

2014 Ontario Election: Week Five *Wednesday Update*

June 4, 2014

The major campaign event over the last several days was the Leaders' Debate on Tuesday. See below for a brief summary and analysis of the debate.

It was fairly quiet on the campaign trail over the weekend, as the leaders were preparing for the Debate. While the leaders kept a light schedule on Monday, there were several notable events.

The PCs released a confidential [report](#) about Ornge, the air ambulance service, and accused the Liberals of ignoring safety problems related to pilot training that were highlighted in the report. The [Ontario Provincial Police Association](#) (OPPA) entered the fray, releasing television attack ads against Hudak. It is the first time the police union has produced a political attack ad, and has raised questions about whether the union's participation in an election campaign is appropriate. For example, [Matt Galloway](#) of Metro Morning asked Jim Christie, president of the OPPA, "what would happen if an OPP officer pulled over a driver with a Tim Hudak bumper sticker on her car? Would politics come into play?"

On Wednesday, Wynne [promised](#) to reintroduce the Spring Budget in 20 days if the Liberals win the election.

Leaders' Debate

With only nine days to go until Election Day, there were high expectations raised for the one election debate of the campaign. Although there was no decisive blow, PC Leader Tim Hudak did better than expected, staying focused on his message and appearing comfortable throughout. The biggest news coming out of the debate was Hudak's pledge to resign his office if his plan does not work.

Not surprisingly, Hudak and NDP Leader Andrea Horwath spent most of their time focusing on the Liberal record, putting Kathleen Wynne on the defensive. However, Wynne did have some success in framing issues as a contrast between her vision and Hudak's plan. But she was less aggressive than expected in responding to Hudak, including passing up an obvious opportunity to raise the credibility of his highly questioned job numbers after he opened the door with a statement that, "Just because you say it over and over again doesn't mean it's true."

The debate included segments on ethics, electricity costs, jobs and the economy, eliminating the deficit, transportation, and education, capped off by closing statements. Moderator Steve Paikin took a very passive approach to the debate, often allowing the leaders to talk over one another for quite a while before interrupting. At times, it seemed like Horwath was forgotten during back-and-forths between Wynne and Hudak.

Tim Hudak made heavy use of anecdotes, including a story of his grandfather during the Depression to illustrate a point on balancing the budget. He went easy in his one-on-one exchanges with Horwath, supporting the school of thought that the PCs need a strong NDP showing to win. He threw heavy criticism at Wynne and the Liberal record, but prefaced his attacks with a "more in sorrow than in anger" tone to ensure he did not appear overly aggressive.

Kathleen Wynne seemed reluctant to fully engage with the other Leaders, often avoiding eye contact and reverting to addressing the pre-recorded “ordinary Ontarians” during the debate. She apologized numerous times during the early segments for the costs of the gas plant relocations, acknowledging the mistakes made.

Andrea Horwath’s confidence built throughout the debate. Her delivery was often aggressive, delivering some strong blows and clearly well-rehearsed zingers against both Wynne and Hudak, including the quote to the latter that “Your million jobs plan has a million mistakes.” Her other primary tactic was an empathetic approach with the viewers at home, playing to her populism.

The cities each leader mentioned during the debate illustrate some of the key battleground ridings in the election: Kitchener and Waterloo, Peterborough, Ottawa, London, and Niagara. Horwath raised some issues – like “dirty diesel trains” and the Ring of Fire, which seemed aimed at holding key NDP ridings.

A post-debate “instant poll” from Ipsos Reid found that 36% of respondents believed Hudak had won the date compared to 30% for Wynne and 26% for Horwath. Interestingly, these are very similar to Ipsos Reid’s most recent vote preference results, though these have been consistently higher for the Tories than most other polling companies.

It seems unlikely that this debate will change the overall dynamics of the race, and it may come too late for Horwath to dramatically improve her party’s chances. It is difficult to gauge, however, what impact it may have on recent trend lines and the choice between the two front runners as ordinary voters digest the debate and the media coverage.

At this juncture, it seems the night of June 12th will still be a nail-biter.

Lines of the night

“Your tough medicine is certainly not Buckley’s. It tastes awful but it’s not going to work.”
– Andrea Horwath

“If you make a mistake in your platform and the numbers are wrong, do you then apologize, or not?” – Kathleen Wynne

“You had a choice. You had an opportunity, you could have said no and saved us a billion dollars.... Why didn't you just say no?”

“You don’t have to choose between bad ethics and bad math. You can choose a plan that makes sense.” – Andrea Horwath

“We all believe in public service. We wouldn’t be here if we didn’t. I’m bringing you my integrity.”
– Kathleen Wynne

“When somebody apologizes, and they do the same thing over and over again, they didn’t mean it. If they get away with this, they’ll try it again, and you’ll pay the price.” – Tim Hudak

Advance Polls

This is just a friendly reminder that you can vote early until Friday, June 6th. Advance poll locations are open from 10 am to 8 pm. Visit Elections Ontario's [website](#) to find your advance poll location.

The Polls

Three pre-Leaders' Debate polls show the Liberals holding the lead ahead of the PCs, while the NDP continues to sit in a distant third. [Abacus Data](#) found that the Liberals hold a 7-point lead, with 37% versus 30% for the PCs and 24% for the NDP. However, the gap narrows considerably among likely voters, with the Liberal leading at 37%, followed by the PCs at 35% and NDP at 22%.

EKOS released two polls prior to the debate. The [first poll](#), conducted from May 29 to June 1, shows the Liberals ahead with 38.5%, followed by the PCs at 33.7%. Notably, the NDP have dropped to 16.9%. The drop was attributed to "their decision to oppose a budget their supporters found attractive." The [second poll](#), conducted from May 30 to June 2, shows the Liberal lead growing. The Liberals stood at 38.8%, while the PCs dropped to 30.5% and the NDP continuing to trail far behind at 17.8%.

The first post-debate voting preference poll was released by [Forum Research](#), which showed increasing support for both the Liberals (40%) and the PCs (35%). The NDP's support dropped to 22%.

Forum and Ipsos-Reid also conducted polls on who viewers thought won the Leaders' Debate. [Forum](#) found that 33% through Hudak was the winner, followed by 28% for Wynne and 20% for Horwath. [Ipsos-Reid](#) found that 36% of viewers through Hudak won, followed by 27% for Wynne and 26% for Howarth.

Firm	Poll Dates	Liberal	PC	NDP	Green
Abacus Data*	May 28-31	37%	35%	22%	5%
EKOS	May 29-June 1	39%	34%	17%	8%
EKOS	May 30-June 2	39%	31%	18%	8%
<i>Post-Debate</i>					
Forum	June 3	40%	35%	22%	2%

*Using Likely Voter models (as opposed to all eligible and committed/leaning voters)

On the Leaders' Tour

The leaders kept a light schedule over the weekend and on Monday, likely to spend time preparing for the Leaders' Debate on Tuesday. Hudak and Horwath took advantage of the advance poll on Saturday, voting in Grimsby and Hamilton respectively. After Tuesday's debate, all the leaders held events in the GTA. Wynne and Hudak also travelled to Ottawa.

Date	Kathleen Wynne	Tim Hudak	Andrea Horwath
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Sat May 31	Toronto	Grimsby St. Catharines	Hamilton Waterloo
Sun June 1	<i>Day off</i>	Toronto	<i>Day off</i>
Mon June 2	Toronto	Toronto	Toronto
Tues June 3	Toronto	Markham Toronto	Toronto
Wed June 4	Vaughan Ottawa	Ajax Ottawa	Ajax Oshawa Toronto

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