

QP BRIEFING

April 20, 2018

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1). IN BRIEF: A SECOND DEBATE, DAVID HERLE THINKS FORD IS A 🍆, AND OEB RATES

By: David Hains

A second televised leader's debate has been set for May 7. That's two days before the writ drops on May 9, but the leaders already seem to be in campaign mode anyway. The debate will be broadcast by CityTV and will simultaneously appear on the station's website and Facebook page. Kathleen Wynne, Doug Ford and Andrea Horwath are confirmed for the event, which will take place from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. and be broadcast commercial-free. The CityTV press release promises that the debate will touch on "transit, health care, the legalization of marijuana, crime, and policing."

It's the second confirmed debate for the three main party leaders, although Wynne has called on Green Party Leader Mike Schreiner to be included in the debates as well. A debate was announced earlier for Sunday, May 27, to be broadcast across a consortium of TV stations. Ford had previously said he would do three televised debates, which Wynne, who is in third place in the latest poll, has tried to encourage.

Speaking of live TV, sometimes unexpected things happen. On Friday afternoon, Liberal campaign co-chair David Herle was part of a panel of political strategists to weigh in on the state of the race. He was asked about comparisons between Doug Ford and his late brother, former Toronto mayor Rob Ford. Using colourful language, Herle argued that Doug is less likable than his brother.

HERLE: Doug Ford is not Rob Ford. Rob Ford was a good politician. People liked Rob Ford. He was a popular guy. He won the mayor's race.

CP24: You don't think people like Doug Ford?

HERLE: I don't actually.

CP24: (overlapping voices, inaudible) more than Rob Ford?

HERLE: No, I think people liked Rob Ford and I think people think Doug Ford is a bit of a dick, to be honest.

No word on whether the eggplant emoji will play a role in future Liberal social media posts. 🍆

The Ontario Energy Board announced that energy rates will remain mostly unchanged for the next year as of May 1. The only two changes are actually decreases of 0.1 cents per kilowatt hour to the mid-peak and to Tier 2 prices.

Hydro rates will likely be an election issue, with the Liberals touting the party's Fair Hydro Plan, while the NDP say they will reduce rates a further 30 per cent, and Ford has previously said he will reduce existing rates by 22 per cent. The opposition parties have offered few details as to how they will do so.

Former MPP and PC leadership contender Christine Elliott will represent the party in its bid to win the seat for Newmarket–Aurora, where she was acclaimed. Elliott finished a very close second to Ford in the PC leadership race, which she didn't concede until the day after the vote total was announced. Most recently she was the province's first Patient Ombudsman.

Christine Elliott @celliottability

Very honoured to be named the PC Party candidate for Newmarket-Aurora. You can count on me to fight for a better Ontario alongside our amazing team lead by @fordnation. June 7th can't come soon enough! Relief is on the way. #pcpo #onpoli

My statement here:

<https://twitter.com/celliottability/status/987424307927105536/photo/1>

4:14 PM - Apr 20, 2018

2). *ADVOCATES DEMAND A MORE MUSCULAR PAY TRANSPARENCY LAW*

By: Christopher Reynolds

Pay equity advocates are calling for beefed-up pay transparency rules that rope in more Ontario employers in the face of a gender wage gap that has barely narrowed in three decades.

Business backers, however, say the government should simply update 31-year-old legislation, not pass a new bill that imposes "burdensome" demands on employers.

The Pay Transparency Act, now in committee at Queen's Park, requires employers to prepare a report detailing the differences in compensation "with respect to gender" in an employer's workforce.

Bill 3 also requires salaries to be posted in job listings and bars reprisals against workers who disclose their compensation.

The rules would be phased in, applying first to public sector employees, then to private companies with more than 500 employees in 2019 and then to workplaces with more than 250 employees in 2020 or 2021, the government has said.

Fay Faraday, representing the Ontario Equal Pay Coalition, called for the new law to be extended to all employers with 10 or more employees "Secrecy in pay undermines women's ability to enforce their fundamental rights in the workplace."

