

This Morning's Issues - January 3, 2018 - Let me know if you have any questions. Guy

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Cabinet Office/Corporate Issues Morning Issues List

January 3, 2018

Please note we did not meet with the Premier's Office this morning.

OPG Financials Continuing To Generate Controversy - The Globe reports that public scrutiny

around Ontario Power Generation (OPG), the government hydro utility that provides forty per cent of the province's electricity, is building over "generous compensation practices" seen at the executive level. The Crown corporation has been determined by a regulatory panel to be providing compensation at too high of a level; that excess estimated to be around \$50-million, despite the panel granting that "(OPG) had made some positive steps towards controlling its overall compensation costs." Additionally, OPG spokespeople say the utility is "reviewing the decision in detail" of regulator Ontario Energy Board (OEB) to "cut \$500-million from the \$16.8-billion five year budget (OPG) submitted to cover its nuclear operations." If it so chooses, the OPG can appeal the ruling in provincial court. The Globe says that OPG "still managed to score some major victories" with its application, as the OEB agreed to allow the charging of hydro consumers for refurbishments and rebuilds of the aging Darlington and Pickering nuclear plants. Says the Globe, The OEB decision will "allow the utility to 'smooth' the cost recovery for its reactor projects, adding more than \$1-billion to the burden on future ratepayers.

Paralegals One Step Closer To Offering Family Law Services - The Law Society of Ontario, which regulates both lawyers and paralegals in the province, voted in early December to "develop a special licence" that would support training for those with paralegal status to "navigate the family court process, form completion and possibly other areas outside of the classroom." That commitment is part of a joint action plan with Ontario's Ministry of the Attorney General, and will also be used to assess whether paralegals being allowed to appear in family court "would be in the public interest." The Star writes that "details remain vague" in terms of the commitment and resistance against the idea is beginning to build—the Family Lawyers Association, as well as numerous family court judges, have made their opposition to the move known. The move does have the backing of Ontario Attorney General Yasir Naqvi, who appeared at the December Law Society meeting and urged approval of the commitment as a way to alleviate clogged courtrooms; said Minister Naqvi on the issue, "access to justice is a serious challenge in the family justice system, where approximately sixty per cent of litigants represent themselves and struggle to resolve their personal family law disputes."

Toronto's Flu Season Could Be More Severe Due To Ineffective Vaccine - According to Dr. Naveed Mohammed of the William Osler Hospital system in Peel region, the "relatively mild" winter flu outbreak that hospital have encountered so far may be a "late bloomer," as Australia has seen "a record-breaking surge" of flu cases this year. Worryingly, Australian health officials used the same flu vaccine as Ontario to inoculate their citizens earlier in 2017; a vaccine that didn't include two particular strains of flu that have already been encountered in the provincial hospitals. Dr. Mohammed says that doctors in Ontario "are on pins and needles", waiting for the worst to come, as "we lose a significant part of our hospital real estate to admit patients, which is what leads to some of the complications within the surge with wait times and unhappy patients." Lisa Berger of Toronto Public Health says it's still too early to predict how the rest of the season will go, and defends the flu vaccine: "The message is to get vaccinated. The vaccine takes two weeks for effectiveness and the flu season started later. We still have our season ahead of us."

Community In Crisis - The District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board has been lobbying the province for a joint task force and additional resources to combat an overwhelmingly high demand for mental health and addictions services. Joe Bradbury, the board's chief executive officer, has said local social services providers are stretched too thin, and that 27 per cent of their case loads are for mental health and addictions services. Data collected by the North East LHIN shows wait times for proper community supports for mental health and addictions can be between days to months depending on the program, and there has been a 25 per cent increase in hospital visits for such patients. DNSSAB chairman Mark King has said, "DNSSAB doesn't blame the hospital but rather the

lack of funding from the LHIN and Ministry of Health.” King suggests the increased demand has likely affected police and ambulance workers as well.

Plug Pulled On Cardiac Fitness; Cardiologist In Charge Says Patients Being ‘Abandoned’ In Shift To St. Joe’s Rehab Program - The London Health Sciences Centre (LHSC) plans to shut down its Cardiac Fitness Institute, despite objections from its cardiologist, Dr. Larry Patrick, who says up to 1,400 patients are being “abandoned” by the hospital. “Without the ongoing support of the institute, more patients will deviate from the exercise, diet and screening that keeps them alive and out of emergency rooms,” Dr. Patrick asserts. The LHSC released a statement saying, “These services do not fall under the mandate of acute care hospitals and LHSC receives no funding to support similar services and can no longer subsidize the costs of the CFI program.” After March 2018, patients who would have used the CFI program will be referred to a six-month rehabilitation program at St. Joseph’s Health Care London, which Dr. Patrick says has had wait times of up to five months. Key differences between the programs include that St. Joe’s rehab program provides exercise and diet advice for six months and offers stress tests for up to six months, whereas the fitness institute provides exercise and diet advice indefinitely and provide stress tests annually, “which brings in between \$90,000 and \$110,000 from Ontario’s Health Ministry.”

