

Ontario's Political Parties

Some Reflections on Their Policy History

Jordan Brennan, PhD

Economist, Research Department

Ontario Regional Council

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Scope of the Presentation

Three Political Parties

- New Democrats
- Progressive Conservatives
- Liberals

Five Premiers

- Bob Rae NDP, 1990-1995
- Mike Harris PC's, 1995-2002
- Ernie Eves PC's, 2002-2003
- Dalton McGuinty Liberals, 2003-2013
- Kathleen Wynne Liberals, 2013-2018

Time frame

- 1990-2018 (28 years)

Four Policy Areas

- Labour Relations
- Fiscal & Industrial Policy
- Hydro One
- Equity

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Section 1

Labour Relations



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Labour Relations

How friendly are the political parties to workers/unions?

- **Labour law** reform (ESA, LRA)
- **Hostile labour legislation**
 - Back-to-work legislation
 - Suspension of bargaining rights
 - Restricting access to union protection
- Public sector **work stoppages** (strike activity)
- Adjustments to the **minimum wage**



Reforms to Labour Law: NDP

Amendments to the ESA

- **Parental leave** (1990)
- Employee Wage Protection Program (1991)

Overhaul of the LRA (1992-1993)

- **Coverage expanded:** domestic workers, some professions
- **Expedited hearings** for complaints around discipline/discharge during organizing campaigns
- Use of **replacement workers** prohibited



Reforms to Labour Law: NDP cont.

Overhaul of the LRA cont.

- Employees were given **‘just cause’ protection** in cases of disciplinary action prior to first collective agreement, during strikes and lockouts
- Employers and unions required to bargain **adjustment plan** in case of mass termination/plant closure
- After a strike employers required to **reinstate** employees to former positions



NDP: Other Labour Legislation

The Social Contract (1993)

- Stated aim was to save \$2 billion on public payroll (\$12 billion deficit) without layoffs
- Forced 12 days of unpaid leave for many civil service workers (**'Rae Days'**), exempted those earning > \$30K/yr
- Opened public sector collective agreements, **froze wages**
- Rift with the labour movement



Labour Relations: Progressive Conservatives

Mike Harris: LRA Reforms (1995)

Repealed many NDP reforms, intro significant amendments:

- Replaced card-based certification with **secret ballot**
- Repealed NDP law outlawing the hiring of **replacement workers** during a strike
- Lowered the threshold to apply for **decertification**
- Removed **successor rights** for Crown emps (*restored 2006*)



Labour Relations: Progressive Conservatives

Mike Harris: LRA Reforms cont.

- Introduced requirement for employers to post info about **decertification** process (2000)
- Introduced **union salary disclosure** for all union officials and employees (\$100K+)

Mike Harris: ESA Reforms (1995)

- General **prohibition** against unionized employees filing **complaints under ESA** (built into collective agreements)



Labour Relations: Progressive Conservatives

Mike Harris: ESA Review in 2000-2001

- Introduced **rest periods** (daily, between shifts, etc.)
- Introduced **Personal Emergency Leave**
- Length of **parental leave** extended
- **Enforcement** tools strengthened, including escalating max fines for corporations and increased max jail terms



