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An inquiry is needed to clear the air

Government is like a referee.

When a referee is doing the job nobody notices, players move up and down the ice, calls are made, penalties are assessed and the game continues. Likewise in government: public administration is handled, and citizens get on with their lives. Only when a referee misses an important call, or governments bungle the public's business, does anyone notice.

Right now, everyone is noticing the McGuinty government here in Ontario.

They have bungled their responsibilities so thoroughly that the rules of the game are being ignored with impunity. At eHealth Ontario alone, there have been too many consultants in the game, but the Ontario Liberals said, 'play on'. Senior staff was offside with their expense claims, but nobody blew the whistle, so play continued.

Instead of insisting upon the best deal through a contract tender process, the Ontario government waived the rules and handed out contracts to firms with Liberal connections. Sometimes these connections were very cozy indeed.

Why does a government spend more than \$1 billion to develop its own computer system for health records independent of any other jurisdiction? We could have spent this money on our much needed Oakville Hospital. Yet \$1 billion later, and we have nothing, except longer lines for health care and a bunch of overstuffed consultants and senior bureaucrats living on easy street.

So the Ontario government is caught in the glare. Everybody is watching. It's as if the referees were caught speaking to gamblers in the stands, while accepting liquor and fancy holidays

while setting up their friends to ref other games.

If you think that's a stretch, there's more.

While all this was going on, the referee-in-chiefs at Management Board of Cabinet were waiving all the rules that might have prevented the abuses. And once the refs saw that the abuses were going public they denied it and obstructed investigations into the issue.

Certainly if these types of actions occurred in sport, it would be no surprise to anyone that the leagues involved would lose their credibility and fans would cease to be interested.

Now perhaps we can understand why people no longer vote.

The Ontario PC's have called for a public inquiry into the mess at eHealth. It is necessary to get to the bottom of the rot, find out who is responsible, and regain the public's trust.

Frankly I am shaken by the apparent size and depth of this scandal. Compare eHealth's \$1 billion price tag, or about \$80 per Ontarian, to the several hundred million dollars involved in the Federal Sponsorship Scandal, where Liberal friendly ad agencies were given taxpayers money ostensibly to promote federal government events in Quebec, but funnelled the money back to Liberal Party coffers.

The Gomery Inquiry exposed some nasty business in that scandal. It also found that not every Liberal, nor every government employee was involved. Similarly, an inquiry into eHealth would help clear the air and allow the Ontario government to move on and serve the public without the pall of scandal hanging over them.

We in opposition exposed this scandalous behaviour by scouring spending records. However, it is the public that must be the ultimate watchdogs. The public will cast its judgement along with its ballot.