

MEDIA EVENT: GREEN PARTY LEADER SCHREINER RELEASES PLATFORM

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Time / Location:

9:15 a.m./Queen's Park Media Studio

Speakers:

Green Party Leader Mike Schreiner

Media Attendance:

Print – 7

TV - 2

Radio – 0

Media Outlets:

Reeves – QP Today; Paikin – TVO; McGrath – TVO; Fitzpatrick – CBC Online

Statement:

Thanks Jason and good morning everyone. Thank you for being here today. Before I begin I'd just like to acknowledge that we're on this traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat, Seneca and most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit. And just to acknowledge that the Green Party embraces our role as stewards of this land and of this place not only for today but for the next seven generations.

I'd like to thank my colleague Robert Kiley who's our male deputy leader and candidate Kingston and the Islands for being here today. As well as David Coon, the leader of the Green Party of New Brunswick and MLA. David has really shown what a difference one green MLA can make. He's played an instrumental role in stopping fracking in New Brunswick. And I should note that David was included in the leaders' debates prior to having a seat in the legislature and he won his seat. So maybe that's why Doug Ford is afraid of what Mike Schreiner could do in the debates being the only major party leader still not asking for Greens to be included in the leader's debates.

Today it's my pleasure to put forward our nine priority commitments in our platform. It's a practical balanced and costed platform and it begins with jobs. Good jobs. Sustainable jobs. Well-paying jobs. Jobs that put people and planet first. So instead of clinging to the past like the three status quo parties, the Green Party wants to embrace the future, so Ontario is a world leader in creating the next generation of jobs. We will skate to where the puck is going not where it has been.

Already today in Canada 274,000 Canadians work in the clean energy sector with an average salary of \$92,000 dollars. Those are good middle class jobs and that's how we can rebuild our middle class after losing so many manufacturing jobs over the last decade. And we would begin by reorienting Ontario's business support programs to put criteria in place to invest in clean innovation, clean economy, so our companies can scale up clean innovation and become a world leader in the growing low carbon economy. We would also invest \$4.1 billion dollars over the next four years in a green building and business program so that Ontario businesses are the most energy efficient and competitive in the world. And so people can save money by saving energy.

And we would create living wage jobs supporting an increase in minimum wage while at the same time lowering payroll taxes on our small businesses. You know we have two parties of big business and one party of no business at Queens Park. We are the party that's going to champion local businesses and support resilient local economies. And as we generate prosperity we want to invest in people and communities.

You know over the last 15 years housing prices have gone up to the point where so many young people cannot afford to have a place they can afford to buy as a home. Gridlock is on the rise where commute times have gone from minutes to hours. And it doesn't have to be this way.

And so that's why the Green Party is calling for changes to our inclusionary zoning laws to require that any new development in Ontario whether it's rental, housing, condo have a minimum of 20 per cent affordable housing units. That is why we're going to call for changes to zoning and planning bylaws to ramp up the availability of tiny homes, laneway houses, secondary suites and basement apartments. In Toronto alone

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there's the potential for 40,000 laneway housing units which would allow us to increase the affordability of housing stock without always having to grow up or grow out.

We would also make a historic investment in transit funding \$35 billion over the next four years, which is on average about \$1.5 billion dollars more than what the Liberals are proposing. And we would cover 50 per cent of the operating costs for municipal transit. And we will be honest with the people of Ontario about how to pay for it. Magic money will not create the investments we need in transit no matter how often the 3 status quo leaders pretend otherwise. We have to be straight with the people of Ontario. That is why the Greens will follow expert recommendations to bring in road pricing, parking levies and land value taxation to raise \$3.9 billion dollars a year to invest in world class transit to get our economy moving again and get our people moving again.

We also believe it's critically important to transform our health care system, to work in preventing illness and promoting health not just treating sickness. And that's why we will make primary healthcare the foundation of our health care system. Because governments for years have poured billions into healthcare and we still have wait times. We still have hallway medicine. And that's why we have to start preventing illness instead of treating it. And one of the best ways to do that is to make a historic investment in mental health services, \$4.1 billion over the next four years which is \$2 billion more than what the Liberals are proposing. Because we understand that one of the best ways to take pressure off of our healthcare system and especially our hospitals, is for people to have the mental health services they need in our communities.

