

A Taxing Story

City for All Women Initiative (revised June 10, 2008)

Cast:

Narrator –

Municipal Government -

Provincial Government –

Federal Government –

Woman taxpayer -

Narrator and 3 levels of government will sit at table where deputations are presented; taxpayer walks around the room sweeping.

Props:

- Skit text and list of responsibilities (see end of skit text)
- Municipal, Provincial and Federal government wear a sign.
- Sign: CHST
- Three boxes that fit one inside the other. Largest box is gold, medium box is silver with CHST written on it, smallest box is brown.
- A second, medium size silver box with CAP written on it.
- Play money.
- Signs of services placed inside the smallest, municipal box (index cards): employment and training, Ontario Works, child care, public health, housing
- Signs: 50 cents, 42 cents, 8 cents (index cards)
- Baby doll, broom, apron, shoulder purse.
- Federal government dresses very rich and provincial government rich.
- 2 Peach Scarves (CAWI symbol)
- Upload Public Health Post Card (may substitute other action materials)

Narrator carries in one scarf, CHST sign and CAP box. Federal government carries in large gold box with other boxes inside it, inside the municipal box are index cards with services, money scattered in the big box. Taxpayer carries baby, broom and shoulder purse which contains money signs, play money, peach scarf and public health post card.

Play Opens: CAWI is called to present skit.

Levels of government are outside the room, out of site

Woman taxpayer comes walking in with her baby and broom in hand sweeping her way into the centre of the room. She continues to move around the room sweeping throughout the skit.

***Narrator** enters right behind her carrying props (peach scarf, sign CHST, CAP box) and takes a seat at the table.*

Narrator: We invite you to hear this story about Mona, (*pointing to woman sweeping*) and how the way our taxes are collected and distributed are affecting her life.

Narrator: To help tell the story, here come the three levels of government now.

Federal, then provincial, then municipal enter the room. Federal government carries a large gold box bursting with money; all levels of government carry their skit text and list of responsibilities. They take their seats at the table next to the narrator.

...Federal reads list of responsibilities.

...Province reads list of responsibilities.

...Municipal reads list of responsibilities, exhausted as she reads the long list and then collapses in her chair in exhaustion.

Narrator: There was a time not so long ago when the Federal government took a more active role in the day-to-day lives of Canadians through programs like the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) or RAPC in French *(The narrator passes the CAP box to federal government who holds it up for all to see. The federal government then passes the box to the provincial government, takes money from her gold box and places it into the CAP box, while shaking her finger, scolding the provincial government.)*

The federal government put conditions on how the provinces spent federal dollars for social programs like public health, child care, housing, and education, so it was fair for people wherever they lived in Canada.

(Federal government points to a paper, requiring the Provincial government to sign. The Provincial government pretends to be signing with reluctance.)

But in 1993, the federal government replaced CAP with the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST), or in French -TCSPS. *(federal government takes back the CAP box and puts it out of site. The narrator passes the federal government the CHST sign which the federal government holds up for all to see).* This meant the federal government would give the provinces less money with fewer conditions on how they could spend it. It was a smaller cheque, but now it was blank!

Federal Government: *(says to Provincial government)* I've got an idea! You get less money but you get to do with it what you want!
(Federal government pulls out the medium silver box with CHST written on it and passes it to province, placing money inside. The province accepts it gleefully)

Provincial Government: Yes! Yes! We are now the masters of our own destiny. Finally we have the powers we need! No more you telling us "You must do this, or do that!" *(Federal and provincial governments embrace)*

Federal government: (*says to audience putting her hand up to not let the province hear her secret, while province looks gleefully at her box*) That means we, the federal government, get to keep more! We can even give the people a few tax breaks to distract them. They'll be so happy to have more money in their pockets; they won't notice they'll have to pay for things that used to be free!

Narrator: This was the first "download" – less federal money but greater powers for the province to decide how to spend the money. But it was not too long before the honeymoon was over.
(*Federal and provincial governments turn away from each other abruptly with arms folded in a huff.*)

Provincial Government: At last we have the powers we richly deserve, but we have less money from the federal government to spend! There must be a way out of this! What could we possibly do? (*Ponders in deep thought*)

Aha! I have an idea! What if we were to download some of our responsibilities for health and social services onto our municipalities???
(*Chuckles*) – Hello tax lovers, this is how we will make this work!

Province pulls out of its box the small municipal box which have cards inside of services to be downloaded. She takes the cards out, reads the cards off one by one placing them into the box. (employment and training, Ontario Works, child care, community/public health, housing), then passes the box to the reluctant municipal government, placing a few dollars into the small box..

Municipal Government: *Takes the box saying* But, but....

