

Liberals hit voters with double-barrelled advertising blitz for hydro plan

From: Energy In The News (ENERGY) <energynews@ontario.ca>
To: "@ENERGY-COMM-Issues_and_MediaRelations" <energy-comm-issues_and_mediarelations@msgov.gov.on.ca>, "Anderson, Alexandria (OPG)" <alexandria.anderson@opg.com>, "Armstrong, Hillary (ENERGY)" <hillary.armstrong@ontario.ca>, "Barbaro, Rachel (ENERGY)" <rachel.barbaro@ontario.ca>, "Berg, Denna (ENERGY)" <denna.berg@ontario.ca>, "Bergen, Tom (OPG)" <tom.bergen@opg.com>, "Bernard, Mary (IESO)" <mary.bernard@ieso.ca>, "Berry, James (ENERGY)" <james.berry5@ontario.ca>, "Biggs, Megan (ENERGY)" <megan.biggs@ontario.ca>, "Bozzo, John (OEB)" <john.bozzo@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Buccilli, Lina (OEB)" <lina.buccilli@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Butters, Tim (IESO)" <tim.butters@ieso.ca>, "Campbell, Alexandra (IESO)" <alexandra.campbell@ieso.ca>, "Campbell, David (ENERGY)" <david.campbell2@ontario.ca>, "Cannella, John (IESO)" <john.cannella@ieso.ca>, "Carson, Cheryl (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <cheryl.carson@ontario.ca>, "Cayley, Daniel (ENERGY)" <daniel.cayley@ontario.ca>, "Chatterjee, Jeet (ENERGY)" <jeet.chatterjee@ontario.ca>, "Coker, Meaghan (ENERGY)" <meaghan.coker@ontario.ca>, "Cooper, Sarah (ENERGY)" <sarah.cooper@ontario.ca>, "Crawford, Paul (OEB)" <paul.crawford@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Dade, Christine (ENERGY)" <christine.dade@ontario.ca>, "Dow, Andrew (IESO)" <andrew.dow@ieso.ca>, "Dykxhoorn, Sandra (OPG)" <sandra.dykxhoorn@opg.com>, "Esdaile, Trevor (ENERGY)" <trevor.esdaile@ontario.ca>, "Evans, Karen (OEB)" <karen.evans@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Farmer, Chuck (IESO)" <chuck.farmer@ieso.ca>, "Feather, Adam (ENERGY)" <adam.feather@ontario.ca>, "Gibbs, Diana (ENERGY)" <diana.gibbs@ontario.ca>, "Gruetzner, Ted (OPG)" <ted.gruetzner@opg.com>, "Hill, Allyson (ENERGY)" <allyson.hill@ontario.ca>, "Ho, Larissa (ENERGY)" <larissa.ho@ontario.ca>, "Hume, Steen (ENERGY)" <steen.hume@ontario.ca>, "Imbrogno, Serge (ENERGY)" <serge.imbrogno@ontario.ca>, "Imlay, Patrick (ENERGY)" <patrick.imlay@ontario.ca>, "Johnson, Paul (ENERGY/MEDEI/MRI)" <paul.johnson3@ontario.ca>, "Kacaba, Jennifer (ENERGY)" <jennifer.kacaba@ontario.ca>, "Katona, Keley (ENERGY)" <keley.katona@ontario.ca>, "Kelly, Neal (OPG)" <neal.kelly@opg.com>, "Kinapen, Donna (OEB)" <donna.kinapen@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Kitchen, Matthew (ENERGY)" <matthew.kitchen@ontario.ca>, "Kovesfalvi, Sylvia (OEB)" <sylvia.kovesfalvi@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Landmann, Peter (ENERGY)" <peter.landmann@ontario.ca>, "Lars Hansen" <lars.hansen@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Latto-Hall, Arla (ENERGY)" <arla.latto-hall@ontario.ca>, "Lazakis, Chloe (ENERGY)" <chloe.lazakis@ontario.ca>, "Leckey, Jane (IESO)" <jane.leckey@ieso.ca>, "Leung, Thomas (MOF)" <thomas.leung@ontario.ca>, "Lindsay, Ken (ENERGY)" <ken.lindsay@ontario.ca>, "Linnington, Brenda (MOI)" <brenda.linnington@ontario.ca>, "Mackie, Richard (OPG)" <richard.mackie@opg.com>, "Maguire, Lauren (ENERGY)" <lauren.maguire@ontario.ca>, "McGoey, Eric (ENERGY)" <eric.mcgoey@ontario.ca>, "McGrath, Jessica (ENERGY)" <jessica.mcgrath@ontario.ca>, "Montgomery, Kaitlin (MOF)" <kaitlin.montgomery@ontario.ca>, "Naveed, Fatima (ENERGY)" <som.fatima.naveed@ontario.ca>, "Nekolaichuk, Colin (ENERGY)" <colin.nekolaichuk@ontario.ca>, "Nelms, Scott (MOF)" <scott.nelms@ontario.ca>, "O'Donnell, Cheryl (ENERGY)" <som.cheryl.o'donnell@ontario.ca>, "O'Riordan, Eamon (ENERGY)" <eamon.o'riordan@ontario.ca>, "Pagel, Alexa (ENERGY)" <alexa.pagel@ontario.ca>, "Pelkey, Bryan (ENERGY)" <bryan.pelkey@ontario.ca>, "Penic, Jordan (IESO)" <jordan.penic@ieso.ca>.

