

Good afternoon Premier,

We have four items to update you on today:

- Texas Buy American bill
- FAO report
- Online Health Card
- French and Chinese Media Update

Texas Buy American bill

Allison moved a story on the CP wire following your statement on Texas' Buy American bill. The story reports on your concerns that Texas could extend a Buy American Bill as soon as this weekend but that Ontario is ready to fight against, and even threatens its own protectionism. The story mentions Ontario has hired lobbyists in Texas and Monique Smith has been working with Texas officials.

We have included the story below for your reference:

Ontario threatens its own protectionism in fight against Texas Buy American bill

The Canadian Press

Allison Jones

Ontario has hired lobbyists in Texas and is threatening protectionist measures of its own as it tries to convince state officials not to pass a Buy American bill.

Premier Kathleen Wynne claimed victory last month after a successful Ontario push to stop similar provisions in New York state.

Wynne says in a statement that she is concerned a bill to extend Buy American provisions to virtually all state agencies in Texas is going to a final review and could get approval as soon as this weekend.

The bill would force suppliers to buy iron and steel only from American sources.

Wynne says if that happens, Ontario may introduce legislation to allow the province to restrict its own procurement policies and processes for Texas firms.

Trade between Ontario and Texas amounted to more than US\$12 billion last year, including in the tech, automotive and construction sectors.

Monique Smith, Ontario's representative in Washington, D.C., has been working with Texas officials to push the province's case. As well, Ontario has hired lobbyists in Texas for their expertise in the state legislative process.

“As premier, I will continue to push for open, fair and competitive access to government contracts and free trade overall,”

Wynne said in Thursday's statement. “However, we are also prepared to respond strongly to this action.”

Ontario had feared New York's Buy American policy could have had a domino effect with other states if it was approved.

“I hope we don't have to do this too many times,” Wynne said at the time. “I hope the message is clear.”

Wynne has been increasingly vocal about concerns over signs of increasing protectionism in the U.S., in Buy American policies and a pending renegotiation of NAFTA. She has met and spoken with various U.S. governors as part of a strategy to win over high-profile allies to Ontario's views on trade.

As of now, the story has not been picked up.

FAO report

Robert Benzie followed up on the FAO report with a new story on your reaction to the report when you got asked this morning during your media availability in Timmins.

The story, titled: “Wynne defends 25% hydro rate cut: ‘All of those costs were on the shoulders of people today’” includes large portions of quotations from your answer this morning, explaining the Fair Hydro Plan was the right thing to do despite the costs of the plan.

We have included the story below for your reference:

Wynne defends 25% hydro rate cut: ‘All of those costs were on the shoulders of people today’

Toronto Star
Robert Benzie

Premier Kathleen Wynne is making no apologies for the Liberals’ 25 per cent hydro rate cuts that a legislative watchdog warns will cost at least \$21 billion over the next three decades.

Premier Kathleen Wynne is making no apologies for the Liberals’ 25 per cent hydro rate cuts that a legislative watchdog warns will cost at least \$21 billion over three decades.

In the wake of Financial Accountability Officer Stephen LeClair’s [report](#) on the “Fair Hydro Plan,” Wynne emphasized that Ontario electricity consumers demanded and deserved relief.

“You all read the newspaper, you listen to the radio and you watch television — you know the problems that families are having around the province paying for their electricity costs,” the premier told reporters Thursday in Timmins.

That's why the government moved forward with a rate cut that will see the average household's monthly hydro bill drop from \$156 to \$123 once it fully takes effect next month.

In a 15-page report released Wednesday, the financial accountability officer estimated the initiative would cost the province \$45 billion over the next 29 years while saving ratepayers \$24 billion for a next expense of \$21 billion.

Both the Progressive Conservatives and the New Democrats oppose the Liberal rate cut.

But Wynne said the government has in effect renegotiated a mortgage so it will bankroll hydro infrastructure improvements over a longer time period in order to give customers a break now.

"We're talking about a 30-year window here. It took at least 30 years, probably 40 years, to let the electricity system degrade to the stage that it had in 2003," she said, noting "we were having blackouts and brownouts around the province" before her party took office that year.

"There were thousands of kilometres of line that needed to be rebuilt . . . that work hadn't been done over those generations, so electricity costs were low over that period of time but the work wasn't being done."

When her predecessor Dalton McGuinty came to power in 2003, Wynne said Queen's Park began spending billions on infrastructure improvements, including expensive subsidies for green energy, such as wind turbines and solar panels.

"There's a lot of work that has been done since then. Literally thousands of kilometres of line have been rebuilt. The coal-fired plants have been shut down. The air is cleaner. There's less pollution in the air. The system is reliable and renewable," she said.

"So there's a cost associated with that and what was happening was that was work that had to be done — and all of those costs were on the shoulders of people today."

Wynne noted "this electricity grid is an asset that is going to be used for generations to come."