And we also recognise what a critical role poverty plays in people's health outcomes. Which is why I was so excited that the government, the previous government, brought in the Basic Income Guarantee pilot project, something the Greens have been advocating for years. But we cannot allow the Liberals to hide behind the Basic Income Pilot Project to not address poverty. For 15 years this government has failed to address poverty. Which is why we would immediately raise social assistance rates to the same level of the Basic Income Guarantee Pilot Project. That would cost about \$3.5 billion which we would pay for by cancelling the Liberal's unfair hydro plan. The most expensive Band-Aid in Ontario's history and a plan that disproportionately benefits the wealthy. We believe it is time to end red tape for the most vulnerable in Ontario and ensure that everyone has a basic income guarantee.

And I just want to close by saying that one of the things that I find most distressing at Queens Park right now is how the three status quo parties cling to the past. They are not taking bold action on the climate crisis that we face. You know the Liberals have so mismanaged the transition to a green economy and renewable energy that it's actually created something that should be a golden opportunity, has become a divisive issue in Ontario. The NDP is primarily been absent without leave when it comes to transitioning to the clean economy and a Doug Ford led Conservative Party is simply denying the climate crisis that we face and Greens believe there is a better way forward. We can tackle the climate crisis while lowering our energy bills and creating jobs and prosperity. And it starts by saying no to wasting billions of dollars on rebuilding Ontario's outdated overpriced nuclear plants when we can buy low cost water power from Quebec for one third of the price. And we will join the global movement. Countries around the world who are pledging to move to 100 per cent renewable energy by 2050. We will put Ontario on that same pathway.

And we have to recognise that extreme weather events are putting a lot more pressure on our water systems and our farmland. Which is why we will pledge to permanently protect Ontario's prime farmland and source water regions. Not only will we not open the Greenbelt up for development but we will actually expand it to include the Bluebelt, protecting all the major river systems in southern Ontario.

Greens are making a difference around the world and across Canada. David Coon has demonstrated that in New Brunswick. Peter Bevan-Baker and the PEI Greens doubled their caucus last fall. And of course a year and a week ago the B.C. Greens formed Canada's first caucus, holding the balance of responsibility and a minority government. Greens are showing people that we can do politics differently. Greens in Ontario are ready. We are ready to lead. We are ready to elect our first Green MPP. And we are ready to take our seat at Queen's Park in this election. I'm happy to answer any questions.

Q: McGrath: Mike, on the issue of the income supplements, could you explain a bit more about that? How would the Greens fund this anti-poverty measure and what

Yes, so first of all we would start by raising social assistance rates to the current Basic Income Pilot which is 75 per cent of the low income measure.

