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Communication breakdown



By Nate Smelle

KNEE DEEP IN SCANDALS many had counted the Liberal Party out of contention for the leadership this time around on election day. The animosity towards the Liberals even flared up locally when members of the public angrily confronted Liberal candidate Georgina Thompson during the all-candidates debate in Bird's Creek about the controversies her party is entangled in.

So, what happened? Polls prior to the election showed the Conservatives slightly ahead, the Liberals not far behind, and the NDP picking up a bit of ground on the other two parties. While there may be a lot of confusion around what exactly Hudak and Horwath did wrong to lose an election so ripe for the picking, the message from voters in Ontario on June 12 was loud and clear. With Horwath steering the Ontario NDP further to the right than ever before, and Hudak leaning harder to the right than Mike Harris ever did, Ontarians took a sharp left turn by electing Premier Kathleen Wynne to govern the province for the next four years.

Did Wynne's message resonate well with voters, or was it merely better than the other options? Unfortunately I suspect the latter to be true. With so many voters obviously angry with the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals, Ontarians had never been more ready to make a change. Horwath manifested her own internal party problems when she attempted to move the Ontario NDP away from its core values towards becoming the party of the centre wedged between Wynne's Liberals and Hudak's Conservatives. This slide to the right upset a number of long time NDP supporters which in turn generated the public perception of a party lacking in solidarity.

Hudak on the other hand did not try and transform his party fundamentally by shifting it away from its core values. For the most part he stuck to the script, promising less government, lower corporate taxes and more jobs. In this election the Conservative train came off the track early in the campaign when Hudak's team put out the message that they planned to create one million jobs by cutting 100,000 jobs. Fortunately for the Liberals this message did hit home with voters.

A little number crunching and it didn't take long to see why the Tories plan raised flags for many Ontarians. To put it into perspective, creating one million jobs that each pay $40,000 a year would require a $40 billion investment. For this to work the annual salary of each of the 100,000 people to lose their jobs from the cuts would have to be $400,000. The Sunshine list monitors the salaries of civil servants, doctors, nurses, firefighters, police and teachers that register in at more than $100,000 per annum. In 2013 there were only 97,796 names on this list, earning an average salary of $127,433.

The same type of communication breakdown that took the wind out of the sails of the Conservatives also prohibited the NDP from making any progress on June 12. Both of these parties failed to convince Ontarians that their strategies were a better alternative than the Liberals plan. Now that we have provincially decided on the people to represent our personal interests in the legislature, we can turn our sights towards the municipal elections coming up this fall.