

QP Briefing: December 14, 2017

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Q P B R I E F I N G

December 14, 2017

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Articles

1). Minister responds to Liberals' lacklustre fundraising figure

By: Jessica Smith Cross

The Ontario Liberal Party is lagging behind the opposition parties in fundraising this year — and Minister Steven Del Duca tells QP Briefing it's due to the new fundraising law in place this year.

QP Briefing reported Wednesday that the NDP has been beating the Liberals in fundraising all year and, as of Nov. 28, the PCs had raised \$2,069,860.75, the NDP \$914,350.10 and the Ontario Liberals \$773,460.84, according to the real-time disclosure of political contributions on Election Ontario's website.

It's a change of fortunes for the governing party, which had a powerful fundraising machine before the cash-for-access scandal prompted an overhaul of political financing rules in the province that took effect this year, banning politicians from attending fundraisers, capping donations to the party at \$1,200 and outlawing corporate and union donations.

"Well look, obviously we introduced very significant reforms last year to the rules around fundraising in the province and there is, understandably, a transitional or adjustment period that all parties will go through," Del Duca said, when asked why the Liberals are behind the other two parties so far this year.

Del Duca rejected suggestions from the opposition that the Liberals' relatively lacklustre fundraising is a sign that voters aren't as enthusiastic about the party as they once were — saying instead that the party has been adhering strictly to the letter and the spirit of the new fundraising rules.

"I believe people are encouraged by the new rules, we're adhering to the new rules and we'll continue to do the things necessary for a political party to be prepared for an election campaign in a few months, and when you stack up our agenda versus what the other parties are putting forward I have no doubt that the people will respond positively," he said.

The party has been sending out fundraising emails touting the plan to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour in 2019, a move the Progressive Conservatives have promised to delay — a campaign that coincides with a recent spike in donations, seeing the party raise \$231,534.04 in the past two weeks alone.

"We need to show Patrick Brown and his Conservatives that it's not acceptable to vote against a wage increase that will help over 1.5 million workers," reads one such fundraising email.

Del Duca said there's "tremendous support" for the increase to the minimum wage.

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2). The PCs delivered Thursday's QP questions in rhyming verse

By: David Hains

On the last day of the sitting, all through the House, MPPs were stirring, with the sound of ... rhyming verse?

The PCs held the government to account in Thursday's Question Period with poetry, queries about Bill 148, windmills and other issues, set to the meter of "A Visit from St. Nicholas," the 1832 poem better known as "'Twas the Night Before Christmas."

Patrick Brown @brownbarrie
'Twas the last Question Period before Christmas... #onpoli
1:13 PM - Dec 14, 2017
45 RETWEETS 79 LIKES

The idea for the questions — 14 in all — was developed in Wednesday's PC Caucus meeting, according to a PC MPP and a spokesperson for Patrick Brown.

"It's a creative way to bring forward our issues," said PC Health Critic Jeff Yurek, who used his rhyme time to ask about the price of hydro.

"We took the opportunity to share in the Christmas spirit," he added.

Goaded by journalists to deliver an impromptu response in rhyme, Yurek demonstrated why multiple drafts often deliver better results: "As I speak to the media outside QP / I hope that everyone has an enjoyable holi-dee."

Minister of Economic Development and Growth Brad Duguid, on the other hand, figured out rhymes on the floor of question period to match his PC counterparts (all on his own, a Duguid staffer said).

In response to a Steve Clark stanza asking the government to sign Patrick Brown's People's Guarantee, Duguid defended the Liberal record through poetry:

'Tis the last question period before Christmas
And I must say with much passion

We will bring in a minimum wage of \$15
With or without your attention

We will lower energy rates
We will create jobs as well
This Christmas will be great for Ontario
We're working to make things swell.

"I was overcome with the Christmas spirit," the minister said.

"I don't know where the creativity came from ... a heavenly place, I would expect."

Duguid's inspiration did not come from an angelic place alone. While colleagues Glenn Thibeault and Kevin Flynn tried to match wits by accusing the PCs of being interested in coal, or Grinch-like, the longtime Scarborough MPP was the only one to pull off a successful rhyming responses – which he did on three occasions.

"Even in the spirit of the season no one said we're still not competitive."

The legislative rhyming comes after two MPs engaged in duelling rhymes in the House of Commons earlier this week.

PAC @CPAC_TV

ICYMI: Duelling Christmas poems in the House of Commons from @markstrahl...

3:18 PM - Dec 13, 2017

18 RETWEETS 26 LIKES

Patrick Brown

'Twas the last question period before Christmas, when all through the House,
The ministers were retiring, but scandals they couldn't do without.
They see the waste highlighted by the auditor with care.
Will the Premier admit her hydro plan is unfair?

Laurie Scott

The ministers have briefing books, reading with dread
While visions of scandal dance through their heads.
The Premier envisions ways the opposition she'll trap.
Why won't she close the education skills gap?

Lisa MacLeod

Out on the lawn there arose such a clatter.
Members sprang from their chairs to see what's the matter.
Away to the chamber they ran in a flash.
Will the Treasury stop paying for partisan ads with taxpayer cash?

