



## Election 2011

# Black Hats & White Hats

Yes once again it's election time, that feel-good time where we rebuff the dolts and elect the great hope. For several weeks everything is possible for those seen with the white hats who win the mandate promising how the treasury of the people, bequeathed by Providence, will be distributed to us who so richly deserve it. Meanwhile we sock it to those we deem to wear the black hats who deserve their fate for failing to deliver what we want.

And so, for the past few weeks and the next few coming everyone wanting to take office has attempted to glue on a white hat while projecting a black hat onto their opponents. Because if the respective hats stay put on Election Day, victory is assured and everyone will feel terrific.

Until the next morning. That's when we realize that the public treasury didn't actually come from Divine Providence but from the portion of our own labours we each bequeathed to it (albeit involuntarily). Or it was filled with promises that future taxpayers will have to keep on our behalf.

So it has gone, election after election, for decades. As that time has passed, the treasury has been filled more and more with promises than with fruits of our labour. Tomorrow never comes so promises remain an easy choice.

Promises are made to those who lend the treasury money — investors (including ourselves), foreign governments, corporations. Old promises eventually come due and must be replaced with new promises. Lenders expect their money back with interest. The treasury can do that for quite a while by piling on promises to pay the interest too, and investors are happy to supply the funds since the risk of non-repayment is low

— government power to compel its citizens to repay ensures that.

Still, investors keep an eye on the size of the promises made by the governments they invest with — that's what rating services are — because it's possible for promises to approach or exceed the point where the citizens can be compelled to honour them. "Greece happens", so wise investors keep an eye on the promises they fund to avoid holding any that are empty. If any promises come up empty — defaulted obligations — investors stop funding new promises instantly and start looking to be repaid on old promises as fast as possible.

Going into this election it's important to remember that an ever growing portion of the promises being made by politicians are being funded by investors, not by today's taxpayers. As Greece, along with Portugal, Ireland, Italy, and Spain are demonstrating, frightening consequences follow when the size of the promises grows so that investors must be begged to fund them. Thankfully Ontario is not at that point, but political parties of all stripes for over fifty years have aimed Ontario in that direction. As long as that aim remains unchanged, Ontario will eventually see the consequences. If you believe it can't happen here, recall that many of the challenges endured by the Rae government were precipitated by investor concerns at that time.

Recalibrating that aim means discarding the "white hat/black hat" approach. It means remembering that holding public office is not standing at the door of an inexhaustible, providential treasury, despite how the use of promises makes it seem that way. Public office is a stewardship: a means of co-ordinating small amounts of all our efforts to the greater

benefit of everyone.

Building layers of government funded on promises so the government can look busy on health care is not good stewardship. Reducing taxes can be good stewardship, but not if the reduction is funded on promises.

Reducing how much we fund on promises means either reducing how much we do through government or increasing how much we pay for government — "reduce services" or "raise taxes". Reducing services will always impact someone using those services, so it's tempting to just raise taxes. But taxes repel industry and make stewardship — already badly done "co-ordinating small amounts of all our efforts" — even worse when even larger amounts become involved.

Ajax and Pickering have seen the impact of politicians making the easy political decisions, and we have effectively battled against those. However, the problem has moved to other jurisdictions like the Niagara region as politicians see that region as politically expendable. Whether or not you agree with *Maclean's* January issue that Canada's health care is "Dead Last", our health care clearly shows the effects of decades of such expedient political solutions.

We now need hard, but real solutions. Until political parties show the courage to talk about this, perhaps we can only afford to elect the party that will do the least damage. Just casting around black and white hats won't provide anything more than an ever-shrinking feel-good moment, after which the real solutions will be yet more distant. We can demand the real solutions now or pay the price later. Greece happens. We can choose if it happens to us.

## The Promise Makers

These are the people from the registered political parties seeking your vote on October 6. Please read what they have to say on health care on their campaign web sites below. Who is making the easy choices? Who is looking at the hard issues? Will you feel good on October 7, or will you feel you've helped recalibrate Ontario's health care aim?

