

THE BARRIE EXAMINER

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comment

Making up
ground tough
test for Tories

You have to wonder about Tim Hudak's political instincts. He was given an opportunity to drive a wedge into the Liberals' tax credit for new Canadians, but he blew it with his "foreign worker" slogan. When Progressive Conservative candidates started using that kind of terminology at the local level, it was bound to be painful to those who have known them for years and never heard them speak that way.



Brian MacLeod

The Liberals are offering a \$10,000 tax credit to businesses that hire professionals who are Canadian citizens and have lived in the country for up to five years.

Hudak should have focused on the affirmative action aspect, decrying the policies of the NDP government in the early 1990s, when people who were not visible minorities were often frustrated in their quest for government jobs.

Instead, there he was, standing between cardboard images of "Bob" and "Jim," trying to parse the Liberals' language.

His clumsiness undermined his attempt to portray Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty as "out of touch" — a common expression in PC party news releases — and left him dropping in the polls to the point where the PCs are tied with, or trailing, the Liberals in some surveys.

And McGuinty, who has a string of broken promises and secretive measures on his record, is seen as the best party leader to be premier and is most trusted by voters.

Hudak has now returned to his mantra of lower taxes and getting tough on crime. He has promised to remove the HST on heating and hydro bills, which amounts to a nominal \$275 a year.

Ontarians are understandably skeptical about promises of tax cuts in the midst of a \$15 billion deficit.

The money will come from somewhere and indications are some of it will come in the form of higher property taxes if Hudak halts the uploading of \$1.5 billion in social assistance and court security costs promised by the Liberals.

He is now hyping his promise to force high-risk offenders to wear GPS bracelets (judges can already order criminals to wear them) and to make a sex-offender registry public, which isn't supported by OPP commissioner Chris Lewis, because it encourages vigilantism. (The police can access the registry now).

These are populist measures, but they're not going to improve people's lives.

Contrast that with McGuinty's television ads, with him talking about all-day kindergarten and building new hospitals — things that will touch the lives of average Ontarians.

The Tories' Changebook platform has been out since May. It should be gathering steam with voters by now, in the vein of Mike Harris' Common Sense Revolution in 1995. But it isn't.

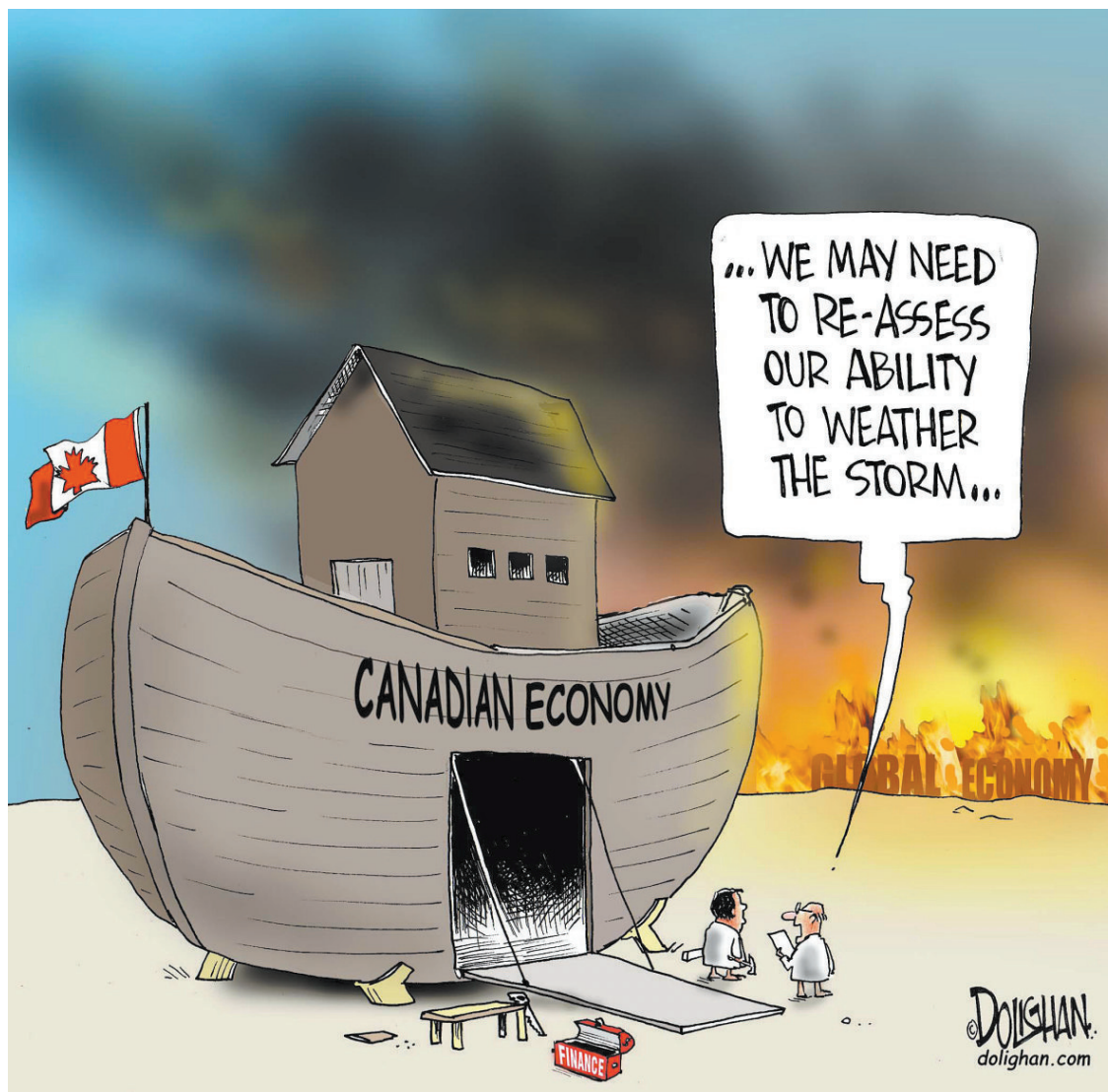
It's hard to see how the Tories can regain what was an 11-point lead in the polls just one month ago.

