

Experience is no substitute for

The Right Direction



The Official Platform of the Freedom Party of Ontario

"Roads are merely followed. A truly great society navigates an ocean of possibility."

Paul McKeever, Leader, Freedom Party of Ontario



Paul McKeever

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Fellow Ontarians,

You have the opportunity to elect your member of the Ontario Legislature as little as once every four or five years. That is a very long time between elections: just consider how much has changed in your life since 1999, or since 1995.

In the next provincial election, you will, in effect, be choosing your representative in a crew that will guide Ontario over sometimes stormy seas. But your vote will also play a much more important role: it will determine whether Ontario will merely follow the wind, or travel purposefully in a clearly-mapped direction to a better future. This is no time to sell your vote for a few cheap “wedge-issue” promises: your vote is a five-year investment. In exchange for your vote, you deserve a clear vision for improvement and prosperity, not experienced management of the little you already have. A government with the courage to do what is *right* consistently, rather than the cowardly arrogance that schemes and flip-flops to avoid the loss of power and prestige. A premier who will work to facilitate Ontario’s success, not a manicured dandy who seeks only the easiest route to avoid failure.

On the issues that will *still* matter five years from now - education, health, and electricity - you will see no real difference between the PCs, Liberals and NDP. All of those parties are firmly committed to forcing you to pay for schools your children do not attend. All are committed to *rationed* health care. All are in favour of economically naive, dangerous, and irresponsible price controls for electricity. In the pages that follow, you will find that Freedom Party is offering something better.

I firmly believe that the greatness of a society is determined not by its government’s tendency to divide a single loaf of bread evenly, but by the efforts of its members to produce enough loaves for everyone. Individual choice, personal responsibility, dignity, prosperity and justice. That is Freedom Party’s vision for Ontario over the next four or five years. It all starts with your vote.

Regards,

Paul McKeever

Choice in Education

Ending the Double-Tuition Penalty;
Choice in Education

Currently in Ontario, parents are free to send their children to schools that are not owned and operated by the Ontario government: schools where there are different teaching methods, where there are different class sizes, or where different subjects are taught; schools in which their children can be challenged in different ways, or in which differing religious or moral values can be instilled. But there is a penalty for parents who choose to send their children to “private” schools: they are required also to pay tuition to a government-owned and operated “public” school even though their children are not attending it. The result is that only the very wealthy can afford to send their children to the school of their choice: only the very wealthy can afford to pay two tuitions for one child. The current double-tuition system is unfair and elitist.

There is one exception to the double-tuition penalty in Ontario: the constitution of Canada prevents the Ontario government from double-charging parents who enroll their children in the Catholic “separate” school system: if you choose to send your child to a Catholic school, you do not have to pay the additional public school tuition. The Freedom Party of Ontario believes that that exception should be available to all parents, regardless of their religion or choice of education.

The Freedom Party of Ontario takes the position that private schools are not only for the rich. No parent should have to pay a tuition for a school that his or her child does not attend. Accordingly, the Freedom Party of Ontario will eliminate the double-tuition penalty. Parents will pay their tuition fees directly to the schools of their choice. One hundred percent of your child’s education dollar will go straight from you to your child’s school: no middle-man, no school board squabbles, no waste.

It is important to note that Freedom Party supports the role of parents in determining not simply *where* their children go to school (i.e., “choice in *schools*”) but also *what* their children learn, and *how* they are taught (i.e., “choice in *education*”). This is an important distinction, because the Progressive Conservative education tax credit eligibility rules may actually be used to cause independent schools to adopt government-school curricula.

Taxes, Borrowing and the Debt

Capital Gains
Tax to be
Eliminated

The Freedom Party of Ontario respects your property rights. You should not be taxed on the money (the "capital gain") you make by selling something (a car, shares, a cottage etc.) for more than you paid for it. The simple fact is that you have already paid tax on the money you used to buy the property in the first place: it is an unfair cash-grab to tax you again simply because you invested your money wisely rather than wasting it. With an aging population, investing wisely should not be discouraged. The Freedom Party of Ontario will eliminate the taxation by Ontario of capital gains: capital gains will be excluded from your taxable income before determining what your rate of income taxation will be.

