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Your morning briefing

30.05.2018 Christopher Reynolds

Headlines

With barely a week to go until E-Day, a new poll ranks **Andrea Horwath's** New Democrats far atop the heap of decided voters at 43 per cent, a craggy climb of five points since the last such poll six days earlier. **Doug Ford's** Progressive Conservatives drew 32-per-cent support and **Kathleen Wynne's** Liberals garnered 17 per cent, according to the survey by Pollara Strategic Insights. The Dipper bump can be attributed to voters plucked from the undecided camp as well as those of the other two parties, said the firm's chief strategist. The poll drew from a relatively small sample of 802 Ontarians starting Sunday shortly before the leaders debate kicked off and closing Monday.

Marieke Walsh

✓@MariekeWalsh

Ford fundraising email today: "they're lying again... Some hucksters called "Pollara" did an online survey, and the media is reporting it like real news."

Ford last week: "I don't pay attention to the polls"#onpoli #onelxn

8:20 PM - May 29, 2018

Adam Radwanski

✓@aradwanski

I've seen better jobs of not conveying panic.

<https://twitter.com/MariekeWalsh/status/1001619238291898368> ...

8:27 PM - May 29, 2018

Fresh public-opinion research from Advanced Symbolics' artificial intelligence, however, suggests NDP support has peaked, with Ford re-taking ground from Horwath, tweets "The Agenda" host **Steve Paikin**.

Steve Paikin

✓@spaikin

@ErinOttawa from @ASymbolics is now reporting the @OntarioNDP has peaked and has lost a bit of support. She's not calling the election yet but at the moment,

@fordnation is winning. #onpoli #Election2018

6:03 PM - May 29, 2018

Other polls released Monday from [Ipsos/Global News](#) and [Mainstreet Research](#) cast Ford in a tight race with Horwath. Ipsos finds it's advantage Ford, while Mainstreet sees Horwath as the popular-vote frontrunner.

It's Battleground Southwestern Ontario. In the midst of duelling campaign blitzes in the region by the New Democrats and PCs, Horwath is targeting [two ridings toward Windsor](#) and [one in London](#), the *Free Press* reports. The NDP ran second in six other of 10 London-area ridings in

2014, slitting open the sluice gates to a potential orange crush. Ford, for his part, has hit the southwest each week of the past three.

Our latest takes from the campaign trail:

- [PC platform nowhere to be seen as election day nears](#)
- [Former Liberal premier David Peterson drops in on NDP event](#)
- [‘There wasn’t Facebook when I was 20. Phew’: Horwath defends another candidate as controversies mount for all parties](#)
- [NDP leader defends her hydro platform math from PC criticism](#)

In other news:

Horwath needs to get out the youth vote to [overcome](#) its traditional vote inefficiency, the *Star* reports.

The *National Post* notes Ontario's ballooning deficit has [barely emerged as an issue](#) in the campaign.

Per the *Star*, Wynne continues to target Horwath through parallel sights as Ford, warning that an NDP government would hurt business — of which it's [suspicious](#), she said — through higher corporate taxes and slower job growth. Horwath responded that New Democrats are "happy to partner with the business sector to create good jobs in the province."

Horwath attracts business ire with her party's call for three weeks of vacation after one year of full-time work with the same employer, the *Post* [reports](#).

The *Star*, too, sees battle lines form around the [minimum wage and good jobs](#).

A trainload of southwestern Ontario stakeholders interested in the \$11-billion proposal for high-speed rail are [vying for various ways to alter it](#), TVO reports.

The *Waterloo Region Record* [mulls transit connections](#) and voting options ahead of the June 7 election.

Ottawa Centre Liberal candidate **Yasir Naqvi** says the transportation budget [should allot cash annually](#) to bike paths and lanes, in the same vein — or artery — as it does for roads, the *Citizen* reports.

TVO's "On Politics" podcast explores the how-to and why-to of [casting](#) an absentee ballot.

From the opinion pages:

- **Adam Radwanski** says Wynne could take some admittedly frigid comfort from a potential NDP win, since it would suggest Ontarians aren't just trying to turn the clock back to Ford's nostalgic, "back-to-the-future" Ford vision.
- The *National Post* asks why a costed PC platform seems to be too much to ask.
- **Brian Lilley** argues the joke's on you if you believe the NDP hydro plan.
- **Ed Keenan** demands more transparency from Toronto Hydro.

Events

8:30 a.m.

NDP leader **Andrea Horwath** makes an announcement. 10908 Brentwood Cres., Windsor.

9 a.m.

Liberals to unveil new information on the NDP. Ontario Liberal Party campaign headquarters, 595 Bay Street, 12th Floor, Toronto.

10:30 a.m.

PC Leader **Doug Ford** to make an announcement. Private home, 5688 Oil Heritage Road, RR2, Wyoming, Ont.

12 p.m.

Horwath makes an announcement. TSE Stores LP, Back Parking Lot, 235 Talbot St. E., Leamington.

12:45 p.m.

Liberal Leader **Kathleen Wynne** to make an announcement. Liberty Suites, 7191 Yonge St. Unit 1201 - Lobby Balcony. Thornhill. Livestream available here.

3 p.m.

Horwath holds a campaign event. Bayshore Park Parking Lot, 355 Front St. N., Sarnia.

3:30 p.m.

Wynne to visit Carter's Ice Cream. 3 Woodmount Ave., Toronto.

6 p.m.

