

QP Briefing: September 29, 2016

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September 29, 2016

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Articles

1). O NTARIO, Q UEBEC ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS SAY MORE ACTION STILL NEEDED ON CLIMATE CHANGE

By: Geoff Zochodne

Even though governments representing more than 80 per cent of Canada's population are embracing the need to put a price on carbon emissions, the environment ministers from Ontario and Quebec say the work is in no way done on the climate change file.

Ontario Environment Minister Glen Murray and his Quebec counterpart David Heurtel, along with Matt Rodriquez, California's secretary for environmental protection, spoke Thursday morning on a cap-and-trade-themed panel in Toronto. The three officials represent governments that are using, or plan to use, cap and trade to reduce their GHG pollution and fund a portfolio of climate initiatives.

Heurtel was the most outspoken, calling for the other provinces and the federal government to keep up with Ontario and Quebec.

"We have made the hard decisions. We've had the vision to set it up," said Heurtel. "So I think other provinces need to shoulder their fair share of what needs to get done to achieve [targets set at last December's Paris climate conference]. And the federal government also has to contribute to that goal, effectively."

Murray, meanwhile, noted the world is approaching a new milestone: a global concentration of carbon dioxide above 400 parts per million. In answering a question about the climate target for 2050, the year Ontario is committed to reducing its emissions by 80 per cent below 1990 levels, Murray said he's "not sure we have until 2050."

"My sense is we're going to have to move faster," he added. "We have less runway than we thought. Can we do it? Yes. The question is, how serious are we?"

Murray's question comes as provinces like Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia are bristling about the federal government's plan to slap a Canada-wide price on carbon emissions.

Quebec and California already have carbon-pricing systems in place, and they have had their cap-and-trade programs linked with each other since 2014. The jurisdictions have seen sales of their carbon credits slide in the last two auctions, although Rodriquez said their systems are "designed" to handle those down periods.

Ontario's cap-and-trade program will start next year, with the first auction of emission allowances expected in March. Companies covered by the emissions cap will have to buy carbon credits equal to their GHGs.

The government expects to raise \$1.9 billion annually from permit sales, which it will use to pay for more electric vehicle charging stations and to give social housing energy-efficient retrofits, among other measures. It will also bring down its carbon emission cap at a rate of just over 4 per cent annually.

Out west, British Columbia has a carbon tax, and Alberta is instituting a similar fee, meaning more than 80 per cent of Canada's population will be under some sort of carbon-pricing system.

Heurtel, however, said the federal government's current emissions targets won't allow Canada to meet the goals set in December in Paris (which include restraining the increase in the average global temperature to below 2 degrees Celsius). For its part, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government is sticking with GHG reduction targets they inherited from the previous Tory regime.

"Right now, the federal goal will not allow us to get to Paris. We already know this," Heurtel said. "I think the role of the federal government is to make sure that everybody comes on board and contributes fairly to the target."

Canada's environment ministers are set to meet Monday in Montreal to continue their work on a "pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change," a release said.

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2). ONTARIO'S FUTURE CAP- AND- TRADE PARTNERS SAY IT'S GOING TO BE O K – DESPITE DROP IN AUCTIONS

By: Geoff Zochodne

Come on in, Ontario, the carbon market's fine.

The top environmental officials from California and Quebec – despite losing out on hundreds of millions of dollars in back-to-back auctions of emission allowances – say their joint cap-and-trade systems were always going to go through rough patches. Evidently, the road to mitigating climate change can get a bit rocky.

Ontario, meanwhile, anticipates raising \$1.9 billion annually when it starts selling carbon credits – and it intends to link its cap-and-trade system with California and Quebec in 2018. But weak markets happen sometimes, said Matt Rodriquez, California's secretary for environmental protection.

"We know that markets can be very, very unpredictable," Rodriquez said Thursday in Toronto. He was participating in a cap-and-trade panel discussion with Ontario Environment Minister Glen Murray and Quebec Environment Minister David Heurtel.

