

Morning Media Scan: Labour Reform - October 30, 2017

From: "Stinson, Jeffrey (CAB)" <jeffrey.stinson@ontario.ca>
To: "@OPO-Media Relations and Issues Management" <opo-mediarelationsandissuesmgmt@msgov.gov.on.ca>, "Rowe, Mary (OPO)" <mary.rowe@ontario.ca>, "Bevan, Andrew (OPO)" <andrew.bevan@ontario.ca>, "McEachern, Gillian (OPO)" <gillian.mceachern@ontario.ca>, "Killorn, Bill (OPO)" <bill.killorn@ontario.ca>, "Coe, Michael (OPO)" <michael.coe@ontario.ca>, "Foerster, Carly (OPO)" <carly.foerster@ontario.ca>, "Tomney, Genevieve (OPO)" <genevieve.tomney@ontario.ca>, "Jancik, Mike (OPO)" <mike.jancik@ontario.ca>, "An, Derrick (OPO)" <derrick.an@ontario.ca>, "Leisk, Madison (OPO)" <madison.leisk@ontario.ca>, "Porter, Maddy (OPO)" <maddy.porter@ontario.ca>, "Whittington, Margot (OPO)" <margot.whittington2@ontario.ca>, "Yaqubian, Farnaz (OPO)" <farnaz.yaqubian@ontario.ca>
Cc: "@CAB-Trans CO" <cab-transco@msgov.gov.on.ca>, "Sumi, Craig (CAB)" <craig.sumi@ontario.ca>, "Di Giovanni, Robert (CAB)" <robert.digiovanni@ontario.ca>, "Stinson, Jeffrey (CAB)" <jeffrey.stinson@ontario.ca>, "Law, Sally (CAB)" <sally.law@ontario.ca>, "Ma, Cesue (CAB)" <cesue.ma@ontario.ca>, "Selvadasan, Assumpta (CAB)" <assumpta.selvadasan2@ontario.ca>
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Print Coverage

Windsor Star: Minimum wage bill could have big municipal impact; A1 / Front; 2017.10.30

PUBLICATION: Windsor Star
PAGE: A1 / Front
DATE: 2017.10.30
SECTION: City & Region
EDITION: Early

BYLINE: Dave Battagello
SOURCE: The Windsor Star
KEYWORDS: municipalities,ontario,understand,worded,stands,millions
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Minimum wage bill could have big municipal impact

Municipalities across Ontario need to wake up and understand how Bill 148 - as worded - stands to cost each millions of dollars which may force tax rates to skyrocket, said Tecumseh Mayor Gary McNamara. The town's council recently passed a request asking the provincial government for an exemption from the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act - which most people know to be legislation to boost minimum wage to \$15.

"The minimum wage is just the tip of the iceberg," said McNamara on Sunday. "It's all the other unintentional consequences in the legislation that will really hurt municipalities the way it stands."

All part-time, contract and casual workers would have to be paid the same hourly rate as full-time staff performing the same duties under the legislation.

The mayor noted how that wording forces equal pay for standby workers - such as volunteer firefighters or public works employees who do snow clearance - which will add millions to a municipality's budget.

"What they are saying is you have to provide equal pay for equal services," McNamara said. "A volunteer firefighter would receive the same as a regular firefighter. That alone will cost our fire department \$1.3 million per year."

"There is no enhancement to services. This will take money away from infrastructure improvements that are desperately needed. We fight deficits every year. With this, we either reduce services or raise taxes." City administration in Windsor has just started to decipher potential budget implications for Bill 148, said Mayor Drew Dilkens.

"The city is still trying to understand what the impact will be on all our operations," Dilkens said. "But it will be significant. It could cost taxpayers a million or more."

He did not think city council will also request an exemption from the legislation, but was hopeful the impact on municipalities will be considered before the legislation is finalized.

"The province seems committed to have this impact all employers in the province, so I would be surprised if there is an exemption," Dilkens said. "But I certainly support Mayor McNamara in his attempts to get one."

Lakeshore Mayor and Essex County Warden Tom Bain agreed municipalities could face huge financial impacts without an exemption or changes to Bill 148.

"This is not just dollars, but we are talking huge dollars," he said.

Administration in Lakeshore has also just started deciphering the budget impacts, he said.

"Our fire department will be one of the biggest areas affected, but really it will be everything to some degree," Bain said.

"We need changes to the legislation if we can. Something needs to be done on their end to give us some relief."

The legislation passed second reading earlier this month and has been sent to committee for possible changes.

It is expected to be finalized in the coming weeks.

"There are so many grey areas in the bill that have to be better defined," McNamara said. "This will especially hit small towns and rural areas very hard."

"I think you will see a lot more municipalities asking for exemptions," he continued. "What I'm saying to municipalities is do your due diligence." dbattagello@postmedia.com

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The Timmins Daily Press: NOP responds to critic's take on riding separation; A4;
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SOURCE: The Timmins Daily Press
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NOP responds to critic's take on riding separation

The Northern Ontario Party wanted to take this opportunity to respond to Ms. Magnan's Letter published in the Timmins Press on Oct. 27. We find her interpretation of our party to be a bit distorted, as we were one of the first parties to respond to the Liberal government's creation of these two new provincial ridings.

