Ontario recently when he spied a car in the ditch. Seaward, feeling conspicuously Good Samaritanish, pulled over and got out to help. As did an Ontario Provincial Police officer. While the cop and Seaward were grunting and straining at the back bumper of the stuck car, several other vehicles crashed into Seaward's truck and police cruiser.

Naturally, the officer now has to write out an accident report. Naturally, he has to see everybody's licence and registration — including Seaward's. Which is when the cop notices that Seaward has been driving with an expired licence.

Well...a violation, to be sure,



Basic Black

Arthur Black

but under the circumstances — Seaward being such a decent chap and all — undoubtedly the cop will let Seaward off with a wink and a warning, right? Not. Seaward, who was only acting on an impulse of kindness and generosity towards a fellow human being in a jam, finds himself with a strained back, a banged-up truck and a \$315 traffic ticket.

Guess how fast he'll pull over the next time he sees a motorist in difficulty.

Sad, but true, the streets are getting meaner.

Still, Ron Seaward can look on the bright side — at least he didn't have to be helped by a politician. There's a story going around about a traveling salesman on a business trip to Ottawa who one night was robbed, beaten up, thrown in a ditch, and left for dead.

The first person to come by was a Reform Party MP. She looked down at the man and snapped, "Get up on your feet! Stop feeling sorry for yourself! Be a man!" And she walked on.

Next came an NDP supporter. He gasped in dismay at the sight of the poor guy in the ditch. "This is terrible!" he wailed. "I must find the people who did this! They need psychiatric help and career counseling!" And off he ran.

The next passer-by was a Liberal cabinet minister. He stopped in front of the injured man, looked around to make sure no one was watching, then he knelt down by the side of the man and whispered: "What did the other two say?"

Editor's mail

Government responsible for Lake Ontario clean-up

Dear Editor,

You will be drinking the water from Lake Ontario, the most polluted lake in the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes is the largest body of fresh water in the world.

Less than one per cent of fresh water is available for human consumption, and the Ontario government is withdrawing its economic support in the effort to continue the Lake Ontario clean up.

This includes the Niagara River.

Ontario is breaking an international agreement, established in 1987, to establish a clean-up of Lake Ontario.

The co-ordinators of Lake Ontario

and the Remedial Action Programs have been laid off. They co-ordinate the clean up in the "hotspots" around the lake.

Ontario wants private industry (those who pollute) and a volunteer non-profit organization to fund the clean-up.

Imagine the polluter paying to clean up its mess?

Who will be responsible and accountable?

It's your health.

Demand from your MPP that the government get back on track and clean up the lake.

L. Duriar
Scarborough