Vic Fedeli

The families were nestled, ice cold, in their beds,
While 12 per cent more hydro cuts danced in their heads.
They prayed for relief from cold and from cough.
Can you please, Premier, promise you won't cut their hydro off?

Jeff Yurek

So the Minister of Energy rises to spin in QP.
People are asking for relief; we all hear the pleas,
But instead, the minister rises and spins with a bluster.
Again, "Will they give 12 per cent off bills?" is the question we muster.

Sylvia Jones

Now, energy, environment and the Minister of Finance,
Even infrastructure, ec dev, and the member from Brant,
Around the caucus room they say,
Will you introduce long-lasting energy relief today?

John Yakabuski

Sadly this Christmas, we have really bad news.
Santa's elves and his reindeer can't work all night through.
With so little time and joyful children at stake,
Will you give Santa an exemption to Bill 148?

Todd Smith

Santa will know who's been naughty and nice.
He has his list, and he's checking it twice.
The bad ones get coal, but I'm told last year he missed ya.
But this year he won't. Will he get his coal from Avista?

Steve Clark

The voters are skeptical, that is no lie
But we have to reflect and ask ourselves why
From this side of the aisle, it's plain to see
Premier, will you be accountable and sign the People's Guarantee?

Bill Walker

In question period, politicians, they go back and forth
When people want change for taxes and support for the north
So I'll ask again, because no answer was found
Will you sign the People's Guarantee when I sit down?

Lisa Thompson

Wind turbines still go up against a town's will,
Just like the Grinch ignoring councils, this gives Liberals a thrill,
They swear that the turbines are all science-based.
But, will she admit real noise pollution proves that's just not the case?

Rick Nicholls

"Wind turbines must go," but the Liberals ignore
The demands of the people, as they loudly implore.
In the Alley of Carnage, the snow piles so high
But the need for a barrier will they always deny?

Ross Romano

Now we may not be the North Pole, but we are on the way there,
A no man's land we are not, but the Liberals just don't care,
A great opportunity exists, with many jobs for hire,
Why do they refuse to develop the Ring of Fire?

Steve Clark

Now, Speaker, we had some fun today with our question,
After all, everyone has had a very busy session,
So I want to end here with levity and with something light,
Will the Premier join us,
Wish happy holidays, Merry Christmas and to all a good night?

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3). *'People see us as the third party': Horwath still undaunted psyche*

By: Christopher Reynolds

For most of its history, the NDP has held third-party status — with five recession-tarnished years the most notable exception.

Andrea Horwath knows it too.

"People see us as the third party," she said. "There's no doubt that the Liberal government, or any government frankly, always has the advantage — because they have the communications machine, if you will; they're the top-line attention-grabber of pretty much all of the media, and that's just the way it is."

With an election looming less than six months from now, the NDP is still trailing in the polls, despite Horwath's personal popularity. That poll pill may be tougher to swallow since the governing Liberals have adopted the main thrust of some of her party's key planks, appropriating territory traditionally occupied by the left-leaning New Democrats.

Free pharmacare for those under 25. Free tuition for more than 200,000 postsecondary students. Labour reforms that hike the minimum wage, establish equal pay for similar work and smooth the path to unionization in some industries. These all resemble NDP proposals from the past year and earlier.

"Yes, people say sometimes, 'The government just steals your ideas when you bring them out.' But the bottom line is, we think it's about making life better for people," Horwath said.

In a year-end retrospective with reporters Thursday, the eight-year leader who has steered her party through two elections and one minority government laid out her vision for the next six months, culminating on June 7, election day.

"We have the smallest team, but many people say we punch above our weight," she said.

The Dippers have been pulled in more fundraising dough than the Grits for most of this year. As of Nov. 28, they'd raised \$914,000, outpacing the Liberals' \$773,000 but paling beside the Progressive Conservatives' \$2-million haul, according to Elections Ontario.

So far, they have the highest number of individual donors.

"And those are the folks who are motivated, they're excited. Those'll be the folks who come and help us knock on doors and connect with voters throughout the campaign," Horwath said.

Secret weapon Michael Balagus, who has actually worked on a successful NDP campaign, hopped over to the Ontario capital from Manitoba, where he shepherded Premier Greg Selinger into that job title and served as chief of staff to both him and former premier Gary Doer.

But New Democrats have nominated only 33 candidates so far for the 2018 election, compared to 92 for the PCs and 48 for the Liberals.

"I don't see it as a disadvantage at all," Horwath said. "We have a Conservative party that's gotten some 15 or so scandals that have occurred at their nomination meetings. There's a criminal investigation that's happening in Hamilton," Horwath said.

The slew of nomination controversies, tainted with allegations of ballot-tampering and voting breaches, serves to "reduce people's confidence that [PC Leader] Patrick Brown has a handle on what it is to be a leader and how to even manage his own party," she continued.

Meanwhile, Horwath characterized the Liberals as self-serving and Wynne as preoccupied with suing Brown. She slammed the "partisan" and "completely inappropriate" Hydro One inserts touting Fair Hydro Plan savings.