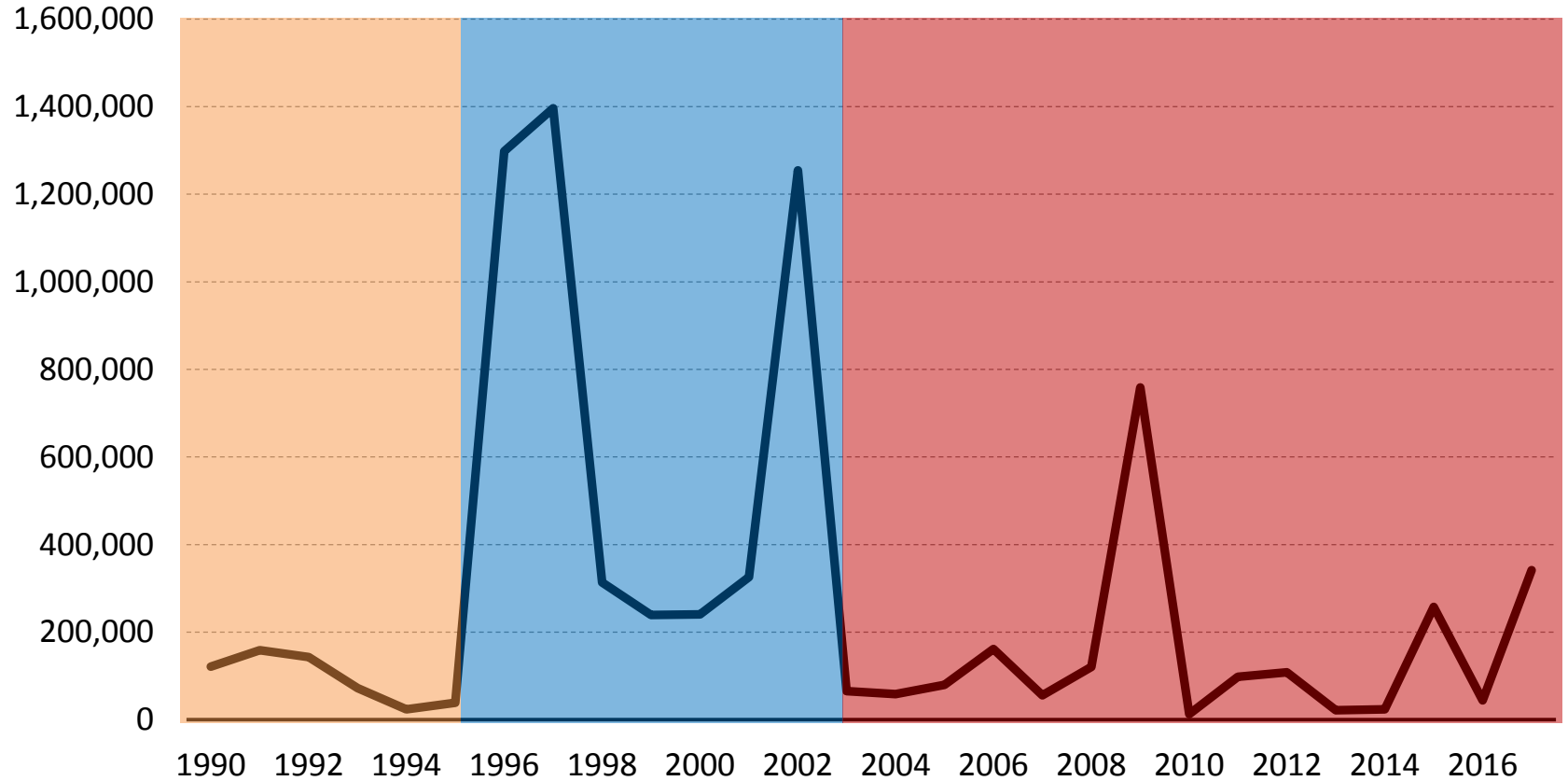
Labour Relations: Liberals

Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne

- **Family medical leave** introduced (2004)
- Improved processes around **wage theft/recovery** (2014-15)
- **Minimum wage** indexed to inflation (2015)
- New **job-protected leaves** (family caregiver, critically ill child, crime-related child death/disappearance)
- Repealed **union salary disclosure** provision, requirement for unionized employers to post decertification info
- **Bill 148** (stay tuned)

