

FRANKLY SPEAKING: The NDP Dilemma

By Frank Klees, MPP
Newmarket-Aurora

I sit two seats to the right of the Leader of the New Democrats in the legislature.

Andrea Horwath is a decent person. I rather like her on that personal level. She has a good sense of humour, doesn't take herself too seriously, is passionate about the issues she has embraced and while I often disagree with her perspective, I have no doubt that she is sincere about her calling to public service. I also see a woman who has become ensnared in a trap that must be as painful for her as it is frustrating for her Caucus and Party faithful.

As I watched and listened to the Leader of the New Democrats rail against the Premier and her government during Question Period this past week, I could not help but think how she must be struggling with her decision to keep this government in power.

On the one hand, she believes that she is doing right by voting to support the government's budget. After all, more than a billion dollars of that budget was the price the government paid for her support. On the other hand, she feels compelled to condemn the same government for its scandalous record of mismanagement, waste and corruption.

My observation is that this dilemma is taking a toll on Andrea Horwath and her supporting cast of MPPs. They know that they are losing credibility with every vote they cast in support of a government that they are also accusing of cover-up, scandal and corruption. The plot thickened again this past week with two more headlines.

Top Liberals Illegally Deleted Emails, Ontario Privacy Commissioner says

In a scathing 35 page report, Ontario's Privacy Commissioner, Ann Cavoukian confirmed that top Liberal staffers, including former Premier McGuinty's Chief of Staff illegally deleted emails that related to the \$585 million gas plant scandal.

Ironically, it was the NDP who asked the Privacy Commissioner to investigate the disappearance of those emails and when the report confirmed that the government had been involved in illegal activities, Ms. Horwath's response was interesting.....

?...it's obviously not in the Liberals' DNA? to be transparent or accountable.

Throughout Question Period that day, the Leader of the New Democrats continued her passionate assault on the government for their corrupt behaviour. I wondered how she would respond to the inevitable questions that would come from the media during the scrum to follow. And come they did.

?Given the revelations today, how can you justify supporting the budget and keeping this government in power?? Her response was that there were ?important things that we were able to achieve in that budget, and so we're proud of that work and we want it to stick for Ontarians.? Really.

Here's the next headline of this past week...

OPP Opens Investigation into Deletion of Government Emails

My caucus colleagues Vic Fedeli (MPP for Nippising) and Rob Leone (MPP for Cambridge), who have been heading the Justice Committee's probe into the gas plant scandal, wrote to OPP Commissioner Chris Lewis urging him to order an investigation into the ?theft of taxpayer property and the breach of trust? by public officials. The Commissioner responded in a letter the following day (June 7, 2013) with the following assurance:

?You may be assured that your correspondence has been received. I have referred the matter to the Ontario Provincial Police Criminal Investigations Services, Investigations and Support Branch, for investigation.?

That investigation is now underway. The criminal investigation into the Ornge Air Ambulance scandal is still underway. The Auditor General is scheduled to table a Special Report on the cost of the Oakville Power Plant cancellation this fall. That report is widely expected to be even more damning than his Mississauga Report and will put the total cost of these politically-driven

decisions to well over a billion dollars.

The billions wasted under this government's watch through the eHealth, Ornge and Power Plant scandals will never be recovered. Those billions should have been directed to front line health care, social services and...oh, yes, transit!

By the time you read this column, the final vote on the Liberal Government's budget will have taken place. I and my colleagues in the Official Opposition will have cast our vote against the budget, consistent with our conviction that based on its record of mismanagement, waste and corruption, we and the people of this province have lost confidence in this government.

Andrea Horwath and her New Democrats will have voted in support of the budget. They will have kept this corrupt government in office. They will continue to accuse them of mismanagement, waste and corruption.

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