QP BRIEFING

February 7, 2017

Click links below to view article:

1). OP-ED: ONTARIO'S LONG-TERM ENERGY PLAN: WHY PICKERING MATTERS

By: John Barrett

Ontarians and their government are completing a review of the province's Long-Term Energy Plan (LTEP) to guide energy decision-making over the next three years to 2019. As anticipated in the previous LTEP (2013-16), the government of Ontario announced in December 2015 plans for the refurbishment of 10 power reactors at the Darlington and Bruce Nuclear Generating Stations over the coming 15 years. This was followed by the announcement that operations would continue at the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station to 2024 to meet Ontario's clean-power needs during the early refurbishments.

There is a fundamental logic in the decision to extend Pickering to 2024. It is the linchpin of the refurbishment process, which in turn underpins the LTEP. It optimizes an existing asset, reduces electricity system costs for Ontario ratepayers, avoids a substantial increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and supports thousands of highly skilled, full-time jobs. Moreover, its 3,100 megawatts of power help to keep emissions down and pollutants out of the air during the important early stages of the Darlington and Bruce reactor refurbishments. This in turn preserves the integrity of the refurbishment project, which will give us another 25 to 30 years of positive clean energy, environmental and economic impact. In short, the Pickering extension is part and parcel of Ontario's long-term energy future.

So Pickering matters for the long term. But it also matters for today's Ontarians over the next few years.

One in seven homes and businesses in Ontario is powered by the Pickering nuclear station, just east of Toronto. At a cost of seven cents per kilowatt hour, Pickering nuclear is one of the most cost-effective, clean electricity generating sources, according to the Ontario Energy Board (OEB). In fact, during the most recent speech from the throne, the government of Ontario acknowledged the financial importance of Pickering, citing a cost-savings to ratepayers of $600 million simply by keeping the reactor running through 2024.

Next, environmental benefits. Nuclear power generation is zero-emitting when it comes to greenhouse gases. Continued operations at Pickering will therefore mean cleaner air and a healthier environment for the people of Ontario. How so? The numbers are substantial. Over the next eight years, power from Pickering will avoid approximately 17 million tonnes of climate-altering GHG emissions. This is the equivalent of taking 3.4 million cars off Ontario's roads, making Ontario's nuclear fleet the largest contributor to the province's 2020 emissions-reduction target. If you take the emissions avoided thanks to the work of Pickering, and couple this with the benefits of the Darlington and Bruce refurbishments, the result would be like eliminating the GHG emissions generated by almost every building in Ontario.

Recently, critics of nuclear have advocated for the early closure of the Pickering nuclear station. Their argument — that the power from Pickering could be easily replaced through imports of hydro from Quebec — misrepresents the claimed ease with which Quebec imports can substitute for Ontario's own clean electricity system and infrastructure. It would replace a reliable non-emitting source of energy with a blind faith — that Hydro Quebec will invest billions in transmission and generation to make it happen.

In fact, the 2013 LTEP concluded that, by shutting down Pickering in 2020 rather than 2024, electricity-sector emissions would rise by a staggering 60 per cent. Ontario would have to replace a large amount of carbon-free nuclear power with natural gas, resulting in GHG emissions and a dramatic move away from the government's climate commitments. Then there are questions over Quebec's ability to supply the 3,100 megawatts, which would come at a commodity price higher than that of Pickering today. Quebec would need new hydro-generating capacity if it's to replace Pickering, with many regulatory and environmental approval hurdles to surmount. And new transmission infrastructure would have to be built by both Ontario and Quebec, with Ontario's share being at least $2 billion and requiring seven to eight years to build. Importing Quebec hydro is therefore not a viable option as a substitute for Pickering.

By contrast, the continued operation of Pickering through 2024 gives Ontario a stable, reliable, affordable and non-emitting foundation for future de-carbonization of the province's energy system. At the same time, Pickering is a vital asset to Durham Region's economy, providing 4,500 full-time jobs to the community and over a billion dollars in local economic benefits. These highly skilled workers come directly out of Ontario's own population and institutions such as Durham College and UOIT; they belong to the Power Workers Union, Steelworkers, IBEW and Building Trades; they're your neighbours.

As Ontario looks to balance the immediate and longer-term needs of the economy with protecting the environment and the electricity consumer, while adapting to emerging trends and technologies — the "triple E" (clean energy, clean environment, economic benefit) contribution of Ontario's nuclear power generation will become all the more important to the well-being of Ontarians.