On Aug. 8, the Northern Ontario Party issued a media release titled: More Ridings in the North, Still leaves us fighting for a Voice at Queen's Park. This article is where Trevor Holliday, the party leader, states that the people of Northern Ontario are tired of not having their voices heard. Mr. Holliday then adds "one or two new ridings will help Northern Ontario citizens to gain access to their MPPs, but will do little in the way of increasing their voice at Queen's Park."

This article was published in most of the major newspapers and media sources in Northern Ontario, even forcing the NDP to follow up with their own response a week later. So rest assured, we weren't napping when it came to this issue, we led the pack.

Now, why would we waste our resources to attend a Legislative Committee session, which was designed to make the Liberals look like they were actually doing something good for the North? Would it have changed anything? The answer is no. The only purpose for the Ontario government holding this public meeting was to create an illusion that they were actually listening to people when they already had their minds made up. All this was, was smoke and mirrors for the sitting government to increase their chances of winning an additional seat or two.

This was much the case with the Liberals' minimum wage tour, the ink was already drying on the bill for the minimum wage increase before the Liberals embarked on a taxpayerfunded election style tour. Did they actually listen to people? The Coalition of Concerned Manufacturers of Ontario will testify to this and say no.

So should the Northern Ontario Party have attended the Legislative Committee session on the additional ridings and played into the Liberals' game of selling snake oil? Our answer is no. Was our party napping? The answer is still no. We feel that we have a duty to spend our resources on issues we can change by advocating, so that we can make the North prosperous once again.

Trevor said it best when he states when you have so many seats to win in Toronto, it becomes the only priority of the big three parties. There is no need for them to worry about any place else. Trevor states that is why the NOP is different -our party is just concerned with representing the people of Northern Ontario. Our party doesn't need to use smoke and mirrors to do this. Myles Clayton Media and social media manager Northern Ontario Party

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24 Hours Toronto: Battleground Ontario: Using our cash to get re-elected; A6;
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COLUMN: Editor- In-Chief
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Battleground Ontario: Using our cash to get re-elected

Here's a not-so-hidden secret: the Ontario Liberals are going to use your money to ensure they get re-elected in 2018.

It will be through grandiose funding announcements, spending all over the province and they will use language such as "investments in our future" while at the same time racking up Ontario's already unwieldy \$312 billion debt.

The Liberals won't be particularly subtle about their spending either, frankly they don't have to be - they currently have a majority government and they can use the public purse as they see fit, no matter how fiscally irresponsible they have been.

However it's still worth pointing out the initiatives they announce are dripping with political opportunism. Take the latest from embattled Health Minister Eric Hoskins for example. The Liberals providing temporary funding for over 1,200 hospital beds sounds great - but doesn't come close to addressing the long-term crisis of bed shortages.

Even the Ontario Health Coalition sees right through this obvious election ploy referring to it as "cynical" while pointing out the funding will likely decrease after the election is over.

But it's a clever move, even if it's temporary funding.

The Liberals are likely working on an advertising campaign designed to tout their benevolence while simultaneously scare Ontarians from voting for Patrick Brown's Progressive Conservatives, who consistently beat the Liberals in public opinion polling.

It will go something like this: "Your Ontario Liberals are committed to patients, and are 'investing' millions of dollars in health care - but the PCs will cut this funding if elected! Vote Liberal!" And speaking of cynical, how about the Fair Hydro Plan which Ontario's Auditor General just ripped to shreds? The "plan" will cost nearly \$40 billion and artificially keeps electricity rates down. Here's the election kicker - just in time for the 2018 campaign, the rates will be the lowest, then will increase every year following. How convenient.

Those campaign commercials practically write themselves.

Earlier this year the Liberals bought themselves labour peace till after the next election offering contract extensions for teachers and education workers and two of the biggest unions representing thousands of public servants across Ontario.

And they vote - in droves.

They know having a Liberal government in the pink palace is in their respective unions' best interest, so why not keep them there? After all, Premier Kathleen Wynne and Dalton McGuinty before her weren't coy about keeping the unions happy.

But the one thing that is going to likely hurt young workers and those who aren't as highly skilled the most was the ramming through of the increased minimum wage.

Study after study has shown that with increased labour costs and regulations, employers will hire less. Not to mention industry will respond to governments obscene financial demands by being more innovative and use technology to replace workers.

None of these facts seem to matter though, the Liberals needed an issue to take away from their left flank - the NDP - and this was it.

So the Liberals have kicked in their re-election strategy, the question is - will Ontarians be fooled into buying what they are selling us, using our own money? @AdrienneBatra

London Free Press: New pay law will cost municipalities, mayor says; A6; 2017.10.30

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New pay law will cost municipalities, mayor says

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