would it do?	
Q: [inaudible]	That's right, exactly, yes, sorry, I should be very clear on that. Yes. And we would initially pay for that by cancelling the unfair hydro plan, which if you think about it, if you look at the FAO numbers, the energy use of the wealthiest Canadians, the one percent, their 25 per cent discount almost equals the energy use that low income people pay for their entire energy use. So the Liberal plan, which the Conservatives support and the NDP partially supports, is essentially a tax cut for the wealthy and we believe it's a more responsible approach to support the most vulnerable in Ontario.
Q: McGrath: With the Fair Hydro Plan, the money that is paying for that is primarily coming from the hydro bills, it's not tax money.	We account for that because if you look at our budget projections we're using the Auditor General and the FAO deficit numbers that include the Fair Hydro Plan in those numbers. So we account for it in that way and so we were using that as our as our as our way of balancing off the budget deficit. Now we recognize that as we move out to Year 4 and we extend from 75 per cent of the low income measure to 100 per cent of the low income measure that will require additional revenue and we are proposing to cover that by increasing corporate taxes by a half a per cent. We're actually calling for a full 1.5 per cent increase in corporate tax on large corporations. Part of that will go to pay for lowering taxes on small businesses, payroll taxes on small businesses, part of it to pay for that basic income guarantee and then we're also calling for a 1 per cent tax on the 1 per cent. Increasing income taxes on the top 1 per cent earners and using that revenue to pay for the roll out of a basic income.
Q: Fitzpatrick: Mr. Schreiner, I think you said that the PCs are denying the climate crisis, can you just elaborate a bit more on what you mean by that and by all accounts, at this point anyways in the polls, it looks like the PCs are poised to form government in June, so what would that mean for environmental issues in Ontario should the PCs win?	Well, first of all, they're opposed to any form of pollution pricing. And not only is that going to hurt Ontario's Environment, I'm deeply concerned it's going to hurt our economy. And the reason is the global low carbon economy is a \$6 trillion opportunity. So if Ontario even captures one per cent of that that's a higher contributor to our GDP than the auto sector is right now. And if Doug Ford is going to take us backwards by essentially saying we are not going to act on climate, from an economic perspective that's the equivalent of 100 years ago a political leader saying we're going to double down on horse carriages and buggy whips and instead of embracing 21st century automobiles. The equivalent of that today is the clean economy, is clean energy, is bio products, is advanced manufacturing, is clean technology. So from our perspective that's where our business development grant money should go to. Carbon pricing needs to stay and we need to embrace the clean economy, not only to fight climate change, but to also create 21st century jobs.
Q: Fitzpatrick: Do you think he's a climate change denier? Have you ever heard him	Well he certainly doesn't acknowledge the need to take action on climate change so that to me suggests that he is.

say anything that he doesn't believe?	
Q: Paikin: Are you going to keep the current cap and trade system?	We would like to phase the current system out; we would do it in a responsible way over five years and bring in a carbon fee and dividend system. And the reason we prefer a carbon fee and dividend is it's the most cost effective market friendly approach that can ramp up a carbon price high enough to change consumer and business behaviour. And then we would do it in a revenue neutral way returning the money directly back to the people of Ontario as a dividend check. So that way people can better manage the transition to a low carbon world and that they also have money that they can invest in reducing their carbon footprint. So the more you conserve the more you save.
Q: Paikin: And the road pricing system, what roads, where, how much, how do you roll all that out?	Yeah, so we would follow the recommendations that we've seen in the Golden Report, the Board of Trade Report of the Metrolinx report. So we anticipate raising 1.4 billion dollars through road pricing of the 400 series highways and two billion dollars with a two dollar a day commercial parking levy and we would raise about 100 million. So a smaller amount, with the proposals around land value taxes around transit hubs.
Q: Paikin: You would toll the 400 series highways?	That's right.
Q: Paikin: All of them?	All of them. All of all the ones going into Toronto.
Q: Paikin: How about any of them going downtown?	Just going into Toronto, yes.
Q: Paikin: How about going into downtown Toronto?	Yes, through congestion charges, yes.
Q: Paikin: Only Toronto or other cities in the province as well?	Toronto – GTA, yeah, the highways coming into Toronto. The 400 series highways coming into Toronto. Yeah.
Q: Paikin: Can you tell people why you think that will be a vote winner in Toronto?	Yeah. You know what it is Steve, can I tell you a story from the last election? OK. I was knocking on doors in Guelph and I went to a gentleman's door and I said, you know, one of my priorities is all- day, two-way GO service, Guelph, Toronto and KW. And he asked me how I would pay for it and I gave him the exact same answer I've given you and he told me that I will never vote for you because you're going to charge me to go to a Leafs game. And I said to him, I said you know what? I respect that opinion. But I fundamentally believe that if a politician is not honest with you, we're never going to have honest government. And for decades we've been saying we're going to build out transit and we haven't done it and the only way we're going to build out the proposed transit going forward is to balloon