The decision by the Ontario government to keep Pickering operational through 2024 was the right one. At a time when Ontario needs affordable, reliable energy to keep the lights on — when businesses and homeowners are depending on the province to provide clean energy and keep the air free of pollutants — we need to be open about the benefits of nuclear power. Nearly 60 per cent of Ontario's daily electricity comes from clean nuclear. That is the reality. That is why Pickering matters.

Dr. John Barrett is the president and CEO of the Canadian Nuclear Association

2). Survey shows businesses skeptical of Liberal government's key climate and pension policies

By: Geoff Zochodne

Ontario businesses are feeling "pessimistic" about climate and pension policies the Liberal government holds near and dear, a new report suggests.

Those policies are the foundation of Premier Kathleen Wynne's plan for the province, but the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's (OCC) first-ever Ontario Economic Report, released Tuesday, suggests companies aren't feeling sure about them.

Included in the report, a sweeping document that intends to take the annual pulse of the province's corporate world, is a business confidence survey that found the chamber's 60,000 member companies are more certain of themselves than the Ontario economy. The survey shows 62 per cent of members were confident in their own organization's economic outlook, but just 24 per cent felt the same about the province's economy.

"If OCC members are largely optimistic about their own organization's economic outlook, why are they so pessimistic about that of the province?" the report asks. "One reason is direction and governance: only a minority of OCC members believe that a number of major government policies and initiatives will have a positive impact on their organization."

The results suggest a majority of Ontario businesses foresee the Liberal government's cap-and-trade system for carbon emissions — a cornerstone of its climate change strategy — and a Canada Pension Plan expansion — which the Ontario Liberals fought and celebrated hard over — will have no effect, or will actively cause harm.

The survey found 26 per cent of businesses said cap and trade will have a negative impact, and 34 per cent think it will have no impact at all. Just 8 per cent of the chamber's members said the carbon-pricing plan would have a positive impact.

Businesses were also skeptical of the agreement that Ontario worked out with the federal government and the other provinces to increase Canada Pension Plan premiums and payouts. The survey found 44 per cent think it will have a negative impact, 28 per cent think it will have no impact, and 13 per cent believe it will be a boon.

But businesses were bullish about the Liberal government's 8-per-cent hydro bill rebate that starts this month, with 40 per cent saying it would cause a positive impact. Even so, 38 per cent still said it would have no impact and 9 per cent said it would have a negative effect.

Reaction to the Liberals' 12-year, $160-billion infrastructure spending plan was split between the optimistic and the neutral, with 38 per cent of the chamber's members saying it would have a positive impact and 38 per cent predicting it would have no impact. Another 4 per cent said it would have a negative impact.

"Our research shows that Ontario's economic climate is posing challenges to the businesses we represent and Ontarians more broadly," said Allan O'Dette, president and CEO of the OCC, in a release. "Investment is being held back because of a high perception of risk. We need immediate action in order for our province to continue to grow and prosper."

A recent Conference Board of Canada report projected that Ontario's economy expanded by more than 3 per cent in 2016 and would grow by 2.4 per cent in 2017, tying it with British Columbia as the top province.

But cap and trade began in Ontario this month, setting a limit on the amount of carbon businesses can produce and increasing the cost of gasoline and other fossil fuels. The Liberal government is projecting the system will raise about $1.9 billion in proceeds that will be used to fund up to $8.3 billion in greenhouse gas-reducing programs.

A deal to strengthen the CPP was struck last June, and will be phased in over seven years, from 2019 to 2025. It will hike both the income replacement level (from about a quarter to one-third of eligible earnings) and the earnings limit (by about 14 per cent, to a maximum of $82,700 in annual income). It would also include higher contributions to the pension plan by both businesses and their employees, rising by one percentage point to 5.95 per cent of wages for both workers and companies.

The Liberal government had pushed for the CPP enhancement, and when it was initially denied by former prime minister Stephen Harper, went ahead with its own provincial pension plan. When Justin Trudeau and the federal Liberals formed government, the CPP boost was back on the table and finally tentatively agreed to last June. With that agreement in hand, the Ontario Liberals torpedoed their Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, at a cost of $70 million.

The Progressive Conservatives issued a press released shortly after the release of the chamber's report, declaring that, "The collapsing confidence in the handling of Ontario's economy echoes what the Ontario PC Caucus has been hearing across the province, and it directly relates to Kathleen Wynne's uncompetitive policies, such as skyrocketing hydro rates, higher taxes, burdensome red tape and the new cap-and-trade cash grab."