Iceland, Denmark and Belgium have pay transparency legislation that applies to 25, 35 and 50 employees, respectively, she noted.

Businesses with fewer than 100 workers comprise more than 95 per cent of businesses in the province, according to the Ontario Federation of Labour, which demanded the law apply to all employers, regardless of size.

"In fact, women who are Indigenous, racialized, or new to Canada — all of whom face a larger gender wage gap — tend to work in smaller businesses," stated the union in a submission to the standing committee on social policy this week.

The union, which represents about 700,000 workers, is asking for more specifics in the law itself — including the employee threshold, above which a business is subject to the legislation — rather than in regulations to be hashed out down the line. Compensation structure and wage grids by gender, job classification and employment status should all be enshrined in Bill 3 itself, according to the OFL.

Both the union and the Ontario Equal Pay Coalition, which includes more than 40 women's and community groups, unions and business organizations, are also calling for: tougher enforcement through the Pay Equity Office rather than the Ontario Labour Relations Board; mandatory timelines for filing pay transparency reports; and penalties of up to \$50,000, on top of \$1,000 in damages to each employee, for failing to comply.

Rocco Rossi, president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, said the government should go no further than reviewing and updating the Pay Equity Act, passed by Liberal regime under David Peterson in 1987 and untouched by amendments since 1993.

"Many of the goals of Bill 3 could be achieved by improving the existing legislation and its associated regulations, including strengthening the mandate of the Pay Equity Office," he said in an April 17 letter to committee chair and NDP MPP Peter Tabuns.

Rossi cited the "administrative burden" that more reporting rules around compensation and gender would cause — "a step in the wrong direction."

He pointed to the Ministry of Labour's relatively underfunded Pay Equity Office — its budget for 2017-18 is \$2.95 million, and it has investigated more than 1,000 complaints since 2011, according to the office. He suggested the office "focus on compliance" through improved communications.

The gender gap — the difference between wages earned by men and those earned by women — slid 0.24 per cent per year to 29 per cent in 2016 from 36 per cent in 1987, according to the office.

The office itself expressed concerns about the bill's effectiveness, stating in a submission the legislation includes no rules "to require accountability," outside of an investigation prompted by a complaint.

Ontario is the first province to try to implement a pay transparency law, Status of Women Minister Harinder Malhi said earlier this month.

"We want to get it right, and that's why we followed what the other jurisdictions are doing," she said. "We want to be able to give women an equal opportunity to be able to bargain, to be able to know what their full value.

"Just recently there's been a show on Netflix called The Crown, and we all know about the queen and the prince: Even though the queen is the leading role, the prince is making almost three times what she is making," Malhi said, referring to actors Claire Foy and Matt Smith. "Had it been publicly disclosed, she would never have accepted that position at that wage."

Last month, the federal budget set out \$50 million to introduce pay transparency over three years in federal jurisdictions for employers with 10 or more employees, among other measures.

Bill 3 is slated to return to the house for third reading next week.

3). FORD PROMISES NEW LONG-TERM CARE BEDS, COMES OUT AGAINST SUPERVISED INJECTION SITES

By: Jessica Smith Cross

A Progressive Conservative government will create 15,000 long-term care beds in five years, Leader Doug Ford announced Friday.

At a media event in Sarnia, Ford said the new beds will help end "hallway health care" in Ontario.

Each of the major parties has promised to build long-term care facilities to shorten the long waitlists in communities across Ontario, thereby reducing hospital overcrowding by moving elderly patients who no longer require acute care out of hospital beds.

The Liberals have promised to create 30,000 beds over the next decade, 5,000 of them over the next four years. The NDP has promised 40,000 beds, 15,000 of them over the next five years. The PCs are promising 30,000 beds over a decade, 15,000 of them over the next five years.

Ford also stressed the need for the government to reduce bureaucracy in the health-care system and to listen to front-line health-care workers.

The Tory leader spoke about watching the pressures the nurses who cared for his brother, former Toronto mayor Rob Ford, were under.