Wynne to participate in a Live Q&A on Twitter, 901 King St W Suite 401, Toronto.

6:30 p.m.

Horwath holds a campaign event. Schwaben Hall, Schwaben Club, 1668 King St. E., Kitchener.

7 p.m.

Ford to host "Rally for a Better Ontario." London Convention Centre, 300 York St., London.

NDP leader defends her hydro platform math from PC criticism

29.05.2018 Jessica Smith Cross

NDP Leader **Andrea Horwath** defended her promise to lower Ontarians' hydro bills by 30 per cent – a claim the Progressive Conservatives say just doesn't add up.

The NDP platform makes this promise to voters: "We will cut hydro bills by 30 per cent and put Hydro One back in public hands." For details, it directs voters to read their full hydro plan on the party website – a plan the party created two years ago.

On Tuesday morning, two incumbent PC candidates – **Lisa MacLeod** and **Todd Smith** – held a press conference to highlight why they believe the 30 per cent promise doesn't add up. The claim comes after the NDP has taken considering criticism over a math mistake in its election platform.

"I have no idea what they're on about this time," Horwath said at her own presser on Tuesday morning. "But I can tell you our hydro plan has been online for well over two years. We're yet to see a plan of any kind from Ford, platform, hydro plan or otherwise."

The PCs listed numerous concerns with the NDP's hydro plan, beginning with the New Democrats' promise to cancel the Liberal government's Fair Hydro Plan – a system of borrowing that keeps residential rates artificially lower – by an average of 25 per cent – in the short term, before allowing them to rise again.

The NDP has promised to cancel the borrowing to save ratepayers from having to pay back as much debt, with interest, down the road.

However, the PCs argue that if the NDP cancels the plan immediately, rates will immediately jump by 25 per cent.

Asked on Tuesday how quickly the NDP would transition away from the Fair Hydro Plan borrowing – and if that means rates will spike – Horwath didn't answer directly, but spoke about getting to work on the hydro file immediately, if elected.

"In fact, that's one of the first things we're going to get working on, the minute we're given the opportunity, should the people put us in the position of government on June 7," she said. "We're going to start working on the hydro plan."

Should the NDP immediately stop the Fair Hydro Plan borrowing, the PCs said, the corresponding spike in rates would nearly cancel out the "alleged" 30 per cent savings the NDP has promised to find.

The PCs attacked the 30 per cent claim as well, noting the detailed documentation of the NDP plan actually only promised to find 17 per cent savings for most residential ratepayers, with only some ratepayers seeing "as much as" as a 30 per cent reduction in the bills.

However, that two-year-old plan is framed as providing a 30 per cent reduction in rates across the board – "Cutting Hydro bills by 30% for everyone" – in the party's election platform, with no actual change in policy.

Under the plan, the bulk of the savings – 13 per cent off all residential bills – was to come from removing the HST from residential bills.

But since then, Liberal government has removed the provincial portion of the HST from bills via a rebate. The NDP would also seek to remove the federal portion of the HST, another five per cent off total bills, but that would be contingent on a commitment from the federal government – which the PCs stressed the NDP does not have.

Another part of the NDP's hydro plan was to lower bills by about 3.2 per cent by ordering Hydro One to use a \$6.2-billion tax benefit to subsidize that company's customer's bills, but it's not clear that can be accomplished. Hydro One is fighting an Ontario Energy Board decision to pass on a portion of those savings to customers.

Other parts of the plan would only affect some customers.

The NDP says it would lower rates for many rural customers by flattening delivery fees, with the cost of that change offset by lowering fees Ontario Power Generation pays the provincial government. Meanwhile, the party's promise to end time-of-use pricing would lower bills for some people, but raise it for others. Some low-income families would benefit from a commitment to double Ontario Electricity Support Program benefit.

The PCs also criticized the NDP for being open to closing down the Pickering nuclear plant before 2024. However, the NDP hydro platform makes no firm commitment and instead calls for "an independent, fact-based evaluation of when to take Pickering offline."

Asked on Tuesday if her plan to lower rates by 30 per cent is still achievable – given everything that has changed since it was initially released – Horwath didn't directly answer.

"The thing that hasn't changed is people can't pay their bills," she said. "The thing that hasn't changed is that the Liberals increased hydro bills by 300 per cent. The thing that hasn't changed is we still have unfair delivery charges, we still have oversupply in the system. We still have profits that are being made hand over fist that we are going to cap. There are a lot of things in our hydro system that can be changed so it operates in the best interest of people again."

Over the long term, the NDP proposes to lower bills by taking costs out of the electricity system and capping private profit margins in the electricity sector, Horwath said.

She also reiterated the promise to reverse the sell-off of Hydro One by committing all dividends from the province's remaining shares to rebuying Hydro One shares, which the PCs are criticizing as impracticable.

"I am not going to give up on Ontario's hydro system," Horwath said. "I'm not going to give up on the people of Ontario who want our hydro system back in public hands and, most importantly, they want it to be affordable. Affordable hydro that we own more of and that's what New Democrats are going to bring."

The PCs, however, estimate it will take the NDP 30 years to buy the company back under their current plan.

"Nobody said it would be easy and nobody knows said it would be quick," Horwath said. "But what we know for sure is this is an achievable goal. All you have to do is look at companies that have gone out to the market and sold shares and have become that type of corporation and then have turned around and gone to sole ownership again. These are companies like Heinz, like Panara Bread, like Dell computers.

"So this is not an impossible dream, it's an achievable plan."