Wynne said Tuesday that the fact businesses are feeling confident about their future, but not the province's, presents a "contradiction."

"As businesses thrive, Ontario thrives, jobs are created," Wynne said. "Ontario is leading economic growth in the country this year. Our unemployment rate has been below the national average for, I think, 20 months in a row. It's not as even as we would like it to be but we are working on exactly the things that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has identified."

3). Minister given ‘clear mandate’ to consider empowering police chiefs to suspend officers without pay

By: Sabrina Nanji

Newly minted Community Safety Minister Marie-France Lalonde is in talks around allowing police forces to suspend officers accused of serious misconduct without pay, but hasn't yet made a commitment.

The government has set a spring deadline to overhaul the 27-year-old Police Services Act as part of its Strategy for a Safer Ontario, which could include measures to give police chiefs broader power to suspend officers without pay. Currently, the law only allows suspension without pay for officers sentenced to time in jail.

“I have been speaking to our stakeholders about many aspects of the Strategy for a Safer Ontario, including the issue of suspension without pay," Lalonde said in an email statement to QP Briefing Tuesday. "The Premier has set a clear mandate for myself and my ministry to work with our partners to look at this issue. I am confident that our strategy, when released this Spring, will do just that."

Lalonde, who was shuffled into the corrections file following David Orazietti’s sudden resignation in December, was responding directly to the call made unanimously in a survey of more than 100 police services boards, the civilian governance bodies that oversee local law enforcement.

According to the Ontario Association of Police Service Boards (OAPSB), 100 per cent of respondents (107 out of 138 boards under the association’s umbrella responded) felt police chiefs should have the freedom to suspend accused officers without pay.

“This legislative update is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to positively influence the legislative framework for community safety,” the OAPSB said in its report.

The survey also shows strong support for giving boards the authority to lay off employees, including police officers.

Police boards ranked strengthening board governance as a top priority, followed closely by modernizing labour relations practices, “facilitating alternate service delivery,” including shifting responsibility to civilians where possible to alleviate pressure on law enforcement, and improving oversight of third parties. (The government is conducting a separate review of provincial police oversight bodies, with a report coming at the end of March.)

It's plausible that changes to the way police boards operate are coming down the pipeline, too, as previously intimated by then-minister Orazietti.

Lalonde added she’s “confident many of the issues raised by the OAPSB will be addressed” when the Police Services Act is updated during the spring session.

"My approach to community safety and well-being is working with a collaborative model, with the input from public and community-based sectors, that have a role to play helping us ensure a streets are safe," she said.

4). Report ‘calls into question’ accuracy of Ontario’s complaints about Canada Health Transfer

By: Jessica Smith Cross

Ontario's provincial government has repeatedly warned that the federal government isn't keeping up its share of health spending, but a new report questions whether, in fact, the province is holding up its own end.

On Monday, the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy released a new report, “CHT Conundrum: Ontario Case Study,” on the provinces' stand-off over the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) with the federal government.

The report found that the federal government’s final offer on the CHT — annual 3.5 per cent increases plus a smattering of targeted funding for home care and mental health — isn’t enough to keep up with the demands of inflation plus a growing and aging population, which it pegs at about 5.1 per cent a year.

But neither, according to the report, is the spending outlook for the next few years that the Ontario government included in its budget documents last year. Ontario’s Financial Accountability Office (FAO) has come to the same conclusion.

The spending “restraint” in Ontario's outlook would mean increases to the health budget of only 1.9 per cent annually through to 2018-19, “the slowest pace since health care spending stalled in the 1990s (and which) stands in stark contrast to the estimated growth in the cost drivers over the next few years, which are expected to average 5.1 per cent annually on rising pressures from population growth (0.9 per cent), aging (1.0 per cent), real income growth (1.1 per cent), and CPI inflation (2.1 per cent),” the report says.

Ontario and the other provinces have cited 5.2 per cent for the cost drivers of over the coming years in their negotiations with the province as well. And yet, Ontario, and the other provinces, are forecasting spending restraint that comes in well below that, and below the 3.5 per cent of the federal government. That, according to the report, “calls into question the assertion made by the provinces and territories that the role of federal government funding for health care will steadily decline over time,” the report says, because it would mean the federal government’s transfer increase of 3.5 per cent — the subject of serious complaint from the provincial government — would outpace the provinces' own increases over the next few years.

For Ontario, it means, if the government follows through with the forecast restraint in future years, the federal government’s share of health-care funding will increase over the next few years to 28 per cent — which is contrary to the decreasing federal share the Ontario government has claimed.

