

Late Afternoon Media Scan: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan - March 26, 2017

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Sunday (Late Afternoon) Media Scan: March 26, 2017

MEDIA SCAN: HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

March 26, 2017

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TV Transcripts (Saturday 6 PM)

CJOH Premier's Approval Rating Remain Low Despite New Hydro Plan

Source: CJOH

Mar 26, 2017 6:09 PM (9)

Anchor: Meanwhile, a 25 per cent cut in hydro rates has not helped Premier Kathleen Wynne's approval rating. An Angus Reid Institute survey finds only 12 per cent of respondents approve of the job Wynne is doing. The poll was conducted shortly after the Ontario government announced plans to cut hydro rates this year.

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GlobalFocus Ontario: New Liberal Hydro Ads Consist of False Advertising

Source: Global

Mar 26, 2017 8:00 AM (1)

Alan Carter, Host: The price tag is in for the taxpayer funded ad campaign the Ontario Liberal government launched to promote its plan to reduce hydro bills.

Glenn Thibeault, Ontario Minister of Energy [clip]: We've spent under \$1 million on both the radio ads and on the social media ads.

Alan: The opposition PCs asked the Speaker to rule the ads in contempt of the Legislature, calling this "a clear case of electioneering."

[Hydro Radio Ad]: Starting this summer, households in Ontario will receive an average of 25 per cent off their hydro.

Alan: That's enough. You get the idea. Global Television is a private broadcaster and we are in the habit of getting paid to run advertisements, thank you very much. How does the Minister of Energy defend the ad campaign?

Minister Thibeault [clip]: It is important for us to make sure that we let everyone know about the 25 per cent reduction that is coming.

Alan: Okay, let's hold it right there. We live in a time when marketing slogans matter more than facts. So when the Minister talks of a 25 per cent reduction that is coming he is not, in fact, being truthful. The Liberals introduced an eight per cent hydro rebate that took effect back on January 1. What is coming is a 17 per cent cut, on average. The exact cost of that is unknown, but will be north of \$2 billion a year. Listen. It's not a 25 per cent cut, ok? Now, here the Minister makes a good point.

Minister Thibeault [clip]: The programs that are coming with the Fair Hydro Plan, like the Affordability Fund that people need to know about.

Alan: What he was saying is, we peered into his ear there, is that there is part of the act that has something people should know about. The basic role of taxpayer funded government advertising should be exactly that – informing citizens of programs and services that are available, like the Affordability Fund for hydro. Just one wrinkle here: the ads don't mention the fund.

Minister Thibeault [clip]: But it is part of the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan, and the 25 per cent reduction is something that is important for everyone to know about.

Alan: Okay. We have been over this. It's not 25, it's 17. But as for that \$1 million spent on ads, that's it,

right? We're done?

Minister Thibeault [clip]: All forms of media. So, print, television, radio.

Unidentified: More to come?

Minister Thibeault [clip end]: More to come.

Alan: Minister Thibeault is expected to introduce legislation in the next few weeks that will reduce hydro bills by an average of 17 per cent. Those ads? Well, they're running even before that legislation hits the floor of the House. Now fast forward 24 hours and suddenly these pamphlets began popping up all over the province. On one side, it extols the virtue of the Liberal Hydro Rate Reduction Plan. On the other, the headline of the big Liberal promise of 25 per cent off hydro. I'm not going to get into the number right now. Now, you might be asking how much those pamphlets cost after the government spent close to \$1 million taxpayer dollars on radio ads.

[Hydro Radio Ad]: Starting this summer, households in Ontario will receive an average of 25 per cent of their hydro.

Alan: Hey, cut it out. I told you, this is a private broadcaster. No free advertising. Let's do this, every time you see a Liberal ad promising a 25 per cent, just shout out: "It's 17!" It'll frighten and amuse people around you. But, I digress. The fact is that there's a difference between that radio ad and these pamphlets.

Deb Matthews, Ontario Deputy Premier [clip]: This is political advertising. Other parties do this kind of event, letting people know what we're doing. This is not government advertising at all, this is Liberal Party advertising.