Provincial
Government Not
to Borrow

There is no free lunch. When a government borrows to pay for today, it makes you, and your children, poorer tomorrow. Freedom Party will prohibit borrowing by the Ontario government. That said, Ontario has witnessed that when the management and agenda of the Progressive Conservative party was taken over by Liberals ("red-Tories") led by Ernie Eves, the Progressive Conservatives amended their own taxpayer protection legislation to delay tax hikes and tax credits. A tax cut delayed is a tax cut denied, and the same holds true for balanced budgets. Politicians must be made to pay a higher price for a repeat of the *contempt* red Tories have displayed for the public protections guaranteed by law. The Freedom Party of Ontario will hold an Ontario referendum on the adoption, *by the people of Ontario*, of a constitutional convention prohibiting borrowing by the Ontario government.

100% of
Surpluses used
only to pay down
provincial debt
or reduce taxes

From time to time, governments declare that they have a "surplus". This means that they have taken from you more money than was needed to pay the government's expenses.

A surplus is not a green light to increase government spending. It is a clear sign that the government has overtaxed you.

Therefore, in respect of any year in which revenues have exceeded expenditures, the Freedom Party of Ontario will dedicate 100% of that surplus to paying down the provincial debt and/or reducing taxes.

Electricity: a Plan for a Bright Future

The Problem

Ontario is facing a looming crisis concerning the supply of electricity. Our usage of electricity is growing, while our power generation facilities are wearing out. What is worse, the planned closure of one of Ontario's power generation plants in 2005 will result in Ontario suddenly having to import more electricity than it does at present, at high cost.

In December of 2002, the Progressive Conservatives and the Liberals united in voting to re-impose a cap on the money you pay to retailers and distributors for electricity (price caps were initially imposed by the NDP in the 1990s). However, by imposing a price cap of 4.3 cents, the government really just divided the cost of electricity into the part shown on your electricity bill, and the part you pay through provincial sales tax etc. The result is extremely unjust and backward: the less you consume, the more you pay for each kWh. In fact, if you stop using electricity altogether, you will still be paying - through taxes - for the electricity consumed by others, including commercial and some industrial consumption (homes use only 27% of the electricity consumed in Ontario).

The Eves-McGuinty price cap has also scared away investors who were strongly considering the building of more power generation facilities in Ontario: why spend billions if the government is going to impose socialist price caps and punish profitable investment? No longer trusting Eves' Progressive Conservatives and McGuinty's Liberals, investors are simply packing up their plans and leaving Ontario to face a massive power shortage.

It is possible for Ontarians to generate electricity at home using wind or solar technologies. However, significant legal barriers, including backward municipal by-laws and unwilling distributors, currently prevent you from reducing your costs in this way.

The Solution

Freedom Party will improve the supply of less expensive, more environmentally-friendly and reliable electricity by:

- eliminating the 4.3 cent price cap on electricity so that individuals will pay only for the electricity they consume;

(continued on next page)

Electricity: a Plan for a Bright Future

The Solution (continued)

- transferring the power generation facilities of Ontario Power Generation to a number of new subsidiaries, and selling those subsidiaries so as to increase the number of power generation companies in Ontario; electricity will be generated more cost efficiently, with savings for the consumer;
- eliminating all Ontario government marketing, subsidies and tax incentives that favour one form of electricity generation over another so that growth and development of renewable energy will no longer be held back by government intervention in the market;
- repealing legislation that overrides the common law in respect of nuisance, trespass, and riparian (water) rights to empower individuals to protect themselves from environmental harm;
- preventing the IMO from shielding itself from liability flowing from harmful acts or omissions;
- addressing cases of those in demonstrable financial need by providing those in need with financial assistance untied to the level of consumption, rather than with financial assistance that lowers the perceived and personal cost of electricity.
- protecting consumers from: the adding of a “Systems Benefit Charge” to electricity bills, the imposition of a “Renewable Portfolio Standard”, mandated use of power generation in newly constructed buildings, mandated time-of-use rates, and IMO bias in the sourcing and dispatch of power;
- requiring non-discriminatory interconnection standards for independent energy producers;
- removing barriers and restrictions on the use of district energy systems by local distributors;

