

2018 LIBERAL ELECTION PLATFORM

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The Liberal Party platform includes a range of commitments, primarily in social programs and healthcare, that are designed to reinforce their campaign message and 2018 budget commitments
- The Liberals are hoping to use their platform to present themselves as a responsible choice in the face of what the Liberal party says is two reckless alternatives (NDP and PCs)
- While the Liberal Party platform largely focuses on issues outside of the municipal realm, it does contain a number of relevant proposals for local government

BACKGROUND

On Saturday May 26th, the Liberal Party of Ontario released its platform for the 2018 Ontario election. Titled “The Ontario Liberal Plan for Care and Opportunity” the platform includes a range of commitments in social programs and healthcare, designed to reinforce the Liberal campaign message of “Care Not Cuts.” Coming just two months after the Liberal government tabled its 2018 budget, the party’s platform largely reinforces the commitments made in the budget while also highlighting the government’s key achievements over the past four years.

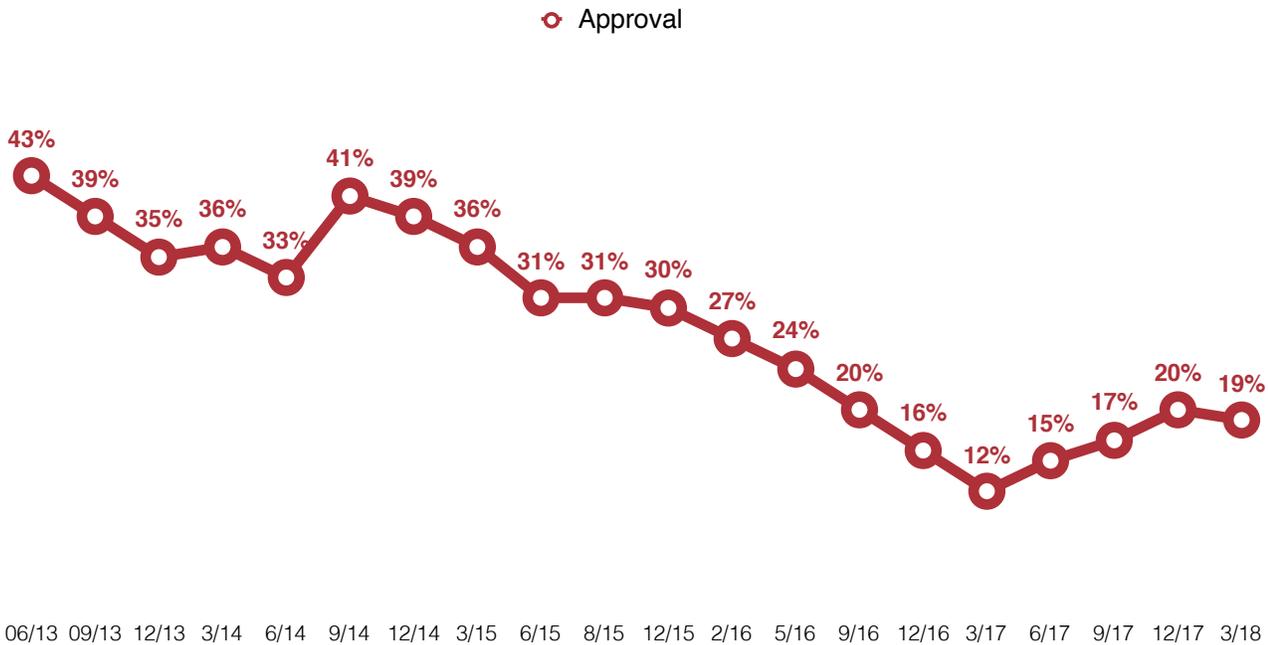
CONTEXT

The Liberal platform was released shortly before the third and final leaders debate, with the party polling well behind both the NDP and Progressive Conservative parties. Premier Wynne entered the election with a personal favourability rating that was historically low (Chart 1). The NDP and PCs, sensing the Liberal Party’s vulnerability, spent the months leading up to the election cultivating and stoking the electorate’s appetite for change.

The course of the campaign has not seen the Liberal party’s fortunes improve. As Liberal poll numbers continued their precipitous decline many of the party’s supporters defected to the NDP. They were joined by others who are animated more by their commitment to defeating Doug Ford than by their support for any one particular party. The challenge for the Liberal party

is therefore significant. Facing an electorate that is overwhelmingly looking for change (85%), the Liberals need their platform to drive the message that they are the only responsible governing choice.