Alan: So, just 24 hours after the Energy Minister defended spending public money to tell people about hydro rate cuts, essentially identical advertising comes out, but this time paid for by the Liberal Party.

Patrick Brown, Ontario PC Leader [clip]: They are spending a few dollars of Liberal Party pamphlets and they're spending millions possibly when it comes to the government buy. So, yeah. They're ripping taxpayers off for their own partisan purposes.

Andrea Horwath, Ontario NDP Leader [clip]: The tactic that they took this morning is enough to have people nodding their heads in disgrace over the actions of this government.

Alan: All of this political elbowing led to an overheated moment on the floor of the Legislature. PC Energy Critic Todd Smith was ejected for some un-parliamentary language, but then as you can see here, that's him pointing his finger. He's still going. He's already been named and now he's still going. Finally, he is escorted out which led to this rebuke from the Speaker that every parent will recognize.

Dave Levac, Ontario Speaker of the House [clip]: That kind of action shall not be tolerated in this House. That goes for anybody. That is disrespectful and I will not tolerate it.

Alan: As Ontario residents struggle to pay hydro bills, these kinds of antics don't help any party's reputation. Hey, maybe we should just send them all to bed without supper.

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GlobalFocus Ontario: Panel On Political Future Of The PC Par

Source: Global

Mar 26, 2017 8:11 AM (6)

Alan Carter, Host: Recent polling puts the Progressive Conservatives well in front of Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals, but with more than a year until the next election it is wise to remember that Progressive Conservatives have a long history of tanking when the polls actually count. This week the party launched a series of new web ads designed to introduce leader Patrick Brown to Ontario.

[PC Party Web Ad]: It doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter where you're from, it doesn't matter who you love, it doesn't matter if you belong to a union, it doesn't matter how much you make, it doesn't matter –

Alan: All right, all right, enough. What did we say about free advertising on this show? To talk more about

this I'm joined by Rob Ferguson of the Toronto Star who wrote about the new ads and Chris Stockwell, former PC MPP and Speaker of the House. Gentlemen, thank you so much for being here. Rob, let's start with you. What are they hoping in the PC camp to achieve with this?

Rob Ferguson, Toronto Star: What they're hoping to do is turn the corner on some problems that they've had. When Patrick Brown ran for the leadership he courted the Social Conservatives, the anti-abortion, anti-gay marriage, the anti-sex-ed types, and now he's trying to pivot to be a more inclusive centrist party as you just heard in that ad – "It doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter who you love," – so now they've got these ads. The problem is they're trying to overcome a difficulty they had last August and September in the Scarborough-Rouge River by-election when he put out an ad to suggest that he doesn't actually support this new sex-ed curriculum that he did support. They were trying to make sure they won that riding but they really put their foot in it. So now he's got to do these ads. He's got to walk back the cat.

Alan: Chris, we were saying, this reminds me of 2011 in a lot of ways. Tim Hudak declared himself of the Premier in waiting or the government in waiting – he was way out in front and then when the electorate actually got introduced to him during the campaign they decided they didn't really like the guy.

Chris Stockwell, Former PC MPP: Well yeah I think that they probably – they did, but not so much that didn't like him, they didn't like what he said. Let's be clear. I think almost everyone will agree the 100,000 firings probably cost him that election. We go backwards again, probably the prisoners collecting garbage on the side of the road in the previous election, and then with John Tory full funding for all schools. We shot ourselves in the foot more than anything else, and I think what we have to be prepared for is to run a campaign, a solid, honest campaign, but put forward reasonable platforms and reasonable positions but just don't give the election to Liberals. I don't think they're that great at campaigning. They've just been so fortunate that we've been really, really bad.

Alan: Do you believe that? I don't know if I believe that, Rob. I think that they're exceptional campaigner in terms of the way they pivot –

Chris Stockwell: They pivoted on those issues.

Alan: Yes, those – I mean certainly those were all gifts in the last three elections.

