

MEDIA SCAN: HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

May 23, 2017

Click links below to view article:

<u>Print Coverage</u>	2
<u>National Post:</u> Does Patrick Brown really want to win?; A11; 2017.05.23	2
<u>Toronto Sun:</u> Pharmacare? Great! How do we pay for it?; A15; 2017.05.23	4
<u>Ottawa Sun:</u> Pharmacare? Great! How do we pay for it?; A15; 2017.05.23	6

PRINT COVERAGE

National Post: Does Patrick Brown really want to win?; A11; 2017.05.23

PUBLICATION: National Post

PAGE: A11

DATE: 2017.05.23

SECTION: Issues & Ideas

EDITION: All_but_Toronto

BYLINE: Kelly McParland

SOURCE: National Post

KEYWORDS: liberal,government,works,frantically,extract,leader

WORD COUNT: 884

Does Patrick Brown really want to win?

As Ontario's Liberal government works frantically to extract its leader from the ocean floor of public opinion, Tory leader Patrick Brown must occasionally survey the situation and think to himself, "Jeez, do I really want to inherit the colossal mess these people have created?" If the thought does occur to him, he probably quickly shakes it off. Being in power is what politics is all about. Who wants to sit on the wrong side of the legislative chamber watching other people have all the fun? Brown is leader of Ontario's opposition, and the main job of the leader of the opposition is to stop being in opposition and start being in power. Ontario's recent opposition leaders just haven't been very good at taking that step.

Brown aims to be different, but the province he'd inherit would give pause to the most self-confident of people. It's rare to get out of bed in the morning without more frightening news spilling from the office of Premier Kathleen Wynne and her colleagues. Most recently Brown's Tories released a confidential cabinet document indicating the Liberals were well aware their recent promise of a reduction in hydro bills would be shortlived, and followed by increases that would cost more than double the savings.

It's not news that Wynne's pledge of a break on hydro bills was being financed with borrowed money, and would end up costing far more than it saved. But the leaked document - reportedly obtained from a disgruntled Energy Ministry employee - put actual numbers on the tab. It indicated an average Toronto bill would fall about \$35 a month in the first year, enabling the Liberals to run for re-election without having to apologize at every doorstep for the latest hydro outrage. But the savings would quickly start to disappear. A decade after the election - by which time most members of this government would be safely retired - Ontarians would be paying about \$90 a month more, with additional increases over the next 20 years.

The Liberals, naturally, shrugged off the revelation. The leaked document, said Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault was from, like, months ago. It was just a topic of discussion. "And, you know, plans change."

He didn't say how plans had changed, or deny that Ontarians will indeed get whacked with crippling increases (on top of the doubling of rates they've already endured from the Liberals.)

He also didn't seem to realize that the constant backof-the-envelope approach to governing is exactly what worries so many people. Just a few years ago Liberal plans changed right in the middle of an election, and Ontarians got stuck with a \$1.2 billion bill for two power plants that suddenly got shifted out of endangered Liberal ridings.

Thibeault knows as well as anyone that Wynne's government has a very tight window to reverse its disastrous slide. By year-end the election will be too imminent for any more Hail Mary programs. That's been evident for some time as the government abandons all pretence of integrity, from handing out \$54,000 in Canada Goose jackets to government workers in northern Ontario, to revising union organizing rules in hopes of once again cementing the help of labour bosses in defeating the Tories.

A key part of the Liberal plan is to demonize Brown, but the task has proved harder than anticipated, forcing frustrated ministers to complain that he won't provide them with ammunition. They mock him for refusing to release detailed programs, which would enable them to steal the good bits (as they did with the recent NDP proposal for a universal drug plan) and rubbish the bad ones. They yearn for a return to the good old days of Tim Hudak, who produced easy-to-mangle white papers and threw away votes by threatening to erase 100,000 public-sector jobs. Brown has managed to open a commanding lead over Wynne's struggling party while keeping a low profile, yet the Liberals keep insisting he stick his head above the parapet so they can get a better shot at it.

