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Lack of respect for taxpayers money

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It was a simple yet sturdy staircase leading down a small hill to a community garden.

Built by a retiree with some time on his hands and a bit of woodworking skills, the gentleman set out to prove a point ? and he did.

The city of Toronto was going to build a staircase there with an estimated cost of between $65,000 and $150,000.

When it finally hit the news that the staircase built by this citizen was completed for $550, there was a lot of controversy ? notably how did the city's estimate of construction of a simple staircase have a range of $85,000 from low to high estimate and why would it cost so much in the first place?

The city had to backtrack and re-evaluate the estimate and suddenly that same staircase was $10,000 ? coming in at $55,000 lower that the original lowest estimate.

The Mayor of Toronto weighed in calling the estimate ?out of whack with reality.?

Well, no kidding. But it was only ?out of whack' AFTER the city had been called on it. Otherwise you can bet some contractor would have pocketed a lot of taxpayers cash and ran laughing all the way to the bank.

To be fair, the home built wooden staircase was sturdy and would probably would work fine on private property, but to pass public inspection it lacked a few details, so yes, in the matter of public safety it had to come down.

However, lets put this into perspective.

You decide it's time to build a garage at the side of your house after spending years scraping the ice off your car windshield.

Before looking for a contractor, you decide on the basic size and shape of the structure. Then using some basic math skills and a trip to the local home building centre you price out the rough cost of materials for original construction. Add in the cost of framing the roof, laying a cement floor, shingles, a side door, and of course the main garage door.

You then figure out the cost of labour at the going rate, and then probably toss in an extra 10 per cent contingency cost.

When you put this all together you figure the entire garage should cost somewhere between $20,000 and $30,000 give or take a couple of thousand and is well within your allotted budget.

You call a local contractor who prices out an estimate based on what you have told him you want, and he hands you a piece of paper telling you it will cost you $125,000 to build your new garage.

Do you give him the go-ahead? Of course not.

Governments do this all the time and that's why there is so much frustration from taxpayers when they see their dollars tossed around in bundles like it's Monopoly money.

In the aftermath of the recent tragedy in Humboldt, Saskatchwan, there have been calls to make that intersection safer.

In true government fashion they have announced they are bringing in consultants to assess the intersection and suggest changes. At the end of this, the only thing that will happen is the taxpayers will again shell out huge dollars for some kind of recommendation

that will most likely take years to implement anyway.

This is not a complicated intersection. It's a north / south highway meeting an east / west highway.

Why do they need to bring in outside consultants and waste taxpayers money?

Does the province not already have an engineering department with civil engineers with a specialization in transportation on the payroll?

If you brought in a group of farmers who live within a ten mile radius of this intersection, I bet would they would come up with a solution within a couple of hours.

Tragedy aside, the point is government waste is just all to common but we, the taxpayers, never seem to be able to put a stop to it.

These examples come from one city government and one of the smaller provincial governments, but when you take a look at the federal level it's a whole different ball game.

Maybe more of us should start building staircases to make examples of government waste of our taxpayer dollars.