Electricity: a Plan for a Bright Future

The Solution (continued)

- requiring the OEB, IMO and distributors to develop supportive policies, practices and standards, including Canadian Standards Association (CSA) or Underwriters Laboratories (UL) rated meters, to permit net metering without a kW limit;
- requiring all publicly-owned utilities to offer net metering; and
- eliminating arbitrary prohibitions (e.g., municipal zoning restrictions) to the construction or installation of independent generation facilities.

You will have the freedom to choose a single, low price for electricity with a retailer, but also the ability to offset your electricity costs by generating electricity and selling it back into the electricity grid. Taking these steps, Ontario will pave the way for an enriched supply of less expensive and reliable electricity, generated in a safe and environmentally friendly way.

Corporate Welfare

No Subsidies to business

All businesses in Canada that want or need financing must be left to borrow it from banks or other private sources, or to encourage Ontarians and others to purchase shares or bonds. A business whose financial situation is so bad that banks and investors are unwilling to lend the business money or buy the business' shares is not a business to which Ontario taxpayers should be forced to give their earnings. Strong businesses hire often and pay well. Ontario needs more strong businesses, not more welfare recipients. A Freedom Party government will not give or lend your income to businesses in Canada through the mechanism of government taxing and spending.

No Subsidies to the customers of business

Likewise, a Freedom Party government will not give or lend your income to people or companies that want the money so that they can buy goods or services from Ontario businesses. The Ontario government ought not to be in the habit of supporting businesses by forcing you to pick up the tab for a company's customer.

Your Home and Your Town

The Problem

If you own a house, you know that you currently pay a property tax based on its value. If you rent or lease, a significant portion of the rent you pay is used to pay the landlord's property taxes on the unit you rent.

Currently, in Ontario, many people who bought their houses when they were affordable are finding the values of their homes to have increased significantly. As a result, their property taxes have gone up. In some cases - and, particularly for people on a low, fixed-income - people have been forced to sell their homes and leave their communities because they cannot afford to pay property taxes on the houses they have already bought and paid for.

At the same time, municipalities are finding property taxes to be ill-suited for the purpose of funding core municipal expenses. Unfortunately, provincial governments in recent years have simply decided to give provincial revenues to municipalities in crisis rather than fixing the way in which municipal expenses are paid for. The result: provincial taxes that should have benefitted all Ontarians have been spent for the benefit of only those people who live in the lucky few places that have received a provincial hand-out. Some, typically-smaller towns are left to crumble so that others can have a transportation subsidy or an opera house.

The Solutions

Freedom Party's vision for municipal renewal and home-owner fairness involves three key changes:

End Property Taxation

1. **ELIMINATING THE PROPERTY TAX** - after you pay for your home, nobody should have the right to tax you out of it. It's your home, not a cash cow. It's your community and sense of belonging: it's not a place reserved for the wealthy. Eliminating the property tax is the decent and right thing to do.

Consumption Tax, Instead

2. **REPLACING LOST REVENUES** - Freedom Party will work with the municipalities to design a single consumption tax (e.g., a sales tax) to replace the revenues lost from the elimination of the property tax. Each city will set its own rate of taxation. This will ensure two things:

Competition between municipalities to keep taxes low: to keep people shopping where they live, and to encourage other shoppers to visit, municipalities will have to ensure that their tax rate is competitive with that of neighbouring municipalities.