You can't blame him for refusing to oblige, but you can wonder whether Ontario is a prize worth inheriting any more. The damage the Liberals have done to the energy grid is deep, serious and pernicious. It will take years, perhaps decades, to repair, if it can be repaired at all. Wynne and her predecessor Dalton McGuinty have committed the province to years of expensive contracts in service to their wide-eyed green energy dreams. The landscape is studded with towering, pricey windmills producing sporadic power the province doesn't need. The third leg of the Hydro One sell-off was completed a week ago, though enthusiasm for the shares has fallen so low that promoters found themselves stuck with a reported \$1.4 billion in unwanted stock. Meanwhile the Liberals are spending \$1 billion a month on debt interest and recently managed their first "balanced" budget in a decade, but only through conjuring tricks and accounting gimmicks that will quickly evaporate once the election is over, according to the province's financial accountability office.

It's a poisoned chalice that could saddle a new government with years of frustration. Patrick Brown seems intent on becoming premier despite the bleak prospects he's likely to inherit. If he succeeds, he may come to wish he hadn't.

COPYRIGHT: © 2017 Postmedia Network Inc. All rights reserved.

=====

Toronto Sun: Pharmacare? Great! How do we pay for it?; A15; 2017.05.23

PUBLICATION: Toronto Sun
PAGE: A15
DATE: 2017.05.23
SECTION: Comment
EDITION: Final
BYLINE: Jerryagar
SOURCE: Toronto Sun
KEYWORDS: afford,provide,universal,publicly,funded,coverage
ILLUSTRATION: / WYNNE;
WORD COUNT: 584

Pharmacare? Great! How do we pay for it?

We cannot afford to provide universal, publicly funded drug coverage for everyone in Ontario. We are broke.

That doesn't mean we can't discuss how it might be possible in the future, even the near future, to make it affordable.

The goal of providing life saving, life improving drugs to all Ontarians, regardless of their income, is a noble one and it is worth discussing, which we are now doing.

Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath has declared the next step in our medical system needs to be universal pharmacare.

Ontario's Liberal government recently instituted "OHIP+", a drug plan which offers free prescription drugs for people 24 and under, starting in January, 2018.

How will either party pay for it? They don't say. Perhaps they don't know - or care. It is a great political move.

Emotionally, people of good faith and good hearts are for the idea.

Who wants people to suffer simply because they can't afford the medication their doctor prescribes? But a part of caring is attention to detail, and a sustainable method of funding.

Paying for such a plan is not a small detail to be left to the future.

Emotion and empathy do not trump reality.

That sort of attitude is what got us into unprecedented and unsustainable debt; a debt that grows even as the Ontario government claims to have achieved a balanced budget.

The Wynne government, rather than deal with debt, plays with numbers, as they did with the cost of hydro.

Lowering the cost of power short term by paying less now, but extending the payments long term is not, as some suggest, like extending your mortgage payments on the house.

The house is an asset.

Ontario's debt is just debt, like your credit card bill.

And to seemingly balance the budget, the government is selling assets, such as Hydro One. What happens next year? Ontario's debt is projected to be \$312 billion this year, growing to \$336 billion in 2019-20.

Interest on debt is the fourth largest spending area, at \$11.6 billion.

What would universal pharmacare add? Health care is already our single biggest provincial expense by far.

Ontario will spend \$53.8 billion on health care this year, up from \$52.2 billion last year.

Spending is expected to rise to \$58.1 billion in 2019-20.

What does that mean to you if you pay taxes? There are roughly seven million working, taxpaying people in Ontario.

That means that each taxpayer spends almost \$7,700 a year, or \$640 a month, for health care.

If estimates are correct it will soon be nearly \$700 a month.

That is without adding in universal drug coverage.

How much more can you afford to pay? The only way people who "care" enough to cheerlead for universal pharmacare can be taken seriously is if they also show us where the money to pay for it will come from.

