

## Liberals say Hudak got ideas from US groups

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TORONTO - The Liberals are accusing Progressive Conservative Leader Tim Hudak of adopting policy ideas from "right wing extremist radical elements" stateside after they say he met with some major conservative thinkers in Washington, D.C.

Liberal Economic Development Minister Eric Hoskins says a leaked itinerary from Hudak's April 2012 trip to the American capital shows he met some big-name groups known for espousing free-market views.

The list includes officials with think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation, Cato Institute, Brookings Institute, American Enterprise Institute and anti-tax political activist Grover Norquist.

Hoskins says that since meeting with what he called "radical factions of the Republican (Party) movement" Hudak has unveiled some decidedly like-minded positions in Ontario, such as his campaign pledge to cut 100,000 public sector jobs if elected.

But the Tories say the Liberals are dredging up a "year-old news story," stating Hudak has been open about how he develops his ideas and that one meeting on the trip — with consultant firm Greener and Hook — was already reported on.

The Liberals have themselves gone south for political advice in the past, tapping ex-Barack Obama adviser David Axelrod for help prior to the 2003 election.

Hoskins said Hudak's Tories have adopted "radical" measures such as the proposed public sector cutback and a since-dropped pledge to bring in a so-called "right-to-work" overhaul of union rights in the workplace.

"It's not just about who he consulted with. It's the advice that he received and took," Hoskins told reporters Sunday, asserting that ideas from the U.S. groups popped up in Tory policy papers and their current election platform.

"It's what he did with the information that he received from these right-wing elements that shaped a far-right, extremist, reckless set of policies and proposals."

The Progressive Conservatives said Hoskins' "embarrassed himself" by bringing up what they call old news about Hudak's trip.

"The fact that the Liberals would try to fool the media shows how desperate they are to change the channel from their 11-year record of job losses and scandal," the party said in a release.

Hudak also brought in Benjamin Zycher, an independent American economic consultant involved with free-market groups, to do some groundwork on the Tories' centrepiece "million jobs plan."

The Liberals on Sunday rolled out a new attack ad hammering the plan's disputed jobs numbers, which have been challenged by some economists who say some figures are inflated due to an alleged misinterpretation of data.

"Still, Hudak won't admit his mistake. This just isn't about bad math for Tim Hudak. It's about leadership," the ad's narrator intones.

The spot arrives just before Tuesday's leaders' debate.