

Morning Media Scan: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan - December 8, 2017

From: "Stinson, Jeffrey (CAB)" <jeffrey.stinson@ontario.ca>
To: "@OPO-Media Relations and Issues Management" <opo-mediarelationsandissuesmgmt@msgov.gov.on.ca>, "Bevan, Andrew (OPO)" <andrew.bevan@ontario.ca>, "McEachern, Gillian (OPO)" <gillian.mceachern@ontario.ca>, "Donelson, Philip (OPO)" <philip.donelson@ontario.ca>, "Bossin, Bryan (OPO)" <bryan.bossin@ontario.ca>, "Tomney, Genevieve (OPO)" <genevieve.tomney@ontario.ca>, "Jancik, Mike (OPO)" <mike.jancik@ontario.ca>, "@CAB-Trans CO" <cab-transco@msgov.gov.on.ca>, "Baker, Carys (ENERGY)" <carys.baker@ontario.ca>, "Berry, James (ENERGY)" <james.berry5@ontario.ca>, "Bodrug, Andrew (ENERGY)" <andrew.bodrug@ontario.ca>, "Campbell, David (ENERGY)" <david.campbell2@ontario.ca>, "Coker, Meaghan (ENERGY)" <meaghan.coker@ontario.ca>, "Den Heijer, Kevin (ENERGY)" <kevin.denheijer@ontario.ca>, "Esdaile, Trevor (ENERGY)" <trevor.esdaile@ontario.ca>, "Festeryga, Katherine (ENERGY)" <som.1katherine.festeryga@ontario.ca>, "Foster, David (ENERGY)" <david.foster@ontario.ca>, "McGrath, Jessica (ENERGY)" <jessica.mcgrath@ontario.ca>, "Moseley-Williams, Kate (ENERGY)" <kate.moseley-williams@ontario.ca>, "Nekolaichuk, Colin (ENERGY)" <colin.nekolaichuk@ontario.ca>, "Olsheski, Mark (ENERGY)" <mark.olsheski@ontario.ca>, "Ramasra, Raynier (ENERGY)" <raynier.ramasra@ontario.ca>, "Ruttan, Craig (ENERGY)" <craig.ruttan@ontario.ca>, "Teliszewsky, Andrew (ENERGY)" <andrew.teliszewsky@ontario.ca>, "Thompson, Rachel (ENERGY)" <rachel.thompson@ontario.ca>, "Tresise, Landon (ENERGY)" <landon.tresise@ontario.ca>, "Tretiakov, Ilia (ENERGY)" <ilia.tretiakov@ontario.ca>, "Walman, Evan (ENERGY)" <evan.walman@ontario.ca>, "An, Derrick (OPO)" <derrick.an@ontario.ca>, "Leisk, Madison (OPO)" <madison.leisk@ontario.ca>, "Porter, Maddy (OPO)" <maddy.porter@ontario.ca>, "Whittington, Margot (OPO)" <margot.whittington2@ontario.ca>, "Yaqubian, Farnaz (OPO)" <farnaz.yaqubian@ontario.ca>, "Riggs, Matt (ENERGY)" <matt.riggs@ontario.ca>
Cc: "Sumi, Craig (CAB)" <craig.sumi@ontario.ca>, "Di Giovanni, Robert (CAB)" <robert.digiovanni@ontario.ca>, "Law, Sally (CAB)" <sally.law@ontario.ca>, "Stinson, Jeffrey (CAB)" <jeffrey.stinson@ontario.ca>, "Nutter, George (ENERGY)" <george.nutter@ontario.ca>, "Ma, Cesue (CAB)" <cesue.ma@ontario.ca>, "Electronic Media" <cab.emedia@ontario.ca>, "Selvadasan, Assumpta (CAB)" <assumpta.selvadasan2@ontario.ca>, "Halford, Gavin (ENERGY)" <som.gavin.halford@ontario.ca>
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MEDIA SCAN HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

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Toronto Sun: Wynne worse than McGuinty on ads; A16; 2017.12.08

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Wynne worse than McGuinty on ads

Of all the examples of government waste revealed in Ontario Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk's annual report, perhaps the most startling is this.

When it comes to spending taxpayers' money on partisan advertising, Premier Kathleen Wynne can not even match the level of political integrity demonstrated by her Liberal predecessor, Dalton McGuinty. As a result, Lysyk concludes, the Wynne government spent over \$17 million of tax money in 2016/17 alone running partisan political ads promoting itself, that would not have been allowed under McGuinty's government.

McGuinty, after winning power in 2003, passed the Government Advertising Act, which took effect in 2005. It gave the auditor general the power to veto partisan advertising designed to make the government look good, rather than convey useful information to the public.

In 2015, Wynne gutted that law by passing amendments severely restricting the auditor general's ability to veto partisan advertising.

Ever since, according to Lysyk, the Wynne government has been using millions of tax dollars to pay for political ads she would have vetoed under McGuinty's law but had to allow under Wynne's amendments. Last year, the Wynne government spent over \$58 million on advertising - the highest level in a decade. Lysyk found 30%, \$17.4 million, was spent on advertising whose main purpose appeared to be to make the government "look good".

Among the most egregious examples was a \$5.6 million advertising campaign on climate change. Part of it, said Lysyk, appeared to be designed to "create apprehension (in adults and children) about the effects of climate change so viewers will be more likely to support Ontario's Climate Change Action Plan." Another part, "did not provide viewers with any useful information" and made claims that appeared to be "overstated", designed "to foster a positive impression of the government".

Lysyk criticized a \$1 million radio ad campaign promoting Wynne's 25% electricity rate cut before the enabling legislation was even passed, and a \$1.9 million television campaign about creating more daycare spaces that "could be perceived as a political commitment in light of the forthcoming June, 2018 election." So according to the auditor general, the Wynne government is using our money to pay for Liberal advertising to get itself re-elected. Had enough yet?

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