"Pitkeathly, Doreen (ENERGY)" <doreen.pitkeathly@ontario.ca>, "Poirier, Linda (ENERGY)" <linda.poirier@ontario.ca>, "Rehob, James (ENERGY)" <james.rehob@ontario.ca>, "Reid, Michael (ENERGY)" <michael.reid@ontario.ca>, "Rowe, Jennifer (OPG)" <jennifer.rowe@opg.com>, "Ruttan, Craig (ENERGY)" <craig.ruttan@ontario.ca>, "Sermat-Harding, Kaili (ENERGY)" <kaili.sermat-harding@ontario.ca>, "Shear, Dan (ENERGY)" <dan.shear@ontario.ca>, "Simmons, Valerie (ENERGY)" <valerie.simmons@ontario.ca>, "Spence Lair, Marlo (ENERGY)" <marlo.spencelair@ontario.ca>, "Spence, Marcia (ENERGY)" <marcia.spence@ontario.ca>, "Stoiko, Andrea (ENERGY)" <andrea.stoiko@ontario.ca>, "Sweet, Edward (ENERGY)" <edward.sweet@ontario.ca>, "Syed, Usman (ENERGY)" <usman.syed@ontario.ca>, "Teliszewsky, Andrew (ENERGY)" <andrew.teliszewsky@ontario.ca>, "Thompson, Erin (ENERGY)" <erin.thompson@ontario.ca>, "Todd, Brian (MOI)" <brian.todd@ontario.ca>, "Tretiakov, Ilia (ENERGY)" <ilia.tretiakov@ontario.ca>, "Visheau, Vanessa (ENERGY)" <vanessa.visheau@ontario.ca>, "Waddell, Colleen (MOF)" <colleen.waddell@ontario.ca>, "Wall, Vanda (OEB)" <vanda.wall@ontarioenergyboard.ca>, "Whittington, Matt (ENERGY)" <matt.whittington@ontario.ca>, "Wright, Lindsay (ENERGY)" <lindsay.wright@ontario.ca>, "Yadav, Saurabh (ENERGY)" <saurabh.yadav@ontario.ca>, "Young, Terry (IESO)" <terry.young@ieso.ca>

Date: Tue, 21 Mar 2017 15:33:16 -0400

Liberals hit voters with double-barrelled advertising blitz for hydro plan

QP Briefing

The Liberals have turned an advertising campaign for their new hydro plan into a two-pronged assault on voters, targeting them with promotions paid for with both government and party funds.

Government ads had already been making the rounds on the radio and social media, but leaflets from the Ontario Liberal Party – offering the same sort of message – were being distributed to Toronto commuters Tuesday morning, touting the Grits' plan to reduce hydro bills by an average total of 25 per cent.