Strike Intensity in Ontario's Public Service, 1990-2016

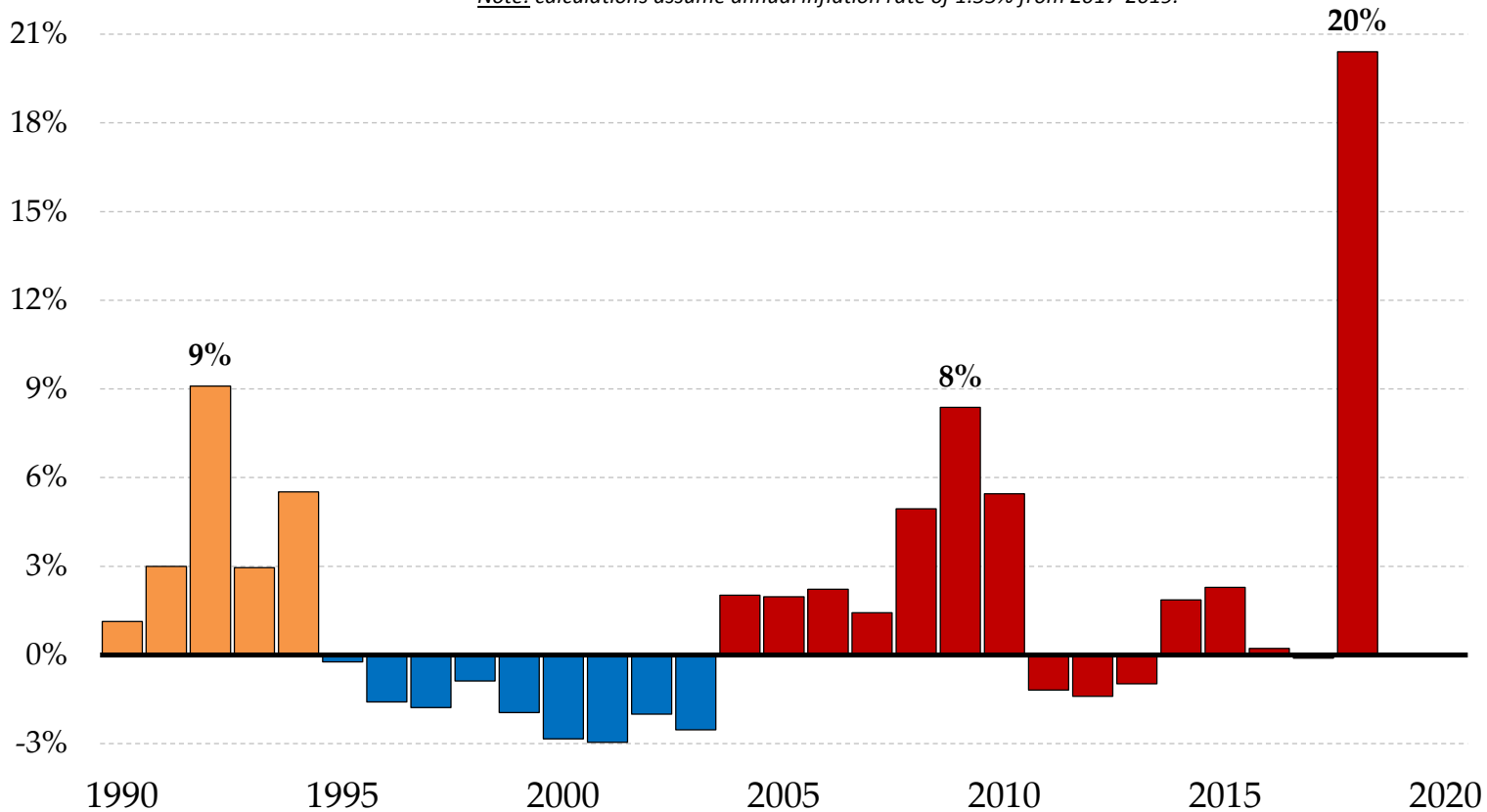
Note: Person days not worked. Source: Cansim Table 278-0013.



Minimum Wage: Annual Percent Increase/Decrease, 1990-2018

Source: Cansim Tables 384-0037 and 326-0020; Government of Canada Minimum Wage Database.

Note: calculations assume annual inflation rate of 1.55% from 2017-2019.