Responsible municipal spending: because municipalities will have to be competitive with the amount of money they collect, they will have to be prudent in the expenditure of tax revenues. Politicians will have to refrain from empire building, and to ensure that important and legitimate municipal services are given top priority.

Your Home and Your Town

Municipalities to Pay their Own Way: no subsidies from people living in other towns.

3. END PROVINCIAL SUBSIDIES TO MUNICIPALITIES: When the province spends provincial revenues (e.g., income tax, PST) on municipal expenses, people in some towns end up paying for the municipal expenses of other towns: wealth is transferred out of one community and into another. The town receiving the money benefits, but the town paying the money suffers.

When a municipal government thinks that it can always turn to the province for help, it is encouraged to live beyond its means and expect people in other towns to fix the problem. This is an unfair abuse of the taxpayer, and an irresponsible form of municipal finance.

But it's worse than that. In a town whose transportation, housing etc. is subsidized by the province, businesses avoid paying their employees enough money to pay the full cost of transportation, housing etc.. Businesses move into the subsidized town, leaving others behind to become little more than bedroom communities. People from the bedroom communities, having lost jobs at home, travel to the subsidized town to work. The subsidized town becomes cramped and overly expensive. Roads to the town become congested. People spend hours on the road instead of with their families. With so many cars on the roads for so long, pollution increases. So does road rage. Accidents increase. Road costs soar. And governments use the whole catastrophe as a means of imposing new fines and fees (e.g., a fee to drive into the down-town).

The bottom line: provincial subsidies to municipalities lower everyone's standard of living and quality of life. Freedom Party's vision is for a greater number of thriving but less concentrated communities. You should be able to work near where you live, spend less time sniffing fumes on the highway, spend less money on fuel and mileage, and spend more time with your family and friends. Freedom Party's commitment to end provincial subsidies to municipalities is a first and essential step to that better future.

Improving the Integrity of Elections

The Potential for Voter Fraud under Ontario's current system is unacceptable.

The vote is the only direct power that most Ontarians have to influence the course of their governance. The vote is the result of centuries of political struggle, and is a matter that must be guarded and defended from fraud.

To vote in an Ontario election, you must be a citizen of Canada and live in the riding in which you vote. By law, you may vote only once in an election. However, the somewhat disturbing fact is that Ontario's eligibility requirements are practically unenforceable. Although you would be breaking the law, it would be an extremely easy matter for you to vote several times in your riding, or in multiple ridings, even if you are not a citizen of Canada.

That is because Ontario's voter registration system is essentially an *honour* system. Under the current system, if your name is not on the voter's list at a polling station, you can still vote without even showing anyone any ID. You may have to sign a declaration saying that you are eligible to vote, but nobody - ever - reviews the statement to verify that you are who you said you were, or that you in fact were eligible to vote. The statement you sign will be placed in storage: there is no person in the entire government of Ontario assigned to ensuring that you had the right to vote.

Under our current system, any adult, from any country or province could vote in an Ontario election, vote multiple times in a given election, and have little fear of ever being caught. In fact, there are thousands of deceased people on the voter lists of Canada, each of whom still appear to have the right to a ballot, from the perspective of a polling station staffer. If someone you know has passed away recently, chances are that you could vote for them and nobody would ever know that you had broken the law.

Given the fact that nobody is bothering to check for fraud, it should not be surprising that Elections Ontario prides itself on never having had a single case of voter fraud. If you aren't looking for it, you shouldn't be too surprised not to find it.

Yet, when the PC's, Liberal's, or NDP's representatives are presented with the proposal that there should be a voter card, there are howls of protest. None of them wants a change from the current honour system.

Replacing the Honour System: a Voter Card to Prove Eligibility to Vote.

There is currently no single piece of identification that certifies your eligibility to vote in an Ontario election. In advance of the calling of an election, the Freedom Party of Ontario will issue a voter card to every person who is eligible to vote in an Ontario election, and will require all voters to present the voter card at the polling station before they will be given a ballot.

Ontario's democracy deserves better protection from fraud than the honour system.