Rob Ferguson: Well they were total gifts. When Tim Hudak announced that first Friday of the campaign that he was going to cut 100,000 public sector jobs, I was with the NDP campaign that weekend on the bus, all the reporters and political staff, all our jaws dropped. They didn't have to do that.

Alan: No, and I was with the Liberals and within an hour Kathleen Wynne had made an unscheduled stop to speak out against it. So they knew what they had. But let's move forward to Patrick Brown. How's he doing, Chris, in terms of introducing himself to the public?

Chris Stockwell: Well – good column. The column was good and it was written very well. It said what I thought it should say, which is opposition leaders who haven't been through a general election are virtually unknown and generally always unknown. Let's be clear, Alan. Right now we will bring out a platform for the 2018 election. We're not bringing it out right now. Right now it's entertainment time for Conservatives. We get to sit here and watch the Liberals implode. This like the Super Bowl, Kentucky Derby all wrapped up in one for Conservatives. They've got Sorbara fighting with Murphy, they've got terrible polling numbers, they're putting ads out that you know very well are obviously, blatantly partisan, and they're not even blinking. So I'm not sure why we'd want to go out and change the channel for them by bringing in a comprehensive policy package on all things Ontario.

Alan: Well Rob, the attack on PCs is no hydro plan. Everybody says, 'Well the NDP's got 30, the Libs got 25, the PCs got 'I'll see you later.'

Rob Ferguson: Yeah, that has been a problem for them. At this point I don't know why they would bring out a hydro platform – they've been outflanked. Why change the channel for the Liberals? They are waiting for their policy convention in November to wrap it up, and they've said that they wanted to wait to do it to make sure that it was full and complete and well thought out. So if all of a sudden they bring one out, then they look like they rushed it.

Chris Stockwell: Furthermore, look at the Liberals. They've got a new plan every two months. They're sobbing one moment, they're resetting the next, they're changing the plan, the HST is going down, oh now it's 25 per cent – well Liberals, stop worrying about us. You've got enough to worry about with yourselves when every time you change the plan, which we can't keep track of.

Alan: Let's get back – back to the central issue is it doesn't matter sometimes how badly they stumble prior to the election, it's the stumbling of the Progressive Conservatives in the moments that count. And have we seen the kind of leadership from the office and the kind of discipline from the Progressive Conservative office that says they can run a good campaign?

Rob Ferguson: I don't think we've seen that yet. They're trying to get there, and they're trying hard to get there. We saw an example this week of them trying to get on top of things. Randy Pettapiece, the MPP for the Stratford area, made a remark in a legislative committee about a woman scientist who's going on the Ontario Energy Board, being appointed to it, maybe she could fix the problem with the bad coffee. Now, maybe not the brightest thing to say. He meant no malice, I'm sure of that, but it was not the kind of thing you say anymore. But this time, they got on it and he apologized right away, as opposed to last spring when MPP Jack MacLaren from the Ottawa area dragged this – made some intemperate remarks about a female Liberal MP and dragged it out for three weeks and ended up going to sensitivity training. That was a disaster. So they've learned something from that at least –

Alan: Rob, we have 30 seconds and Chris, I want to ask: This Social Conservative stuff – that going to be the millstone going into the next election?

Chris Stockwell: I don't think it will be an issue. I honestly don't think it will be an issue. I think what it comes down to is they're trying to hang this on him, maybe a bad interview here and there, and with the record the Liberals have had in the last 13 years I think that's simply enough to take them down; and just be very careful about what you say and how you position your party.

Alan: Chris Stockwell, Rob Ferguson, thank for being here.

Both: Thank you.

Online Coverage

Chronicle Journal's NDP hydro plan rings hollow compared to ours:

By: Bill Mauro, MPP, Thunder Bay - Atikokan
Posted: Sunday, March 26, 2017 8:28 AM

http://www.chroniclejournal.com/opinion/ndp-hydro-plan-rings-hollow-compared-to-ours-mauro/article_a899572e-121f-11e7-9170-175ec5f727d1.html

NDP leader Andrea Horwath made a brief stop in Thunder Bay recently to try and sell her half-baked plan to reduce electricity rates for Northwestern Ontario residents and businesses.

