

QP Briefing: May 30, 2017

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Q P B R I E F I N G

May 30, 2017

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Click links below to view article:

Articles

- [1\). The Funding Portal – Week of May 22](#)
- [2\). Ex-PC MPP casts independent vote against patient protection bill – and against his old party](#)
- [3\). Sponsored content: Taking a long-term view of electricity system costs](#)
- [4\). Seen: Queen's Park passes photo-radar bill](#)
- [5\). The winners and losers of Ontario's proposed labour law reforms](#)
- [6\). Environmental commissioner calls for renewable energy centres and "grey water" use](#)
- [7\). Heard: Legislature passes patient protection law](#)

Articles

1). The Funding Portal – Week of May 22

By: Sabrina Nanji

Who got funding from the government last week?

Funding for the week of May 22, 2017 under Canadian federal and provincial grants and business incentive programs reached \$341.8 million, up from \$165.5 million during the previous week.

Top Sector. Community & Nonprofit is the top sector this week, attracting \$252.1 million, 74 per cent of total incentives.

Top Region. Quebec is the top province this week, securing \$140.6 million, accounting for 41 per cent of total national disbursements this week.

Top Recipients in Ontario.

- Two projects in North Glengarry receive \$15.2 million from the Government of Canada's Clean Water and Wastewater Fund and \$7.6 million from the provincial government.
- 38 projects across Ontario have been approved for \$12.7 million in funding from the Government of Canada's Clean Water and Wastewater Fund and \$6.4 million from the provincial government.
- The City of Burlington receives \$4.5 million from the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund to support the redevelopment and expansion of the Joseph Brant Museum.

Sectors.

<https://fundingportal.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/image-82.png>

Provinces.

<https://fundingportal.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/image-81.png>

[Top](#)

2). Ex-PC MPP casts independent vote against patient protection party

By: Geoff Zochodne

It didn't take Jack MacLaren long to take sides against his former party.

The ex-Progressive Conservative MPP and now Trillium Party member voted against two pieces of legislation on Tuesday that were supported by his old colleagues in the Tory caucus.

MacLaren was ejected from the Progressive Conservative caucus Sunday morning – although he says he was planning to join the Trillium Party this week anyway – after a video came to light of the Carleton-Mississippi Mills MPP saying that “you don't have to convince me what's wrong with French language in Eastern Ontario,” and hinting at some kind of hidden Tory agenda. MacLaren now sits as an independent, technically, because the Trillium Party does not have official status.

Speaking to reporters Monday morning, one of MacLaren's biggest complaints about being a Tory was the constant whipping of votes. He told reporters that he was opposed to a carbon tax, which his former leader, Patrick Brown, had supported.

“I will no longer have that albatross around my neck,” MacLaren said. “I will now have the freedom to vote as I want, in the interests of my constituents, and I will do so.”

But Brown told reporters on Tuesday that whipped votes had nothing to do with MacLaren's exit. QP Briefing obtained a copy of the email sent to MacLaren Sunday morning by Brown's chief of staff, Alykhan Velshi, that declared the latest video “the final straw” – a line the PC Leader echoed in a scrum.

“Frankly, this is not about whipped votes,” Brown said of MacLaren. “This is not about any of that. This is about the fact that he made derogatory, inappropriate comments. That it did not represent the modern, inclusive PC party that I'm building and that's why he was fired, and that's the only reason he was fired.”

MacLaren said the video the Tories cited in booting him from caucus dated back to 2012, that it was a “non-issue,” and that he had joined the Trillium Party last week and planned on announcing it Tuesday.

Brown told reporters that he hadn't heard about the video until last weekend, but had already been disappointed with MacLaren, who had sparked controversy in the past, earning him a stint in sensitivity training at one point after telling a crude joke about a female MP. “He wore my patience out,” said Brown.

But on Tuesday, MacLaren quickly showed his newfound independence by being the only MPP to vote against third reading of Bill 87, the Protecting Patients Act, and Bill 65, the Safer

School Zones. PC MPPs voted in favour of both pieces of legislation.

