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## PC leader Hudak rips 'failed' Ontario Liberal government

March 06, 2010

BY KEITH LESLIE

OTTAWA – Ontario needs the Progressive Conservatives to clean up after a “reckless failed” Liberal government, Opposition Leader Tim Hudak said Saturday as he fired up the Tory troops for the 2011 election.

Hudak unleashed a blistering attack on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals during his keynote address to about 1,000 delegates at the Conservatives’ annual general meeting in Ottawa, with the theme ‘Ontario can lead again.’

“Our economy may have fallen apart – but our lawns are perfectly pesticide free,” said Hudak. “Our factories may be closing – but Ontario is protected from the menace of the plastic grocery bag.”

Under the Liberals, Ontario has fallen into have-not status, said Hudak.

“Our unemployment rate is higher than the rest of Canada,” he said. “Our taxes have climbed higher than the rest of Canada. Our services have deteriorated below the rest of Canada.”

Ontarians turned to the Tories in 1995 after the disastrous NDP government led by Bob Rae, and they’ll turn to the party again next year, predicted Hudak.

“It was our party that rescued the deal in the 1990s when previous reckless governments plunged Ontario into uncertainty, debt and fear,” he said. “Now this province needs us again to clean up after another reckless failed government.”

Hudak promised the Tories would rebuild the economy and create a better climate for investment to help boost employment levels.

“Instead of higher taxes on your paycheques and on everything you buy, we will cut taxes and create jobs,” he said.

The Liberals say the Conservatives’ rhetoric doesn’t match their policy positions when it comes to corporate taxes, which the government has already pledged to cut along with eliminating the capital tax.

“The only way to meaningfully cut the tax rate on new business investment is to get rid of the provincial sales tax,” said one Liberal source. “Lowering corporate tax rates has much less of an impact on the tax rate on new business investment than does transitioning the PST to the HST.”

Tory finance critic Norm Miller couldn’t say what specific taxes the party will promise to cut once it develops its platform for next year’s general election.

“We would certainly try to make Ontario as competitive as possible,” said Miller. “I can’t speculate on just exactly what we would do.”

The Conservatives also unveiled new party logos, a new website and what they claim is a first in Canada, an iPhone application for Hudak designed to attract more young voters.

A highlight of the day for many Conservatives was a tribute to veteran Bob Runciman, who resigned his Leeds-Grenville seat after being appointed to the Senate by Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

Former premier Mike Harris, who like Runciman was first elected to the legislature in 1981, said his friend and colleague was an obvious cabinet choice.

“When it came time to form my first cabinet in 1995 the one spot I filled very quickly was that of solicitor general,” said Harris. “Anyone who has the guts to tell the government of the day that they had made a deal with the devil is all right in my books.”

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Runciman had blasted the NDP government for allowing Karla Homolka to strike a deal for a reduced sentence for her role in the slayings of school girls Kristen French and Leslie Mahaffey with her former husband, Paul Bernardo.

The newly-minted senator vowed not to forget his Ontario roots, and vowed to help the Tories defeat McGuinty and the Liberals in next year's election.

*The Canadian Press*

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