

Newstalk 1010 with Patrick Brown, April 5/17

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CFRB INTERVIEW WITH ONTARIO PC LEADER PATRICK BROWN

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Speaker(s): Patrick Brown, Ontario Progressive Conservative Leader

CFRB: It is 12:36 right now and I made some comments earlier today about the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario on Moore in the Morning at 8:45 and I had made them online on Twitter as well. There was a piece that was penned by Patrick Brown today in the Toronto Sun about how the NHL should be taking part in the Olympics in China. And I just don't think that that's necessarily what the province of Ontario wants to hear from the leader of perhaps the next leader of this province, the man who will be running Ontario hopefully for four years coming up in about 16 months after an election. But that's just me. A lot of people said, "oh yeah that's -- he can have opinions on other things." Of course he could have opinions on other things but you know, when we're knee-deep in this hydro thing and people are looking for answers and he promised he would be on this show; he is on this show in a couple of seconds, but he said he would be on this show and he would unveil the plan. And now the plan ain't coming out 'til I guess closer to election time. Was there even a plan in the first place? And again my other problem is that politicians -- let me talk to him about it. Patrick, thank you very much, you're very kind to come on the show this afternoon. The leader of the opposition, Patrick Brown of the Progressive Conservative Party.

PATRICK BROWN, ONTARIO PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE LEADER: Well, thank you for having me on the show. As soon as I heard you were eager to have me on the show I jumped at it. Who wouldn't want to talk to Jim Richards.

CFRB: Who wouldn't want it?

PC LEADER BROWN: I apologize if I (inaudible)....

CFRB: But we're not going to be talking hockey. I mean it seems like you want to talk hockey more than you want to talk about the future of this province. That's why -- like do we want to talk about what a great year Auston Matthews had and how Mitch Marner and all those kids are looking fantastic? And who is going to do better? You're cheering for the Sens or the Maple Leafs?

PC LEADER BROWN: Well, Jim I write (inaudible) several times a week and I give probably 10 speeches a day. But I've actually never wrote an article on sports before. You know, I know some of these guys because of this tournament that I put on every year in Barrie to support our local hospital. You know, Connor McDavid is a big help with it. And for me, to be honest, I was just annoyed. I was frustrated. I hate that you've got this millionaire couple of NHL owners and (inaudible) they don't seem to care that this is a pretty special moment for young people to get excited about, for Canadians of all ages to get excited about. So I wrote an article about sports. Normally I don't but as a guy that loves hockey I couldn't help but (inaudible) frustration.

CFRB: So how many -- you say, and listen maybe that's -- okay. So you're saying, hey I don't pay attention to the articles that you write that are not about sports and this is the only one that you

wrote about sports and I chose to pick on this one because the timing, the optics seem wrong. Is that what you're claiming?

PC LEADER BROWN: I write articles on hydro all the time...

CFRB: Pardon me?

PC LEADER BROWN: ...and I do write articles on hydro all the time and happy to talk about hydro at any time. You mentioned that I was supposed to be on your show to talk about hydro. That's why I'm here right now to answer any questions you have.

CFRB: But the only question is what's the plan? And now there's not going to be a plan for more than a year?

PC LEADER BROWN: Well, actually we have put forward what we believe are immediate structural changes that need to be made. What I try to point out -- a lot of people are just -- you know it's optics, it's spin, it's PR when it comes to hydro. And I'm trying to plan -- I'm trying to have evidence-based hydro policy. We had this whole debate Jim....

CFRB: But you had evidence-based that was supposed to -- are you telling us that the plan that was supposed to be released at about now is going to be a different plan than the -- that you ripped that one up and you're coming up with a new plan...

PC LEADER BROWN: No, no....

CFRB: ...because if you came up with evidence-based, then it was supposed to be ready and unveiled now.

PC LEADER BROWN: But I never said it would be unveiled now. That's certainly -- what I've said is that we're not going to be creating -- we're not going to be releasing our platform on someone else's timeline. We're going to do it based on evidence-based policy that is vetted and -- by our membership, by the experts that we've been meeting with but having said that....

CFRB: Look, I can pull up the e-mails of people in your staff who have said, "Listen Jim, in a couple of weeks when we come out with our plan we will come on your show." And I can send those back to you. And again that might be another e-mail problem like the sex-ed curriculum thing but we can send you those e-mails.