Bill 87, which passed on a 92-1 vote, allows for health-care professionals to have their licence suspended while a complaint against them is being investigated and expands the grounds for the mandatory revocation of a licence for a practitioner who has sexually abused a patient.

MacLaren had previously voiced objections to the bill during debate in the house, saying that “any time you hear the term ‘zero tolerance,’ I find that dangerous, because there always has to be consideration of leniency, of understanding and of tolerance.” He later apologized for the remarks.

Bill 65 allows for photo-radar to be used in a school or “community safety” zone where the speed limit is less than 80 kilometres per hour. MacLaren was also the only MPP to vote against third reading of the legislation, which passed 92-1.

[Top](#)

3). Sponsored content: Taking a long-term view of electricity s

By: Patrick Dillon

There is a lot of debate and discussion taking place in Ontario about how we can balance the need for investments in our electricity system while making sure that consumers pay affordable rates. As with any infrastructure investment, this can be challenging since the funds need to be spent now, while the benefits from these projects may not be fully realized for years or even decades.

Reconciling the need for investments with affordability should not be a partisan issue. Thousands of building trades workers across Ontario are the ones building this infrastructure in both the private and public sectors, earning wages that stimulate economic spinoffs in the communities they serve. These investments need to be made if we are going to build a prosperous long-term future for Ontario. Just as we benefit today from infrastructure built in decades past, under the leadership of all three major political parties, we need to continue to progress with that same long-term view in mind without resorting to partisan bickering.

This brings me to the issue of electricity. While we can debate whether all the elements of the Long Term Energy Plan are perfect, we need to make investments in our electricity system now and we need to make those investments in a way that families can afford. So, how should we do this?

The answer for me is quite simple. We should do what virtually every other Canadian province does – manage the cost of these investments over the long-term. Some may argue that this would cost more than just paying for it now, up-front, all at once. That's true but it's not the way long-term investments work, for anyone, including governments. If a middle-class family is buying a new house, renovating an older one, buying a car, sending a child off to university or incurring any other major expense, does it pay for everything, all upfront? Not likely. Why would we then expect the government to pay for the electricity system or the construction of new schools or hospitals any differently?

When we look at the long term electricity debt per person by province in Canada, we have been one of the only provinces not treating our investments as financed by debt. Oftentimes, people talk about electricity rates being lower in our neighbouring provinces. What critics don't tell us is that these other jurisdictions smooth out the cost of electricity by using debt to finance the long life of their assets.

In fact, the per-person debt for electricity is estimated to be \$5,588 per person in Quebec, \$6,400 in Saskatchewan, over \$11,000 in Manitoba and \$12,000 in Newfoundland and Labrador. These are costs that are funded over a long period of time and help smooth the rates that families pay for electricity today. This is what Ontario should have been doing with Ontario Hydro and is now doing under the Fair Hydro Plan. Ontario's estimated electricity debt per person is estimated to peak at \$4,800 (among the lowest in the country) and this will provide immediate relief to families by reducing electricity rates as is done in other provinces.

Would it be less expensive to pay for everything upfront? Yes, it would. But no one does that

and its part of the reason why Ontario's electricity rates are higher than they need to be. One could argue that amortizing the cost of electricity over the long-term should have been done some time ago, as was the case in other provinces, and that's a fair point, but we have to confront the reality that Ontario is only now beginning to take this approach. Spreading out the cost of the electricity system is the right way to fund infrastructure and as we look across the country, we see that it's a fiscally responsible path and one that will help manage the cost of electricity for Ontario families.

Patrick Dillon is the Business Manager and Secretary Treasurer of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario. He has held this position since January, 1997.

[Top](#)

4). Seen: Queen's Park passes photo-radar bill

By: Geoff Zochodne

Who's ready for some photo radar?