Just how much Ontario will spend on health care next year is yet to be decided as the budget process is ongoing, Premier Kathleen Wynne said Tuesday, but she noted that the government has recognized the need to increase funding, citing a decision this year to boost hospital funding. However, she wouldn’t give any hints as to whether a substantial increase is in the cards for the 2017 budget.

“Those decisions have not been made, we’re just in the process,” Wynne said. “That’s why — quite frankly, I can’t state this strongly enough — that’s why the conversations with the federal government are so important, because they are writing their budget and the provinces and territories are writing their budgets as well.”

Wynne’s government has promised a balanced budget, plus some kind of significant relief for electricity rate payers, to be announced prior to the release of the budget. But when it comes to choosing between an adequately funded health-care system or relief on hydro bills, Wynne assured Ontarians they've got a government that can do both.

“Therein lies the challenge of my job. Priorities,” she said. “The reality is we have to find ways to do all of those things. And that is, literally, that is the challenge of the work [Health Minister] Eric (Hoskins) and my team and I, do, is weighing all of the concerns of the people in this province, investing in the things we know are going to create prosperity in the future and dealing with the issues that are challenged with today. That’s exactly the core of our work. So we will absolutely let you know, just as the budget comes out, OK?”

5). PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVES SHUFFLE CRITIC PORTFOLIOS AHEAD OF LEGISLATURE'S RETURN

By: Geoff Zochodne

Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown is shuffling the official opposition's critic roles before the legislature gets back to business later this month.

The shakeup to the shadow cabinet was announced Tuesday afternoon, and hands Niagara West-Glanbrook MPP Sam Oosterhoff his first critic job since getting elected to the legislature. Oosterhoff, who was 19 when he won a byelection to replace Tim Hudak last November, is the Tory's new critic for Digital Government and the associate critic for Research, Innovation and Science (he'll help Kitchener—Conestoga MPP Michael Harris with the latter, as Harris remains the full-time critic for both Transportation and Research, Innovation and Science).

Scarborough-Rouge River MPP Raymond Cho has also received his first critic assignment, as the new critic for Citizenship and Immigration and for "City of Toronto Issues." Cho, 80, won the Sept. 1 byelection in his riding, seizing a seat that had long been Liberal property.

The special municipal focus extends to Ottawa, which will have Nepean—Carleton MPP Lisa MacLeod serve as the critic for the city's issues. MacLeod will also continue to shadow Treasury Board President Liz Sandals.

Some veteran PC MPPs are staying put in their portfolios, such as Brown himself, who keeps the education critic job.

Nipissing MPP Vic Fedeli, who has been the Tory finance critic since 2013, will continue being a thorn in Finance Minister Charles Sousa's side. Elgin—Middlesex—London MPP Jeff Yurek is sticking around as health critic.

Leeds—Grenville MPP Steve Clark, the PC deputy leader, will swap Tourism, Culture and Sport for an entirely new portfolio: Ethics and Accountability. Clark has taken the lead in questioning the Liberals about the Sudbury byelection scandal and similar controversies, and will likely continue to do so.

The changes to the Tory caucus come ahead of the Ontario Legislature's scheduled return on February 21. The NDP shuffled their critic portfolios in December.

"I'm looking forward to working with this team every day on behalf of the people of Ontario," said Brown in a statement. "The Ontario PC Caucus will hold the government to account on failed decisions that have caused a provincial affordability crisis, driven up hydro rates, undermined our competitive edge, caused frontline public service cuts, and chipped away at the accountability and transparency people deserve and expect."

Here's the full list of the changes:

PC MPP	**Previous critic role**	**New critic role**
Arnott, Ted	Labour	Environment and Climate Change
Bailey, Robert	Democratic Reform and Intergovernmental Affairs	Democratic Reform and Intergovernmental Affairs