"On a palliative care ward, there was a couple of nurses trying to keep up with a whole wing of palliative care patients, I saw first hand. And when I went through that, I said to myself: 'Never again, never again in Ontario are we going to face these pressures.' "

Ford didn't offer a costing of his health-care plan; he has not provided a costing of any of his promises.

However, the NDP platform — which makes the same commitment to creating 15,000 beds over five years — has pegged the cost of that at a little over \$2 billion over five years.

According to figures in the Liberal government budget, the continuing cost to operate 15,000 long-term care beds would be about \$820 million a year.

Liberal MPP and campaign co-chair Deb Matthews criticized Ford for failing to say how he'd pay for the investment in long-term care.

"Today, Doug Ford was out talking about investing in new long-term care beds — but he's also repeatedly said that he will make drastic cuts across government — up to \$10 billion annually. And with healthcare representing approximately 40 per cent of Ontario's budget, we know billions will have to be cut directly from front line services," she said in a statement.

"Doug Ford needs to come clean with a fully costed, honest campaign. A promise to build new beds when he's also shutting down hospitals and firing nurses doesn't add up, and Ontarians deserve better."

Ford comes out against supervised injection sites

At the same media event, Ford was asked for his views on supervised consumption sites, also known as supervised injection sites, which are now legal in Ontario and have been opening in communities across the province.

"I don't believe in safe injection areas, as I call them," he said. "I believe in supporting people, getting them help. Because right now, it's upwards to a thousand dollars a day in some cases, that people have to go rehab, we don't have enough rehabilitation. I ask anyone out there, if your son, daughter, loved one, ever had an addiction, would want them to go in a little area and do more drugs? I'm dead against that."

"But I fully understand, fully understand, there's a small epidemic out there. Opioids and the rest. We have to help these people, we can't just keep feeding them and feeding them, we have to get them help. We'll make sure we have the resources to get them help. Because it costs an absolute fortune, a fortune out there, to have them go to rehab right now."

Ford has experience with the cost of private rehab, which many people turn to, particularly when a publicly funded bed is not immediately available. In 2014, his brother Rob pegged the cost of his rehab at possibly as much as \$100,000. Rob received treatment at GreenStone Clinic in the Muskoka area.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath criticized Ford's view.

"Mr. Ford will drag Ontario backwards and deny people the care they need," she said in a statement. "The opioid overdose epidemic has touched every community in Ontario and devastated families. New Democrats will listen to front-line care workers, declare a public health emergency and take urgent action to save lives."

4). *HUTTON: THE DONALD, THE DOUG, AND THE KATHLEEN*

By: Deb Hutton

Last weekend after reading an Andrew Willis column in The Globe and Mail, I decided to write my monthly Queen's Park Briefing contribution on the simplicity and inaccuracy of comparing Ontario PC Leader Doug Ford with U.S. President Donald Trump.

In responding to Ford's outrage — shared by many Ontarians — at the salary package of the Hydro One CEO, Willis warned: "Welcome to a post-Trump political dynamic that carries real risks to Canadian business."

Really?

Willis is by no means alone in comparing Ford and Trump; but his column was the tipping point for me in my frustration with this narrative.

And then Wednesday happened.

Premier Kathleen Wynne not only jumped on the Ford-as-Trump bandwagon, she ratcheted up the rhetoric to new and dizzying heights. So anyone who had yet to compare the two conservative politicians and those who had already done so were given brand new ammunition.

A column in the Toronto Star went so far as to declare that the Ford-Wynne campaign has become a Trump-Clinton rematch.

I get it. It's easy and interesting to make comparisons between prominent politicians both past and present. I have no doubt I've done it myself.

Obviously, there are legitimate similarities between leaders who share space on the political spectrum regardless of jurisdiction. While all political parties strive to form new coalitions of voters at election time, their core supporters have more commonalities than differences. And so, of course, their leaders share in those ideologies, values and approach to the role of government.

And I acknowledge that the personalities and backgrounds of our political leaders help inform how they might act or react in situations. It's important.