After a fight at the committee stage, Bill 65, the Safer Schools Zones Act, passed third reading Tuesday on a 92-1 vote, with only newly independent MPP Jack MacLaren voting against it. The legislation now requires the signature of the lieutenant-governor before it comes law.

Bill 65 lets municipalities set lower speed limits and use photo radar to police local traffic. One of the only tweaks to the legislation at committee was to restrict the use of photo radar in designated community safety zones where the speed limit is below 80 kilometres per hour. Photo radar will also be allowed in school zones.

There had been a protracted procedural battle when the bill was still in committee, as the Progressive Conservatives tried to insert an amendment that would make camera footage from school buses admissible in court, making it easier to nail drivers who "blow by" the vehicles when they make a stop. The amendment failed, with the Liberals calling it a "political tactic" by the Tories, who protested the bill at first over fears it would become a "cash grab."

In the end, Liberal, NDP and PC MPPs all voted in favour of Bill 65. Only MacLaren voted against it.

Bill 65 will come into force at a date that's still to be determined.

[Top](#)

5). The winners and losers of Ontario's proposed labour law re

By: Sabrina Nanji

Ontario's answer to a lengthy review of outdated labour laws proposes many gains, and some pain, for the province's working world.

Premier Kathleen Wynne and Labour Minister Kevin Flynn confirmed Tuesday that many of the goodies in the proposed Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, will tackle the type of unpredictable and unstable work that 30 per cent of the province's workers find themselves in.

The government plans on doing that through a \$15 minimum wage by 2019, increased vacation and emergency leave, an easier path to a union, and equal pay for equal work, whether you're on a part-time or full-time contract.

To enforce that, the labour ministry will recruit 175 more employment standards officers and launch an education campaign to school employees and businesses about their legal rights and responsibilities.

Wynne said the new bill – informed by 173 recommendations made by special advisers C. Michael Mitchell and John C. Murray for the Changing Workplaces review – will be introduced before the house rises for summer, on Thursday. It's expected to be sped through to committee after first reading, not second as is normally done, so that the public can weigh in

during hearings this summer. The legislation is expected to pass by Jan. 1, 2018.

And the winners are...

Most minimum wage earners

People who make minimum wage, about 10 per cent of the work force, will have a little more green in their wallet next year. Ontario plans to follow Alberta and raise the base wage to \$15 an hour by Jan. 1, 2019, with a hike to \$14 on Jan. 1, 2018 – up from the current \$11.40. It will still be tied to inflation.

Wynne said it has become “almost impossible” to raise a family in a minimum-wage job, but more and more people are having to do it.

“Increasing the minimum wage will make a world of difference in millions of lives,” Wynne said to booming applause in front of a backdrop of workers and worker advocates.

The \$15 wage won’t apply to liquor servers and some students, who will get a lower pay bump. For instance, servers who currently make \$9.90 per hour can expect to bring in \$13.05 by Jan. 1, 2019. The difference is justified because most people who serve alcohol can stand to make a fair amount from tips, Flynn said.

Hunting and fishing guides, and people who do paid work for an employer in their own homes are also poised for a wage hike.

Bereaved parents, vacationers, vulnerable workers, Crown employees, part-timers

The province is proposing a slew of amendments to give a broader range of workers legal protection and better working conditions.

That includes part-time, temporary, casual and seasonal employees who perform the same duties as their full-time coworkers. Under the new law, an employer would have to formally explain the discrepancy, and if it did not comply with the rules, they would have to adjust the part-timer’s salary.

The government also wants to stop the misclassification of employees as independent contractors, and address unpredictable scheduling by requiring employers to pay out three hours’ wages if they cancel someone’s shift less than 48 hours before.

People who work for employers with less than 50 employees will be entitled to 10 personal emergency leave days a year, at least two of which would have to be paid. Those days could be used if someone was experiencing sexual or domestic violence. Your boss would not be able to request a doctor’s note for such absences.

Family medical leave is being extended, and a separate leave would be created for the death of a child from any cause, or their crime-related disappearance, up to 104 weeks.