PC LEADER BROWN: Most, certainly I've never specified a timeline on the hydro platform. Having said that we actually have been out in the legislature around Ontario for years talking about what needs to be fixed. I'm happy to talk about that today. What the point I was trying to make to you Jim, was that when people pick numbers out of thin air that aren't based on evidence it doesn't work out. We had this whole debate a few years ago on insurance. The NDP and the Liberals competed with each other saying that they were going to reduce insurance rates and they made that promise and said 15 per cent. It never happened. It was fictitious. So what I'm trying to point out -- here's the real challenge in Ontario. You know in 2015, these are the most recent numbers we have, Ontario generated 145 terawatt hours of energy from our three main sources, water power, natural gas and nuclear. But we only consumed 137. That's not even including any of the renewables. We give away electricity. We have too much generation and no one is talking about the fact that we have these structural problems where we have this massive surplus that we have to give away whether it's to Michigan....

CFRB: Okay but you're basically telling me right now that you've got enough evidence to criticize the Liberals but not enough evidence to come up with a plan despite the fact...

PC LEADER BROWN: Well, no....

CFRB: ...that we know what's been going on in this province and I'm sure that you can find any

expert, that these experts will not have the answers for you for a couple of months? I mean when will these experts have the evidence?

PC LEADER BROWN: Well, no, no. So Jim if I haven't been saying what the structural things we would change right away with hydro. What I'm saying is it's misleading for politicians to name an exact figure out of thin air that's not based on evidence. And so if you want to go over some of the immediate steps that I would take, I'm happy....

CFRB: But why isn't that evidence available now is my point?

PC LEADER BROWN: Well, it is available because I'm out there giving speeches every day talking about are -- the structural changes that we make. What I'm saying is that the numbers the NDP and the Liberals presented are fictitious. They are not based on reality.

CFRB: Okay but my question is do you have the plan now or will the plan be it's still coming together?

PC LEADER BROWN: Well, let me tell you exactly what I've recommended so far in terms of structural changes to the hydro. Number one, not sign any new, expensive bad contracts which is a direct contrast with what we're currently doing right now. This would stop the 6 billion in surplus that we're giving away. Number two, I would dismantle the Green Energy Act. That's one of the significant sources of these bad contracts and the extra generation. Number two, I would stop the fire sale of Hydro One. The Auditor General, the Financial Accountability Officer has already said we'll lose future control over rate increases with this fire sale. Number four, I would rein in some of this exorbitant executive compensation in the energy sector. The fact that we got people making four and a half million dollars when people can't afford their bill is unacceptable. The other thing that I want the province to look at, and I would if I was premier, is last year we spilled or abandoned 3 billion kilowatt hours of energy from water power, facilities that are paid and bought for. So we have water facilities in Ontario, in Niagara Falls, Merrickville, Manitou, are just a few examples and we pay to spill water. And so when the government says it is about green energy, it's not about green energy. Our own green energy we're spilling every day. Why not use some of that to help our businesses, to help people in Ontario?

CFRB: I think those recommendations sound fantastic Patrick, but the fact...

PC LEADER BROWN: Thank you.

CFRB: ...of the matter is is that they are not going to help lower the cost. They might make sure that it doesn't go up anymore. But they are not going to lower the cost.

PC LEADER BROWN: Actually no I would disagree with that. When you look at the surplus we have in Ontario and just to go back, you know, we generate 145 terawatt hours from our three main sources not even including renewables and we only use 137 terawatt hours. And how you pay for that is it's in the global adjustment. They hide it in the residential rate, it's just blended into the price and you actually see it on a commercial bill. So this global adjustment is killing people and that is where they hide the surplus. That's where they hide all this cost of this massive over generation we have. And I'm the only person pointing out right now at Queens Park, only the PCs are pointing out that we have a generation problem. And get this, you know what I find so infuriating about the Liberal plan that was released is we're borrowing money to pay for the old, bad deals butt the next day....

CFRB: Okay.

PC LEADER BROWN: Let me say this though. The next day they proceeded with 1,100 more contracts, 1,100 more contracts when we already have too much.