	our budget deficit. And so I feel a fundamental responsibility to be honest with people about how we're going to pay for transit. And so instead of making it a political issue, I'm going to follow what the economists, the business leaders and the various experts say we have to do in order to raise the money to fund transit. And I believe that if we want to have honest government and honest politicians, then we have to be honest with people about how to pay for things. And I have the courage to do that.
Q: Paikin: Do you have a view on...	Oh and I want to finish my story. Sorry! No, no, no. I forgot to finish my story. So you know what? The gentleman said I'm not going to vote for you. So I knocked on the rest of the doors on the street and as I was walking away he called me back to his porch. And he said 'Hey Green Guy, come back here.' And you all know that your campaign manager's going to be like 'Don't go talk to that person. Right? Like don't waste your time talking to somebody who's not going to vote for you.' But I deeply respect every voter. So I went back to his porch and he said to me: 'Green guy I want a sign and I'm going to vote for you.' And I said 'Well what made you change your mind on road pricing?' And he says 'Oh I still don't support road pricing but I thought about what he said to me. And I agree with you that if we don't vote for politicians who are going to be honest with us, we'll never have honest government. And I'm going to vote for you for being straight with me and having the courage to stand on my porch and tell me something I didn't want to hear.' And I'm... I believe voters are tired of the rhetoric. They're tired of the fairy land that our politicians seem to live in where we can spend, spend, spend and not talk about how to pay for it. Or we can somehow cut, cut taxes without cutting services or still building out transit. And when we talk about doing politics differently it's about being straight with people about how to pay for the things we need.
Q: Paikin: Where did he live?	He lived in Guelph. Well yeah I was knocking on doors in Guelph. Yeah.
Q: Paikin: Hydro One. Status quo? Buy it back? Sell more of it off? What's your plan?	Yeah, so. I ... first of all I opposed the privatization of Hydro One. I thought it was a disastrous decision. And, you know, part of what motivated that decision quite frankly, part of the untold story here is that the NDP in 2014 when it was a minority government refused to support the Liberals on road pricing and out of desperation they looked at privatizing Hydro One which I thought was a disastrous decision. But I have to say here I don't see how the math adds up that we can somehow buy back all of Hydro One like the NDP is proposing and lower electricity prices at the same time. I just don't understand that math. So I would love to tell you we're going to buy it back but I

	just don't think that that's the responsible way to use public tax dollars at this point.
Q: Paikin: So status quo?	Status quo. If we can figure out a way to get 50 per cent of it back I'd be certainly supportive of that. So we returned at least having a majority stake in Hydro One. But buying all of it back, I don't think we have the resources to do that.
Q: Fitzpatrick: Do you want to phase out the current cap and trade system you said.	Yes.
Q: Fitzpatrick: Do you have any idea what that might cost? Would there be cancelled contracts?	We don't know. That's why we're proposing a responsible five year phase-out. Because we don't want to expose Ontario to the risk of any cancelled contracts around permits that have been purchased. So we want to do it in a responsible way.
Q: McGrath: Mike is the unified school board still in the platform this year?	Yes if you look at our Vision Book which we released on March 20 th . And that gives you... GPO-dot-ca-slash-vision... it gives you a wide range of positions that we're taking on a broad range of issues. We decided not to make it part of our 9 commitments and because...not that we don't support it and we will continue to push for it. But we recognize that the financial savings that will accrue: 1) We would reinvest that in education anyway. And 2) We believe it's going to take time to work with the four school boards to figure out the most...the best way forward that the least disruptive to students. But we want to start that conversation now so that in the next mandate we're in a position to move in that direction to integrate the systems.
Q: McGrath: Because we did civics with Doug Ford last year...I'm going to ask how many provinces need to agree to a constitutional amendment to eliminate the Catholic School Board.	Oh we can do that directly with...through a direct negotiation with Parliament. That's how Quebec did it. That's how Newfoundland and Labrador did it. And so all we need to do in Ontario is to pass legislation and enter into direct negotiation with the federal government for the constitutional change.
Q: Fitzpatrick: How much of a priority do you think the environment is in this election? I mean we've heard a bit obviously about cap and trade, carbon pricing, the PCs plan to scrap. But I mean, there seems to be a lot of focus on healthcare, the economy, jobs, other issues. Do you.....is the environment on the radar of Ontario voters or not?	Absolutely. I mean I knock on doors all the time and people talk to me about their concerns about water in particular. Loss of farmland. You know, opening the Greenbelt for development. Also people tell me all the time, and we've even we've seen this in our polling numbers and also our focus groups, that people want action on climate change. Like they really do. I can tell you, we did a focus group and we threw a question in there and we asked: do you think the government needs to act on climate change? And everyone laughed and they were like, why are you even asking this question? Of course the government has to act on climate change. So the fact that the three status quo parties are not talking about environmental issues and seldom talk about environmental issues and particularly the two opposition parties seldom prioritise environmental issues, I think

