

Queen's Park Today – Election Report May 14, 2018

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Quotation of the day

“I’m not sure what smile has got to do with making good policy for the north or anywhere else in the province.”

Premier Kathleen Wynne speak with reporters Friday following the second televised leaders’ debate in which PC leader Doug Ford told Wynne “I still like that smile.”

Day 6: Today on the campaign trail

Wynne campaign

OLP leader **Kathleen Wynne** was back in the Liberal-held riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore Saturday morning to discuss her party’s promise of \$1.8 billion in new developmental services funding. In the afternoon, Wynne headed to Scarborough North (a long-time Liberal riding swiped by PC candidate **Raymond Cho** in a 2016 by-election) to visit the Muslim Welfare Centre and speak at a Project Ramadan event. Wynne ended the day at a BBQ in Liberal candidate **Lou Rinaldi**’s riding of Northumberland—Peterborough South.

On Sunday, Wynne spoke with runners in Toronto at the starting line of the Sporting Life 10K in Liberal candidate **Mike Colle**’s Eglinton—Lawrence riding before holding a Mother’s Day-inspired event with her family where she discussed the budget’s promise to deliver free child care for toddlers. In the afternoon, Wynne spoke at Teeyan Da Mela events in Mississauga and Brampton.

On Monday, the Liberal leader will make a morning announcement at the Finishing Trades Institute of Ontario in North York before meeting with members of the Carpenters’ Local 785 in Cambridge. She will end her day at a BBQ in the Liberal-held riding of Kitchener Centre.

Ford campaign

On Saturday morning, PC leader **Doug Ford** headed to York South—Weston to attend the campaign office opening of PC candidate **Mark DeMontis**, then moved onto the riding of Scarborough Centre to campaign with PC candidate **Christina Mitas**. In the afternoon, Ford visited a retirement residence to announce a plan for increasing dental coverage for low-income seniors. He ended the day with a rally in Caledon with local PC candidate **Sylvia Jones**.

On Sunday, Ford was at home to celebrate Mother's Day with his wife and four daughters.

On Monday, the PC leader heads to the Niagara Region where he will make an announcement in Fort Erie before touring a local packaging company in PC candidate **Sam Oosterhoff's** riding of Niagara West. He will also meet with supporters in the Liberal-held riding of St. Catharines and hold a rally in Niagara Falls, which is currently represented by the NDP's **Wayne Gates**.

Horwath campaign

NDP leader **Andrea Horwath** was in Sudbury Saturday to speak with reporters about her plan to reduce hydro bills.

The NDP leader then took off south to attend the campaign office opening of Simcoe North NDP candidate **Elizabeth Van Houtte** in Orillia. Van Houtte will square off in a tough contest for the riding of Simcoe North against **Jill Dunlop**, daughter of former Tory MPP **Garfield Dunlop**. Horwath ended the day with a meet and greet in Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, the riding formerly held by PC leader **Patrick Brown**.

On Sunday, Horwath was in Beaches—East York, the riding currently held by Liberal MPP **Arthur Potts** (but a long-time NDP stronghold under former NDP MPP **Michael Prue**), to meet with supporters on the Danforth. Horwath announced a "New Moms Guarantee" that would protect maternal health services, stop closures of women's health facilities and hire 360 new midwives.

The NDP leader also used the occasion to celebrate the fact that 56 per cent of the NDP candidates running in this election are women — the first time an Ontario party has run a majority female roster.

Monday will see the NDP leader stop in Brampton to make a health care announcement, then head to NDP-friendly western Ontario for campaign events in Chatham and Sarnia.

Leaders delve in to municipal consultation, Ring of Fire and healthcare during northern debate

The campaign's second televised leaders' debate took place Friday morning in Parry Sound as part of the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities conference. The debate featured question on northern policy consultation, the Ring of Fire, health care, firefighter regulations and immigration.

Moderated by Kapuskasing Mayor **Al Spacek**, the stage featured a black backdrop with the leaders behind wooden podiums — a stark contrast to the wide open set used for the first debate. Liberal leader **Kathleen Wynne** stood between PC leader **Doug Ford** on her right and NDP leader **Andrea Horwath** on her left.

The questions were written in advance by a group of northern municipal administrators who watched from the audience and were fine-tuned to address specific government programs and regulations that affect the north.

Ford got the debate off to a raucous start by answering a question about species-at-risk legislation by labelling one of the NDP's eastern candidates as an "extremist." **Ramsey Hart**, NDP candidate Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston and a former staffer at resource watchdog group MiningWatch, was singled out by Ford as evidence that Horwath's team is not supportive of northern resource extraction. Ramsey "cheers every time mining jobs go," Ford said. "Who does that?"

