

Debt load

SHORT EDITORIAL

Thanks to an independent inquiry launched by newly-elected Premier Doug Ford, we now know that Ontario Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk wasn't pulling our chain when she told us the Wynne Liberals were dishonest bookkeepers. The truth landed like a thud last week with the fact that the Liberals left us following their humiliating defeat with a \$15-billion deficit rather than a surplus and a comparatively modest deficit of \$6.7 billion by the end of this fiscal year. No one should be surprised. As new Finance Minister Vic Fedeli put it, the Liberals used ?accounting tricks and straight-out lied to us.? That should have been a given. The number of ?billion-dollar boondoggles? under the previous Liberal government was a staggering abuse of taxpayers' money, as was their addition of layer-upon-layer of belly fat to the civil-service bureaucracy. The worry now among progressives, of course, is that Premier Ford will make former Tory Premier Mike Harris and his Common Sense Revolution of the mid-1990s look like he was being gentle in responding to the fiscal crisis left behind when NDP Premier Bob Rae was tapped out of office. Ford has promised no job cuts on the front lines of the civil service, but he should not ignore the bureaucratic bloat identified by Warren (Smokey) Thomas, president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union. Smith has 155,000 provincial public servants in his union but, according to his research, every five of his employees is hooked up to a manager. That adds up to 31,000 managers. It's a damning number and an unaffordable ratio. If there is belly fat to be cut, there it is. Where else but in a Liberal government would you find a mid-level manager for every five employees on the pay roll? It's a wanton abuse of taxpayers' money. Ford has promised to take it slow, but when the deficit is costing Ontarians billions a year just to pay the minimum on the credit-card statement, the knife must come out. We knew this would be the case, but Ontarians can only blame themselves for giving the Wynne Liberals four more years in 2015 when it was obvious then that red ink was being spilled everywhere. No pain, no gain. That's where we are today.