“[California’s cap-and-trade system] was designed with the idea that there would be periods of time when we might not sell all of the allowances,” added Rodriquez.

The last two auctions held by California and Quebec saw just 11 per cent and 35 per cent (approximately) of available emission allowances actually purchased. Prior to that, and since California and Quebec joined their cap-and-trade systems in November 2014, the auctions had been sellouts.

Heurtel, Quebec’s minister of the environment, said some businesses could have stashed their emission allowances from earlier auctions.

“A market is always going to have ups and downs, it’s cyclical,” he told reporters. “I think it’s perfectly normal to see certain auctions raise less and other auctions raise more.”

But there is a mechanism, Rodriquez said, that shelves California’s unsold allowances. They are then re-offered to companies covered by cap and trade once there have been two sell-out auctions in a row.

He said it is something they will likely share with their Western Climate Initiative partners – the name of the carbon market, of which Ontario and Quebec are members.

“It’s about reducing emissions, first and foremost,” said Heurtel. “That’s the key.”

But there are also plenty of lofty projects being funded with cap and trade by California, Quebec and Ontario. Ontario has already published a Climate Change Action Plan that contains a portfolio of up to \$8.3 billion in greenhouse gas-reducing programs. All of those initiatives are to be paid for with cap-and-trade proceeds.

Murray said the goal of cap and trade is not to raise money, and said opposition attacks that the government is just trying to raise revenues don’t wash with the recent auction results.

“If you needed proof that this isn’t a cash grab, you now have it,” Murray said.

Murray also said the government’s climate spending plans would be staggered.

“Those programs are staged so that in the years where there are stronger, more robust revenues, we fund more programs,” he told reporters. “In the years that there isn’t, we don’t, and we try to average our funding over so we’re spending prudently and wisely so we can maintain those programs.”

Cap and trade is key to Ontario meeting its climate goals and commitment to reducing greenhouse gas pollution 15 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020. Companies covered by the emission cap are currently registering for the carbon-pricing system, which Ontario will start solo next year. The GHG limit will be reduced by just over 4 per cent annually, driving up the price of the increasingly rare emission allowances.

Alex Wood, the executive director of the Climate Change Directorate in Murray’s ministry, said Wednesday at an Ontario Energy Association conference that the government was “quite pleased” with the response to cap and trade thus far.

Murray noted Ontario’s cap-and-trade system will also immediately require a lot of heavy industry and fuel suppliers to buy credits – meaning Ontario is going to have a lot of buyers early on. So much so, in fact, that the province is expected to reduce most of its emissions outside of Ontario, by buying up California’s carbon permits.

“We expect that our auction will perform very, very well,” said Murray.

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3). C ONTROVERSIAL PROF WRONG ON O NTARIO’ S HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION: C HERI D IN OVO

By: Jessica Smith Cross

NDP Cheri DiNovo is correcting the record about how Ontario's transgender human rights legislation came to be — and it has nothing to do with the premier's sexual orientation.

Tenured University of Toronto psychology professor Jordan Peterson (pictured above) released an hour-long online lecture against political correctness Tuesday, in which he airs his suspicion that Premier Kathleen Wynne is somehow linked to federal bill C-16, which adds gender identity or expression as a prohibited ground for discrimination in the human rights act and the criminal code.

He speaks, in a rambling fashion, about how the language is the same as Ontario's similar legislation, and the same language that LGBT activists use.

Peterson speaks about Wynne in that context.

"I'm going to concentrate on Ontario, because I think a lot of this is emanating from a small coterie of people behind the Ontario Human Rights Commission, which is a particularly pathological organization, in my estimation and perhaps the biggest enemy of freedom currently extant in Canada," he says. "And I don't say that lightly."