Ford accused his rivals of knowing only how to tax, spend and "talk, talk, talk" when it comes to the Ring of Fire, to which Wynne expounded on the need for extensive discussions with municipalities, First Nations and industry before roads and bridges to the Ring of Fire can be responsibly built. Wynne said construction will begin on the main Ring of Fire road in the next few months.

Horwath said, if elected, her party would create a special committee of northern MPPs to study all policy proposals through a northern lens. The NDP leader got one of her largest applauses of the day when she asked Ford simply, "Where's your platform?"

With polls showing the NDP are in second place behind the PCs, Ford shifted the focus of his attacks from the premier to Horwath. During the debate, the PC leader said Horwath, like Wynne, is more interesting in huddling with "downtown elites" and "extremist environmentalists" like Hart than she is in working with northern communities. He also brought of the specter of former NDP Premier **Bob Rae** who he "destroyed the province" in the 1990s.

During the post-debate handshakes, Ford held onto Wynne's for an extra moment and could be heard saying "I still like that smile" to the premier before the candidates left the stage.

Ford defends "take care of our own" comment from northern debate

The largest quarrels in Friday's leaders' debate arose from discussion about the Northlander train service and the carbon tax. PC leader **Doug Ford**'s response to a question about immigration dominated the post-debate analysis.

The debate's final question asked leaders to weigh in on whether their party would support a northern Ontario-focused immigration nominee pilot program, similar to projects run in other provinces, which would allow northern businesses to fill jobs by sponsoring economic immigrants.

Ford replied that he would be happy to look at the program's results, "but number one, I'm a pretty generous guy—I'm taking care of our own first. Once we take care of our own, once we exhaust every single avenue and don't have anyone that can fill a job, then I'd be open to that."

Reaction from Ford's political rivals was swift. In post-debate scrums, Liberal leader **Kathleen Wynne** called the comment "very disturbing" and NDP leader **Andrea Horwath** told reporters Saturday she was "shocked" by the remark. "I've heard that language used by people who are suggesting that newcomers are not welcome in the province or in our country, and that's not an opinion that I share," said Horwath.

The backlash put Ford's team on defense over the weekend. During a campaign stop in Etobicoke on Saturday, Ford accused his opponents of "playing politics" with his response. "I'm a huge supporter of new Canadians. I'm a huge supporter of new immigrants coming into this country, trying to make their own way," he told reporters, claiming "Ford Nation is the most diverse group anywhere in Canada."

At a campaign stop in Humber River—Black Creek in Toronto on Sunday, Wynne told reporters that anyone who attempts to divide the people of Ontario into "our own" and "everybody else" is "fundamentally" wrong.

"Apart from Indigenous people, we all came from somewhere else," Wynne said after making a child care announcement. "Whether we came six generations ago or six years ago, we are one Ontario. What Doug Ford did in that comment was really divide people, and I don't think that kind of divisiveness, that kind of separating of some Ontarians from others, I don't think it's who are."

Topics of conversation

- A new Mainstreet Research poll of 2,534 Ontarians shows **Andrea Horwath** and the NDP have solidified their second place status with 28.4 per cent of voter support, compared to 22.1 per cent for **Kathleen Wynne** and the Liberals. **Doug Ford** and the PCs remain well ahead of both parties with 42.3 per cent support from decided or leaning voters.
 - Compared to the last Mainstreet poll conducted April 30, NDP support is up 7.1 per cent among decided voters and Liberal support is down 6.1 per cent. Tory support dipped by 2.6 per cent.
 - Support for the Liberals within the City of Toronto has also dropped, putting them six points behind the Tories in the 416-area code and almost 20 per cent behind the PCs in the 905.
- Ontario's unemployment rate held steady in April at 5.6 per cent, which is below the Canadian average of 6.1 per cent. According to Statistics Canada, on a year-over-year basis "employment in the province rose by 133,000 or 1.9 per cent, all in full-time work."

- The economy, health care, education and the environment are Ontario voters' top four priorities heading into the June 7 election, according to CBC Vote Compass analysis of over 12,000 voter responses.
 - While the economy and education remain the top two priorities, the data shows both are less important than they were to voters in the lead-up to the 2014 election.
 - Health care and the environment, however, both registered as more important in this campaign than they were in 2014. Housing, which barely registered as an election issue in 2014, saw one of the largest single-issue jumps in importance from 2014 to 2018.
 - For voters 65+, the economy and health care rank first; for voters aged 18-29, education and the environment rank as top priorities.
 - Religion, crime and immigration are the three lowest priority issues for voters in the 2018 campaign.

Today's events

May 14 at 9 a.m. — Brampton

NDP leader **Andrea Horwath** will make a health care announcement at North Star Plaza.

May 14 at 9:15 a.m. — North York

OLP leader **Kathleen Wynne** will make an announcement at the Finishing Trades Institute of Ontario.

