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FP COMMENT

Ontario's Power Trip: The backroom funding of the McGuinty Liberals

Parker Gallant Sep 23, 2011 – 3:12 PM ET

How union, corporate and government money – through Trillium Foundation – used to support Liberal policy in election campaign

The Environmental NGO and union push to get the Liberals re-elected in Ontario is picking up momentum as the Oct. 6 provincial election approaches. It's a campaign financed by tax deductible union dues and by organizations that receive much of their funding from government. And there's some special-interest corporate money as well..

The ENGOS have been joined by Samsung, the Korean energy giant that has an exclusive green energy contract with the McGuinty government. Samsung created and launched their "clean jobs today" [site](#) on July 31, 2011, and a [press release](#) August 30, 2011, extolling the virtues of their contract with the Ontario Power Authority. Samsung says in a disclaimer that "The company remains committed to fulfilling the terms of its Agreement and as a global, neutral company, has no interest in entering into a political debate. However, Samsung feels compelled to respond to the above release as it crosses the line from constructive dialogue into idle, unsubstantiated speculation." The "above release" referred to was the PC parties pronouncement; "Samsung Deal to Boost Costs of Energy Exports by up to \$786 Million Annually."

Last week I wrote about Environmental Defence's Penelope, and other organizations that are actively promoting Liberal policies.

Apparently there was more on the drawing boards, including yet another Environmental Defence [entity](#) called Green Prosperity. Green Prosperity appears to have been registered by Rick Smith, head of Environmental Defence. Promotional material describes Green Prosperity: "Twenty-one of Ontario's leading environmental organizations have endorsed an action agenda for the province that we believe can help it to usher in an era of green prosperity. The groups are working together in an unprecedented way to outline how Ontario can protect the environment and develop more sustainable practices and policies."

Needless to say the composition of the group includes the usual suspects: Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, the David Suzuki Foundation, Environmental Defence, Ontario Sustainable Energy Association, Pembina Institute and many others. The site posts the energy positions of three of the four parties vying for Ontario voters attention. There's a [video](#) of the Liberal Environment Minister, John Wilkinson, talking about implementing a "cap and trade" market under the Western Climate Initiative. The site also states; "This project is funded by the [Ontario Trillium Foundation \(OTF\)](#), an agency of the Government of Ontario." The position of the Ontario Progressive Conservatives is not mentioned or covered perhaps because they will kill Ontario's FIT and MicroFIT programs and cancel the Samsung deal.

Then another entity sprang up called the [Ontario Citizens' Coalition for Clean Affordable Energy](#) . It was also recently created (July 29, 2011), although it discloses nothing about it's members, founders or sponsors. Some digging, however, and one discovers that the prime force behind the new group is Deborah Doncaster of the [Community Power Fund](#) . The Community Power Fund was chosen by the McGuinty Liberals to disperse \$10 million of ratepayers funds to a variety of parties that recently included the Ontario Sustainable Energy Association (OSEA), an industry-community power activist group that was instrumental in getting the Green Energy Act passed.

Researching this further, I discovered that the [Legislative Standing Committee](#) reviewing the Green Energy Act prior to its passing received a presentation on April 8, 2009, from a Carol Chudy, co-chair of the Clean Affordable Energy Alliance, and on the same day received a presentation from Deborah Doncaster , who at that time was the Chair of the Green Energy Act Alliance. Ms. Chudy stood against the Act and Ms. Doncaster in favour, citing the German experience with renewable energy. It seems somewhat ironic that Ms. Doncaster has now chosen the key words from Ms. Chudy's group as the name for her new entity, the Clean Affordable Energy "Coalition" as opposed to "Alliance." Their mission statement is; "To sustain Ontario as a global leader in clean renewable energy production, investment and jobs. The CAE supports initiatives like the Green Energy Act and Feed-in-Tariff Program that are responsible for creating thousands of jobs, generating economic prosperity, ensuring energy security and controlling climate change."

That the unions are also involved in trying to maintain the status quo goes without saying since most of them have benefited considerably under the McGuinty regime. The unions via the misnomer; "[Working Families](#)" have chimed in with an anti-Hudak rant and offer this; "Our job in this election is to remind voters what's at stake for working families.." They go on to say this about the Harris/Eves government; "Excessive tax cuts led to a crisis in education. Strikes were keeping our kids out of school. Sick patients were left waiting endlessly for desperately medical treatment. Health and safety protection was eliminated. Infrastructure went ignored and left to crumble." "We saw diminished protection for workers, demoralizing cuts to social services and fewer teachers, nurses and doctors to deliver high-quality public services."

Using government grants from the Trillium Foundation and tax deductible union dues to influence the voting public during an election campaign brings new meaning to the Liberal slogan, "Forward Together"! Union members have no say over union spending of their dues. Taxpayers have no say over how the Trillium Foundation and other government agencies fund operations that are essentially lobby groups.

If the Hudak Conservatives win this election, they should take up the idea of [opening up union finances to public scrutiny](#) – and take a good look at how Trillium Foundation cash is distributed.

Parker Gallant is a former banker who looked at his Ontario electricity bills and didn't like what he saw.

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