Labour Relations Scorecard

Issue	NDP (1990-1995)	PC (1995-2003)	Liberal (2003-2018)
Labour Law Reform	☑	☒	☑
Public sector strikes <i>Average # work days lost/year</i>	93,000	575,000	147,000
Back-to-Work/Suspension Bargaining Rights/Restricting Unionization	6	16	5
Minimum Wage <i>Average annual change</i>	+4.3%	-1.9%	+3.2%

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Section 2

Fiscal and Industrial Policy



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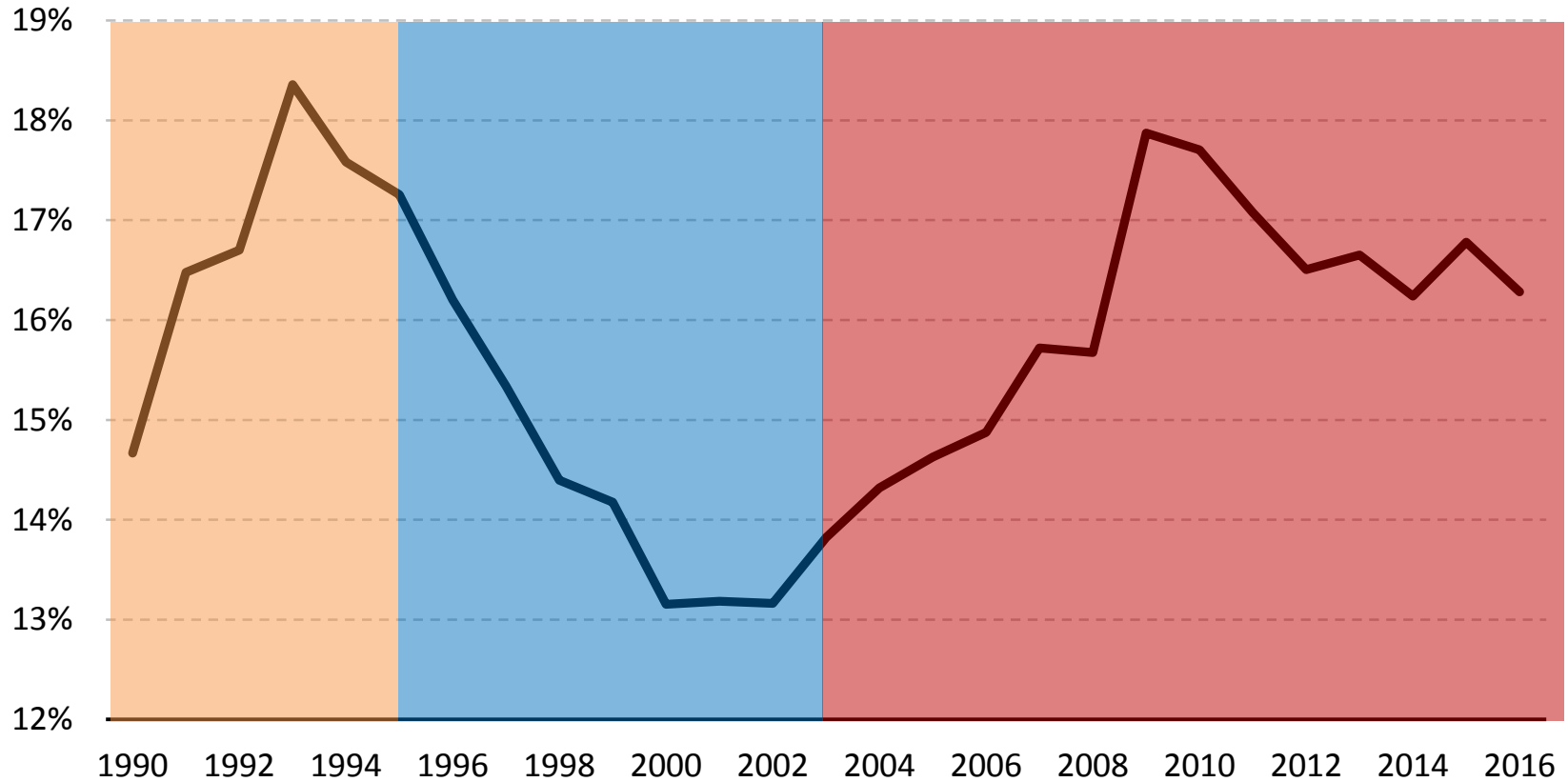
Fiscal and Industrial Policy