But no two people are the same, no two jurisdictions are the same; nor are times in their economic, fiscal, cultural or demographic history. And that even includes among family members. Comparing Prime Minister Justin Trudeau with his father, for example, when it comes to how he will govern in 2018 would be no more instructive or fact-based than the Ford and Trump comparison.

Simply tallying up the so-called similarities between two politicians — particularly in two very different jurisdictions is an overly simplistic and unproductive way to look at the complexity of leaders and leadership.

And the Ford-Trump comparison is even more frustrating than others because I just don't buy it. Sure, both men are plain-spoken and anti-establishment in their tone and approach. They both

come from the private sector and have run a business. And, as though it matters one iota to their leadership abilities, the Economist declared this week that both men are “big, beefy and blond!”

<http://s3-us-east-2.amazonaws.com/qpbriefing/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/20135621/Ford-Trump-300x194.jpg>

(The Ontario Liberals shared this meme comparing Doug Ford with Donald Trump.)

But look at the actual facts. Trump ran on an anti-immigrant platform wrapped in protectionist pro-American rhetoric. The same cannot be said of Doug Ford. While we won't know until June 7, I suspect that his coalition of support will include a large segment of Ontario's immigrant population who are attracted to his policies and rhetoric about “the little guy.” And if anyone is talking about protectionist policies in Ontario, it's our current premier.

On the election itself, the only comparison I see between the one this June and the last U.S. federal one is this: many voters are feeling financially squeezed and don't believe they are sharing in the purported success around them. But the root causes of our troubles and our options for addressing them here in Ontario are nothing like those in the United States.

The Ontario Liberals clearly believe that labeling Doug Ford as Ontario's Donald Trump is good a political strategy. And they may well be right. We won't know for a few weeks.

But if you consider that an election is a large-scale job interview for the most important position in our province, surely there are more informative and instructive ways to evaluate the candidates running for the job.

In fact, the good news in this upcoming election is that we really do have clear homegrown choices for premier. The three individuals vying for the job couldn't be more different in their own right. And whether on child care, pharmacare, minimum wage, taxes, job creation, government spending or the running of Ontario's electricity system, voters are being presented with very different options.

And more importantly, I truly believe that the policies being put forward are firmly rooted in the personal beliefs and motivations of the individuals who are selling them. I don't believe that Wynne nor Ford in particular are borrowing from any other political leader past or present. In this election, they are running on exactly who they are and what they believe in. And those two perspectives couldn't be more different.

So there's no need to add anyone else to the mix when sizing up our choices for premier, particularly someone who doesn't live here and might not even be able to find us on a map.

5). WHO'S LOBBYING FOR WHOM

By: David Hains

New, renewed and amended registrations: April 13–20

Kenneth Stewart of Capital Hill Group Inc. on behalf of Inversa Systems Inc.

David Angus of Capital Hill Group Inc. on behalf of SavvyDox

David Angus of Capital Hill Group Inc. on behalf of Valt.X

David Angus of Capital Hill Group Inc. on behalf of Inversa Systems Inc.

David Angus of Capital Hill Group Inc. on behalf of Pegah

Michael Keegan of Michael Keegan & Associates on behalf of Grow Ontario Together

Patrick Dion of Patrick Dion & Associates on behalf of Receivables Management Association of Canada

Marc Wasserman of Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP on behalf of Deutsche Bank AG

Michael De Lellis of Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP on behalf of Deutsche Bank AG

Kevin Morley of Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP on behalf of Deutsche Bank AG

Jake Sikora of National Public Relations on behalf of Electricity Distributors Association

Saro Khatchadourian of Proof Strategies on behalf of the Foundation Fighting Blindness

Michael McCarthy of Grosso McCarthy Inc. on behalf of Home First Alliance for Patients

Kelly Baker of StrategyCorp Inc. on behalf of Carpenters' District Council of Ontario

Leanna Karremans of Pathway Group Inc. on behalf of Ignite Infrastructure Association Inc.

Don Moors of Temple Scott Associates Inc. on behalf of TransUnion of Canada Inc.

