MEDIA SCAN: HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

August 27, 2017

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ONLINE COVERAGE

***NATIONAL POST**: DEPTHS OF WYNNE'S UNPOPULARITY REVEALED IN ONTARIO-GOVERNMENT POLL (ALSO APPEARS IN: CTV NEWS, CBC NEWS, AND HAMILTON SPECTATOR)*

News - National Post
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Byline: The Canadian Press

TORONTO - Critics of Ontario's premier wondering why her dismal personal approval ratings aren't prompting her to quit before next year's election need look no further than government-commissioned polling.

The last nine of months of polling that have landed in Kathleen Wynne's lap, and were obtained by The Canadian Press through a Freedom of Information request, suggest improving public opinion fortunes for a now somewhat less unpopular Liberal government.

The polling conducted by the Gandalf Group - headed by the man leading the Liberals' 2018 re-election bid - found large support for the government's plan for a $15 minimum wage, general support for carbon pricing, if not necessarily the specifics, and even improving assessments of the hydro file, over which the government has been consistently hammered.

McMaster University political science professor Henry Jacek said Wynne sees a path to electoral victory with popular policies, but she is still personally unpopular. An Angus Reid survey in June put Wynne's approval rating at 15 per cent - up from 12 in March.

"I can see how she sees the path forward in terms of the policies, but I still think there are so many red flags out there," Jacek said. "When people sour on a leader it's very hard to bring them back. They could have the best policies in the world."

A turning point in the polling came in March, which is when the government announced a cut to hydro bills, though in perhaps a sign of how poorly the government had been viewed up to that point, the pollsters cheered not an improvement in the numbers, but a lack of further decline.

"Assessment of the government's overall performance and assessment of the government's management of electricity prices have stayed constant from February through March," reads the March report to the cabinet office.

"These are measures that have been consistently eroding over the past several months, so remaining constant is a step in the right direction."

Premier Kathleen Wynne in Sudbury, Ont. on Tuesday May 23, 2017

The worst overall month for the government came in January, with 61 per cent of respondents saying it was on the wrong track. By July, that was down to 49 per cent, versus 43 per cent saying the government was on the right track - a gap that hadn't been that narrow since July 2016.

January's numbers also may point to why the government in March announced a further 17 per cent cut to electricity bills. An eight-per-cent cut had already taken effect on Jan. 1, but still 46 per cent of respondents said what came to mind on electricity was increasing costs, versus just four per cent who cited the eight per cent rebate.

After March's hydro announcement, that swung dramatically the other way, with 45 per cent of people citing "government reducing cost."

And since then, the government's performance rating on electricity prices increased steadily, with 44 per cent of respondents in July calling it excellent or good, up from 34 per cent in March.

More than three-quarters of respondents - 79 per cent - said they supported the Fair Hydro Plan, though a much smaller number - 55 per cent - said they actually believed their bill would decrease by the promised 25 per cent.

When it comes to the government's cap-and-trade system, the polling suggested Ontarians are very supportive in principle, but less so on the specifics.

In November, when the program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions hadn't yet been implemented, 85 per cent of respondents supported limiting the amount of pollution businesses can emit, though only 52 per cent supported Ontario's system.

And while 60 per cent agreed it was right to encourage businesses to reduce air pollution even if it led to higher costs for consumers, only 46 and 42 per cent, respectively, were OK with cap-and-trade adding four cents per litre on gasoline and $13 per month to energy fuel costs.

Given this, the pollsters suggest a line of messaging for the government.

"How the policy, cap and trade, is communicated makes a significant difference in support and in willingness to accept personal costs," they write. "Discussing the result of cap and trade, 'putting a cap on the amount of emissions that businesses can release into the atmosphere,' is much more supported than using the term cap and trade."

Support for cap and trade dropped after the plan was implemented in January, but still had the support of 50 per cent of respondents.

Wynne's most recent major policy, a $15 minimum wage, among other labour reforms, has been very well received, the polling suggests.

In July, 71 per cent of respondents said they supported the policy.

"Increasing the minimum wage, along with protection for temporary and part-time workers, serves to increase confidence in government even more than increases to healthcare spending," the pollsters wrote.