Even the Fraser Institute's report that places McGuinty ninth among the country's 10 provinces in managing finances won't do the Liberals much harm. There's nothing new here.

The deficit was created by a worldwide slump (the budget was balanced before the recession) and most of the higher spending by the Liberals has gone to health care and education, for which McGuinty seems quite content to take the credit.

A Liberal minority government with the NDP holding the balance of power cannot be considered a victory for Hudak. Unless the Tories unleash a bold new initiative in the middle of the campaign, look for the party to go intensely negative on McGuinty.

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our opinion

Candidate answers need
to make sense to voters

There's a lesson somewhere for the rest of Ontario in Rob Ford's sticky fiscal dilemma.

The Toronto mayor received a strong mandate from voters last fall by promising to eliminate the gravy train at city hall, the waste of taxpayers' dollars, and the high taxes which were strangling homeowners.

Ford said he could find about \$2 billion in savings without cutting city services, and Torontonians believed him. He easily outdistanced the field on election day.

But turn the clock ahead 10 months and it's a different situation for Ford.

A recent Forum Research survey puts the mayor's support at 42%, down from 57% in June and 60% in late February.

This drop can, in large part, be attributed to a city report which suggests ending subsidized day-care, closing libraries and museums, selling zoos, reducing TTC services, having a smaller police force, reducing arts grants, etc., as a way to cut the gravy at city hall.

Trouble is, most Toronto residents don't consider these services gravy.

Ford is like many politicians who make promises on the campaign trail, but then have great difficulty delivering once in office.

And this cannot all be laid at Ford's feet. Voters need to scrutinize election promises and decide whether they hold water, or whether they are nothing but pipe dreams.

Because many, but not all, politicians will say whatever needs to be said to get elected, then worry about the details of actually governing later.

Keeping promises can be especially difficult for municipal politicians. Canada's prime ministers and premiers are party leaders, and can practically demand that MPs and MPPs vote along party lines.

Mayors are not party leaders and have exactly one vote at the council table. They cannot keep their election promises by their will alone.

But municipal leaders are not the only politicians who can't keep their election promises.

Liberal Dalton McGuinty was elected Ontario premier in 2003, in part because he promised no new tax increases.

He wasn't in office for two days before discovering a \$5-billion shortfall, blamed on his Conservative predecessors, and introduced OHIP fees, a tax by another name.

Many Ontario voters expressed outrage that McGuinty had broken his promise, and that they had given him a majority government. Not so outraged that

McGuinty didn't get another majority in 2007, but outraged all the same.

In last spring's federal election, it was clear that Canadian voters would not buy what former Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff was selling. The Conservatives won their majority government, the New Democrats are the official opposition and Ignatieff is out of politics.

On Oct. 6, Ontario voters will decide who will govern this province for the next four years — or less, if a minority government is elected.

Conservative leader Tim Hudak, the front-runner until a few days ago, has been promising lower taxes, spending cuts and tighter fiscal management at Queen's Park. He calls McGuinty "the taxman" and it's been an effective argument.

But what will Ontario look like with a Hudak government? Will it be a reborn 'Common Sense Revolution'?

Or does Hudak's popularity reflect a backlash against the high cost of Ontario living under a McGuinty government?

Ontario voters need to ask these questions and get the answers from provincial candidates.

And those answers need to make sense, or what's happening to Toronto could be happening right across Ontario.

The incredible
potential of
Georgian close
to realization

Our college is continuing to grow and create jobs and opportunities for Barrie with the opening of the new Georgian Centre for Health and Wellness.