There are also improvements to vacation leave for loyal workers. After working at the same company for five years, the employee would get three weeks of annual paid time off, up from 2 weeks.

Crown employees have something to celebrate as well – they’ll be brought under the new version of the Employment Standards Act, which mandates basic conditions such as overtime and statutory holiday pay. There are more potential victors in this category – the government is going to review the other occupations currently excluded from basic employment standards starting this year.

Unions

It will be easier to join a union and to access first contract arbitration should the proposed legislation pass – something organized labour has long called for. The province would also allow card-based union certification to employees that work in some of the more precarious sectors – community care, building services, and to temporary workers.

The proposal has already won accolades from worker advocates and organized labour groups, including the Ontario Federation of Labour and Unifor.

The Grits, possibly

The governing Liberals may too make gains – a recent poll suggested the majority of Torontonians strongly supported a \$15 minimum wage, something the Ontario NDP has long called for. That could woo voters to the Liberal camp ahead of the June 7, 2018 election, which will take place six months after the first raise, to \$14 an hour, is implemented.

When asked by a reporter about the timing of the proposal, Flynn said it “was not contingent on the next election.”

“It really is a good day for the little guy in Ontario today,” he said.

Those who stand to lose ...

Businesses, as they say

But many businesses warn they stand to lose if Ontario’s proposed changes pass as is. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has raised concerns that businesses can’t afford the minimum wage hike, which could lead them to let people go, or hire fewer employees.

The OCC has also urged the government to analyze the potential consequences of any changes before they are enshrined in law.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business echoed the sentiment, saying the Premier was “punishing” small and medium-sized employers in particular, and “rewarding big unions.”

Restaurants Canada said the move would have “devastating consequences” and “betrays the trust of Ontario’s business community.” The group, which represents more than 37,000 restaurants and bars, estimates the new minimum wages will cost the industry \$1.8 billion.

Wynne acknowledged the concerns and said treating workers decently is good for business. “Higher wages increase retention, they improve productivity and mean that the people of the province can continue to purchase the goods and services that Ontario businesses sell,” she said.

Both Wynne and Flynn promised to work with employers throughout the summer.

Scofflaw employers

The government is cracking down on employers who break the law, including increasing the range of fines for Employment Standards Act violations to \$350 to \$1,500, from \$250 to \$1,000.

The Ministry of Labour will also award interest payments to employees who are owed outstanding wages, and will no longer force employees to inform their boss if they make an official complaint to the government.

[Top](#)

6). Environmental commissioner calls for renewable energy ce

By: Christopher Reynolds

The province’s environmental commissioner sees a fortune of future energy savings in plugging leaks, tapping the potential of “grey water” and converting treatment plants into “renewable energy centres,” among other steps.

In a report on the link between water and energy, Ontario’s green guru Dianne Saxe struck a critical but upbeat chord to recommend changes to municipal water and wastewater systems.

Treating and pumping those two water systems amounts to nearly \$260 million a year, about

40 per cent of municipal energy use – but it doesn't have to, said the independent officer of the legislature.

<http://www.qpbriefing.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Reclaimed-partially-treated-wastewater-flow-chart.jpg>

"To date, many municipal water systems are energy laggards that leave money-saving efficiency opportunities on the table. Why? Inadequate funding, inadequate data and ineffective incentives all contribute," Saxe said Tuesday.

A lack of clear, swift data reporting by municipalities means even basic problems, such as leak rates – up to 40 per cent in some areas – go overlooked. Aging infrastructure and a myopic focus "on short-term capital cost, instead of total cost to taxpayers," has meant cheaper construction "at the price of high energy use and greenhouse gasses," she said.

The fact that 11.6 million Ontarians – 85 per cent of the population – enjoy unlimited clean water delivered through municipal taps may have further warped perceptions around the real cost.

Municipal water and wastewater systems account for one-third of reported greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario, according to the commissioner's annual report, titled "Every Drop Counts."

