



## **Forward.Together. – The Liberal Party’s Platform for the Upcoming Provincial Election**

### **Forward.Together.**

On Monday, September 5, just two days before the writ drops for the October 6<sup>th</sup> provincial election, Premier Dalton McGuinty released the Liberals’ election platform. The platform, titled [Forward.Together.](#) is a 60-page document accompanied by a 15-page platform costing document that lays out the fiscal plan behind each commitment.

The Liberals intend to overcome the challenges presented by the global recession by presenting what they believe is a forward-looking plan that will set them apart from the opposition. It largely defends and builds on the Liberals’ record, presenting 45 new promises that the Liberals say will cost an additional \$1.5 billion annually and appeals to key voting blocs including seniors, caregivers, parents, and middle-class families.

### **Education**

In an effort to garner the votes of parents and middle class voters, the focus of the Liberals’ platform was largely on education. The platform commits to address the affordability of post-secondary education by offering a 30 per cent post-secondary undergraduate tuition grant for families whose income is below \$160,000. The Liberals also commit to creating 60,000 more post-secondary education spaces and building three new undergraduate satellite campuses in the province. The platform promises to fully implement Liberals’ highly-regarded full-day kindergarten program, and promises to put in place before and after-school programs for children aged six to 12.

### **Health care**

Health care commitments are focused on seniors and investments in home care. Investing in home care is positioned as being not only of benefit to seniors, but also as a cost-effective strategy for the sustainability of the system. The platform commits to providing three million more hours of home care for seniors from personal support workers and promises to bring back “house calls” for seniors. It also includes a Health Home Renovation Tax Credit, worth up to \$1,500 annually, to cover the costs of renovations to keep seniors at home longer. Ultimately, the commitments on home health focus on the need to maintain the independence of seniors in their home. The platform also commits to creating an Active Aging Strategy, which will focus Ontario’s research investments to support the prevention, treatment and possible cures for conditions such as Alzheimer’s and related dementias.

The platform also focuses on health prevention. Commitments include building on the Smoke Free Ontario Act and creating online Personalized Cancer Risk profile for all Ontarians. In terms of children, the platform outlines a promise to reduce childhood obesity by 20 per cent over five years, through measures which include doubling the Children’s Activity Tax Credit and introducing a healthy snack program. In terms of mental health, the platform outlines a



commitment to implementing a comprehensive mental health strategy. The platform also aims to promote better food choices by creating a Local Food Act.

### **Jobs, the Economy and Green Energy**

The platform defends the Liberals' record on jobs and the economy. It discusses job creation, touts the amount of foreign direct investment the province has received, and outlines the benefits that tax reform has had on businesses.

The platform strongly reinforces the Liberals' commitment to making Ontario an international leader in green energy. They tout the successes of the Green Energy Act and commit to further building upon it and its centerpiece, the Feed-in Tariff (FIT) program. The platform particularly highlights the clean energy jobs that have been created through the FIT program and commits to delivering 50,000 clean energy jobs for Ontario families. The Liberals highlight their commitment to invest in renewable energy such as wind and solar, as well as bringing clean energy to Ontario's roads through investments in electric vehicles and the infrastructure required to support them.

In terms of new investment, the platform outlines a need to attract highly skilled labour and commits to implementing a tax credit of up to \$10,000 for employers who hire highly skilled newcomers so they can get Canadian work experience. Framed as a part of their environmental platform – and as a tactic to win votes in the 905 area code – the Liberals have promised to expand GO train service by delivering full-day, two-way GO train service in all corridors.

### **The Deficit**

The platform does not offer anything new in terms of deficit reduction. Rather, the platform reiterates the government's goal as outlined in the 2011 Budget to reduce the deficit by finding efficiencies, while protecting vital public services.

### **Contrasting Promises**

In contrast to the "pocketbook politics" advanced by both the Progressive Conservative (PC) Party and the New Democratic Party (NDP), the Liberals' platform offers little more in terms of relief. With the opposition parties promising tax and electricity price relief for families, the Liberal platform does little more than highlight the Clean Energy Benefit they have already introduced. The platform keeps a focus on long-term goals, instead of short-term relief.

### **Opposition claims Liberal commitments not possible without tax increases**

On Sunday evening, details of the Liberal platform were leaked to the press. Both opposition parties quickly jumped on this, arguing that the move was an indication of "internal problems" within the Liberal Party. The PC Party has immediately taken aim at the tax credit for businesses who hire newcomers, comparing the program to affirmative action policy and stating that it offers an unfair advantage in the job market. The PCs have also insisted that the platform is an attempt to distract attention away from the "elephant in the room," insisting McGuinty will raise taxes to fund his promises.



### **On the Campaign Trail**

As events have indicated so far, Dalton McGuinty is running a very tightly controlled campaign. The platform launch itself was held in a small room at Marriott Hotel and the Liberals have banned opposition MPPs, candidates and staffers from attending all electoral events featuring McGuinty. While this could be framed as an effort to run a campaign with a strong element of discipline, it could also be viewed as a means to deflect criticism from opposition parties towards the Liberal leader.

The most recent Nanos polling numbers show that the Liberals are only trailing the PCs by 3.5 percentage points, indicating a close race. With the release of their platform, the Liberals will campaign hard to prove to voters that they are the only party who can ensure a healthy, prosperous and bright future for Ontarians in contrast to the opposition parties which they purport will keep the province stuck in the past.