

## 2018 PC ELECTION PLATFORM

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party released “For the People: A Plan for Ontario.” The PC plan is not a fully costed campaign platform with fiscal projections, but does include associated costs for many of the party’s commitments
- During the PC leadership race Doug Ford and all three of his leadership rivals pledged the scrap the carbon tax from the PC platform and eliminate the province’s current cap-and-trade system. Without the revenue from either cap-and-trade or a carbon tax, the conservatives have pledged to fund their new initiatives by finding billions of dollars of savings through “efficiencies”
- The new initiatives proposed in the PC platform are designed to reinforce the PC campaign message of “For the People,” and to demonstrate that the PC party is the best option to generate change at Queen’s Park

### BACKGROUND

On Wednesday May 30th the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party released “For the People: A Plan for Ontario.” The PC plan is not a fully costed campaign platform with fiscal projections, like those released by the NDP and Liberals. While “For the People” includes associated costs for many campaign promises, it does not include detailed fiscal projections and notably does not identify the \$6 billion of efficiencies that a PC-led government would find and eliminate.

With a populist campaign message that promises to put people ahead of elites and restore respect in government, the PCs have structured their platform around five key priorities:

- Cutting hospital wait times
- Restoring accountability and trust
- Creating good jobs
- Cleaning up “the hydro mess”
- Putting “more money in your pocket”

These five priorities are supported by a range of consumer-friendly promises that the PCs believe will boost the economy and make life more affordable for Ontarians.

## CONTEXT

The Progressive Conservative Party started the year as the odds-on favourite to form government. However, by the start of the campaign the party had endured several months of turmoil prompted by the surprise resignation of leader Patrick Brown. What followed was a contentious, hard-fought leadership campaign that thrust Doug Ford into the leaders chair. His ascension shifted the party away from the centrist position staked out by Patrick Brown, and moved it towards a more populist form of small government conservatism.

The tight timeline of the leadership race gave the party little space to prepare for the provincial election. As the new leader's team quickly moved to remake the party in Doug Ford's image, it quickly jettisoned many of the leaders previous policy positions and commitments.

First to be jettisoned, was the "People's Guarantee," the platform crafted by Patrick Brown and released well in advance of the 2018 election. The "People's Guarantee" was full of bold new spending and policy initiatives that were designed to appeal to centrist as well as conservative voters and guide the PCs to power on June 7<sup>th</sup>. However, most of the new spending proposed in the "People's Guarantee" was based on revenue generated by the introduction of a carbon tax.

During the PC leadership race Doug Ford and all three of his leadership rivals pledged to scrap the carbon tax from the PC platform and eliminate the province's current cap-and-trade system. However, without revenue from either cap-and-trade or a PC-designed carbon tax, the conservatives have significantly less revenue upon which to base new policy proposals or spending commitments. To fill this gap Ford pledged to find billions of dollars of savings by locating government "efficiencies" that could be used to fund new programs and services.

These new programs and services, outlined in the PC platform, are designed to reinforce the PC's campaign message of "For the People," and demonstrate that the conservative party is best positioned to generate change at Queen's Park. The platform is also meant to contrast the PCs with the plan put forward by the NDP, who are also campaigning with a change message. Ford has portrayed the NDP as an irresponsible choice that cannot be trusted to spend taxpayer dollars wisely. Ford hopes to use his platform to demonstrate that he and his party can be trusted to "get Ontario back on track."

Key promises from the platform include:

- Reducing hydro bills by 12%
- Reducing gas prices by 10 cents/per litre, eliminating Ontario's carbon tax and suing the federal government for relief from the requirement for Ontario to put a price on carbon
- Lowering taxes and eliminating red tape for businesses
- Cutting income taxes by 20% for the second income-tax bracket
- Creating a 75% refundable tax credit for child care costs for children aged 0 -15

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVE

While the focus of the PC platform is largely on issues around affordability, it does touch on a few issues with municipal resonance. It should be noted, however, that of the three major parties, the PC plan offers the fewest specifics. It is therefore difficult to generate a complete picture of how it would impact Ontario's local governments. Specific commitments include:

### Environment/Climate Change:

- Repealing the *Green Energy Act*
- Eliminating the province's cap-and-trade system
- Lowering gasoline taxes

### Housing:

- Increasing the supply of affordable housing across the GTA
- Investing \$3.8 billion in mental health, addictions and housing over 10 years

### Transportation:

- Increasing GO service in the GTA and Southern Ontario
- Uploading responsibility for subway infrastructure, including the building and maintenance of both new and existing subway lines and dedicating an additional \$5 billion towards building new subway lines. Responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the TTC would remain with the City of Toronto
- Exploring the potential for new high-speed rail projects
- Investing \$45 million to bring back passenger rail service to Northern Ontario

### Public Safety:

- Making changes to Bill 175 (which amended the *Police Services Act*). It is not entirely clear how the PCs would change the *Police Services Act*, or which aspects of Bill 175 they would repeal
- Investing more resources to fight gangs and organized crime

### Public Administration:

- Ordering a line-by-line audit of government spending, with the goal of eliminating waste and mismanagement
- Returning the government to a balanced budget on "a responsible timeframe," though the budget does not provide any additional details about what a responsible timeframe would be
- Launching an independent commission of inquiry to examine the province's use of deficit spending

Property Taxes:

- Amending the *Assessment Act* to ensure that Ontario branches of the Royal Canadian Legion do not pay property taxes

Long-term Care:

- Creating 15,000 new long-term care beds over the next 5 years

**For more information on this note, contact:**

Eric Muller  
Policy Advisor  
emuller@amcto.com | (905) 602-4294 x234