Patrick Brown
PARLIAMENT HILL

The 172,000-square-foot building is the largest single expansion in Georgian College's history. The new facility will create 400 new jobs at the college and the construction alone has had an economic impact of approximately \$98 million for our area.

The new centre will also increase the college's number of students enrolled in health programs by 1,800, bringing the total to over 3,000 by next year. This will allow more people to pursue health care careers in our region with certificate, diploma and a growing list of degree programs through Georgian College's University Partnership Centre.

I remember touring the campus with Prime Minister Stephen Harper in 2005, when he was leader of the opposition, and talking about the challenges facing a rapidly growing city, the need to invest in the future and the incredible potential of Georgian College.

I am so proud of our government for supporting this vision. The \$20 million in unprecedented federal funding through the knowledge infrastructure program was immensely helpful in making this ambitious undertaking become a reality in a relatively short period of time.

In particular, I am thrilled to see Georgian's nurse practitioner-led clinic being an integral part of the new centre. The clinics offer all the services expected from a typical family practice.

The program is open to the general public with a target area for those residing in Barrie and the immediate area. If you are interested, please register with the program by contacting it directly at 705-737-5441.

Registered patients will have access to illness and injury treatments, physical examinations, well baby and child care, men's health, women's health, immunizations, counselling, education, smoking cessation, diabetes, asthma, arthritis and heart disease management.

Members of the public who do not have a dental plan can take advantage of low-cost dental services for cleanings, x-rays and other minor restorative care from the Oral Clinic.

Patients can also see an optometrist, place an order for prescription glasses and receive massage therapy on-site as well.

In the coming months, the centre will introduce esthetic services focused on skin care and spa treatment, and there are plans to add a communicative disorder assistant for hearing and speech testing.

The dean of the Health and Wellness Centre, Dr. Cassandra Thompson, and her team are doing such a fantastic job of implementing all the new programs. I applaud them for their ongoing work and wish them every success moving forward.

The federal government has strongly supported the economic health and wellness of Barrie in recent years.

We are optimistic that this great facility will go a long way to help address shortages at Royal Victoria Hospital in the future and benefit people living in our community today by giving families more local health care options.

On behalf of the government of Canada, I thank everyone involved in this amazing project.

Patrick Brown is Barrie's MP.

Annual 'Out of the Cold' debate set for Friday

The Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness, Barrie chapter, will be holding its annual Out of the Cold election night on Friday, Sept. 16.

This has been an annual event for the past five years or so, where the members of the chapter get together to raise awareness, feed the working poor and hold an election debate to help inform area citizens of local issues that should be discussed prior to the election.

This is a very important debate and if you are going to go to any election debate it should be this one.

Held outside so party reps are made keenly aware of what some of our homeless feel on a daily basis, we talk about how the parties will assist working poor

Paula King
EQUAL TIME

through their platforms.

Remember, every citizen is important and society is judged on how it provides for the most vulnerable members of the population.

The awareness march starts at 5:30 p.m. from Queen's Park and travels with police escort to Memorial Square. There, the circle road, Fred Grant Street, will be closed to traffic as we have set up the Salvation Army emergency truck to deliver a hot roast beef meal to what we anticipate to be 250 participants.

We engaged the services of Catering by Rose to provide the meal, along with donations from the community. The full course meal including desert will be served after the march at approximately 5:45 p.m.

After the meal has been completed and the area cleaned up, we will begin the election debate moderated by the famous Mandy Hillyard. Well, maybe not famous, but certainly well known in these parts.

A word of caution to the party representatives; be clear about your platform because if you make a mistake, Mandy will be sure to call you out in front of the audience. With humour, of course, but she will make her point.

So far we have confirmation from the New Democratic, Green and Liberal parties.

This is a very important debate ... held outside so party reps are made keenly aware of what some of our homeless feel on a daily basis, we talk about how the parties will assist working poor through their platforms.

Where are you, Conservative representative? Are you coming? We sent you an e-mail but have not heard from you.

We expect this portion of the program to start at 6:30 p.m. and end about eight-ish. Each candidate will be given three minutes to make a presentation and then it is onto questions and answers.

So come one, come all to the annual Out of the Cold evening, this Friday, held downtown.

It is the Barrie chapter's attempt to bring as many people as possible together to meet the candidates and ask them ques-

tions close to their hearts.

If you ever wondered why Ontario Works barely covers rent, or why housing is so hard to secure, or what is the party's policy on affordable housing or whatever happened to the special food allowance given out to those suffering with a medical problem, then this is the time to come out and ask.

See you there. I'll be the one with the apron on.

Paula King is the executive director of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Simcoe County.

quote
of the day

Basically, what we're looking at is the erosion of full-time work in our economy from sea to shining sea."

Sheryl Lawson, a picketer at Georgian College