Narrator: This was the second download. The municipalities had more responsibilities, but they did not have as many ways to raise money as the federal and provincial government.

The federal and provincial government have income taxes and sales taxes, while the municipality only has property taxes and user fees to raise money. Of every dollar that you pay in taxes, here is how it is distributed.

(Woman tax payer walks over to the governments, reaches in her purse to pay her taxes)

Federal government: *(Women pulls out 50 cent sign, and gives it to federal government, federal government holds it up for all to see, kisses it and sits back satisfied)* Ah, another budget surplus! We are so thrifty! We can give tax cuts and tax breaks to buy our way to the next election victory!

Provincial Government: *(Woman taxpayer pulls a 42 cent sign out of her purse and passes it to the province, who holds it up for all to see. Then turns to the municipality patting her on the head)* If we balance our budget and run a surplus, so can you! In fact, we will make it law that you cannot run a deficit.

Municipal Government: *(Woman reaches in her purse and hands the municipality the 8 cent sign, the municipality holds it up for all to see)*

Oh my, how are we going to make this work! How are we going to balance our budget, let alone create surpluses!! We have no choice!

We must increase

property taxes *(Put hand out)*...recreation fees *(put hand out)*...

water and sewage *(Put hand out)*...garbage *(Put hand out)*...

bus fares*((Put hand out)*...parking *(Put hand out)*...

licences and permits (*Put hand out*)...

(After naming each increase, the municipality pauses to put out her hand causing the woman to reluctantly dig in her purse to pull out another bill and hand it to the municipality who puts it in her box, then extends her hand for the next payment)

Municipal Government: (*looks in box, worried*) We still don't have enough money. I know we will just have to reduce services and the number of city staff, too. We must balance our budget!

Narrator: This is the third and final download from government onto individual taxpayers.

Taxpayer: But, you can't cut those services. I need those services, my community, my children, my parents need these services! If the city cuts back the services, how am I going to meet the needs of my family?

I realize it is important to pay taxes. In that way we all contribute to a healthy community. But there must be a more fair way to do it!
(She stoops low with the weight of the world).

Narrator: Wow, what a taxing story! Mona, I have had enough of this. We can't go on like this. We need to get together. There must be something we can do!

(Narrator speaks to the woman taxpayer for the first time, woman passes her baby to one Councillor and broom to another Councillor and walks toward Narrator)

Taxpayer: I have been thinking the same thing. Did you know that Ontario is the only province where municipal property taxes pay for social services?

Narrator: What's wrong with that?

Taxpayer: Well, property taxes and user fees are regressive, that means the amount we pay is not according to how much we earn.

Narrator: Yes and did you know, that even if you rent an apartment, your landlord charges you property taxes through your rent.

Taxpayer: I know; I pay the rent. But income tax is a progressive tax, the amount you pay is based on how much you earn. So as long as only the federal and provincial government can collect income taxes, it would be better that they pass on enough money to cities to pay for the full cost of social services that cities deliver.

Narrator: Cities aren't what they used to be. They now play an important role in the health and well-being of our communities. Our city can do a great job of delivering social services like public health, social housing, long term care and child care. As the government closest to the people, city governments are in an important place to hear our concern. But cities need enough funds to do it right.

Taxpayer: It's time we take action (*taxpayer looks at narrator and they both put on their peach scarves; taxpayer holds up public health upload postcard*). Let's start by joining with City Council, CAWI, People for a Better Ottawa and other community groups to deliver postcards to Premier McGuinty to tell him we want the province to take back the full cost of public health now!

Narrator: Great idea! Then when the federal election is called, we will let the candidates know we need more federal funds for our cities.

Who else here will join us? (*Narrator and woman look back at audience*)

Audience: (*Women in audience wearing peach scarves clap*).

**As the Federal Government
We fund and deliver services like:**

- Old Age Security
- Employment Insurance,
- National Defense
- Canada Revenue

**We MAKE THE RULES, cover
SOME costs and require the
PROVINCE to ADMINISTER:**

- Social Assistance
- Post-secondary Education
- Health Care
- Housing
- Child care

As the Provincial Government

We MAKE THE RULES, cover SOME costs, require CITIES to SHARE the costs and DELIVER services like:

- Child care
- Public Health
- Long term care
- Social Assistance
- Housing

As the Municipal Government

We SHARE THE COSTS and DELIVER THE SERVICES the Federal and Provincial governments tell us to, including:

- Child care
- Public Health
- Long term care

- Social Assistance
- Housing
- Roads

- Libraries
- Recreation
- Drinking Water

- Sewage
- Public Transit
- Emergency Preparedness

- Recycling
- Parks
- Garbage Pick Up