

How to beat Tim Hudak and defeat the right-wing agenda

BY EDWARD C. CORRIGAN | JUNE 11, 2014

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12



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It seems like most Ontarians are only now getting interested in the June 12, 2014 vote in Ontario and the ballot, which will determine who will rule Canada's largest province. The Polls indicate that the current governing Ontario Liberals led by Kathleen Wynne are in a neck and neck race with Tim Hudak's Ontario Progressive Conservatives.

This news is troubling because the Conservatives are very strong in the rural ridings, which generally have a lower number of voters and will elect Members of the Provincial

with a lower vote total than the more populous urban ridings. Hudak appears to be leading in the rural ridings of South-Western Ontario and in Eastern Ontario.

The Liberals and NDP are battling it out in Northern Ontario. The Liberals seem to have retained much of their base in urban Ontario and especially the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). However, the NDP have made inroads in the urban centres notably winning two byelections in Kitchener and in London, Ontario.

According to the Nanos Poll taken on May 26, 2014, Ontario voters when asked to identify their preferred choice for Premier, Wynne was first at 34 percent followed by Hudak at 24 percent and Andrea Horwath at 13 percent respectively.

Of note, over the past month of May there has been a noticeable drop for Horwath from 18 to 13 percent. Horwath also registered a noticeable drop when Ontarians asked if she had the qualities of a good leader. On this measure she dropped from 53 percent to 44 percent over the past month.

The Green Party leader Mike Schreiner trailed the three main Ontario political parties with only 2.7 per cent support.

Only time will tell if these trends will hold until the June 12, 2014 election.

Scandals, scandals, scandals!

There are a number of scandals that have been dogging the Ontario Liberals. The closure of the Mississauga-Oakville Gas plant will reportedly cost Ontario Tax payers over \$800 million. However, both the Ontario PC and the NDP campaigned on promises to close the gas power plants. It was only when the

Liberals agreed with their provincial counterparts that the political debate switch to the issue of costs.

There are also opposition parties complaints over the cost of the E-Health initiative which put the medical records of patients online and accessible to medical practitioners and hospitals. Ultimately this program will save lives and money and eliminate much abuse of the medical system.

Both Hudak and Horwarth have been pounding away at these issues, but they have not gained the traction they had hoped for. The cost overruns are of course deplorable.

Hudak also has been getting a great deal of flack from the media and even members of his own party. Hudak has promised to eliminate 100,000 jobs from the Ontario public service. The jobs are to be eliminated in the health care, public safety area and education sectors. The cost of terminating these employees will be substantial with severance pay and salary in lieu of notice. This factor does not appear to have been included in the Conservatives cost equation.

The second problem is that Ontario's health, safety and education sectors are already stretched and if anything will need more nurses and support workers to deal with Ontario's aging population. Ontario public sector unions including the nurses, and the Ontario Provincial Police have taken to the air waves to publically oppose what they see as draconian cuts that threaten their jobs but also the health and safety of Ontario residents.

Hudak is also being strongly attacked for his "promise" to create a million jobs in Ontario if he is elected. In a province of just over seven million it is impossible for any government to create one million jobs. Experts and even members of his own party have attacked this ridiculous claim.

In my view, even to make this outrageous claim is an insult to thinking Ontario voters.

Howarth also has been criticized by long-time members of the NDP for not supporting the Liberal Ontario budget, which was described as the most progressive budget in decades. **A group of 34 high-profile Ontario NDP supporters say they're "deeply distressed" by the direction** Horwarth has taken in the election campaign and are seriously considering not voting for the NDP.

In an email to Horwarth dated May 23, 2014, and obtained by CBC News, the group of long-time supporters, including Michele Landsberg (columnist and wife of former Ontario NDP leader Stephen Lewis), former federal candidate Winnie Ng and activist Judy Rebick, warned Horwarth may lose their support "and the support of thousands of others."

"From what we can see you are running to the right of the Liberals in an attempt to win Conservative votes," the letter stated.

"It is not clear whether you have given up on progressive voters or you are taking them for granted."

The warning comes a day after the NDP platform was released and during a campaign where Horwarth's decision to force the election has been **criticized by prominent NDP insiders such as Gerry Caplan.**

So, the voting system is pretty frustrating...