***Toronto Sun**: Thanks for nothing*

By: James Wallace, V-P, Editorial, Suns
Updated: Sunday, August 27, 2017 03:22 PM EDT

http://www.torontosun.com/2017/08/27/thanks-for-nothing

This is a case where you want to look the proverbial gift horse in the mouth.

Ontario Housing Minister Peter Milczyn has just announced plans to make "major investments in social housing repairs and retrofits" across the province.

"Helping Ontario's most vulnerable find stable housing is critically important to our goal of ensuring everyone in the province has a safe place to call home," Milczyn said in announcing a five-year cash commitment of $657 million.

Except that's not what's happening.

On the surface, the announcement is good news for residents in Toronto's dilapidated social housing homes and apartments, and for the City of Toronto, which has a $2.6-billion social housing repair backlog and unsolvable social housing crisis.

Toronto will get about half the funds Milczyn announced, but here's the rub

All the money, the minister's office confirmed, is earmarked for green energy renovations, not what's actually needed — cash to fix units and buildings so run down from neglect and abuse that they are uninhabitable.

As Mayor John Tory wrote in letters to provincial MPPs earlier this year: "Without immediate support, the City of Toronto expects that 400 units will be at risk of closing this year and 600 units will be at risk of closing in 2018.

"That's 1,900 of the city's most vulnerable residents at risk of losing their homes in two years," he wrote.

Apparently not a single Liberal MPP, not Milczyn nor Premier Kathleen Wynne responded, until this past week with a green energy retrofit program.

So instead of cash for worn out kitchen cabinets, broken toilets and new floors, the city will get money for building insulation, maybe some rooftop solar panels and new energy efficient windows — "to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and save money on electricity costs," the province said in a release.

All of which is good for the environment, and without doubt will be some help to TCHC. Ontario's electricity bills are the highest in Canada, thanks to the Liberal government's disastrous mismanagement of this province's energy infrastructure. So if this green cash lowers TCHC's energy bills, that's a plus.

Tory was gracious in acknowledging the funding gesture from Queen's Park, as was TCHC. But it might be compared to handing a pair of new jeans to a starving man — appreciated perhaps, but the gift doesn't address the real problem.

Meanwhile, the cash Milzcyn plans to dole out will come from the Liberal government's new cap-and-trade carbon tax, which will make everything from gasoline to groceries more expensive for consumers.

But it will do little to lift desperate tenants out of dangerous, sub-standard public housing, which is somewhat ironic given Milczyn is also minister responsible for poverty reduction.

Forced to choose between helping people in dire and chronic need, or virtue signalling about global warming, the Liberals chose the latter.

Wynne has repeatedly suggested the next election campaign will be about "fairness." Given the Liberals have had 14 years to fix the social housing "downloading" mess they blamed on Mike Harris in opposition, it's clear this government has no idea what that means.

By the numbers:

— The government announced a five-year, province-wide investment of up to $657 million.

— Funding is contingent on carbon market proceeds, for greenhouse gas retrofits and repairs to social housing apartment buildings.

— That includes up to $343 million for Toronto over five years: $43 million previously announced for 2016-17, $119.5 million in 2017-18, and up to $180.3 million between 2018-19 and 2020-21.

***Blackburn News**: CK MPP Dissapointed By News of Enviroshake Closure In Chatham*

By: Sarah Cowan
August 27, 2017 10:28AM @scowannews

http://blackburnnews.com/chatham/chatham-news/2017/08/27/ck-mpp-dissapointed-news-enviroshake-closure-chatham/

A local MPP is not happy to hear that a Chatham manufacturer named Industry of the Year for 2017 is set to close.

Enviroshake is a manufacturer that produces roofing products from recycled material. The plant is located at the corner of Bloomfield Rd. and Riverview Dr.

Almost 50 workers will be affected when Enviroshake Canada in Chatham closes by the end of the year. Staff were notified of the closure on Thursday and Friday.

“I was sad to learn that Enviroshake would be closing down its Chatham plant. This will certainly have an impact on our community. I hope action is taken to help the 50 affected employees find another job,” says Chatham-Kent-Essex MPP Rick Nicholls.

Nicholls adds that it is tough to find good-paying manufacturing jobs in Ontario anymore.

“Under the Liberals, Ontario has lost more than 350,000 manufacturing jobs because companies no longer see Ontario as open for business,” he says.

Nicholls says some of the production will be moving to Michigan, where hydro rates are lower.

TV Transcripts

None