Chart 1: Premier Wynne Approval, June 2013 - March 2017



Source: Forum Research

The Liberals share many policy priorities with the NDP, and their platforms are similar in a number of areas. Having made the decision before the election to campaign on the left, the Liberals are now making the case that they are the only party that will deliver compassionate policies (“Care not Cuts”) in a responsible way. Kathleen Wynne and other Liberal Party spokespeople have repeatedly attacked the NDP as irresponsible, untrustworthy and a threat to Ontario businesses and a healthy economy. In this way the Liberals are presenting themselves as a responsible choice in the face of what they say are two reckless alternatives: (1) A PC party that will slash government programs and cut public sector jobs; and, (2) the NDP who will run the province into the ground, raise corporate taxes, and hurt Ontario’s business climate. Following this line of argument, the Liberals are the only party that puts the needs of ordinary Ontarians above unions (NDP), or corporations and the rich (PCs).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVE

While the focus of the Liberal Party platform is largely on issues outside of the municipal realm, it does contain a number of relevant proposals for local government. Specific commitments include:

Infrastructure:

- Implementing the Liberal government's previously-announced investments of approximately \$230 billion in infrastructure over 14 years, which started in 2014-15. Including:
 - Providing faster and more frequent GO service
 - Investing in rapid transit
 - Investing more than \$11 billion to support the building of Canada's first high-speed rail service in the Toronto-Windsor corridor
 - Further reducing fares for GTHA transit users
 - Improving GO stations
 - Investing \$140 million in cycling infrastructure
 - Building and improving highways in Southwestern, Central, Northern and Eastern Ontario
 - Increasing annual funding to the Connecting Links Program to \$30 million
 - Investing \$490 million over 10 years to repair and upgrade railway tracks, bridges and trains in Northern Ontario
 - Investing in culture and recreation infrastructure
 - Committing to having major public infrastructure projects comply with a community benefits framework by 2020

OCIF:

- Increasing the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF) to \$300 million per year by 2018-19

Reporting Burden:

- Working with municipalities to standardize sewage bypass reporting to the province

Economic Development:

- Investing up to \$26 million in a Main Street Revitalization Initiative
- Investing an additional \$100 million in the Eastern Ontario Development Fund and the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund over the next 10 years

Broadband Infrastructure:

- Investing \$500 million over three years to expand broadband connectivity
- Increasing broadband speeds in communities across the province that lack service

Land Use Planning:

- Continuing to grow the Greenbelt

Community Hubs:

- Continuing to encourage the development of community hubs by better utilizing provincially owned property, an online portal to connect groups that are interested in participating in a community hub, and a new capital grant program

Public Safety:

- Implementing a modern policing framework that prioritizes community, fairness, accountability and responsibility
- Proposing a province-wide strategy to reduce gun violence

Rural Ontario:

- Working with municipalities, banks and credit unions to ensure that banking services are available across rural Ontario
- Expanding the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission bus service into Northwestern Ontario

Housing:

- Working with municipalities, developers, and other stakeholders to enable small-scale residential intensification that would allow homeowners to build multi-unit projects on their land

Child Care:

- Creating 100,000 new licensed child care spaces over five years

Mental Health:

- Investing \$2.1 billion in mental health and addiction care over the next four years
- Partnering with municipalities to tackle local mental health issues, and bringing partners together to better coordinate care and integrate local services

Long-term Care:

- Creating 30,000 new long-term care beds over the next 10 years

Seniors:

- Providing seniors \$750 per year through the Seniors Health Home Program to enable seniors to remain in their homes longer by helping them with maintenance costs

Accessibility:

- Completing the ongoing Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) legislative review and to continuing to develop two accessibility standards for health and education

- Conducting a review of the Built Environment standard
- Strengthening enforcement of the AODA

Poverty Reduction:

- Beginning consultations on the next Poverty Reduction Strategy within 100 days of returning to office

Libraries:

- Increasing the operating funding for public libraries by \$51 million over three years
- Investing \$28 million over three years to create a province-wide Digital Public Library

Environment/Climate Change:

- Partnering with municipalities to build new bike lanes and bike infrastructure
- Strengthening climate change policies in the municipal land-use planning process
- Providing climate-change related funding to municipalities through the Municipal Challenge Fund
- Investing \$2.3 billion in green infrastructure projects to help municipalities mitigate and adapt to climate change
- Undertaking a province-wide risk assessment to inform a comprehensive climate adaptation strategy
- Ensuring that the relocation of excess soil is completed responsibly and sustainably

For more information on this note, contact:

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