If they only want to raise taxes, they are fiscally irresponsible and lazy.

If they believe the Ontario government is fiscally responsible, then they are at best naïve.

Anyone can come up with a spending plan. Anyone can say they care more than others do. But grownups budget and prioritize. Grownups put some sweat and intelligence into their caring.

Care enough to pay for everyone's drugs? Then care enough to show us the cuts in other spending you have identified and that you will push for.

Agar hosts the 9 a.m. to noon show on NEWSTALK1010 jerry.agar@sunmedia.ca
[@jerryagar1010](https://twitter.com/jerryagar1010)

COPYRIGHT: © 2017 Sun Media Corporation. All rights reserved.

Ottawa Sun: Pharmacare? Great! How do we pay for it?; A15; 2017.05.23

PUBLICATION: Ottawa Sun

PAGE: A15

DATE: 2017.05.23

SECTION: Comment

EDITION: Final

BYLINE: Jerryagar

SOURCE: Ottawa Sun

KEYWORDS: afford,provide,universal,publicly,funded,coverage

ILLUSTRATION: / WYNNE;

WORD COUNT: 572

Pharmacare? Great! How do we pay for it?

We cannot afford to provide universal, publicly funded drug coverage for everyone in Ontario. We are broke.

That doesn't mean we can't discuss how it might be possible in the future, even the near future, to make it affordable.

The goal of providing life saving, life improving drugs to all Ontarians, regardless of their income, is a noble one and it is worth discussing, which we are now doing.

Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath has declared the next step in our medical system needs to be universal pharmacare.

Ontario's Liberal government recently instituted "OHIP+", a drug plan which offers free prescription drugs for people 24 and under, starting in January, 2018.

How will either party pay for it? They don't say. Perhaps they don't know - or care. It is a great political move.

Emotionally, people of good faith and good hearts are for the idea.

Who wants people to suffer simply because they can't afford the medication their doctor prescribes? But a part of caring is attention to detail, and a sustainable method of funding.

Paying for such a plan is not a small detail to be left to the future.

Emotion and empathy do not trump reality.

That sort of attitude is what got us into unprecedented and unsustainable debt; a debt that grows even as the Ontario government claims to have achieved a balanced budget.

The Wynne government, rather than deal with debt, plays with numbers, as they did with the cost of hydro.

Lowering the cost of power short term by paying less now, but extending the payments long term is not, as some suggest, like extending your mortgage payments on the house.

The house is an asset.

Ontario's debt is just debt, like your credit card bill.

And to seemingly balance the budget, the government is selling assets, such as Hydro One. What happens next year? Ontario's debt is projected to be \$312 billion this year, growing to \$336 billion in 2019-20.

Interest on debt is the fourth largest spending area, at \$11.6 billion.

What would universal pharmacare add? Health care is already our single biggest provincial expense by far.

Ontario will spend \$53.8 billion on health care this year, up from \$52.2 billion last year.

Spending is expected to rise to \$58.1 billion in 2019-20.

What does that mean to you if you pay taxes? There are roughly seven million working, taxpaying people in Ontario.

That means that each taxpayer spends almost \$7,700 a year, or \$640 a month, for health care.

If estimates are correct it will soon be nearly \$700 a month.

That is without adding in universal drug coverage.

How much more can you afford to pay? The only way people who "care" enough to cheerlead for universal pharmacare can be taken seriously is if they also show us where the money to pay for it will come from.

If they only want to raise taxes, they are fiscally irresponsible and lazy.

If they believe the Ontario government is fiscally responsible, then they are at best naïve.

Anyone can come up with a spending plan. Anyone can say they care more than others do. But grownups budget and prioritize. Grownups put some sweat and intelligence into their caring.

Care enough to pay for everyone's drugs? Then care enough to show us the cuts in other spending you have identified and that you will push for. jerry.agar@sunmedia.ca

COPYRIGHT: © 2017 Sun Media Corporation. All rights reserved.

=====