Comparing the Three Parties

- Taxing and spending
- \$142 billion budget
 - 82% of program expenditure spent on four ministries
 - Health care: 44%
 - Education: 21%
 - Community & Social Services: 10%
 - Advanced Education & Skills Development: 7%

Government Spending as a Percentage of GDP, 1990-2016

Source: Fiscal Reference Table 23; Ontario Economic Account, Table 9





NDP: Fiscal/Industrial Policies

- Keynesian '**stimulus**' to counteract recession
- \$82 billion in **deficits** over five years (in today's dollars)
 - Social assistance, social housing, child benefits
 - Increased taxes on high-income earners
 - Lowered tax rates on 700,000 low-income earners
- '**Jobs Ontario**', a job creation program
- **Home Care & Community Services Act** (*PC's repealed*)
- **Bailout** of Algoma Steel, Spruce Falls Paper



PC: Fiscal/ Industrial Policies

- **‘Common Sense Revolution’** centred on significant spending reductions, tax cuts and elimination of the budgetary deficit
- Cut **social assistance** rates by 22 percent (1995)
 - Reduced welfare rolls by 500,000 people
- Provincial **income taxes** reduced 30 percent
- Introduced Fair Share **Health Levy** on high-income earners to help pay for rising health care costs
- Cut **health care spending**, laid off hundreds of nurses and closed hospitals in an effort to balance the budget



PC: Fiscal/ Industrial Policies cont.

- Cut funding for major **infrastructure** projects (e.g., Eglinton West subway in Toronto)
- **Privatization**: proposals for Ontario Hydro/LCBO, Hwy 407
- Provincial **income assistance** downloaded to the cities
- Eliminated **Grade 13/OAC**
- **Walkerton** water supply contaminated with E. Coli, seven died. Provincial water testing privatized in 1996.
 - Public inquiry found that deregulation of water quality testing and cuts to Ministry of Environment were contributing factors

McGuinty Liberals: Fiscal/Industrial Policy

Four deficits: health, education, infrastructure & fiscal

- **Health:** new money for hospitals (wait times), free immunization for kids, 100K new home care spaces, 3% increase to social assistance, new agreement on national health accord
- **Education:** \$6.2 billion was 'largest investment in education in 40 years', increased accessibility for low-income students
- **Infrastructure:** \$1.2 billion, 10-year expansion of TTC and GO Transit, 15,000 new affordable housing units
- **Industrial Policy:** **Green Energy Act** (2009) used tariffs to expand renewable energy production, create a green energy industry in Ontario
- **Investment support** for auto companies in aftermath of Great Recession



Wynne Liberals: Fiscal/Industrial Policy

- **Drummond Report** (2012), recommended pivot to austerity
- \$295 million **Youth Jobs Strategy**
- \$260 million investment in **home care** health services for seniors
- 20% increase to **Ontario Child Benefit** for low-income families
- Investment support for Honda (\$86M), Detroit Three, Cisco
- 2014 election included **\$12.5 billion deficit** which targeted:
 - Wage increases for home care and childcare workers, Ontario Pension Plan, Tax hike for high-income earners
- \$29 billion **infrastructure** investment program (subway, rail, road)
- **Climate Change Action Plan** (WCI-2016)

Progressive Conservative: Where Are They Now?

Tim Hudak

- Scrap the **Rand Formula** (voluntary dues payment, have unions collect dues, disclosure of union revenues and expenditures)
- Terminate **100,000 public servants** and implement a wage freeze
- Aggressively reduce **government spending**, shrink number of ministries from 24 to 16, cut business and personal taxes, scrap DB plans
- **Privatize** OLG, end Beer Store monopoly, explore 'all options' for LCBO
- Increase **class sizes**, delay expansion of full-day kindergarten, phase out 10,000 non-teaching positions, etc.
- Withdraw from Western Climate Initiative (scrap **cap-and-trade**)
- *Another 'Common Sense Revolution'*

Progressive Conservative: Where Are They Now?