"So, the reason I think the Ontario Human Rights Commission is an emblematic institution in this regard is partly because I think that the social-justice-warrior-type activists are over-represented in the current provincial government or the current Liberal provincial government and I can't help but manifest the suspicion that that's partly because our current premier is lesbian in her sexual preference," he continues.

"That in and itself doesn't bother me one way or another, I don't think it's relevant to the political discussion, except in so far as the LGBT community has become extraordinarily good at organizing themselves and has a fairly pronounced and very, very sophisticated radical fringe and I can't help but see the hand of that in what I'm going to read to you and you can make up your own mind and see if you think the same thing," he continues.

He goes on to read the Ontario Human Rights Commission's definitions of gender identity and gender expression.

"I'm not saying this is right, it's what I've been able to sort out, what I've been able to puzzle out," he adds.

It's not right, said DiNovo.

Ontario's human rights code was amended to include gender identity and gender expression when all three parties supported Toby's Act, she said.

"I tabled my bill five times over I don't know how many years, and finally we got all party support, and it was an all-party bill," she said. "That happened in 2012."

And that was before Wynne was Ontario's premier.

"It's hard to believe that this man has the job he has," said DiNovo.

His comments are particularly disturbing because of the high rates of attempted suicide and the high rates of poverty in the trans community, she said.

"The types of inflammatory language he uses and the disdain with which he speaks about this community truly is cruel, and has devastating results. It's despicable, and really, in a sense, is hate speech," DiNovo said.

In his lecture, Peterson says he's afraid that what he's saying could be considered illegal hate speech. However, he goes on to say the concepts of gender identity and expression, as defined by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, are ill-informed and politically motivated ideas. He talks about not believing people can be transgender.

"I think it's nonsensical, I think the formulation is absurd, I think it has no scientific standing, I think it's ideologically motivated, I think it's divisive, I think it's dangerous, it causes chaos, it confuses people, there's no upside to it," he says. "For any one person that this potential

transformation of legislation is going to free from oppression it's going to deathly confuse a hundred more. And I say that as a clinician with some experience in this matter."

Peterson says he's scared by those things and says he can't help but think he's seen authoritarian and totalitarian state developing.

"The changes to the law scare me because they put into the legal substructure of the culture certain assumptions about basic human nature that not only do I believe to be untrue, I think they're also dangerous and ideologically motivated," he says.

That's why Peterson says he won't call students or colleagues by gender-neutral pronouns.

"I'm not doing that. I'm not doing that. I think it's manipulative. I don't recognize another person's right to determine what pronouns I use to address them, I won't do it," he says. "I think that those gender-neutral pronouns are politically motivated. I think they're connected to an entire underground apparatus of political motivations, radical left political motivations, and I think uttering those words makes me a tool of those motivations and I'm going to try to be a tool of my own motivations as clearly as I can articulate them and not some murderous political ideology."

Contacted by phone, Peterson elaborated on his comments concerning the premier's sexual orientation: "The only association there is it increases the probability that people who are practiced at activism for those sorts of causes are going to get access to the opportunity to do things like write the outlines associated with government policy and law. And I don't think that's a good idea."

He wouldn't say how he believes the premier's personal life causes this to happen.

A spokesperson for the University of Toronto, Althea Blackburn-Evans, said no complaints have been made, so far, about Peterson's comments, but if the university receives complaints it will look into them.

"Our university, like all universities, is a place where people can express their opinions, and sometimes those opinions are controversial and sometimes they're unsettling. This type of debate happens at U of T every day," she said. "Professor Peterson's views are his own and they don't reflect the views of the university."

The university expects all professors to abide by the university's policies concerning a learning environment that's free from discrimination and harassment, she added.

In the meantime, DiNovo said she's hopping the LGBTQ community speaks up.

"I'm hoping he has a deluge of trans lobbyists and trans folk and LGBTQ folk who let him know exactly what their lives look like and what his words can mean, and that truly this is hate speech," she said.