Barrett, Toby	Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs	Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Brown, Patrick	Education	Education
Raymond Cho	N/A	Citizenship and Immigration and Critic for City of Toronto Issues
Clark, Steve	Tourism, Culture and Sport	Ethics and Accountability
Coe, Lorne	Advanced Education, Skills and Development	Associate Critic for Education and Critic for Post-Secondary Education
Fedeli, Victor	Finance	Finance
Hardeman, Ernie	Municipal Affairs and Housing	Municipal Affairs and Housing
Harris, Michael	Research, Innovation & Science, Transportation	Transportation and Research, Innovation and Science
Hillier, Randy	Attorney General	Attorney General
Jones, Sylvia	Children and Youth Services	Infrastructure
MacLaren, Jack	N/A	Natural Resources and Forestry
MacLeod, Lisa	President of the Treasury Board	President of the Treasury Board, Anti-Racism Secretariat, and City of Ottawa Issues
Martow, Gila	Critic, Francophone Affairs, Greater Toronto Area Issues, Associate Culture Critic, Anti-Racism Secretariat	Children, Youth and Families, Critic for Francophone Affairs, and Critic for Greater Toronto Area Issues
McDonell, Jim	Government and Consumer Services	Government and Consumer Services
McNaughton, Monte	Economic Development, Employment & Growth, Infrastructure	Economic Development, Employment and Growth
Miller, Norm	Northern Development and Mines, Indigenous Relations	Northern Development and Mines
Munro, Julia	Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy, Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan)	Poverty Reduction Strategy
Nicholls, Rick	Community Safety and Correctional Services	Correctional Services and Critic for Tourism, Culture and Sport
Sam Oosterhoff	N/A	Digital Government and Associate Critic for Research, Innovation and Science
Pettapiece, Randy	Community and Social Services	Community and Social Services and Critic for Horse Racing
Scott, Laurie	Women's Issues and Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade	Community Safety and Critic for Women's Issues
Smith, Todd	Hydro One Sale and Natural Resources and Forestry	Energy
Thompson, Lisa M.	Environment and Cap-and-Trade	International Trade and Critic for Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation
Walker, Bill	Associate Health Critic for Long-Term Care, Responsible for Seniors' Issues, and Accessibility	Seniors, Critic for Long-Term Care, and Critic for Accessibility
Yakabuski, John	Energy	Labour and Training

Yurek, Jeff	Health	Health

6). Happening: Ontario Medical Association turmoil continues

By: Jessica Smith Cross

Ontario's dissident doctor groups, the Coalition of Ontario Doctors and Concerned Ontario Doctors, are claiming a partial victory in the resignation of the Ontario Medical Association's executive committee.

The groups issued a press release Tuesday, celebrating the decision of former President Virginia Walley and five other members of the executive to step down. However, they said the resignations are only partial, as those six doctors will remain on the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) board.

The dissident docs also warned of another shoe to drop.

"COD and the Coalition will soon be communicating new and disturbing developments we have just learned that OMA has purposely hidden from its members," their statement says. "These alarming issues will be addressed in more detail soon. It includes OMA having advance knowledge of plans by the Ontario Liberals to unilaterally cut even more from the patient services Ontario’s doctors provide. The OMA Executive failed to notify the profession about these dramatic cuts and had planned to do nothing to protect Ontario’s patients and doctors against their devastating impacts."

Some doctors also tweeted Tuesday about impending fee cuts in radiology and ophthalmology, which, on the surface appear to be in line with a proposal to contain costs, in the absence of a new agreement with doctors, which the minister of health outlined last December. QP Briefing is awaiting a list of all planned fee cuts from the office of the Minister of Health.

David Jacobs @DrJacobsRad
Feel like it takes forever to get your MRI or CT scan? @DrEricHoskins is slashing funding by 10% April 1st. #onpoli #onhealth
9:17 AM - 7 Feb 2017
21RETWEETS 13 LIKES

Health Minister Eric Hoskins declined to weigh in on the OMA turmoil when asked about it Tuesday, except to say his government is ready to resume negotiations with the association "in the proper spirit of goodwill."

“First of all, I’m not going to talk about internal matters, internal to the O
MA," he said. "But certainly, we remain hopeful, as a government, that we can reach an agreement, with the OMA, with the doctors in this province.”

7). ‘More flexibility’ for budget if pension accounting panel sides with government, FAO says

By: Sabrina Nanji

Should the panel studying a pension accounting clash with the auditor general conclude that billions of dollars worth of pension assets should be counted on Ontario's balance sheet after all, the government will get more flexibility to balance the budget as promised, the Financial Accountability Office says.

The accounting spat came to a head late last year when the government sought an independent reviewer to help clarify a measure that adds or subtracts $10.7 billion to the province’s net debt and $1.5 billion to the 2015-16 deficit, depending on your vantage point. In AG Bonnie Lysyk's opinion, two jointly-sponsored pension funds worth $10.7 billion should not be included on the financial statements, as the government has done for years, because the funds aren't accessible.

Multiple sources reportedly told Toronto Star columnist Martin Regg Cohn that the Pension Asset Expert Advisory Panel has made its decision and sided with the government.