May 14 at 9:15 a.m. — Toronto

Green Party of Ontario leader **Mike Schreiner** will release the GPO's campaign platform at Queen's Park.

May 14 at 10:30 a.m. — Niagara Falls

PC leader **Doug Ford** will make an announcement at the Marriott on the Falls hotel.

May 14 at 12 p.m. — Smithville

PC leader **Doug Ford** will tour packaging company Stanpac.

May 14 at 1:30 p.m. — St. Catharines

PC leader **Doug Ford** will hold a meet and greet with St. Catharines PC candidate **Sandie Bellows** at Scorecard Harry's Inc.

May 14 at 2:30 p.m. — Chatham

NDP leader **Andrea Horwath** will hold a campaign event.

May 14 at 4 p.m. — Cambridge

OLP leader **Kathleen Wynne** will make a campaign stop at Carpenters' Local 785.

May 14 at 6 p.m. — Niagara Falls
PC leader **Doug Ford** will hold a rally with supporters at the Marriott on the Falls.

May 14 at 6 p.m. — Kitchener
OLP leader **Kathleen Wynne** will deliver remarks at a BBQ with local supporters at a private residence.

May 14 at 6 p.m. — Sarnia
NDP leader Andrea Horwath will hold a campaign event at Dante Club Hall.

News from the campaign trail

- “Okay, I get it. Everything hasn’t been perfect in **Kathleen Wynne’s** Ontario.” So begins a new Liberal television advertisement, in which a young woman walks through farm fields detailing how the Liberal leader has delivered on her 2013 promise to “build Ontario up” by increasing the minimum wage, making tuition free and launching OHIP+.
 - “Who’s the premier with the lowest unemployment rate in almost 20 years? Kathleen,” the ad concludes.
- The Ontario Liberal Party accused the New Democrats Saturday of burying a tax increase on businesses in the fine print of their platform. The Liberals argue the NDP’s proposed change to the Business Education Property Tax would raise business property taxes by 28 per cent and would affect all businesses no matter how profitable they are.
 - The New Democrats say their plan is to standardize the Business Education Property Tax, which is currently being unevenly applied. According to the NDP some businesses pay up to 15 per cent more than comparable companies.
- Northwestern Ontario Liberal MPPs **Bill Mauro** and **Michael Gravelle** unveiled the Liberal Party’s northern platform in Thunder Bay on Friday morning shortly before the leadership debate.
 - In the platform, the Liberals promise to double the capacity of the TransCanada highway, increase funding for the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation and add 5,500 personal support workers to northern and remote communities in order to increase access to home care.



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- **Zita Astravas**, former press secretary to Liberal leader **Kathleen Wynne**, is taking an unpaid leave of absence from her post as chief of staff to federal Defence Minister **Harjit Sajjan** to help guide Wynne's sputtering campaign. According to CBC, Astravas, who left Queen's Park to join federal Liberal leader **Justin Trudeau**'s 2015 campaign, is known in Liberal circles as the prime minister's "fixer."
- On the heels of inflammatory statements about race and same-sex marriage from former PC candidate **Tanya Granic Allen** and London West candidate **Andrew Lawton**, more questionable comments have surfaced from Kanata—Carleton PC candidate **Merrilee Fullerton**. Fullerton made anti-Muslim statements on Twitter and on a blog between 2007 and 2016.

Wynne earmarks \$1.8 billion boost for developmental services

Liberal leader **Kathleen Wynne** was in Etobicoke Saturday to announce an additional \$1.8 billion investment over three years in developmental services beginning in 2018-19.

"This will go a long way towards expanding services for people living with disabilities and giving families more choice and flexibility when it comes to care," Wynne told supporters.

As part of the investment, more than 40,000 adults with developmental disabilities in Ontario will receive a minimum of \$5,000 each year to spend on the kind of care or services they need, provided the Liberals win re-election.

Close to \$300 million of the \$1.8 billion investment will flow to community-based agencies that provide programming for adults with developmental disabilities. "That is base funding to allow them to continue to grow their programs," Wynne said, or to expand the services they currently provide.

Ford promises dental coverage, long-term care beds for seniors

The Tories will cover the cost of dental care for low-income seniors who lack coverage, PC leader **Doug Ford** announced Saturday, at an estimated cost of \$98 million annually.

Speaking at the Chartwell Scarlett Heights Retirement Residence in Liberal MPP **Yvan Baker**'s riding of Etobicoke Centre, Ford told supporters that "Many Ontarians have dental insurance, but two-thirds of low income seniors do not and cannot afford it."

More than 100,000 seniors across the province would see increased access through funding boosts to dental units at Public Health Units, Community Health Centres and Aboriginal Health Access Centres. A single senior making \$19,300 or less will qualify for the PC plan, or an elderly couple with a combined household income of \$32,300 or less.