Anika Christie of Grosso McCarthy Inc. on behalf of Home First Alliance for Patients

Caroline Pinto of Counsel Public Affairs Inc. on behalf of Orfus Realty

Aleem Kanji of Sutherland Corp. Ltd. (formerly Sutherland & Associates) on behalf of Empire Communities Ltd

John Duffy of StrategyCorp Inc. on behalf of Crosslinx Transit Solutions Constructors

Donald Gracey of CG Management & Communications Inc. on behalf of Ontario Athletic Therapist Association - OATA

Andrea Lockhart of Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP on behalf of Deutsche Bank AG

Mark Rudolph of justenvironment on behalf of First Mining Gold Corp.

Katlyn Harrison of Summa Strategies Canada Inc. on behalf of Canadian Steel Producers Association

Daniel Moulton of Crestview Strategy on behalf of Intact Financial Corporation

Joanne Dobson of Summa Strategies on behalf of 2021 Canada Games Host Society

Steven Mahoney of SWM Consulting Ontario Inc on behalf of Argo Development Corporation

Ryan Singh of Temple Scott Associates Inc. on behalf of TransUnion of Canada Inc.

Ryan Singh of Temple Scott Associates Inc. on behalf of Mastercard Canada

Scott Thurlow of Temple Scott Associates Inc. on behalf of Imperial Tobacco Canada Limited

Mike Everard of Augusta National Inc. on behalf of Catholic Cemeteries, Archdiocese of Toronto

Christopher Holz of Adelaide Consulting Group Inc. on behalf of Camping in Ontario

Leanna Karremans of Pathway Group Inc. on behalf of Ontario Provincial Police Association (OPPA)

Andrew Retfalvi of Global Public Affairs Inc. on behalf of BioMarin Pharmaceutical Inc.

Saad Baig of StrategyCorp Inc. on behalf of Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment & Training

Christopher Loreto of StrategyCorp Inc. on behalf of Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment & Training

Caitlin McClung of StrategyCorp Inc. on behalf of Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment & Training

Brian Teefy of StrategyCorp Inc. on behalf of Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment & Training

Chris Benedetti of Sussex Strategy Group on behalf of BluEarth Renewables Inc.

Beverly Brooks of Brooks Communications on behalf of Ontario Life Line Intermediaries
Dan Pfeffer of Public Affairs Advisors on behalf of Renewable Industries Canada
Christian von Donat of Impact Public Affairs on behalf of Equifax Canada
Peter Curtis of Pathway Group Inc. on behalf of Ontario Catholic School Trustees Association
Paul Pellegrini of Sussex Strategy Group on behalf of United Parcel Services Canada Limited (UPS Canada)
Maryanne Sheehy of Public Affairs Advisors on behalf of Goldcorp Inc
Barry Campbell of Campbell Strategies on behalf of Home Capital Group Inc.
Christina Marciano of Sussex Strategy Group on behalf of Brooks Road Environmental
Giancarlo Drennan of Maple Leaf Strategies (formerly Bentham & Associates) on behalf of BIOX Corporation
Kevin Gaudet of BrightPoint Strategy on behalf of Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario
Kevin Gaudet of BrightPoint Strategy on behalf of Residential Construction Council of Ontario
Dafna Strauss of One Degree Government Relations on behalf of Red Rock Indian Band
Patrick Boily of Ontario Community Support Association
Marietta D'Souza of Ontario Long Term Care Association
Judy Irwin of Ontario Long Term Care Association
Candace Chartier of Ontario Long Term Care Association
Jamie Sanders of Ontario Long Term Care Association
Tommy Wong of Ontario Long Term Care Association
Andrea Wilkinson of Ontario Long Term Care Association
Vinita Haroun of Ontario Long Term Care Association
David Beirnes of Ontario Long Term Care Association
Michelle Gradini of Ontario Long Term Care Association
Karyn Bawden of Ontario Long Term Care Association
Nancy Cooper of Ontario Long Term Care Association
Carmen Williams of Ontario Long Term Care Association
Greig Nishio of Ontario Long Term Care Association
Kim Lucchetta of Ontario Long Term Care Association
Heather Webb of Ontario Bar Association
Christopher Cheung of Ontario Bar Association
James Elson of Ontario Bar Association
Quinn M. Ross of Ontario Bar Association
Michael Spitale of SEIU Healthcare
Vinusiya Peranandan of SEIU Healthcare
Sharleen Stewart of SEIU Healthcare
Blair DeMarco-Wettlaufer of Receivables Management Association of Canada (RMA)
Dale Leslie of Receivables Management Association of Canada (RMA)
Steve Sheather of Receivables Management Association of Canada (RMA)
Sharon Burns of Canadian Cancer Society
Cindy Vinall of Canadian Cancer Society
John Atkinson of Canadian Cancer Society
Rob Cunningham of Canadian Cancer Society
Cathy Burns of Canadian Cancer Society
Lynne Hudson of Canadian Cancer Society
Susan Flynn of Canadian Cancer Society
Brenda MacGregor of Canadian Cancer Society
Jeff Cornett of Canadian Cancer Society
Heather Gray of Canadian Cancer Society
Karen Griffiths of Canadian Cancer Society

