

Daily Media Note - February 24, 2017

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Date: Fri, 24 Feb 2017 17:11:39 -0500
Attachments: Daily Media Note - February 24, 2017.docx (56.78 kB)

Good afternoon Premier,

We have three items to update you on today:

- Power outage
- Thibeault's speech
- Chinese media update

Power outage

Power outage on the GO train / UpExpress has dominated the news today with a lot of live coverage from Union Station, Pearson airport and from the UpExpress.

Besides personal stories of travellers getting stuck in the UpExpress and who missed their flights, media reported a power outage at the CN Rail Traffic Control Centre caused the delays throughout southern Ontario.

Even though Metrolinx has announced all system resumed earlier this afternoon, Metrolinx spokesperson Anne Marie Aikins said there "may be some impact" to GO Transit operations this evening as crews repair damaged signal system.

A second outage provoked by the reboot of the system added more details as consequences.

Media reported that in total 1,500 people have been directly impacted this morning.

Thibeault's speech

Following the speech Mr Thibeault delivered today before the Economic Club of Canada in Ottawa today, The Globe and Mail released a story titled: "*Ontario Government Eyes Electricity Market Overhaul To Lower Rate*".

Shawn McCarty reported that the Ontario government is pursuing a fundamental overhaul of the province's electricity market in an effort to keep rates as low as possible as it faces a political backlash over soaring prices. The province is considering introducing a "technology-neutral" bidding process, rather than the current approach in which the system operator issues contracts from specific sources of power such as natural gas, wind or solar, Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault said in a speech Friday. It is also looking at a new pricing approach that would give ratepayers options, such as whether to choose a flat rate or a time-of-use plan in which prices fluctuate depending on off-peak or peak use, he said.



The Globe and Mail @glob... 3h
Ontario Liberals eye electricity
market overhaul to lower rates
[trib.al/VrftMNH](#) @smccarthy55

We have included the McCarty's story below for you reference:

The Ontario government is pursuing a fundamental overhaul of the province's electricity market in an effort to keep rates as low as possible as it faces a political backlash over soaring prices.

The province is considering introducing a "technology-neutral" bidding process, rather than the current approach in which the system operator issues contracts from specific sources of power such as natural gas, wind or solar, Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault said in a speech Friday.

It is also looking at a new pricing approach that would give ratepayers options, such as whether to choose a flat rate or a time-of-use plan in which prices fluctuate depending on off-peak or peak use, he said.

"It is our government's intention to reshape the foundation of the electricity sector to ensure hydro costs are reduced for ratepayers going forward," he said in the speech to the Economic Club of Canada in Ottawa.

In an interview afterward, Mr. Thibeault said it is too early to commit to a specific market model, noting the Independent Electricity System Operator is currently consulting with industry, consumer groups and power producers. "There still needs to be a lot of work with the system operator to unleash them to find ways to make that happen," he said. "If we don't evolve the system, if we don't change it, we're going to run into problems again."

But he said the current model needs to change.

"Allocating the precise mix of technology types has largely been arbitrary and led to suboptimal siting, uncompetitive prices and heightened community concerns," he said.

The Liberal government is also looking at additional short-term measures to provide rate relief, especially to rural customers who have often faced higher prices than urban consumers.

Residential electricity prices have doubled in the past seven years, and Premier Kathleen Wynne is facing angry consumers and nervous industrial users across the province. With an election scheduled for 2018, the government's record on electricity prices has emerged as a key issue.

Progressive Conservative MPP Lisa MacLeod said the Liberal government has mismanaged the sector for years, going back to the introduction in 2009 of the Green Energy Act, under which Ontario issued high-priced contracts for wind and solar power with the aim of building a renewable energy sector in the province.

"The Liberals have to acknowledge they've taken us down a very expensive and unsustainable path," Ms. MacLeod said after Mr. Thibeault's speech.

"Ontarians are going to look at this Liberal government and say I'm not better off than I was eight years ago. The true cost of the Green Energy Act is one that has been exorbitant and has a real impact on our bills."

Mr. Thibeault said critics overstate the impact of the Green Energy Act, arguing costs soared because the province had to rebuild the system after years of neglect, while at the same time phasing out coal-fired power, a decision he credited for a major improvement in air quality.

Rob Ferguson also filled in a story in the Toronto Star with the headline: "Energy minister Glenn Thibeault admits Ontario messed up on hydro rates with bad decisions"

As the story underlined the “Mea culpa” of the Minister about high electricity price, admitting “*Ontario screwed up by paying too much for renewable energy*”, Ferguson also insisted Thibeault did not announce new plans for more hydro rate relief but said “*we are well on our way to achieving that*” before Finance Minister Charles Sousa unveils his spring budget’.

 Robert Benzie retweeted



Toronto Star  @TorontoStar 2h
Energy minister Glenn Thibeault
admits Ontario messed up on
hydro rates with bad decisions
thestar.com/news/queenspar...

Metro News picked up Ferguson’s story.

Chinese Media update

The Anti-Islamophobia motion that was passed unanimously yesterday at QP was widely though moderately covered. It was noted the three parties have never been so co-operative on a single act.

FYI -A surge in gasoline prices helped drive Canada's annual inflation rate well beyond expectations in January to 2.1 per cent. Statistics Canada said Friday the 6.3 per cent increase in transportation costs was the main contributor to the higher inflation rate, with gas prices spiking by 20.6 per cent across the country compared to the year before.

FYI – Robert Benzie wrote a piece to report that you have “quietly re-appointed the man behind booze in supermarkets and the Hydro One sell-off as her unpaid privatization guru”. Ed Clark, the former TD Bank CEO, was given cabinet approval earlier this month to serve as the premier’s business advisor until March 31, 2018.

FYI - Journalists from at least three U.S. news organizations (New York Times, Buzzfeed, BBC) were prohibited from attending a briefing by U.S. President Donald Trump’s press secretary today, a highly unusual breach of relations between the White House and its press corps.

FYI - OPSEU issued a release today saying that Sudbury's local economy will take a yearly \$6.4 million financial hit, if the laundry is closed and 50 hospital laundry workers lose their jobs. They say that's the finding of the independent economic impact analysis Greater Sudbury council asked for earlier in January, to assess the effect of a Health Sciences North (HSN) decision to sever its local hospital laundry contract and use a provider in Hamilton.

FYI - CP moved a story on its wire reporting the Ontario government has been ordered to pay four aboriginal people \$390,000 after the prosecution decided at the last minute to withdraw illegal-logging charges against four men had faced those charges for eight years.

FYI – Patrick Brown appeared on CP24 with Stephen LeDrew today. He talked about electric Vehicles program, bad contracts with Energy companies, Cap and trade and Executive compensations.

FYI - QP Briefing is reporting Toronto City Councilor Georgio Mammoliti “seriously considering” running for Ontario Tories in 2018.

As always, let us know if you have any questions,
Kate, Jenn, Gurvinder and Ronan

Ronan Le Guern

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