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4). *TORIES CRY 'SHADY ACCOUNTING' AFTER LIBERALS DELAY RELEASE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS*

By: Sabrina Nanji

A stalemate between the government and the auditor general has stalled the release of Ontario's latest fiscal update – an omen that the opposition contends may herald broken promises to balance the books.

But Treasury Board President Liz Sandals was quick to dismiss the allegations on Thursday.

"There's nothing to hide – I'm being very open and telling you that the result will be, when we publish the books, that we will have met the (deficit) targets. There's a myriad of details to sort out and that's exactly what they're doing," Sandals said at Queen's Park.

Ontario's public accounts, which are typically released 180 days from the end of the fiscal year, include the province's annual report and financial statements, and checks the fiscal

performance against the current budget.

The delay, as Sandals explained to reporters, is due to ongoing discussions surrounding "some very complex rules." She added that she has directed her staff to work with the auditor general to table the public accounts "as quickly as possible" but could not provide a specific date.

"When you've got tens of billions of dollars being audited, it isn't unusual that the inside accountants and the third-party accountants have a bit of a discussion on finalizing the details," Sandals said.

The Tories raised the concern in question period and referred to Sandals on a point of order informing the house on Tuesday that "there will be a delay in the tabling of public accounts because of ongoing discussions between the public service within the government and the auditor general regarding an accounting issue relevant to a provision in the public accounts."

That prompted accusations from the Progressive Conservatives that the government "has something to hide" or may not actually be able to fulfil its pledge to wipe out a projected \$4.3-billion deficit by the end of fiscal 2017-18, or that provincial debt, expected to clock in at \$308.3 billion for 2016-17, will balloon further.

"You know, Speaker, something just doesn't seem right. Just one week ago, the deputy minister at Treasury Board quit. Now the Liberals are going to miss the tabling deadline. Why is that? Has this government been using shady accounting practices? Are the debt and deficit higher than the government is letting on?" came the question from PC MPP Steve Clark.

The New Democrats too expressed frustration that a government that boasts transparency and accountability seems to practice the opposite.

"By stalling this information they are clearly demonstrating that they do not want to provide information that's necessary for the auditor general to do her job and for us, as MPPs, to do our job," added the NDP's Deputy Leader Jagmeet Singh.

Auditor general Bonnie Lysyk was not available for comment Thursday but a spokesperson from her office said in an email that they "are working with the government to finalize the province's financial statements."

Lysyk and the government have had accounting tiffs in the past, most recently over the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games audit. Whereas the government maintained the games came in under budget, the auditor general found the budget went \$342 million into the red.

At the time, Lysyk also noted some TO2015 staff had disposed of computer hard drives, thereby limiting the scope of her report. That prompted an investigation by the Information and Privacy Commissioner, who on Thursday cleared the government of any improper record keeping or retention.

"As a result of my office's investigation, I am satisfied that TO2015 staff did not deliberately attempt to avoid accountability or to mislead the auditor general in the course of her audit," Brian Beamish said in a release.

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5). P A R E N T S G R O U P T A U N T I N G M P P M O N T E M C N A U G H T O N W I T H O P E N L E T T E R

By: Jessica Smith Cross

A socially conservative parents group that attacked PC Leader Patrick Brown for flip-flopping on the sex-ed issue has now set its sights on PC MPP Monte McNaughton.

Parents As First Educators (PAFE) and Brown's Chief of Staff Nicolas Pappalardo had been in communication about the anti-sex-ed letter during the Scarborough - Rouge River byelection, and the group was displeased when Brown disavowed it and pledged to support sex-ed. After the byelection, PAFE released details of its communications with Brown's office and disputed his claims that he hadn't been involved in the crafting of the letter.

Now, the group's president, Tanya Granic Allen (pictured above at a recent anti-sex-ed rally), is taunting McNaughton in an open letter, asking him to help clear things up.

