

Evening Media Scan: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan - April 23, 2017

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Sunday (Evening) Media Scan: April 23, 2017

MEDIA SCAN: HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

April 23, 2017

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Online Coverage

Toronto Star: foolish to count Kathleen Wynne out: Watt

The embattled Ontario premier believes she is doing the best for the people of the province and so does her team. They think they can win and she isn't going away, regardless of poor poll results.

By: Jamie Watt
Sun., April 23, 2017

<https://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2017/04/23/its-foolish-to-count-kathleen-wynne-out-watt.html>

Kathleen Wynne is not going anywhere.

And that's for one very good reason — the premier truly believes she has a shot at victory.

In recent months, speculation about her possible departure as Ontario premier has increased. Yet, as the provincial election looms next year, Wynne has repeatedly insisted she is here to stay.

This insistence comes in spite of increasing concern among Liberals that her unpopularity is hurting the party. That anxiety is not entirely misplaced.

A recent Forum Research poll had the Ontario Liberals in third place, expected to receive about 19 per cent of the provincial vote. This was nearly 24 points behind the Progressive Conservatives and 10 points behind the NDP.

With numbers like this, a Liberal victory looks far out of reach.

However, no one should count Wynne out. She is a strong campaigner and an effective communicator. She is capable and incredibly hard-working. The biggest mistake the Progressive Conservatives can make is to forget about Wynne's potential as a candidate.

The Premier has begun to lay out her game plan for victory. She will pursue an aggressive and progressive policy agenda in a bid to capture enough progressive centrist and left-leaning votes to defeat both the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP. Her initiatives will move government to the left — far left.

So what is her path to victory?

First, the premier has announced measures to try to temper skyrocketing home prices, a move that will resonate with many voters and help secure support on the left.

Second, expect the premier to announce that the minimum wage will increase to \$15 an hour by 2018.

Third, she will announce a guaranteed annual income program for low-wage workers and welfare recipients. This will win her back some support among middle-class workers who feel this government has largely ignored their concerns about jobs and the economy.

And fourth, next winter, Wynne is banking on Ontarians being happy to see that their hydro bills have decreased by 25 per cent from the previous winter.

The Premier has a few other things going for her.

Wynne has Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in her corner, and he has proven to be an effective resource for

Liberals in provincial elections across the country. The Liberal brand remains very strong in Ontario.

With that said, do I think Wynne can win? Only a fool could be goaded into answering that question.

But do I think she believes she can win? Do I think her team believes they can win with her? One-hundred per cent.

There is a comparable example in recent Canadian political history — none other than Wynne's nemesis, former prime minister Stephen Harper.

Both defied the odds to win majority governments (Harper in 2011 and Wynne in 2012), and both, despite daunting polls, decided they were the best people to lead their parties one last time.

The premier and her supporters staunchly believe that the work her party is doing is for the good of the province and the people of Ontario. Harper's supporters also had faith that the work he was doing was critical for the nation. Among supporters, Wynne has thus far been given as wide a berth as Harper had in the run-up to his failed re-election.

But what about those terrible polls?

Wynne will almost certainly have a better 2017-2018 than 2016-2017, but the hurdle she needs to overcome may be insurmountable.

One thing, though: political polls have lately not been especially accurate indicators of election outcomes, as we saw south of the border in November.

Perhaps Wynne believes Ontario voters simply have a case of "Liberal fatigue"— the party has been the government in Ontario since 2003 — that they will get over at election time.

What's more, while Ontarians may not like the current direction of the province, the other parties haven't offered anything else yet.

Hers is not an easy road to victory, and Wynne, experienced political leader that she is, undoubtedly knows this.

But, as long as she continues to believe she is doing the right thing for Ontario, and as long as she is doing it from behind the premier's desk, it is not surprising that she has not stepped aside. No one should count on her doing so.

Jaime Watt is the executive chairman of Navigator Ltd. and a Conservative strategist.

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Bayshore Broadcasting Not Happy With Cut in Hydro Rates

By: Fadi Didi
Sunday, April 23, 2017

http://www.bayshorebroadcasting.ca/news_item.php?NewsID=92670

39% of respondents say they will barely notice the cut because their bills are too high already.

Premier Kathleen Wynne has promised to reduce hydro rates by as much as 25 per cent in 2017.

According to Bayshore Broadcasting's latest online poll, that will not mean much to a lot of people.

We asked how you felt about the cut in hydro rates, and 39 per cent of respondents say they will barely notice the cut because their bills are too high already.

One voter called the reduction "a joke."

Another feels the move is a chance for the governing Liberals to "suck up to the voters" ahead of next year's provincial election.