David West, the FAO's chief economist, said he had not heard about any conclusions from the panel but noted that if they have decided to count the pension assets, it gives the government more breathing room to achieve balance, as promised.

The FAO's economic outlook last fall proffered two economic scenarios, with and without the pension assets. With the AG's opinion, the deficit for 2016-17 was an estimated $5.2 billion and $2.6 billion in 2017-18.

The government's Fall Economic Statement that came shortly after and projected the deficit for 2016-17 at $4.3 billion, and with the AG's opinion, would add an extra $2.2 billion to the deficit in 2016-17, $2.8 billion in 2017-18 and $3.7 billion in 2018-19. In spite of this, the Liberals say they'll balance the budget in 2017-18 and 2018-19.

"If it turns out that the government can indeed claim the assets of the [pension plan] then this increased expense wouldn't appear on their books, so the deficit would approve by those amounts. [Our] conclusions are pretty much the same. Based on our projections, we would anticipate the government having a small deficit in 17-18, but as we acknowleged, there's enough flexibility in the government's plans and even more flexibility is available to them when the number is smaller, but they could schedule the timing of asset sales or restrain program spending on a temporary basis in the year. So they are even more likely to achieve a balance in 17-18 if they don't have to claim the $2.2 billion in additional expense that they would have under the AG's recommended accounting treatment," West said.

West declined to weigh in on whether he thought the pension assets should be counted on the books, or if he thought the AG is being political or the government undermining. He did concede that the accounting clash has not made the job of the financial accountability office easier.

Last fall, the government tabled the public accounts later than expected with the auditor's opinion, despite disagreeing with it, which required a temporary regulation.

Because the panel's report isn't public yet, Lysyk declined to confirm or comment directly.

"I really don't have any comment. I guess I just want to respect the process, and I think that process is there is no report that's been released," Lysyk told QP Briefing Tuesday.

However, Lysyk's comments last fall seemed to suggest she was digging in her heels and would not be swayed from her original opinion.

"I as well have external advice that I seek prior to addressing a significant issue, so I'm really confident that we've done our homework and that we have it right," Lysyk said at Queen's Park in October. "I have no vested interest in the outcome of this other than making sure it's right in accordance with public sector accounting standards ... at this point I'm pretty confident that we got it right."

Premier Kathleen Wynne gave little away when pressed at an unrelated news conference Tuesday morning, pointing out that the government's panel were experts with "vast experience in this area," and then proceeded to name each expert and their qualifications. ("I anticipated this question," Wynne quipped after pulling prepared notes from the stack in front of her.)

"What we have to do as government is get the best advice that we can...We asked an objective independent panel to weigh in on this and give us advice, and we're going to take that independent advice very, very seriously," Wynne said.

Panel members include Murray Gold, Uros Karadzic, and Paul Martin (not the former prime minister), who were paid a $1,900 per diem, and the chair of the Canadian Actuarial Standards Oversight Council, Tricia O'Malley, who earned $2,000 a day.

8). HEARD: SICKKIDS GETTING NO NEW REQUESTS FOR HELP AFTER TRAVEL BAN SUSPENSION

By: Jessica Smith Cross

Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children is still willing to help any children who are turned away from the U.S. due to the Trump administration's travel ban, but with its suspension this week, they've received no more requests for help, a spokesperson said Tuesday.

Ontario Health Minister Eric Hoskins announced Friday that SickKids had been asked to help international patients who required life-saving pediatric surgeries, but whose families had been blocked from coming to the U.S. by the travel ban put in place by President Donald Trump's executive order. However, later that night, the executive order was suspended by a court order. The appeals process is ongoing.

"With the suspension of the travel ban, our international patient office has not received any additional requests. According to media reports at least one child, who had been brought to our attention, will be able to access care in the U.S.," said SickKids spokeswoman Matet Nebres. "We have compassion for the children and families who find themselves in challenging situations and as the need arises we will continue to work with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and all partners, to see what we can do to help."

The case dominating the news was that of Fatemeh Reshad, a four-month-old Iranian baby girl, who was scheduled for heart surgery Oregon Health & Science University's Doernbecher Children's Hospital, but whose family had been rerouted back to Iran because of Trump's executive order. After a political outcry, her family was issued travel documents, according to U.S. reports, which said doctors in both Canada and Germany had stepped up to help in the meantime.

SickKids is still willing to help the patients the hospital was contacted about last week, but is awaiting further information, Nebres said in a statement.