	highlights why we need a Green MPP and Green MPPs at Queen's Park to protect the people and places we love in Ontario. To create a bridge to the future that we can walk across with confidence and compassion and ensure that we leave a livable future for our children and grandchildren.
Q: Reeves: Does your platform include anything in changing the way that we vote? To a proportional representation system?	Yeah. Our Vision Book contains that. So like I said our vision but gives you a wide range of issues. We decided that in our platform we wanted to highlight nine commitments. And the reason we did that was that, you know, we're hoping to be an Opposition Party. You know like, let's start. And if I'm going to be honest about how to pay for things, I'm going to be honest with people about the role I think we can play in the legislature. And so, you know, our goal right now is to secure seats at Queen's Park to be an Opposition Party and we wanted to be very clear about what our top nine commitments were that we're going to push for in the next session of the next session of the legislature. And so we're very confident with that. Proportional representation is still very important part of our commitment. And as Steve Paikin knows because he interviewed me a year ago on June 7th and he asked me what would be some of the conditions we would place in any negotiations in a minority government? And I said at that time and I'll reiterate again today, that we would have proportional representation on the table with any negotiations in a minority government situation. If that's the situation we're in after June 7th.
Q: Unidentified: Maybe just a question about your fiscal plan. So a deficit for the first year? Next four years?	Yeah. So we...I can tell you I tried to figure out how we could move us back to balance. And then I realized that you know what? Ontario's structural deficit problems have been created by successive NDP, Conservative and Liberal governments. And we're not going to change that overnight. But we've put forward a fiscal plan that puts our budget deficits at one third of what the Liberals are proposing right now. Less than what the NDP is proposing, and we have no clue what the Conservatives are proposing. So I think we've offered a balanced and responsible approach that shows how we can expand public services while being fiscally responsible. And I feel very confident in that approach.
Q: McGrath: Mike there was some discussion this weekend about the Liberals and the NDP and how they might work together or not, based on how this election shakes out. If you went to seat....there's been some examples recently of small Green Caucuses mattering....	Yes.
Q: McGrath:..in government negotiations. Could you imagine forming any kind of agreement with the Progressive	Yeah, you know at this point I don't want to comment on who we would work with in a minority situation. Because we'd have to do that on an issue by issue, case by case

Conservatives given their commitment to not only end the current cap and trade system but not bring in anything to replace it?	basis. But our commitments are very clear and we would only work with parties that share our values and our commitments and are willing to move forward on the commitments we've outlined.
Q: Reeves: This is the first time you've run in Guelph where there hasn't been an incumbent. How has that changed what you've seen on the ground?	Yeah I think we're well positioned in Guelph to successfully break through and win our first seat in Ontario. As you all know I did very well in the last election, almost getting second place with just a few hundred votes behind the Conservative. And what I hear at the doors is that a lot of people are saying, you know, Guelph obviously been Liberal for a long time so I have a lot of people saying, you know, I just can't vote for the Liberal Party this time. They've been in power for 15 years. They need a time out. They've shown they can't govern the province responsibly. But I'm also having those people tell me there is no way they're going to vote for a Doug Ford led Conservative Party. A Conservative Party that's shown that it can't even govern itself over the last few months, let alone govern the province. And they're looking to me and saying Mike you've been a strong champion for Guelph. You've clearly worked hard for this community you'll be a strong voice for Guelph and we feel that you're somebody we can trust to put our vote in. We know that we have to work really hard. I've told my team that I feel like we're at base camp at Mount Everest and it took a heck of a lot of work to get to a base camp. And we can scale the peak and I can see that peak. But it's going to take a lot of work to scale it. But it's possible. It's doable and we have the team that can get the job done. Great. Thank you everyone.
<i>N.B.: Comments captured are not verbatim quotes</i>	