

MEDIA SCAN: HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

April 3, 2017

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ONLINE COVERAGE

SUDBURY STAR: *WYNNE'S PROGRESSIVE PLAN MAKES RURAL FOLK SHUDDER (ALSO APPEARS IN: THE DAILY OBSERVER)*

By: Jim Merriam
Monday, April 3, 2017 5:44:18 EDT PM

<http://www.thesudburystar.com/2017/04/03/wynnes-progressive-plan-makes-rural-folk-shudder>

Premier Kathleen Wynne is said to have developed a "bold" strategy for getting re-elected in next June's provincial vote.

Essentially the new strategy involves overwhelming Ontario residents with "progressive" initiatives designed to appeal to traditional Liberals who are fed up with the endless debacles of the Wynne government, NDPers and others with a progressive bent.

Presumably the folks who would change allegiance or jump back on the Wynne train to nowhere reside mostly in the big cities and their suburbs.

It's a certainty that things will be different in rural Ontario, which is not overrun with progressives at the best of times.

Rural Ontario did not support Wynne's Liberals last election and she has done nothing to change any minds since taking office.

Also, rural folk are tired of the way this government plays smoke and mirrors with our money, trying to buy votes. The recently-announced reductions in electricity rates are the latest examples.

Among the progressive ideas we might see popping up at Queen's Park are a guaranteed annual income. Presumably, that would replace welfare and other support programs. Such an income, of course, would have to be high enough to cover the costs of heat and electricity.

Also expected is an increase in the minimum wage from the \$11.60 that is to become effective in October, to \$15 an hour.

Also on the horizon, according to Bob Hepburn of The Toronto Star, are sweeping changes to labour and employment laws. It's anybody's guess what these changes might entail, but it's a cinch they won't be pretty for some business owners.

Here's the problem with such a plan. The Wynne government and the government of Dalton McGuinty before her, have never suffered from lack of a progressive agenda. The problem always has been poor implementation and a critical lack of management.

The Green Energy Act was a progressive idea. But instead of coming up with some creative ideas whereby Ontario residents could benefit, perhaps by establishing co-operatives to build and own wind and solar installations, the Liberals set it up so the people pay in perpetuity with offshore conglomerates making off with most of the profits.

Likewise, the new sex ed curriculum in schools was nothing if not progressive. But it was implemented in the most ham-fisted way possible.

A little delay in the start date to provide time for more conversations with parents -- two way conversations where government representatives actually listen -- might have avoided a generation of hard feelings and alienated voters.

Establishing a new trails policy over private lands without consulting land owners was anything but a well-managed idea.

The best of intentions can become a nightmare when nobody understands implementation, managing expectations or caring about how changes will impact the people the government was elected to serve.

Now rural folks will fear that progressive initiatives might be enough to move city voters back to the Liberals.

The anti-Wynne pendulum seems to have swung too far for that to happen. However, if it begins to swing back, we can only hope it bumps Wynne out of the way on its journey.

TIMMINS PRESS: HYDRO PROMISE HOLLOW

By: Glenn Thibeault, Ontario Energy Minister
Monday, April 3, 2017 6:44:01 EDT PM

<http://www.timminspress.com/2017/04/03/hydro-promise-hollow>

TIMMINS - NDP Leader Andrea Horwath's hydro scheme is short on details and long on hollow promises.

Many of their proposals rely on a vague and yet-to-be-determined "expert panel" that will be convened in the future, as well as pie-in-the-sky negotiations with the federal government.

These offer little to Northern Ontarians in the short-term, compared to the real and meaningful relief our government's Fair Hydro Plan will provide to everyone starting this summer.

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.

What it will do is send billions to the stock market instead of making much needed infrastructure investments here in across Ontario.

And as if the NDP proposal wasn't damaging enough, their scheme would scrap Time of Use pricing, which would dial back conservation savings, and potentially lead to supply gaps.

Time of Use has been a success, reducing our peak demand by up to 5%, which means we don't need to build costly new generation.

However, it may not be the best model for everyone in the province.

That's exactly why we are already piloting different models that can give electricity customers choice in how they're billed. But this needs to be implemented responsibly, not through a short-sighted system like the NDP has proposed.

Through Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, our government is cutting electricity bills by 25% on average for all families starting this summer, along with as many as half a million farms and small businesses.

It is the single largest rate reduction in the province's history, with rates also held to inflation for the next four years.

Our plan is about real relief for Ontarians and a way to ensure greater fairness in our electricity system.

Patrick Brown and the PCs have no plan and the NDP hydro proposal offers nothing practical or substantial when it comes to reduced electricity costs for families and small businesses.

TV TRANSCRIPTS (6 PM)

NONE