"And do you, Monte McNaughton – do you believe Patrick Brown when he claims that he had not seen the “scrap” letter before Friday, August 26? And if somehow you do believe him, or are being forced to say that you believe him, could you please explain how it is possible for Brown to have been involved in the construction of the letter, and to have signed the letter, and yet ... somehow ... not have seen the letter before its public release?" the letter says.

They've also disclosed that McNaughton had sent out a fundraising letter for the PC campaign, based on the controversial letter. McNaughton was an outspoken opponent of the sex-ed curriculum when he ran for the PC leadership. He eventually dropped out and endorsed Brown.

You can read both emails below.

McNaughton's fundraising email:

mcnaughtonfundraiser

August 27, 2016

Tanya --

Earlier this week, Ontario PC Leader Patrick Brown circulated a letter to parents across Ontario. [Click here to download the full text.](#) In this letter, Patrick firmly committed to scrapping the Wynne-Liberals' new sex-ed curriculum upon the election of a PC government:

"Upon being elected, a PC Government would scrap the controversial changes to sex-ed introduced by Premier Wynne and develop a new curriculum after thoughtful and full consultation with parents. Unlike the present government, which has focused on this one issue, a PC government will develop a well-rounded curriculum that will strengthen reading, writing, mathematics and other skills that will prepare them to succeed in the real world."

-Patrick Brown, August 24, 2016

Today, the Toronto Sun published an article about Patrick's letter and the impact it could have on the upcoming By-Election in Scarborough-Rouge River. [Click here to read the article.](#)

I'm out campaigning in Scarborough this weekend for my friend Raymond Cho, and I hope you'll come out and join us. If you're able to volunteer and support the campaign, please join us at the campaign office, 4500 Sheppard Avenue, Unit 102 in Scarborough throughout the weekend. You can also contact the campaign office directly by phone at: 416.479.1039.

This could be a great victory for our PC Party, but we need all hands on deck. Please join us.

Regards,

Monte McNaughton, MPP

PS: If you are unable to join me campaigning this weekend, please consider making a financial contribution to the Scarborough-Rouge River PC Association by [clicking here](#). Thank you.

The PAFE letter:

pafe

September 29, 2016

Monte McNaughton, MPP
monte.mcnaughtonco@pc.ola.org
Queen's Park Office: (416) 325-3362
Constituency Office: (519) 245-8696 (Strathroy)

Dear :

Long time, no talk.

I hear you made a brief appearance at the anti-s/x-ed rally at the Legislature last week, though I didn't personally see you. Really, you ought to have lingered a bit longer to say hello.

I am told, though, that Patrick Brown's office instructed you and other PC MPPs to avoid the rally and not to speak. Is this true?

The last time I heard from you was via a mass emailer you sent out on Saturday, August 27 entitled "A PC Government would scrap Kathleen Wynne's s/x-ed changes".

In that email, you told the recipients that "Earlier this week, Ontario PC Leader Patrick Brown circulated a letter to parents across Ontario" and you further explained that "In this letter, Patrick firmly committed to scrapping the Wynne-Liberals' new s/x-ed curriculum upon the election of a PC government."

You also asked us to make a financial donation to Raymond Cho's Campaign, the candidate in the Scarborough-Rouge River byelection last month.

Of course, since then, Patrick Brown has "scrapped" this very commitment to Ontario parents and he now essentially supports Kathleen Wynne and her s/x-ed agenda.

Last week, I wrote my account of PAFE's involvement with Brown's office in the drafting of Brown's "scrap Wynne s/x-ed" letter. Since my letter on this subject, Patrick Brown has finally acknowledged his awareness that these negotiations took place. Moreover, neither Brown nor his Chief of Staff have taken issue with the specific information I relayed, including my report that, according to Brown's Chief of Staff, it was Patrick Brown's personal preference that the word "scrap" be used in the letter instead of my suggested word "repeal".

The world now knows that Brown's suggestion that this "scrap" letter somehow came from the local Scarborough campaign is false – the letter came from Brown's office and his personal team!