With her party competing directly with the PCs in some southwestern and northern ridings, and

directly with the Liberals in multiple Toronto ridings, Horwath is striving to set her party apart. She cited her own proposals for universal coverage of 25 commonly used drugs, putting hydro back in public hands, a ban on pre-paid meters, even more worker-friendly labour laws and, above all, "proper" hospital funding.

The former community development co-ordinator has crisscrossed the province over the past eight months to visit hospitals plagued by overcrowding.

She touched on the "pain and anguish" of patients "who have been robbed of their dignity and privacy and had their treatments delayed. ... And whether that's being left on a stretcher in a hallway with no call bell and with no washroom facilities for days on end, or being shunted into a shower room, a closet or a storage area, these things are happening to real people, and that's just not acceptable."

Wynne has driven hard on "fairness." Brown has signed with a flourish his People's Guarantee. Horwath wants to bring "hope back to this province."

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4). The Funding Portal – Week of December 11

By: Christopher Reynolds

Overall disbursements: Funding for the week of Dec. 4, 2017, under Canadian federal and provincial grants and business incentive programs reached \$610.4M, up from \$232.6M during the previous week.

Top Sector: Nonprofit and community initiatives are the top sector this week, attracting \$416.5M, 68% of total incentives.

Top Region: Alberta is the top region this week, securing \$273.1M, accounting for 45% of total national disbursements this week.

Top Recipients in Ontario:

- NOVA Chemicals receives \$100M from the Jobs and Prosperity Fund to create 145 new jobs in the Sarnia-Lambton region and 1,400 direct and indirect jobs in the province over 10 years.
- The City of Toronto receives \$25.6M from the Ontario Municipal Commuter Cycling Program for cycling infrastructure.
- Lakehead University receives \$1.65M from the Government of Ontario to support Northwestern agriculture research at the Lakehead University Agricultural Research Station (LUARS).

Sectors:

<https://fundingportal.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/chart-33.png>

Provinces:

<https://fundingportal.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/chart-34-768x411.png>

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5). In Brief: Hydro One tragedy, Ombudsman investigation, but thumbs-up and concussion laws

By: QP Briefing Staff

Four people are dead following a Hydro One helicopter crash near Tweed, Ont.

The identities of the individuals will not be released until their next of kin have been notified. The incident happened shortly before noon Thursday.

In a statement, Hydro One wrote:

"We are deeply saddened to confirm that an incident involving one of our helicopter aircraft occurred in the Tweed area and has resulted in four fatalities. Emergency services are on-site and we have notified all the appropriate oversight organizations."

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault offered his condolences Thursday afternoon:

Glenn Thibeault @GlennThibeault

Hydro One has informed me of a helicopter crash in Eastern Ontario. My thoughts are with the employees affected, and our sincere condolences to the families of those lost in the crash. We are monitoring the situation closely and will be getting updates as they become available.

3:18 PM - Dec 14, 2017

5 RETWEETS 5 LIKES

Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé announced he's launching an investigation into an incident at a Niagara council meeting where police were called and a St. Catharines Standard reporter and "a citizen blogger" had their property seized.

"This matter has raised serious concerns about the actions and processes of the municipality, and has understandably drawn high public interest," Dubé said in a press release.

His office will launch an investigation immediately, after receiving numerous complaints.

The Standard reported that staff seized computers belonging to journalist Bill Sawchuk and a local blogger after they left the council chambers because they believed someone was recording the closed portion of a meeting.

The government passed the 2017 budget measures legislation Thursday which includes the provision of an \$85-million trust for the remediation of contaminants in the English and Wabigoon Rivers.

It requires the government to establish a panel to direct the trust with representatives appointed by Grassy Narrows First Nation and Wabaseemoong Independent Nations.

Other measures announced in the spring budget and legislated in the act include cutting the Corporate Income Tax rate for small businesses from 4.5 per cent to 3.5 per cent, effective Jan. 1, creating the Ontario Caregiver Tax Credit, as well as a legislative framework for an Ontario French language university.

Seven bills — including one on the Group of Seven — got the royal thumbs-up Thursday. Lt.-Gov. Elizabeth Dowdeswell lent her signature to legislation that, having made it through the house, passed into law late that morning.

The acts include legislation on the ticket bot ban, Trans Day of Remembrance and Ontario Craft Beer Week, as well as Lawren Harris Day, in honour of the legendary Canadian painter.

The province has introduced legislation to protect amateur athletes from concussions.

The new bill, deemed Rowan's Law in honour of Rowan Stringer, a 17-year-old rugby player whose death resulted from multiple concussions, would require an annual review by athletes, coaches and educators of concussion awareness resources. It also includes "removal-from-sport" and "return-to-sport" protocols in the event of a suspected concussion, as well as a code of conduct designed to preempt head injuries.

Progressive Conservative MPP Lisa MacLeod, who represents Rowan's riding, put forward a bill that passed in June 2016, which established a committee to work on the 49 recommendations made during a coroner's inquest into the teenager's death.

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