

MEDIA SCAN: HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

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GLOBAL: FOCUS ONTARIO: AUDITOR GENERAL SAYS ONTARIO'S DEFICIT WILL BE \$11.7B NEXT YEAR

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Alan Carter, Host: Welcome back to Focus and a look at this week's auditor general's report. To paraphrase prince, this is what it sounds like when accountants fight.

Bonnie Lysyk, Ontario's Auditor General: The pre-election report is not a reasonable presentation of Ontario's finances.

Alan: That is Ontario's lead accountant, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk lowering the accounting boom on Kathleen Wynne's bookkeeping. Lysyk says next year's Ontario deficit will be \$11.7 billion. That is a whopping 75 per cent more than the Liberal budget predicts. The Premier responded this way.

Premier Kathleen Wynne: It's an ongoing discussion but it's not a new discussion.

Alan: The "not new" discussion which is now again under discussion is based on two major disagreements over how to count government assets and debts. Here, now watch this stock footage of hydro wires while I explain about the recently enacted Fair Hydro Plan. It lowers your hydro bills now by passing costs onto future generations. The debt associated with the plan doesn't show up on the government books and the auditor says that is wrong. Now, here is some footage of Queen's Park, this representing government workers in Ontario. Governments for years have counted employee pension plans as an asset but this auditor says that money isn't really available and should not be included on the plus side of the ledger. Isn't accounting fun? Now all of this of course is a gift to the opposition just before an election. But what would actually change with a change of government?

John Vanthof, NDP Finance Critic: Come June 8th, we will sit down with the auditor general and make sure that Ontarians – that we don't end up in this mess again.

Alan: Just a promise of a meeting from the NDP who have based their platform on the way the government counts assets, and even with promises to scrap the Fair Hydro Plan. As for the PCs, right now the party doesn't have a complete policy but its former platform kept both Liberal accounting and the Fair Hydro Plan.

Auditor General Lysyk: Or 75 per cent more than the \$6.7 billion presented by government.

Alan: All of which means the June 7th Ontario election is unlikely to solve this accountancy fight no matter who wins. It really is an ongoing discussion that will be ongoing. Now in reaction to the auditor's report, PC Leader Doug Ford made some news by revealing he would run a deficit if elected.

Doug Ford, Ontario PC Leader: Our goal's always to balance the books. It won't be the first year. We're going to do this in a modest and a responsible fashion.

Alan: Ford says his party will release a fully costed platform before the June 7th election. As for the accounting dispute with the auditor? Ford says he will order an inquiry.

PC Leader Ford: When it comes to budgets, the people of this province want to know where they stand. And right now, no one believes anything because every day, it changes. It changed from \$6.7 billion now up to close to \$12 billion.

Alan: Importantly, although Ford says he believes the auditor he would not commit to using her accounting methods if elected.

ONLINE COVERAGE

NONE