Patrick Brown and the “People’s Guarantee”

- **Tax cuts** for the middle class, expand program spending, temporary budgetary deficit then balanced budget. But how?
- Scrap **Climate Change Action Plan**, including cap-and-trade, replaced with Trudeau’s carbon tax (\$4B over four years)
- Delayed move to \$15 **minimum wage** (2022)
- **New spending** measures: write off 75% of daycare costs, 100,000 new childcare spaces, \$1.9 billion for mental health, new money for autism, free dental care for seniors, \$5B subways
- Language remains one of **tax cuts and deregulation**, even though there are indications he intends to govern like a Wynne/Trudeau Liberal

Fiscal/Industrial Policy Scorecard

Issue	NDP (1990-1995)	PC (1995-2003)	Liberal (2003-2018)
<p>Program Expenditure</p> <p><i>Average annual % change per cap</i></p>	+3.4%	-1.0%	+2.1%
<p>Industrial Policy</p> <p><i>Investment support</i></p>	☑	☒	☑
<p>Austerity Politics?</p> <p><i>Public Expenditure Reductions, Deregulation, Privatization</i></p>	☒	☑	☒ / ☑

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Section 3

Hydro/Utilities



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Hydro One: Timeline

- 1990s: cost overruns at Darlington Nuclear, ballooning debt, Rae NDP responds by **freezing prices**
- 1998-2000: Hydro One acquires 88 municipal electrical utilities
- 1999: **Harris restructuring** splits power generation (OPG) from transmission and distribution (Hydro One), prepares IPO
- 2002: Unfreezes prices, **prices skyrocket**, Eves' reversal
- 2015: Wynne announces **privatization**, \$\$\$ for deficit reduction & infrastructure; FAO warns of '**fiscal deterioration**' (\$750M)
- 2017: Government completes third auction of shares (49.9%)
- Party Stances

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Section 4

Equity



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The Rae NDP and Equity

- Established **Employment Equity Commission** (1991)
- **Affirmative action** to increase number of women, non-whites, aboriginals, disabled persons in public sector (1993)
- Bill 167 (1994) would have provided for **same-sex partnerships** benefits (*tri-party defeat*)
- Supported **Indigenous right** to self-government, advocated for inclusion of Aboriginal rights in constitutional reforms
- Required **Ontario police** services to hire more women, disabled people, Aboriginal Canadians, visible minorities



The Harris-Eves PC's and Equity

- Harris opposed Rae's **affirmative action** measures
- Harris appointed more **female deputy ministers** than any other Ontario Premier
- 'Equity' or 'equality' go unmentioned in the Brown Progressive Conservative, *People's Guarantee*



The McGuinty-Wynne Liberals and Equity

- Legal definition of marriage changed to include **same-sex couples** (2005)
- Increased **accessibility to higher education** for low-income students through public investment (2005)
- Ontario's **Poverty Reduction Strategy** (2008-)
- Equity and Inclusive **Education Strategy** (2009—*Bill 13, 2012*)
- **Gender Wage Gap Strategy** (2014-2015)
- **Free college/university tuition** for low-income students (2016)
- Ontario **Accessibility** Action Plan (2016)
- Ontario Three-Year **Anti-Racism** Strategic Action Plan (2017)
- Safer Ontario Act **Policing Oversight** Act (2017)

Hydro and Equity Scorecard

Issue	NDP (1990-1995)	PC (1995-2003)	Liberal (2003-2018)
Keeping Hydro Public	✓	✗	✗
Equity	✓	✗	✓



Summary

- There are some clear differences between the parties when it comes to major policy issues
- There is also considerable overlap between the NDP and the Liberals on some issues, and between the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives on other issues, depending on the government of the day
- **Questions?**