I feel compelled to point out the flaws in the NDP plan, and contrast that with our government's Fair Hydro Plan.

1. The NDP hydro scheme is very short of details. It talks about a vague and yet-to-be-determined "expert panel" that will be convened in the future, as well as pie-in-the-sky request for federal government to forgo its 5-per-cent cut of the HST.

In contrast, our government's plan will cut electricity bills by 25 per cent on average for all families, small businesses and farms, including the 8-per-cent cut that kicked in Jan. 1, with the rest to follow this summer.

2. The NDP's most expensive idea - buying back more than \$4 billion in shares of Hydro One - will not take one cent off electricity bills.

The partial sale of Hydro One has nothing to do with the price we pay for electricity, and Horwath knows this. The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) is an independent board in charge of setting electricity prices in Ontario. Utilities like Hydro One don't get to set their own prices - the OEB does that.

Buying back shares of Hydro One, over an eight-year period, would use money that's already earmarked for education, health care, and infrastructure in Thunder Bay-Atikokan, and would create a significant fiscal gap without any impact on electricity rates.

In contrast, our Fair Hydro Plan brings forward the single largest rate reduction in the province's history, helping families, small businesses and farms in the Thunder Bay area.

3. The NDP are suggesting that at some point, maybe 10 years down the road, they hope to reduce electricity rates by between 17-30 per cent. I must add that they are including the 8 per cent that our government has already reduced from electricity bills, as well as the 5 per cent federal portion of the HST.

In contrast, as stated earlier, our plan offers a 25-per cent-cut on average, but that reduction will be even greater for rural Hydro One/Atikokan Hydro (R1 and R2) customers, who will see reductions as high as 40 per cent on their bills.

This means that the rural R1 and R2 customers would fare worse under the NDP plan, paying on average, at minimum, 10 per cent more for hydro.

4. Other than the 8-per-cent reduction our government brought in Jan. 1, the NDP plan won't reduce electricity prices by one cent in the immediate term.

In contrast, our plan offers additional relief on hydro bills by this summer, not somewhere down the road. And our plan will also keep rates consistent, holding them to inflation over the next four years. My constituents have told me they need immediate relief. That's what we have delivered.

As you can see, there are numerous holes in the NDP's proposals to reduce energy costs.

But I must add that our Fair Hydro Plan is not a starting point; it adds to a number of other actions we have taken to reduce electricity costs, including:

-The Northern Ontario Energy Credit helps families and individuals by providing tax credits for low- to middle-income families and individuals living in Northern Ontario. The maximum annual credit for a single person is \$146, and for a family is \$224.

- The Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit saves qualifying individuals and families up to \$1,008 per year, with a maximum of \$1,148 per year for qualifying seniors.

- The Rural or Remote Electricity Rate Program (RRRP) provides eligible rural ratepayers with additional relief.

For larger companies in North Western Ontario, we also:

- Expanded the Industrial Conservation initiative (ICI) program in January to capture over a thousand new businesses. Under the Fair Hydro Plan we have expanded it to even more medium-sized manufacturing. Participants are able to save up to one-third on their electricity bill.

- The Northern Industrial Electricity Rate program, made permanent in 2015, helps large industrial facilities, including forestry and mining sectors, reduce electricity costs by 25 per cent. To date, the NIER program has disbursed approximately \$730 million.

Other measures we have already taken to reduce electricity costs include:

- A new agreement to trade electricity, energy capacity, and energy storage with Quebec, that will reduce electricity system costs by \$70 million.
- Removing the Debt Retirement Charge (DRC) early for all residential customers, saving the ratepayers \$70 per year.
- The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program provides emergency financial support of up to \$600 for families and individuals having trouble paying their bills.
- The saveONenergy Home Assistance Program helps income-eligible consumers manage energy costs by providing home energy efficiency assessments and energy saving measures at no cost.

Facts are facts. Our Fair Hydro Plan offers immediate relief for families, businesses and farms in Northwestern Ontario. The NDP plan offers nothing but hollow, half-baked proposals.