But what about Brown's assertion regarding the drafting of the letter? Recall he said: "Certainly, I wasn't involved in it and that's one of the reasons that I was so upset about it..."

This is clearly not true, at least based on what his Chief of Staff told me. I was told that Patrick Brown was most definitely involved in the composition of that letter, from early on in the process right through to the addition of the word "scrap", and I believe it.

To recap, we believe that Patrick Brown was not truthful when:

- he falsely asserted that the letter was "from Scarborough" when in fact it came from his office
- he asserted that he wasn't involved in the process

And so it must follow that:

- Patrick Brown's assertions that he only first saw the "scrap" letter after it was reported in the media seems exceedingly unlikely. Brown, it seems, was involved in the drafting of the letter, and even in the exact wording of key sections, and his Chief of Staff distributed the final draft of the letter to PAFE and to an opposing candidate, Queenie Yu, a full day before Patrick claims to have seen it.

Monte- please help clarify the record here for the parents and voters of Ontario.

Monte- you knew about PAFE's talks with Brown's office as early as August 14th and you were personally involved in the Scarborough-Rouge River byelection campaign, urging parents to vote for Brown's candidate Raymond Cho, as you explained in your letter of August 27.

Monte- could you please confirm for PAFE and for the rest of Ontario a few things?

When did you first become aware that a letter using the word "scrap" was being discussed in the context of the s/x-ed issue and Patrick Brown?

What was Patrick Brown's role in this process?

And do you, Monte McNaughton –do you believe Patrick Brown when he claims that he had not seen the "scrap" letter before Friday, August 26? And if somehow you do believe him, or are being forced to say that you believe him, could you please explain how it is possible for Brown to have been involved in the construction of the letter, and to have signed the letter, and yet.... somehow... not have seen the letter before its public release?

People sometimes tell me that my emails are too long, so I will stop there. I have quite a few more questions, as you can well imagine, but I shall save those for future letters.

In the meantime, I await your reply.

Sincerely,

Tanya Granic Allen
President
Parents As First Educators (PAFE)

P.S. Monte -please call me! You have my number.

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6). *SEEN: M P P PROVIDED CHARACTER REFERENCE FOR CONVICTED RAPIST*

By: Jessica Smith Cross

PC MPP John Yakabuski provided a character reference for a local politician who had been convicted of raping his wife, the CBC reports.

The CBC reported on the trial of Elmer Raycroft, who was the deputy mayor of McNab/Braeside, which is in Yakabuski's riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

His wife, Isabelle Raycroft, testified that he'd sexually and physically assaulted her and a judge delivered a guilty verdict in June 2015. At a sentencing hearing in September of that year, Raycroft's lawyer presented a number of character references from locally prominent people, including Yakabuski, the CBC reports.

Yakabuski had attended the couple's wedding and "wrote about how much Elmer had helped the community," according to the CBC.

Records show Raycroft has donated to the local PC constituency association and volunteered in fundraising for Yakabuski.

The story also noted Ontario's Integrity Commissioner recommends MPPs don't provide references in criminal proceedings, because they "might be interpreted as an attempt to interfere with and/or influence the legal process."

The CBC's story focuses on the twist in the legal case: The judge who presided over the sentencing had taken the case from a different judge, who had fallen ill, and, after hearing the character references, overturned the conviction and ordered a new trial, according to the report.

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7). *SEEN: N D P RE- INTRODUCES POPULAR PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL TO INDEX SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PAYOUT.*

By: Sabrina Nanji

Update: Bill 6 passed second reading Thursday afternoon and is now off to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

Should it pass, NDP MPP Paul Miller's Bill 6 would create an independent Social Assistance Research Commission to advise governments on appropriate social assistance rates based on cost of living in different Ontario regions.

On Thursday, Miller reintroduced his private member's bill — its parent draft having died on the order paper following prorogation, and after it unanimously passed second reading in the house in April — that would create an arms-length commission to look at indexing social assistance rates to the cost of living in different towns, and map Ontario's "economic geography." Miller said the current model for social assistance rates is arbitrary and further hurts recipients, many of whom live in deep poverty.