CFRB: Okay in a moment I want to ask you if you're not coming out with your plan is it because you have this front runner's strategy that you guys don't want to make any mistakes in before the election? Patrick Brown, the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party is with us and I want to --

well I have some other things I want to ask him in a second.

[Commercial break]

CFRB: Progressive Conservative leader Patrick Brown is with us on the practice here, because earlier today after seeing an article that I saw that he intend that the NHL should be a part of the Olympics coming up in China. Is that really what people want to hear from Patrick Brown right now? I mean people want to hear from him on hydro. We're hearing from him on hydro. But, Patrick I mean you've been accused I guess by people on this radio station of sounding like you don't know the portfolio. I think you sound today like you do know what you're talking about but for a lot of people you're throwing around things that they don't even know about. They just know eye-level stuff that my hydro bill is too large and they want to know without throwing around all of these terms that people have no idea what you're talking about. They want to know that their hydro is coming down and they want to see that someone has -- they want to see that there's hope on the horizon. They don't want to hear mumbo-jumbo, they want to hear "I've got a plan." And the evidence is in because it is in and so just give it to us.

PC LEADER BROWN: So Jim first of all, we're the only party that will actually reduce hydro bills and I have a plan that I've released on the structural changes. What I said I will not do is pick a number out of thin air that's not based on evidence. And what I mean by evidence-based policy, if you look at the contracts for the major renewables of the 30 mega contracts I only have one copy; the government won't release it. And the one copy we have showed an exit clause; we could have got out of a billion and a half of surplus electricity. Instead we gave it to Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio and New York and so what my point is, I'm going to promise to Ontarians is what I can do, not what sounds good but what we can actually do and to pick a number out of thin air and not base it on evidence....

CFRB: But are you picking a number -- what if you pick -- are you going to pick a number out of thin air before an election, will you be able to tell people this is what your hydro bill will look like before the election because clearly you have that information now and it's not going to miraculously pop up just before the election?

PC LEADER BROWN: So what I can tell you, unequivocally, is that under the PC plan hydro rates will go down. Under the Liberal and NDP plan hydro rates will go up. Under Kathleen Wynne's plan in four years they will continue to skyrocket. If the government does these structural--

CFRB: How much?

PC LEADER BROWN: [Inaudible] five points that I've recommended, your hydro rates, everyone hydro rates will actually go down. And to the degree which they will go down will depend on how bad some of these contracts that Ontario is signed into. If there is exit clauses like there was in the one copy we got under the Samsung, maybe we can get out of all the surplus generation.

CFRB: Okay, so let me ask you another question. Have you been told there's a part of your strategy, since you are up in the polls, to have a front-runner strategy and lay low and not do anything controversial until election time?

PC LEADER BROWN: No, my strategy is simply to, you know, speak candidly and honestly and don't make promises that cannot be honoured, don't make-- frankly I want to govern this province. I want to make sure that the promises I make we can actually act upon. And so it was easy for other parties to make promises on auto insurance a few years ago. We didn't because we knew it was a fictitious promise and it turned out that it was. I'm going to make sure hydro, that I actually reduce people's hydro bills. No one believes that Kathleen Wynne will actually do that. I can tell you if we do my structural fixes hydro bills will actually go down in Ontario.

CFRB: Okay, and have you read the criticism that people have suggested that your availability is directly related to what your hockey schedule is because you do love to play hockey, everybody knows that, but that people have to plan around you playing hockey.

PC LEADER BROWN: Well I play hockey twice a week for an hour but I usually work, you know, 16, 17 hour days. I don't think playing shinny twice a week affects your availability. I do apologize; the Friday that I couldn't go on your show was the same day that I was playing in Hockey for the Homeless. It's an annual fundraiser I do in Barrie that a bunch of my buddies are involved in where we raise money for the homeless shelter. And I was on the ice that day and I apologize but I'll make sure Jim Richards that I'm available to talk to you because I enjoy the opportunity and I want to make sure we're accessible.

CFRB: Alright. Thank you. Patrick thank you very much for the time, I appreciate it.

PC LEADER BROWN: Anytime.

CFRB: Patrick Brown is the leader of the opposition, the Progressive Conservative leader here in this province who could quite possibly be the next Premier of the Province of Ontario.