Health Care

Choice in Health Care Insurance

The Current System
is Broken

In Ontario, no person or company is permitted to compete with the government's health care insurance plan. The government has a monopoly. The government, despite all we know about monopolies when it comes to such things as gasoline prices - e.g., inflated prices - tells you that the government's monopoly is good; that competition is somehow a bad thing. But, if the government health care insurance is so good, why does the government fear competition?

The fact is that the Ontario monopoly on health care insurance is not good. Worse, it leads to expensive over-use of the health care system. Here's why. In Ontario, people can use hospital services to have a sniffle diagnosed at no cost to the sniffer. In Ontario, your neighbour can abuse his body, live an unhealthy lifestyle, and rely on you to pay for the extra health care services he uses as a result. In effect, under the current system in Ontario, those who use health care less pay more for the little service they actually use.

Such a system of health care funding defies common sense and fairness. By way of contrast, if your neighbour knew that continuing an unhealthy lifestyle would cause his healthcare insurance costs to increase, he would be more likely to take care of himself. Ontario's health care costs would decrease, because the overall need for services would decrease.

A sustainable health care system starts with disease prevention and healthier lifestyle choices.

A Better Plan for
Sustainable,
Affordable, Health
Care Funding.

Freedom Party will remove the current prohibition against competition in healthcare insurance. Those who choose to live a healthier life will find their health care costs decrease and/or their level of service improve.

Health Care

The Current System
is a Government
Monopoly

Choice in Health Care Service Providers

Currently in Ontario, the government prevents competition with the government in the provision of most healthcare services. The results are the same as in any other monopoly: there is little incentive to provide customers with faster service, or with more courteous or higher quality service. The provider - in reality, a group of politicians - doesn't have to provide better services to keep customers because the customer has no competitor to turn to.

Monopolies don't keep costs down. A monopoly is simply a way for politicians to cut health care quality without losing health care revenues (i.e., taxes). But it's a short-term game: eventually, health care ends up in such disrepair that politicians announce a "crisis" exists in health care, and that it is "necessary" to impose new taxes or government fees to repair the damage.

Monopolies are also a tool for the envious. There are those who actually believe that it is more important for everyone to have the same services than for the services to be good. This argument, clearly, is flawed. If we all had only one dollar's worth of health care per year, we would all have the *same* quality of service, but it would be extremely *poor* service. If the quality of all health care services is to improve, then *quality*, not socialist fanaticism, must be the focus.

It's your body. It's your money. Freedom Party will defend your freedom to have the health care you want, when you want it, and from whom you want it. What you *want*, not merely what government deigns you worthy of receiving.

Freedom Party will
allow more health
care providers to
compete to serve
you.

Freedom Party will end the prohibition against competition with government health care services. Knowing that providers who give their patients poor service will lose your business (and, therefore, your money), all healthcare providers - including government-run providers - will be forced to improve service to you and to other patients. If Ontario's health care system is truly tops, it will do very well in competition with others.

Political Party Funding

No Provincial Revenues for Political Parties.

Under current Ontario law, a political party whose candidate receives better than 15% of the popular vote in a riding receives a subsidy from Ontario taxpayers. The Freedom Party of Ontario believes that political parties should pay for their own election expenses: taxpayers should not be forced to provide financial support or reimbursements to political parties, especially if they disagree with the policies of such parties. Accordingly, the Freedom Party of Ontario will eliminate government subsidies to political parties.

The Same Rights for All Individuals

The Freedom Party of Ontario strongly opposes laws or government activities that do not treat every individual the same as every other individual, regardless of their genetic make-up, religion, country of origin, or peaceful lifestyle choices. The Freedom Party of Ontario rejects the notion that discrimination is an acceptable way of combatting discrimination. The Freedom Party of Ontario will repeal discriminatory laws, or amend them such that they confer no benefit or status as a discriminatory means or to a discriminatory end.

