

McGuinty denies killing Mississauga power plant to save his skin

Rob Ferguson - Sep 25, 2011



Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty serves beer after speaking about his party's plan to make post-secondary education more accessible and affordable while at the Regal Beagle Pub in Toronto on Sunday. Aaron Vincent Elkaim/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Ontario's tightest election campaign in three decades has entered a crucial week, with Dalton McGuinty denying charges he's killing a Mississauga power plant to save Liberal seats.

The Liberal leader's claims came Sunday as Tim Hudak's Progressive Conservative campaign made a surprise stop at the site and NDP boss Andrea Horwath revealed how she'd pay for her \$3.35 billion platform if elected Oct. 6.

McGuinty, who will go head to head with his rivals in Tuesday night's debate, insisted the timing of the plant cancellation is pure coincidence less than two weeks before voters head to the polls.

“We’ve responded to a compelling argument put forward by the folks living in that community,” he said, noting he was keeping an “open mind” because the plant was already under review.

“I don’t think anybody buys that,” Hudak told the Star after his visit to the site just northwest of Sherway Gardens mall, where concrete footings and construction cranes dot a pit the size of two hockey arenas.

It’s in the swing riding of Mississauga South, where a Forum Research poll in Saturday’s Star had McGuinty’s labour minister, Charles Sousa, in a dead heat with Conservative challenger Geoff Janoscik.

The decision to scrap the plant, announced quietly Saturday by Sousa and fellow Liberal MPPs from neighbouring ridings, follows years of community opposition.

“These sneaky tactics have become part of the Liberals’ standard operating procedure,” charged Hudak, who said he would not go ahead with the plant. “The eco taxes were brought in through a sneaky way and the HST and health premium were broken promises.”

McGuinty said there have been “significant changes” since the natural gas-powered plant was announced six years ago, including three nearby condos, new rules that would prevent even a wind turbine on the site because of the proximity to a residential area, and ample electricity supplies.

Hudak and NDP Leader Andrea Horwath noted McGuinty still hasn’t come clean with taxpayers on how much it will cost in penalties for cancelling a similar power plant months ago in the Liberal-held riding of Oakville.

“What’s it going to cost to change the location, what’s the new location?” Horwath said, calling for details before the vote a week from Thursday.

“This is more about saving seats than it is about making decisions on where to site power plants.”

McGuinty evaded the cost question, saying “it’s the subject of continuing conversation.” He attacked the NDP platform for raising corporate income taxes to 14 per cent from the current 11.5 per cent.

Horwath said that will raise government revenues \$1.85 billion a year by 2015 to help pay for pocketbook help for ordinary families, such as freezing tuition fees, transit fares and scrapping the 8 per cent provincial portion of the HST on natural gas and oil for home heating.

She set aside a “buffer” of almost \$2 billion a year as a financial cushion in case the world economy crashes again, but wouldn’t rule out spending more if there’s a double-dip recession, or using any unspent money to erase annual deficits before 2018.

“Nobody has a crystal ball,” she told reporters at a downtown hotel.