Unfortunately many voters are disillusioned with the present electoral "first-past-the-post system." This means that the individual that gets the most votes in a riding wins. Given the four way spilt in the vote (Liberal, PC, NDP and Green Party) a candidate could win with around 30 per cent of the vote or even less.

Many authorities have criticized the British/Canadian/American first-past-the-post and winner-take-all as

anti-democratic. Alternatives that are suggested are a preferential ballot or a proportional representation system which would more accurately reflect the wishes of the voters.

Harper won a majority government in Canada in the last Federal Election with only 39.7 per cent of the vote.

Ontario had a referendum on the adoption of a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) representation system, but the voters turned it down on October 10, 2007. Whatever we think of this current system it is the one we are stuck with on June 12, 2014.

The question is what to do? The first thing is to vote.

The lower the voter turnout the better Conservatives tend to do. The higher the voter turnout the better centrist and left wing parties tend to do. The Conservatives do not like high voter turnout and in my opinion really do not like democracy. This is the rationale behind Stephen Harper's election reforms which more properly should be called Stephen Harper's Vote Suppression Act.

The other thing that is important is to consider strategic voting. The Conservatives like the fact that there are three parties on the centre and left to split the vote. The Liberals, NDP and even the Green Party divide the vote in ways that almost always favours the Conservatives. Hudak could win a majority government with around 35 per cent of the vote and the majority of Ontario voters opposing his policies.

Take a moment to realistically assess the strength of the candidate or party that stands the best chance of defeating the Conservative in your riding. This may mean voting for the NDP candidate instead of your favourite Liberal or it may mean voting for the Liberal over your preferred NDP candidate.

If it is a battle between the NDP and Liberal or Green candidate vote with your heart. However, remember that some elections are decided by only a handful of votes and sometimes even one vote. If you want to keep the Conservatives out of power seriously consider strategic voting.

What counts in politics?

There are three things that count in politics: Organization; money and power.

Organization is critical on the ground to get someone who supports your ideas and values elected at a nomination meeting and then in an election is the first step. This means selling memberships. This also means bodies on the ground for canvassing, voter identification, signs and most importantly to get out your candidates vote on advance polling days and on election day. Bodies to collect signs and to put away the campaign information and material for the next battle also are needed.

Money is also needed to run a campaign and to buy advertising and "robo calls" and the other expenses to conduct a successful campaign. Ontario has a generous political tax credit program. Donors get a rebate of 75 per cent of the first \$399 they donate to a recognized political party or candidate. The Federal government and all provinces have similar programs.

Hudak is threatening the jobs of 100,000 public servants. Can you imagine the political impact of 100,000 public servants making a political donation of \$399 which would put \$39,900,000 in the hands of Hudak's political opponents? This would cost each individual only \$100 after the Ontario tax rebate. In my opinion, this kind of money would decide the outcome of the election.

Other Ontario civil servants should also be making donations as their employment conditions are going to get much worse. It would only cost each donor around \$100 after the rebate to save the province from the

Hudak Conservative agenda

Also writing a cheque should be every person who has an elderly parent or relative who needs medical help or every parent who has a child in school and knows that cutting the number of teachers and educational support staff will adversely impact their child's education. Hudak is counting on the fact you will not make a political donation to try to stop his agenda.

Voters in general should consider the long term impact of weakening our education system and our health care system will have on our economic well being and our ability to attract well paying jobs and to compete globally.

Power is how you combine these assets and use them to promote your political message. All of the money in the world will not sell a bad or destructive message.

Money sure helps but as some political candidates with almost unlimited financial resources have discovered that you cannot always buy elections. Candidates are governed by the Election Expenses act but as many public interest groups have discovered they can campaign in an election and promote their particular concern and influence the outcome of elections. Corporate and business interests have always known this important rule but now other public interest groups are getting in to the game in a big way.

Not having the money needed to get your message and name out certainly handicaps a campaign. You can replace money with volunteers to get your message out but today electronic and print media tend to dominate and they cost money. In politics, or at least successful politics, there also is a need for discipline and intelligent application of resources.

In politics there are three kinds of people. There are those that make things happen. There are those that watch things happen. And finally there are those who wonder what the hell happened.

You have to decide if you want to be a participant in politics, a spectator or someone who is passive and does not care what happens to them until it hits them over the head.

Hudak is hoping that you will be passive and not participate in the political process. It is up to you how you will act? There is still time to make a real difference and to help determine who will have political power in Ontario after June 12, 2014.

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