A *QP Briefing* reporter was actually handed a Liberal party flyer at a subway station. On one side, there is a picture of power lines, the Liberal logo, and text declaring "25% off your monthly hydro bill." On the other, readers were informed that "The Ontario Liberals recognize that electricity rates are rising too quickly" and given details about the 25-per-cent plan and the proposal to hold hydro hikes to the rate of inflation for four years. The flyer directs readers to "learn more" by directing them to a Liberal-run website.

An Ontario Liberal Party spokeswoman said the information was being distributed by volunteers, "outside of working hours, on a voluntary basis and using solely party resources."

"The material that was handed out was paid for by the Ontario Liberal Party," **Patricia Favre** said in an email. "In addition to today's campaign, we have set up a dedicated website. The campaign is being funded by the Ontario Liberal Party."

The Liberal party ads could also be considered taxpayer-funded promotion (at least in part), as the Liberals, Green Party, NDP and Progressive Conservatives began receiving a per-vote subsidy this year, following changes made to the province's political fundraising rules.

"Political parties, including the NDP and PCs, often spend time promoting policies and values they believe in," said Favre. "Getting this information to Ontarians is an important part of our democratic process."

But the opposition parties were critical of the two-front offensive by the Liberal government and party, calling the Grits' tactics a sign of desperation.

"It absolutely makes it more egregious," said PC Leader **Patrick Brown**. "They're spending a few dollars of Liberal Party pamphlets and they're spending millions possibly when it comes to the government buy."

"I think right now they're desperate, that's why they're abusing taxpayers," Brown said.

Brown also pointed out that the province's auditor general [had rapped the government's knuckles](#) last year for running ads about the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan at the same time as the Ontario Liberal Party was running television spots starring Premier **Kathleen Wynne** talking about pensions. Auditor General **Bonnie Lysyk** reported that she was previously able to address this "overlap" by forcing the government to pull its ad, but the Liberals amended her powers in 2015, preventing her from doing so. The auditor general has said the government's new ads on the "Fair Hydro Plan" would not have been approved under the old rules.

But Deputy Premier **Deb Matthews**, who is also co-chairing the Liberals' 2018 re-election campaign, said Ontario still has "the most restrictive rules around partisan government advertising." Matthews also defended the new ads as necessary information, and said everybody does it.

"This is political advertising," she told reporters. "Other parties do this kind of event, the blitz, letting people know what we're doing. This is not government advertising at all. This is Liberal Party advertising."

"We know we've got a campaign in a little over a year," Matthews added. "So of course we're doing that kind of work that you would do in a lead-up to an election."

The Progressive Conservatives tried to halt the Liberal campaign Tuesday by asking the legislature for unanimous consent to suspend taxpayer funded ads until Speaker **Dave Levac** rules on whether they are in contempt of the legislature. The attempt was quickly shot down by boisterous Liberals, leading to a rowdy question period that saw PC energy critic **Todd Smith** kicked out of the chamber because of heckling.

Levac warned that Smith was "very close to being expelled," a punishment that could have kept him out of the chamber for the duration of this legislative session, which could last until the next election. Levac has yet to rule if the government hydro ads are in contempt of the legislature, something the PCs maintain is the case because they were published before legislation was tabled outlining the Liberals' hydro plan.

"Clearly, the legislation is coming forward, and the minister is making a mockery of this Legislature and its members as he runs self-congratulatory ads, paid for by taxpayers," said Brown during question period. "Will the Premier stop her re-election campaigning and using taxpayer resources to do it?"

Brown also told reporters that, if he forms government in 2018, he would reinstate the auditor general's old power to spike ads that are too self-congratulatory.

Liberal Government House Leader **Yasir Naqvi** said Brown and the Tories are just deflecting from the fact that they have no hydro plan of their own yet. "Their plan is a blank piece of paper," Naqvi said during question period.

NDP Leader **Andrea Horwath** accused the Liberals of being "desperate" and "blurring the lines" between government and party with their new leaflets. "I think it's obvious: they had a plan to do what they could by using public money on the radio ads and now they're doing the same thing with their party ads," Horwath said. "But I don't think people distinguish the difference."

<http://www.qpbriefing.com/2017/03/21/liberals-hit-voters-with-double-barrelled-advertising-blitz-for-hydro-plan/>

