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Oakville Beaver editorial | Nov 03, 2010 - 12:19 PM | 1

### Answers wanted

The revelation that Oakville Hydro made campaign contributions of \$15,500 to the Ontario Liberal Party in 2008-09 raises a lot of questions.

Unfortunately, not all of them were answered by Oakville Hydro CEO and president Rob Lister in our story in today's newspaper.

According to Lister, Oakville Hydro did not make a direct donation to the Ontario Liberal Party, but on two occasions, it purchased a table at a heritage fundraiser in Toronto, but is unaware what the organizers of the dinner did with the funds.

Apparently, unknown to Oakville Hydro, \$7,000 wound up as a campaign contribution to the Ontario Liberal Central Party fund in 2008 and \$8,500 went to the Ontario Liberals for the Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock by-election in 2009.

Six other public utilities also made similar donations and all explained the money went to fundraising dinners.

To be fair to Lister, we can understand the vagueness in his answers to our questions about the donations. After all, Lister didn't join Oakville Hydro until April 19 of this year. He didn't attend the dinners and was not privy to the meetings where the funds were approved.

When we first learned of the questions raised by the NDP at Queen's Park about the Liberal Party donations from public utilities, we sent an e-mail to Oakville Hydro and copied it to Oakville Mayor Rob Burton requesting that Lister, Gary Burkett, chair of the Oakville Hydro board of directors, or Burton respond with an explanation. We heard back from Lister.

However, we would still like to know who exactly authorized buying a table at the fundraiser and when it was approved. We would also like to know when the two dinners were held, where they were held and what they were called. Also, who attended and were all the chairs at the Oakville Hydro table filled.

Since Oakville Hydro is a public utility owned by the taxpayers of Oakville, we don't think these are unreasonable questions which should go unanswered.

And while we are at it, we can't help wonder how Oakville Hydro apparently unwittingly made a campaign contribution twice. That's right — twice.

Maybe a mistake is excusable once, but didn't alarm bells ring in someone's head at Oakville Hydro when they received a receipt for income tax purposes from the Ontario Liberals for the 2008 campaign contribution.

These campaign donations are just plain wrong and Oakville residents deserve a better explanation than what we have received to date.

Surely to goodness the Oakville Hydro board of directors is keeping better track of the millions of dollars under their direction than they apparently did with the \$15,500 gift they gave to the Ontario Liberal Party.

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#### Implausible

It is hard to believe that Mayor Burton thinks that not knowing where the money was going is a satisfactory response. With all of his political experience I find it difficult to believe that he didn't know. If he didn't know, than he should have. Furthermore, it seems inappropriate to me for Members of the Hydro Board to be directing Hydro staff at that micromanagement level.

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