"My grandchildren are going to benefit from this asset, so I think it's fair that we spread the cost of that over that 30-year period," she said.

"That's how we made this decision."

Online Health Card

Media was interested today in the notice the Ministry of Health posted online asking for feedback on a regulatory change that would make it possible for the government to develop a new online option for health card renewals.

Jessica Smith-Cross moved a story on the Canadian Press wire that got picked up by a few outlets including Global News and CP24. We have included the story below for your reference:

Ontario seeking regulation change to allow online health card...

The Canadian Press
Jessica Smith-Cross

Ontario is considering allowing people to renew their health cards online.

The Ministry of Health has posted a notice asking for feedback on a regulatory change that would make it possible for the government to develop a new online option for health card renewals.

For now, almost everyone who needs to renew their health card must do so in person at a Service Ontario centre.

Individuals can book an appointment ahead of time online, but still have to visit the centre, with the exception of children younger than 15-and-a-half and most seniors over 80, who can renew their cards by mail.

Proof of residency in Ontario and proof of identity are required to renew a health card.

Some residents immediately welcomed the government's proposed change.

``That's great," said Kashief Butt, who'd just waited in a long line at a Service Ontario office in downtown Toronto. ``If we could do it online, then we'd save so much time."

But Alia Gomes, who'd visited the same Service Ontario, said she doesn't think the online option is a good idea and worried it could lead to fraud.

``I just feel like with being able to do everything online, there's a certain sense of anonymity, and people could use your name for identity theft," she said.

Besides, she said, the line at the centre didn't seem that long to her.

Ontarians can give feedback on the government's proposal for online renewal until June 5.

There's no word yet on what measures would be taken to prevent identify fraud, or when an online renewal process might become available.

French and Chinese Media Update**French**

The nomination of Madeleine Meilleur to become the next Official Languages Commissioner seems to really have become a controversy. Radio-Canada reports that the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada (FCFA) tonight to discuss the issue. The federation learnt earlier about the process of the nomination and the fact that Minister Joly herself lead the final interview, which backs the accusations of a partisan nomination. The nomination is particularly challenged in Acadie where there was hope for the first time nomination of one of them.

Chinese

They all played the numbers even though the approach differed one from another. Sing Tao was alarmist. The cost could spiral to \$69 billion if Ontario continues to borrow to implement its 25% cut in hydro bills. In the next 29 years, the actual cost of \$45 billion minus the \$24 billion savings for Ontarians will be \$21 billion. With files from its parent paper the Star, Sing Tao had its focus on the report by Financial Accountability Officer (FAO). The comparison of a remortgage loan and the introduction of the LTEP this summer by Minister Thibeault was placed in the second and third last paragraphs. PC's repeat of the whistle blower revelation, one paragraph, was carried by the end of the story. Sing Tao ran the news item as its city lead.

FYI - The massive six-alarm blaze at a recycling facility on Polson Pier is now under control and crews have begun the "slow and methodical process" of sifting through the debris and putting out hot spots, Fire Chief Matthew Pegg says. The fire broke out at a GFL Environmental industrial building on Cherry Street near Commissioners Street at around 1 a.m. and quickly spread, causing part of the building's roof to collapse.

FYI – The Canadian Press moved a story on their wire reporting several premiers will be heading south of the border to counter anti trade sentiments. The story mentions that staff for Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, New Brunswick Premier Brian Gallant and Prince Edward Island's Wade MacLauchlan confirmed Thursday those leaders will attend as well. "The focus will be on trade generally, with NAFTA taking a front-row seat and 'Buy America' to a degree," read a written statement from Wynne's office. "(Wynne) would be there with her colleagues to build relationships with key members of the administration, as well as members of Congress, and to discuss the mutual benefits of an interconnected economy and the good jobs that creates for both Americans and Ontarians.

FYI - British Prime Minister Theresa May says progress is being made in the Manchester bombing investigation, even as a spat about leaks of sensitive material threatens to cast a shadow over her meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump at the NATO summit in Brussels

FYI – Media reports President Donald Trump chastised NATO member nations for not paying their fair share to protect the long-standing pact and declined to explicitly endorse its mutual defence agreement.

FYI – The Canadian Press reports Metrolinx has filed an appeal questioning the decision of an Ontario judge last month that preserved the transit agency's contract with Bombardier Transportation.

FYI – Local Media reports today that City council has voted 42-1 in favour of moving forward with the planning and design work for both the downtown relief subway line and an extension of the Yonge subway into York Region.

FYI – CP24 is reporting TTC riders will now be able to load a monthly Metropass onto their Presto card. According to the TTC, a "limited number" of adult and senior monthly passes for June will be available for purchase via the Presto website.

As always, let us know if you have any questions.

Daily Media Note

May 25, 2017

5:00 P.M.

Kate, Jenn, Gurvinder and Ronan