

Ford, candidates target NDP, defend plan at 'all-star' rollout



By Brock Weir

Progressive Conservative leader Doug Ford and over a dozen of his candidates, including fellow leadership candidates Christine Elliott and Caroline Mulroney, targeted the Ontario NDP at a roundtable to introduce some of their party's 'all-stars.'

Mr. Ford and his team were on message as they poked holes in the NDP's plan, but they also presented mixed messages on just when they would be presenting a fully costed, comprehensive platform of their own.

The Newmarket roundtable was the first public event for Mr. Ford after Sunday night's leaders debate and Mr. Ford said coming out of that debate Ontarians had 10 days to make a choice.

'They are going to have to make a choice between the radical activists that the NDP have surrounded themselves with, or a great team that we have ready to govern,' said Mr. Ford, taking aim at comments made last week by NDP leader Andrea Horwath in a Toronto Star interview that, if her party formed government, her MPPs would receive cabinet training. 'This is not time to start sending people to training school. We can't have someone on-the-job training. We have to be ready to govern.'

'We have all-stars across the province, some right here at this table, and there is a stark difference: we have experience from all different areas: business, charitable organizations, police officers, people that have experience, lawyers, former cabinet ministers. We have a great team and we're ready to hit the ground running to implement our plan of reducing taxes and reducing the burden on businesses across this Province, making sure we put money back in their pocket instead of the government's pockets.'

But, what is the plan? Mr. Ford asserted the PC party would have a 'fully costed' plan, but when that might come out was left unclear.

'We have been laying out our plan every single day, holding press conferences every single day and we've put a dollar figure beside every single announcement that we have,' said Mr. Ford. 'The Auditor General came out and basically said [the Liberals] were cooking the books, so we're going to have a very clear, costed platform and every single item that we do, we put a dollar figure. Our plan is very clear: we're going to reduce the hydro rates by 12 per cent to every single person in Ontario. We are going to reduce the tax burden on middle class families by 20 per cent. People on minimum wage will pay a zero per cent tax.'

This was a position reiterated by former PC finance critic Vic Fideli, himself a candidate in the riding of Nipissing.

'We have a platform. It has been rolled out every day, every second day, and there is a number attached to each and every item of it, so there are well costed and very wonderful ideas that the people of Ontario are hearing from us,' he said.

Ms. Elliott added that the PC party is being 'responsible' because they don't know how 'deep' a 'financial hole' they might inherit if they do form government on June 7.

'We don't even know how bad it is going to be yet,' she said. 'That is why we have to have outside auditors come in to tell us how bad it really is, but what we will do is be responsible, we will have priorities, which the NDP do not have. They are promising money across the board to anybody for anything they want. We can't do that. We're in a terrible financial situation and we're not going to waste people's money either, like the Liberals did with the billion dollars on the cancelled gas plants, the \$8 million on electronic medical records that don't even connect properly yet and develop our priorities.'

?We told you about a number of them already. Those are the things we're sticking to because we have heard from the people of Ontario that life is becoming more and more unaffordable. We want to make it affordable for people who want to create jobs and bring prosperity back to this province.?