

2014 Ontario Election: Week Four *Tuesday Update*

May 27, 2014

It was a busy weekend on the campaign trail.

Andrea Horwath was forced to respond to two scathing open letters from [Gerald Caplan](#), an NDP activist, and from [34 high-profile](#) Ontario NDP supporters. In the letters, Caplan and the “Band of 34” suggested that Horwath was not standing up for the party’s core values, and expressed anger at Horwath’s decision to vote against the Budget. Horwath [downplayed](#) the letters, suggesting that it is simply part of democratic debate. She also noted that it is the job of progressives to “shut down corruption,” identifying a theme she would continue to focus on in the following days. The letters sparked much discussion about whether or not the NDP’s plan could be considered progressive – dialogue fuelled by an [op-ed from Horwath](#) in Sunday’s Toronto Star.

Kathleen Wynne visited Northern Ontario for the first time during this campaign period. She released the Liberal [platform](#) on Sunday in Thunder Bay. Wynne and Horwath participated in the Northern Leaders’ debate on Monday in Thunder Bay. Please see below for a summary of the Northern Leaders’ Debate and the Liberal platform.

Over the weekend, Tim Hudak hosted a town hall in Woodbridge and held several campaign events in Toronto. On Monday, Hudak held a town hall about jobs in Peterborough, which received [attention](#) due to heckling and minor demonstrations.

Northern Leaders’ Debate

Andrea Horwath and Kathleen Wynne participated in the first Leaders’ Debate of the campaign, held on Monday in Thunder Bay. Tim Hudak was absent, blaming a scheduling conflict. The media consensus is that it was a rather tame affair, as each candidate had 90 seconds to respond to questions posed by mayors, business leaders and a First Nations Deputy Grand Chief with no direct interaction. The questions focused on northern issues including electricity costs, property assessment and the Ring of Fire mineral deposit.

Horwath denounced “Liberal corruption” in her opening statement, and made constant reference to Liberal waste and mismanagement throughout the debate. Wynne stayed largely focused on the government’s record in the north, but did include an apology for the way the gas plant relocation was handled.

Party Promises

Liberal

The Liberal platform, released by Wynne in Thunder Bay, was largely a repackaging of the Ontario Budget 2014, but contained a few new commitments (noted by underlining below). The platform was divided into eight sections. Highlights include:

- **Jobs:** Extend the Youth Jobs Strategy to September 2015, increase apprenticeship opportunities and job training, continue to offer the 30% Off Tuition Grant, create a \$2.5 billion Jobs and Prosperity Fund and \$40 million through the fund to support the agri-food and agri-products sector.

- **Ontario Retirement Pension Plan:** The plan requires equal contributions from employers and employees of no more than 1.9% of income from each, to a maximum level of \$90,000 per year. Collection of contributions will begin in 2017.
- **Infrastructure:** 10-year, \$130 billion infrastructure plan - the plan includes a \$15 billion commitment for transit projects in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, \$14 billion for projects outside the GTHA (including a Permanent Roads and Bridges Fund), \$1 billion for infrastructure in the Ring of Fire (no longer contingent on federal matching) and \$11.4 billion for hospital expansion and redevelopment projects. The party has also committed to continue investing in green energy projects.
- **Cost of Living:** Lower auto insurance by an average of 15% by August 2015, eliminate the debt retirement charge on energy bills, cap hospital parking fees for frequent visitors, increase funding for housing, invest in developmental services, expand legal aid support, increase the Ontario Child Benefit to \$1,310 per child and the minimum wage to \$11 an hour, tying both to inflation.
- **Education and Child Care:** Re-introduce the Child Care Modernization Act, improve math scores, promote student health and wellness, and launch a nine-month paid community work and service program for graduating high school students (Experience Ontario).
- **Health Care:** Guarantee that every Ontarian has access to a primary care provider, reduce wait times on referrals to specialists, expand scopes of practice for nurses, provide funding for in vitro fertilization, invest \$750 million in home and community care over three years, increase wages for personal support workers.
- **Sustainable Communities:** Support farmers through maintaining the provincial Risk Management Program (RMP), build a sustainable horseracing industry, protect pollinators and bees, expand agriculture in the north, expand the other boundary of the Greenbelt, ensure new development projects provide more money for transit.
- **Making Government Work:** Balance the budget by 2017-18, allow all municipalities to use a ranked ballot for elections, introduce a Consumer Bill of Rights, increase taxes by 1% for people earning between \$150,000 and \$220,000.

The Polls

Two new polls released by EKOS and Abacus Data suggest a close race between the Liberals and Tories, with the Liberals holding a slight advantage. While both firms had similar findings, Ipsos Reid polls over the last several weeks, which put the PCs in the lead, continue to cause uncertainty about which polls are accurate.

On Friday, [EKOS](#) released a poll showing the Liberals leading with 36%, followed by the PCs at 30% and NDP at 20%. The poll also showed the Greens at 12%, but the result was likely caused by a sampling anomaly; the firm stated that "We can say with confidence that the Green Party isn't really going to quadruple its performance." Friday's poll results for the top three parties are nearly identical to the [EKOS](#) poll released the weekend prior.

Monday's [Abacus Data](#) poll of likely voters shows the Liberals and PCs switching places from last week's [Abacus Data](#) poll. The Liberals now lead with 36%, followed by the PCs at 33%. The NDP remain in third at 24%.

Past polls, particularly ones conducted by Ipsos Reid, have consistently shown the PCs in the lead. The last [Ipsos Reid](#) poll showed support for the top three parties tightening up, with the PCs leading with 35%, followed by 31% for the Liberals and 28% for the NDP.

Firm	Poll Dates	Liberal	PC	NDP	Green
Forum	May 2	33%	38%	22%	6%
Oracle	May 2-5	31%	42%	25%	-
Innovative (tel)	May 2-6	39%	33%	24%	4%
Innovative (net)	May 2-6	39%	33%	20%	7%
Ipsos Reid	May 6-9	31%	37%	28%	4%
Forum	May 12	38%	35%	21%	5%
Ipsos Reid*	May 12-14	31%	43%	22%	-
EKOS	May 13-14	37%	30%	21%	7%
Abacus*	May 14-16	33%	36%	25%	5%
Forum	May 20	41%	34%	20%	4%
Ipsos Reid*	May 20-21	30%	41%	26%	-
EKOS	May 16-23	36%	30%	20%	12%
Abacus*	May 21-24	36%	33%	24%	6%

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

On the Leaders' Tour

Wynne took the day off on Saturday before spending the next three days in Northern Ontario. In Thunder Bay, Wynne released the Liberal platform and participated in the Northern Leaders' debate.

Hudak spent most of the last four days in Toronto and the GTA, although he held a town hall in Peterborough that received media coverage due to heckling.

Horwath started the weekend in Southwestern Ontario before taking a day off from the campaign trail on Sunday. She resumed campaign activities on Monday in Northern Ontario, participating in the Northern Leaders' debate. On Tuesday, she held events in Toronto and in the Niagara Region.

Date	Kathleen Wynne	Tim Hudak	Andrea Horwath
Sat May 24	<i>Day off</i>	Woodbridge Toronto	Windsor Chatham
Sun May 25	Thunder Bay	Toronto	<i>Day off</i>
Mon May 26	Thunder Bay	Peterborough Thornhill Milton	Thunder Bay Sudbury
Tues May 27	Sault Ste. Marie Sudbury	Pickering	Toronto St. Catharines Fort Erie

For more information, contact:

Counsel Public Affairs
416-920-0716, reception@counselpa.com