

August 13, 2015

Kathleen Wynne, raider of piggy banks

By Matt Gurney

Every dollar I lose to the ORPP is a dollar I would have used to pay off my house or build my savings ... with no guarantee my children will ever see...

Years ago, not long after the wife and I got hitched, we were chatting with a financial advisor, setting a plan for the future. The missus is a teacher in Ontario, so that's a useful pension to have in your pocket. The advisor asked me, for planning purposes, what I expected to receive in pension. "Zero," I said.

He chuckled and began explaining the CPP to me, and interrupted. "I know about the CPP," I told him. "For my planning purposes, assume it doesn't exist by the time I'm retired. I want anything I get from it to be a bonus."

The CPP will probably still be around when I retire in 30-40 years (God willing). I don't expect it or the country to spontaneously combust, and I think any Canadian government would go to the wall to keep it alive if it was ever teetering in some way. Still, as far as I'm concerned, to the greatest extent possible, I have to look out for my own future, and my kids'. A solvent, generous federal pension plan will be a lovely little boost to what I'm working hard to build for myself and them.

That hard work, obviously, involves the usual steps. Staying employed, hopefully thriving. It also means aggressively paying down what we owe on our house in Toronto. The hard work also involves planning for worst-case scenarios. Life insurance, lots of it, for us both, in case something terrible should happen. Making sure the kids are looked after is the number one priority.

Still, I'm skeptical about the proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. The ORPP, which will likely kick in for me in 2017, is Ontario's answer to a retirement savings crisis that there's little evidence exists for most of the population. It's bad enough that the Ontario Liberals, of all people, think they have any business telling anyone else how to reasonably manage their finances. (The fact that Premier Kathleen Wynne admitted at a press conference she doesn't know how much this plan of hers will cost to administer speaks to this point.) If you'll permit me a scriptural reference, I'd prefer it if they concerned themselves with the beams in their eyes before they fret too much about the motes in ours.

But the main concern is simply that the ORPP will be, for me and millions of

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That was quite a revealing moment, at the end of Stephen Harper's campaign stop in Markham, Ont., Tuesday. The questions from reporters had finished, but - uncharacteristically - Harper was still ready to answer them.

Not having been asked about the proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP), the subject of much back and forth between the federal Conservative leader and the province's Liberal premier, Harper returned to the microphone to attack it unprompted. It was, he said, a "payroll tax hike," an

others, effectively a tax. Assuming I am making the same amount of money that I am now in 2017, I will be bringing home less of it. Just because it's being put toward my future good doesn't change the reality here - virtually all taxes are being put toward the public's future (and present) good. The state docking my income to fund something on my behalf is a tax, even if it goes by another name.

I'll get dinged for the maximum - or near to it. Maybe \$1,500 a year or so off my take-home pay. This sucks, but I can afford it. Most of my friends can, too. But there are a lot of people out there who will feel the pinch a lot more acutely than me and mine. And even my privileged case, I'll still need to make the shortfall up somewhere. The only real place in the family budget that it can come out of is repaying our debt and accumulating savings. Most other costs are fixed.

So that's super. Ontario is so worried about my future that they're slowing down my ability to fully own my home and to accumulate a comfortable rainy day reserve of cash. Because, you know, prudence and stuff.

And there is insult to add to that injury. Every dollar I put against our debt, or into our savings, was a dollar that was there for my wife and kids should the worst happen. Every dollar I lose to the ORPP, should I fall down a flight of stairs or block a bus, is a dollar lost to them. It simply goes to the broader Ontario collective good.

I believe in the collective good. The collective good is important. But I'm already paying a lot of money to sustain the collective good. If you want to take more of my money away from me, and tell me that it's for my own future use, you need to build a system where, if I die before I can make use of it, my wife and kids don't end up out of pocket.

Such systems exist. In Australia, citizens pay their pension contributions directly into personal savings accounts, which are directly transferable, tax-free, to a dependent should they pass away before drawing the account down. If that was the system Ontario was pursuing, I could live with it (no pun intended). I'd grumble about it, and think it was unnecessary - but it wouldn't feel quite so much like Kathleen Wynne busting open my daughter's piggy bank.

But that's not the system Ontario is getting. Instead, millions of people will lose some of their paycheques so that a government that has become notorious for its inability to effectively manage money can (potentially) see to our future financial needs. It's no wonder Prime Minister Stephen Harper is campaigning hard against the ORPP. He thinks it will prove a winning issue for him. I think he's right.

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"enormous tax increase" on the province's workers. Did he have any qualms about his government's refusal to provide the province with any logistical assistance, let alone agree to a similar reform of the Canada Pension Plan, as his Liberal counterpart, Justin Trudeau, has done? No, he was "delighted."

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