The government already has an Income Reform Security Working Group reviewing how it sets rates for social assistance programs such as Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program, the current model for which is convoluted.

A spokesperson for Community Safety Minister Helena Jaczek said in an email that "a fundamental part of the Working Group's mandate is to recommend a methodology for how rates are set and adjusted. This will include consideration of whether there is a benchmark against which social assistance rates should be set, and then what mechanism(s) could be considered in how rates are adjusted over time."

But Miller said a non-partisan commission of experts would be better poised to instruct policymakers on a fair, evidence-based model.

"They haven't done it. And they focus on things that are not at the focal point of what we're trying to achieve ... The people who will be on this commission will be the people who actually lived it, and went and did the walk. It will also be people who have educational backgrounds in social policies and social assistance from third-party sectors as opposed to being appointed by the government. So that makes a big difference on people that basically don't have to answer to the government for their appointment," Miller said at Queen's Park.

The commission would also submit public annual reports to the government and periodically report on how social assistance impacts the labour market and vice versa, as well as for child support payments and workers' compensation.

Jaczek's office noted the government will provide regular updates on the working group's progress before their final report is released for public feedback in 2017, and that the government looks forward to hearing debate on Bill 6 in the house (but would not yet say whether they will vote for it in the house).

Effective September and October, respectively, ODSP and Ontario Works rates will go up 1.5 per cent, with single adults receiving an extra \$25 per month for Ontario Works. As well, rates for the Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities program are going up 1.5 per cent.

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8). S E E N : E I G H T - P E R - C E N T E L E C T R I C I T Y R E B A T E B I L L G E T S A L L - P A R T Y S U P P O R T

By: Geoff Zochodne

The legislation containing the Liberal government's eight-per-cent electricity rebate passed second reading Thursday morning with nary a dissenting vote from the opposition parties.

Bill 13, the Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act, received unanimous support in the legislature, passing on an 84-0 vote. The legislation includes an eight-per-cent rebate for residential and small business electricity customers – equal to the provincial portion of the HST.

The all-party support isn't surprising. The NDP proposed in August that the HST be taken off hydro bills; the Liberals cribbed the idea earlier this month in their Throne Speech. The Progressive Conservatives, meanwhile, have been lobbying for lower electricity rates for some

time.

Bill 13 was referred to the justice committee.

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9). SEEN: EX-MP PAUL CALANDRA TO SEEK PC NOMINATION FOR MARKHAM-STOUFFVILLE

By: Jessica Smith Cross

Paul Calandra is the latest well-known conservative to express interest in running for Ontario's PCs.

Calandra was the Conservative MP for Oak Ridges—Markham from 2008 to 2015, before he was defeated by Liberal Jane Philpott in the last federal election. He told the Stouffville Sun-Tribune he plans to seek the Markham—Stouffville PC nomination for the 2018 election. The newspaper reports that Calandra is good friends with PC leader Patrick Brown and the nomination meeting tentatively scheduled for May/June 2017.

“Seeing what’s happening in the province, I think there are a lot of issues I want to tackle,” Calandra told the Stouffville Sun-Tribune. “Now’s the time we have to get things done and balance the budget, cut taxes, bring back open opportunity for people.”

Calandra has a slightly colourful history as an MP, including a tearful apology he made to the House after giving non-answers in Question Period, by responding to questions about Iraq with non-sequitur attacks on the NDP's commitment to Israel.

The PCs have been seeing interest from candidates with name recognition as of late, former MP and current PC party president Rick Dykstra is seeking the nomination in Niagara West-Glanbrook byelection, as is Grimsby Regional Councillor Tony Quirk. Former Ombudsman Andre Marin will represent the party in the Ottawa - Vanier byelection. Doug Ford has also expressed interest in running for the party.