Sharie Mulkewich of Canadian Cancer Society
Laura Wall of Canadian Cancer Society
Kelly Gorman of Canadian Cancer Society
Angie Woodcock of Canadian Cancer Society
Alison Payne of Canadian Cancer Society
Elizabeth Harvey of Canadian Cancer Society
Janis Cunningham of Canadian Cancer Society
Frank Notte of Trillium Automobile Dealers Association
Todd Bourgon of Trillium Automobile Dealers Association
Darren Cohen of Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Louie DiPalma of Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Reid McKay of Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Rocco Rossi of Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Andrew Thiele of Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Jessica Georgakopoulos of Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Joshua Goodman of Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Rahul Bedi of Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Jamie Cleary of Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Karl Baldauf of Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Nadia Todorova of Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Ashley Challinor of Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Trevor McPherson of Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Jeremy Harrower of Canadian Transportation Equipment Association
Don Moore of Canadian Transportation Equipment Association
Nicola Wright of Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals
Allan Malek of Ontario Pharmacists' Association
Andrew Gall of Ontario Pharmacists' Association
Mike Cavanagh of Ontario Pharmacists' Association
Sean Simpson of Ontario Pharmacists' Association
Frauline Thomas of Financial Advisors Association of Canada (Advocis)
Peter McLachlin of Financial Advisors Association of Canada (Advocis)
James Ryu of Financial Advisors Association of Canada (Advocis)
Greg Pollock of Financial Advisors Association of Canada (Advocis)
Julie Martini of Financial Advisors Association of Canada (Advocis)
Ed Skwarek of Financial Advisors Association of Canada (Advocis)
Peter Tzanetakis of Financial Advisors Association of Canada (Advocis)
Katie Porter of Financial Advisors Association of Canada (Advocis)
Marie-Claire Barba-Flores of Financial Advisors Association of Canada (Advocis)
Shannon Coombs of Canadian Consumer Specialty Products Association
Daniel Demers of Canadian Consumer Specialty Products Association
Karyn Brearley of Yves Landry Foundation
Deborah MacLatchy of Wilfrid Laurier University
Maria Papadopoulos of Wilfrid Laurier University
Michael Kelly of Wilfrid Laurier University
Paul Jessop of Wilfrid Laurier University
Deborah Dubenofsky of Wilfrid Laurier University
Joel Peters of Wilfrid Laurier University
Robert Gordon of Wilfrid Laurier University
Martha Hook McGregor of Wilfrid Laurier University
Sandra Palmoro of Wilfrid Laurier University
Rachel Arbour of Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan (HOOPP)