"We're at the point of a once-in-a-generation injection of billions of dollars into water and wastewater infrastructure. It would really be terrible to waste that opportunity and not think about energy costs when we're choosing how to spend that money," Saxe said.

The report calls for:

- Making energy reporting for municipal water and wastewater systems more accurate;
- Requiring municipalities to submit data via Portfolio Manager, a free online tool, to monitor emissions more quickly;
- Adapting asset management plans – required of municipalities by the province – to identify life-cycle costs around energy and carbon use;
- Raising standards in the Ontario Building Code, with an emphasis on water-efficient toilets and other fixtures and reducing outdoor water use at peak times in the summer;
- Reusing partly treated effluent from wastewater plants as industrial cooling water or irrigation of golf courses and non-food crops;
- Overhauling wastewater plants as renewable energy centres to capture energy through "anaerobic digestion" for on-site heating and power or bus fuel.
- Implementing phosphorus reduction programs.

Saxe cited Guelph as a poster child of water conservation. The city implemented programs at a cost of \$9 million but dodged \$31 million in long-term infrastructure spending and reduced the strain on its water source, she said.

For grey water, Saxe points to San Francisco, where partly treated sewage goes to hydrate golf courses. In other parts of parched California, sludge undergoes basic treatment before reuse in water toilet tanks, which typically draw on potable water just as faucets and washing machines do.

Calgary is another innovator. The city routes wastewater reclaimed from a riverside sewage facility to cool the province's largest gas-fuelled power plant, which sits 14 kilometres away.

Up to three dozen wastewater plants in Ontario already digest waste to produce biogas, Saxe said, but only nine use it to heat and power their facilities. Sainte-Hyacinthe, Que., which has a smaller wastewater plant, brings in bio-waste like food scraps for anaerobic digestion to flesh out the process.

Ontario's waste-free strategy calls for keeping organic waste out of landfills, but hasn't taken the plunge into sewage treatment plants as receptacles. "We simply don't have alternative-licensed places to handle that much organics," Saxe said.

For smaller municipalities in particular, water and wastewater treatment make up a big portion of operating costs that's tough to maintain. "And those costs are going to rise," Saxe said, pointing to rising electricity prices, treatment standards and pollution.

The report comes one year after Premier Kathleen Wynne unveiled "Ontario's Five Year Climate Action Plan 2016-2020" to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

[Top](#)

7). Heard: Legislature passes patient protection law

By: Christopher Reynolds

Legislation that will allow a doctor's licence to be suspended upon an allegation of sexual abuse made it through third reading on Tuesday.

Bill 87, the Protecting Patients Act, passed on 92-1 vote.

MPP Jack MacLaren, booted this week from the Progressive Conservative caucus, was the lone vote of opposition. He said in March that the bill's zero-tolerance approach to sexual abuse of patients was "dangerous," which he ultimately apologized for, prior to his flight from the Tory flock on Sunday.

The law will allow the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to impose an interim suspension of a doctor's licence following allegations of sexual abuse, rather than when the matter has reached the disciplinary stage.

It also expands the types of sexual abuse that would trigger a mandatory revocation of a doctor's licence to include groping.

Health Minister Eric Hoskins has said the bill is based on recommendations from the government's Sexual Assault Task Force, which emerged following high-profile cases of physician sexual abuse that surfaced over the past three years.

Legal wrangling during committee this week underscored tensions in the balance between a doctor's right to practice and patients' right to protection from sexual abuse.

The law ends regulatory bodies' ability to make gender-based restrictions on a health-care professional's licence, effectively trading that for beefed-up licence suspension powers. It also sets a one-year buffer between end of care and the start of a sexual relationship between physicians and their former patients.

The new bill requires parents to complete an education session before they can exempt their children from mandatory immunizations for non-medical reasons.

Doctors, not parents, will now be responsible for reporting to their local public health unit any vaccines they administer to children and youth, thus imposing extra paperwork on physicians.

[Top](#)