Meantime, 35 per cent of voters feel the cut in rates is a positive step forward, with many pointing to failed green energy policies from the Liberals as the reason for high costs.

26 per cent of respondents say the move is good, but will do little to help, citing high delivery charges for rural residents compared to urban counterparts.

The same voters also point to the high praise paid in recent years, which cannot be recouped.

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CBC News Ontario NDP promises pharmacare plan if elected in 2

Leader Andrea Horwath didn't divulge details, but the party says plan would cost \$475M

By: Allison Jones, The Canadian Press
Last Updated: Apr 23, 2017 9:09 AM ET

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ont-ndp-1.4081827>

Ontario's NDP is pledging to create a provincial pharmacare plan, appealing to the grassroots about a year out from the start of next year's election campaign.

Leader Andrea Horwath announced the policy Saturday in a speech to about 1,000 delegates at the party's convention.

"Seeing a doctor just doesn't mean much if you need a prescription, but you can't afford to fill it," said Horwath, who received the support of 89 per cent of the delegates in a leadership vote.

"Just like Tommy Douglas started in one province and built Medicare step-by-step, we're going to start building universal pharmacare right here in Ontario," Horwath said, prompting a standing ovation.

Horwath refused to divulge any details, saying she would announce those on Monday, but a party official later said the cost of the plan is pegged at about \$475 million.

The Liberal government is set to deliver its first balanced budget since the recession next week, and Horwath suggested she was open to plunging the province back into the red to pay for her plan.

"When necessary a deficit, but not necessarily a deficit," she said after her speech.

The next provincial election isn't until June 7, 2018, but Horwath said to be honest, the campaign is already underway.

"I believe leadership is about telling people what your vision is and what it is you plan on doing," Horwath said later in a not-so-veiled shot at Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown.

Brown has come under fire for backing away from an earlier pledge to release his plan on hydro "soon," and has been hesitant to make many grand policy pronouncements before his party's convention this fall.

NDP would buy back Hydro One shares

Horwath largely took aim at the Liberal government, saying Premier Kathleen Wynne denied there was a hydro crisis until it became a political crisis for her party.

Her speech was heavy on other NDP staples: public assets, a \$15 minimum wage, worker protections, child care and transit funding.

An NDP government would work with First Nations to improve education and ensure clean drinking water, proper health care and safe housing -- and would then send the bill to the federal government, Horwath said.

The NDP has also proposed to buy back shares of Hydro One — the government has sold 30 per cent and intends to sell up to 60 per cent.

The party said it would buy back shares back at a cost of between \$3.3 billion and \$4.1 billion, financed

through the province's share of its profit from Hydro One within eight years — assuming 70 per cent of the approximately \$700 million in revenue it has previously generated for the province.

The Liberals have said returning Hydro One to full public ownership wouldn't take a penny off people's bills.

The New Democrat hydro plan also proposes to end mandatory time-of-use pricing, reduce the delivery charge for rural customers and renegotiate power contracts.

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e Ontario Now Andrea Horwath Promises Free Pharmacare If Elected

By: Beth Owens
April 23, 2017

<https://www.eontarionow.com/ontario/andrea-horwath-promises-free-pharmacare-elected-2018/1449>

On Saturday, the leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP) in Ontario pledged hundreds of activists at a convention in Toronto to create drug insurance in Ontario if the NDP wins the next election.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath delivered a speech on Saturday at noon where she announced her plan for provincial and universal drug coverage in Ontario.

She did not reveal the details, however, but should do so Monday at Queen's Park, reports the National Post. She only assured that her plan will bring down costs and improve the health of Ontarians.

Andrea Horwath also reiterated his promise to raise the minimum wage to \$ 15 / hour.

At one year of the provincial election, this congress is an opportunity for party members to discuss the direction the party wants to take.

Andrea Horwath's troops want to show that they represent a credible alternative to Kathleen Wynne's government as the Liberals' popularity continues to fall.

Criticism of other parties

In her speech the leader of the party criticized the Liberal government by saying that Kathleen Wynne denied that there was an electricity tariff crisis until it became a political problem for the Liberals.

It promised to halt the privatization of the Hydro One electricity distributor and restore full control of the company to Ontarians.

Andrea Horwath also said Ontario cannot afford to elect the Progressive Conservatives, which she said would make significant budget cuts and privatize more.

A total of 1,200 delegates attend the conference on Saturday and Sunday.

Several workshops are being offered to prepare for next year's election campaign, including the use of databases and the advantages of technology to convince voters.

On Saturday afternoon, 90% of the delegates also gave their support to Andrea Horwath in a vote of confidence.

TV Transcripts

None