Melisa Foster of Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan (HOOPP)
Blair Stransky of Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan (HOOPP)
Thang Tran of Pfizer Canada Inc.
Catherine Paquette of Pfizer Canada Inc.
Oliver Johnston of Pfizer Canada Inc.
Alexis Sciuk of Pfizer Canada Inc.
Connie Wong of Pfizer Canada Inc.
Frederic Lavoie of Pfizer Canada Inc.
Gillian Kennedy of Pfizer Canada Inc.
Mark Legault of Pfizer Canada Inc.
John Helou of Pfizer Canada Inc.
Erin Gowriluk of Syngenta Canada Inc.
Chris Davison of Syngenta Canada Inc.
John Lundrigan of ArcelorMittal Dofasco GP
Tony Valeri of ArcelorMittal Dofasco GP
Sean Donnelly of ArcelorMittal Dofasco GP
Henry Weigl of ArcelorMittal Dofasco GP
Ian Shaw of ArcelorMittal Dofasco GP

6). *FORUM POLL: ONTARIO LIBERALS FALL TO THIRD PLACE, RISK LOSING PARTY STATUS*

By: Jessica Smith Cross

The Ontario Liberals would go from majority government to seven-seat rump if an election were held this week, according to a poll and projection by Forum Research.

In the poll conducted on Wednesday, Forum found 46 per cent of voters said they would cast a ballot for the Progressive Conservatives if an election were held today, 27 per cent said they'd vote New Democrat and only 21 per cent said they'd vote Liberal.

Forum has had the PCs polling in the 40s for most the past two years, with the NDP and Liberals battling it out in the 20s for second place for most of the past year.

But their most recent previous poll, conducted March 29, saw the PCs at 36 per cent, the Liberals at 27 per cent and the NDP at 26 per cent.

<http://s3-us-east-2.amazonaws.com/qpbriefing/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/19211252/chart-2.jpeg>

The pollster projects this week's poll would translate to 94 seats and a majority government for the PCs, with the NDP serving as official opposition holding 23 seats — while the Liberals would win 7 seats, and lose official party status.

The poll was conducted in the middle of a busy week in Ontario politics. On Monday, the New Democrats released their platform, which includes hiking taxes on the wealthy and implementing subsidized, means-tested day care. Meanwhile, the PCs have been rolling out their first policy announcements, including getting the highly paid CEO of Hydro One fired, lowering corporate taxes and giving minimum wage earners a tax credit for all of their provincial income tax, while freezing the minimum wage.

It was three weeks after the Liberal government unveiled its budget. On Monday of this week, the party unveiled a series of attack ads against Doug Ford.

"The bump in support following the Liberal budget is gone," said Lorne Bozinoff, president of Forum Research. "The Progressive Conservatives are back where we've seen them for the past year, and Doug Ford looks on track to be premier in a few months. While campaigns matter, and it's hard to count out an effective campaigner like Kathleen Wynne, the fact that the shine from the Liberals' billions of dollars of promises has already diminished, must be a blow to their chances."

Forum also asked respondents about some of the PCs' recent policy announcements and found that 50 per cent of voters said that eliminating any provincial income tax would be better for minimum wage earners than increasing their pay by \$1, while 35 per cent said the opposite, and 15 per cent weren't sure.

(According to economic analysis, the minimum wage hike from \$14 to \$15 an hour proposed by the Liberals and NDP results in more take-home pay for minimum wage earners, but critics say increasing the minimum wage results in job losses.)

Forum found opinion on the PC plan to lower corporate taxes is split: 40 per cent said they disapprove of the proposed tax cut, with 26 per cent doing so strongly, while 37 per cent approve, a quarter strongly.

The Liberals would maintain the corporate income tax rate of 11.5 per cent, the NDP would raise it to 13 per cent and the PCs would lower it to 10.5 per cent.

Forum also asked respondents who they believe will win the election. More than half, 54 per cent, said they believe that the PCs will win the provincial election, while 19 per cent said it will be the Liberals and 10 per cent said NDP.

One per cent — "a hopeful few," according to the pollster — said the Greens will win, while 16 per cent said they did not know.

While 87 per cent of PC supporters think the PCs will win, only 54 per cent of Liberal supporters thought their party would win and 27 per cent of New Democrats had faith in their own party.

Forum polled 1,126 respondents by Interactive Voice Response, and says the poll has a margin of error of +/- three percentage points, 19 times out of 20.