### **Ajax-Pickering**

Liberal Party of Ontario (incumbent):

Joe Dickson  
[www.joedickson.ca](http://www.joedickson.ca)

PC Party of Ontario:

Todd McCarthy  
[www.toddmccarthy.ca](http://www.toddmccarthy.ca)

Ontario NDP/NPD:

Evan Wiseman  
[evanwiseman.ontariondp.ca](http://evanwiseman.ontariondp.ca)

Green Party of Ontario:

Steven Toman  
[steventoman.gpo.ca](http://steventoman.gpo.ca)

Ontario Libertarian Party:

Andrew Delis  
[libertarian.on.ca/profiles/andrew-delis](http://libertarian.on.ca/profiles/andrew-delis)

### **Pickering**

Liberal Party (incumbent seat):

Tracy MacCharles  
[www.votemaccharles.ca](http://www.votemaccharles.ca)

PC Party of Ontario:

Kevin Gaudet  
[www.kevingaudet.ca](http://www.kevingaudet.ca)

Ontario NDP/NPD:

Nerissa Cariño  
[nerissacarino.ontariondp.ca](http://nerissacarino.ontariondp.ca)

Green Party of Ontario:

Kevin Smith  
[greenparty.ca/campaign/35072](http://greenparty.ca/campaign/35072)

Ontario Libertarian Party:

Heath Thomas  
[libertarian.on.ca/profiles/heath-thomas](http://libertarian.on.ca/profiles/heath-thomas)

### **Whitby-Oshawa**

PC Party of Ontario (incumbent):

Christine Janice Elliott  
[www.christineelliott.ca](http://www.christineelliott.ca)

Ontario Liberal Party:

Elizabeth Roy  
[www.voteroy.ca](http://www.voteroy.ca)

Ontario NDP/NPD:

Maret Sadem-Thompson  
[maretsadem-thompson.ca](http://maretsadem-thompson.ca)

Green Party of Ontario:

Bradley Gibson  
[www.bradleygibson.ca](http://www.bradleygibson.ca)

Ontario Libertarian Party:

Josh Insang  
[libertarian.on.ca/users/joshinsang](http://libertarian.on.ca/users/joshinsang)

Party for the People with Special Needs:

Dan King  
[www.ppsn.on.ca](http://www.ppsn.on.ca)

Freedom Party of Ontario:

Douglas Thom  
[www.freedomparty.on.ca](http://www.freedomparty.on.ca)

### **Party Leaders & Platforms**

Liberal Party of Ontario:

Dalton McGuinty  
[www.ontarioliberal.ca/Our-Plan/pdf/platform\\_english.pdf](http://www.ontarioliberal.ca/Our-Plan/pdf/platform_english.pdf)

PC Party of Ontario:

Tim Hudak  
<http://www.ontariopc.com/issues/health-care/>

Ontario NDP/NPD:

Andrea Horwath  
[ontariondp.com/en/policy](http://ontariondp.com/en/policy)

Green Party of Ontario:

Mike Schreiner  
[itstimeforgreen.ca/health/](http://itstimeforgreen.ca/health/)

Ontario Libertarian Party:

Sam Apfelbaum  
[libertarian.on.ca/our-platform/health-care](http://libertarian.on.ca/our-platform/health-care)

Party for the People with Special Needs:

Danish Ahmed  
[www.ppsn.on.ca](http://www.ppsn.on.ca)

Freedom Party of Ontario:

Paul McKeever  
[www.freedomparty.on.ca](http://www.freedomparty.on.ca)

The Friends of Ajax/Pickering Hospital is a group of concerned citizens, doctors, nurses, other health care providers, business officials, and patients who support the continued presence of Ajax/Pickering Hospital as the major hospital to fully service all present and future health needs of rapidly growing West Durham region. To receive future newsletters electronically, please contact us at [friendsofaph@rogers.com](mailto:friendsofaph@rogers.com) or visit our website at [www.friendsofaph.ca](http://www.friendsofaph.ca).