No Discrimination by Self-governing Guilds

The Ontario Government delegates to certain professional organizations (e.g., the Law Society of Upper Canada), the power to govern the conduct of their members, who must continue to be members if they are to continue to engage in their profession within Ontario. In many cases, qualified individuals are prevented from practising their professions for reasons of protecting the membership from competition rather than for reasons of protecting the public from harm. For example, in the midst of a physician shortage in Ontario, physicians trained in other countries face almost insurmountable obstacles to practising medicine in Ontario.

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The Same Rights for All Individuals

No Discrimination by Self-governing Guilds

Despite the elimination of racist hiring quotas by the Ontario government in the mid 1990s, some professional organizations continue to use race, country of origin, and other factors unrelated to ability with respect to training, admissions, licencing. In some cases, persons who are forced to be members of such guilds in order to practice in Ontario are finding their membership fees being spent on subsidies or social engineering measures relating not to the abilities of persons, but to such things as their genetic make-up.

The Freedom Party of Ontario will require such governing bodies to eliminate rules, programs, or spending initiatives that do not treat every individual the same as every other individual, regardless of their genetic make-up, country of origin, religion, or peaceful lifestyle choices, or that confer a benefit or status upon any individual because of his or her genetic make-up, religion, country of origin or peaceful lifestyle choices.

No Discrimination by Universities

Some revenues from Ontario taxes are currently forwarded to private universities and colleges. The Freedom Party of Ontario will withdraw provincial funding from any university or college that, by design, allows the genetic make-up, religion, or peaceful lifestyle choices of a person to be a consideration or to influence in any way student admissions, academic or non-academic staffing, funding, promotions, or professorial tenure.

It's Time for a Political Re-alignment in Ontario

Where has "common sense" gone in Ontario? It is a question often asked by political writers and commentators since the spring of 2002. And rightly so.

During the race to replace Mike Harris as leader of the Progressive Conservatives ("PCs"), it became painfully clear that a slender majority of PCs do not now support a common sense agenda for Ontario. The PC's new, red-Tory management, led by Ernie Eves, has thrown common sense out with the trash. Moreover, those PCs who are still in favour of common sense have effectively been sidelined: in reality, they are no longer welcome in their own home.

From electricity to choice in schools, the very thing that brought the PCs to power - a commitment to breaking up government monopolies, to more competition, and to more choice and personal responsibility - has now been ejected by the new red-Tory management of the PC party. In its place is a scatter-brained, make-it-up-as-you-go-along, grease every squeaky wheel, style of governance. The agenda of the PCs now having been seized by 'pink panthers', leadership has been replaced by a system in which the party follows public opinion, even where it is economically perilous to do so. Most succinctly: "Progressive Conservative" is now synonymous with "Liberal", and that is exactly how the new management of the PCs want it.

The red-Tory take-over of the PC agenda has left the Right in Ontario facing the same problem it faced with the federal PCs. There are, in reality, two parties carrying the PC banner: a majority of red-Tories whose views mirror those of the provincial Liberals, and a large minority of blue-Tories, who are committed to free markets, choice, personal responsibility and justice. Like the federal PCs, the provincial PC party is overpowered by a red-Tory faction that wants to keep the financial support of the right without giving the right a say in the party's agenda. This cannot continue.

Having been a blue Tory myself until recently (I was a member in Jim Flaherty's riding association), I sympathize. But sympathy is no substitute for action, and Freedom Party has been preparing a home for dislocated Progressive Conservatives and others for over a year. This is no time to knuckle-under and wait another 30 or 40 years for another Mike Harris to unite oil and water. As you know, Ontario's future depends on a clear vision and voice for the right. I encourage all blue-Tories within the Progressive Conservative party to remain united and to work as Freedom Party to complete the political realignment that is necessary to keep a common sense agenda in the legislature. My door is always open.

A stylized, handwritten signature of Paul McKeever, consisting of a large, elegant letter 'P'.



Freedom Party

Still *Right* for Ontario

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