

# PCs vow to cut taxes and hydro rates in platform (Ont-PC-Convention)

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**From:** Command News <fp.news.killornb@commandnews.com>  
**To:** "Killorn, Bill (OPO)" <bill.killorn@ontario.ca>  
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PCs vow to cut taxes and hydro rates in platform (Ont-PC-Convention)  
By Shawn Jeffords

## THE CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO \_ An Ontario Progressive Conservative government would introduce tax cuts for the middle class, a refund for childcare expenses and a further 12 per cent cut to hydro bills if elected in next spring's provincial vote.

The party released its 2018 election platform \_ presented as a 78-page glossy magazine and called the ``People's Guarantee" \_ at a policy convention today in Toronto.

The tax cuts, childcare refund and hydro cuts are part of five promises that make up the core of the Tory plan and also include a pledge to spend \$1.9 billion over the next decade to create a mental health-care system and plan to introduce legislation to address government integrity and accountability.

Brown says if he cannot implement his five main promises he will not seek a second term as \*\*>premier.

Approximately 1,500 Ontario<\*\* Progressive Conservatives are gathered to hone their election strategy, receive training and hear a keynote address from leader Patrick Brown.

The Tory tax cuts would reduce costs for Ontarians with the lowest incomes by 2022. People making a up to \$42,960 see their tax rate cut from 5.05 per cent to 4.5 per cent. People making from \$42,960 to \$85,923 will see their tax rate cut from 9.15 per cent to 7.1 per cent.

The plan would also introduce the Ontario Child Care Refund, a refundable tax credit based on household income. Under the plan, a mother who earns \$35,000 a year and has a child under six would be eligible for a refund of \$6,750 in child care costs.

The payments for lower income families who qualify for the credit could receive the refund payments in the form of a monthly cheque.

The Tories say they will cut hydro rates for the average household by 12 per cent, or \$173 annually, through a number of measures including returning the \$350 million dividend from Hydro One to ratepayers.

The plan pledges to create a comprehensive mental health-care system by investing \$1.9 billion over the next decade, matching federal funding put towards the same.

The Tory platform calls for the creation of a Trust, Integrity and Accountability Act to address "political corruption" in the province. It would close fundraising loopholes in existing legislation and restore the auditor general's power to vet government advertising.

Beyond the five key pillars of the plan, the platform has more than 140 other promises. They cover a wide range of issues from transit to health care.

The Tories are promising to end the Liberals' cap-and-trade program by July 1, 2019, and withdraw from the Western Climate Initiative. The party says it would instead opt in to federal carbon pricing benchmark marks and return all proceeds of the program to taxpayers.

The platform promises to pay \$5 billion for new and existing subway projects in Toronto. The Tory plan offers to take on the full cost, plus any overrun, for the controversial Scarborough subway extension. In exchange, the City of Toronto would be asked to assume the costs of a light-rail project in the city's east end which extends to a University of Toronto campus.

The platform also would see the province upload hundreds of millions each year in infrastructure and maintenance from the Toronto Transit Commission for its subway system. The TTC would continue to receive all revenue from the fare box and control the entire transit system.

The Tories say their platform spending has been reviewed by former federal Parliamentary Budget Officer Kevin Page who has been "deemed reasonable".

It projects that a PC government would fall into deficit of \$2.8 billion in its first year, while posting progressive surpluses that range from \$8 billion in 2019-2020 to \$767 billion in 2021-2022.

News of parts of the Tory plan leaked Friday evening, prompting blistering condemnation from the governing Liberal Party. Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca said the platform a "Say Anything" plan.

"Let's be clear \_ any time a Conservative says they can lower taxes without making cuts they end up cutting services," Del Duca said in a statement. "Patrick Brown is fundamentally cut from the same cloth as Harper and Harris and core services like education and health care are in for a rough ride under this scheme. That's the Conservative way."

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