College Students Still Working On Completing Fall Semester - Anchor: The winter breaks was anything but relaxing for many students, rushing to finish the fall semester after a five week strike forced a major shift in class schedules. Our Adrian Cheung joins us live from Centennial College’s Progress campus near 401 and Markham road. This shows you how big of an impact this strike is having. Reporter: That’s true. Really in any other year, this week would be the kickoff to the winter semester. Instead, these guys are working still on the fall semester, in some cases even finishing up exams. We have interviewed, spoken to a lot of students about how they feel stressed about this compressed schedule but it might be worse for apprenticeship programs because not only do they deal with class schedules, but they have to work around their work placements as well. Today we dropped in on apprentices to see how they are doing it.

Toronto Sun Editorial: Wynne Robs Peter To Pay Paul - Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne's re-election strategy for June 7 is best summed up by the cynical observation of George Bernard Shaw that, "A government that robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul." With one problem. That's that Wynne is actually robbing Peter to pay Peter because Peter and Paul are the same person. Take Wynne's Fair Hydro Plan to cut our hydro bills by 25%. Wynne's financing that with tens of billions of borrowed dollars. But she's keeping them off the province's books, where taxpayers are responsible for paying them back, by putting them on Ontario Power Generation's books, where electricity ratepayers are responsible for paying them back. Never mind that the Auditor General of Ontario and the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario have both warned this fiscal sleight of hand is one way for Wynne to claim she's balanced the province's books this year, when the real deficit is \$4 billion to \$4.5 billion.

Mental Health Agencies See Increase In People Seeking Services - Anchor: Mental health agencies that serve children and young people have seen a big increase in the number of families that are looking for help. That has forced agencies to innovate the way they deliver those services. Our Amanda Pfeffer is here to tell us more about this. And, Amanda, what's been the increase overall? Reporter: Well, one of the biggest providers of mental health services for kids and teens is the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario and in 2017 it saw a 70 per cent jump in the number of people coming asking for help. That is higher than the increases from previous years. And meanwhile no new

doctors, no new resources. And I sat down and spoke to Dr. Kathleen Pajer, she is the Chief Psychiatrist at CHEO and she says researchers are finding it's critical to address these needs of this growing number of young people because if it goes untreated we're creating adults more prone to illness, obesity, substance abuse, self-harm, even a higher likelihood of getting in trouble with the law and of course premature death.

LABOUR

Minimum Wage Hikes Could Cost Canada's Economy 60,000 Jobs This Year, 8% Of Canadian Workers Make Minimum Wage, And Even Those Making Slightly More Likely To See Higher Wages - Minimum wage hikes across Canada this year could cost about 60,000 jobs, despite the benefits they would bring, the Bank of Canada says in a new report. The central bank published a report over the winter break, attempting to calculate what sort of economic impact a series of minimum wage hikes set to come into force this year will have on Canada's economy.

As of Jan. 1, Ontario's minimum wage is now \$14 an hour, up from \$11.60. By the end of 2018, Alberta, Quebec and Prince Edward Island are also expected to hike their minimum wages. Economists and business leaders have squabbled over the issue, with some of the former arguing higher wages boost the economy and help fight income inequality. Those on the other side, meanwhile, say the costs are too high and will come with a heavy toll on the job market. Farmer Kevin Howe of Howe Family Farms in Aylmer, Ont., a small business that has been in operation for five generations, said he's already reducing the amount of crops he plans to plant this year, and fears he won't need as many workers because consumers won't be willing to pay the higher prices he'll have to charge to cover wage increases. "Costs are always going up and we need to be able to pass these costs on to stay in business," he told CBC News in an interview Tuesday.

Arnprior Movie Theatre Owner Raises Prices To Cover Minimum Wage Hike - Anchor: Businesses say they are already adjusting to the new, much higher minimum wage. It kicked in January 1st, it's impact already being felt at a movie theatre in Arnprior, boosting prices to make up for higher wages. Ontario's minimum wage rising yesterday from \$11.60 an hour to \$14 an hour. January 1st, 2019, it goes up again to \$15 an hour. CTV's Joanne Schnurr now with more on the impact here. Reporter: It's not a big boost in the ticket price at the O'Brien Theatre in Arnprior, a dollar more for each movie-goer. The owner of the theatre says it's the only way he can stay afloat and he's hoping folks will understand. It seems the cost of training a Jedi master just went up. Arnprior Theatre owner Kevin Marshall will need more than the force with him to make ends meet. Kevin Marshall, O'Brien Theatre Owner: We have to put up our prices to meet the minimum wage. At 20 per cent that these guys are getting extra versus the 10 per cent that I'm actually increases the prices. I think it's pretty fair.

OTHER NEWS

New Vaccine For 'Hideous' Shingles Illness Should Be Free For Seniors, Advocates Argue - New vaccine for 'hideous' shingles illness should be free for seniors, advocates argue - Advocates for Canadian seniors are calling on provincial governments to cover the cost of a new vaccine to protect against shingles, a brutally painful illness that can have debilitating consequences. Shingrix was approved by Health Canada last year and its manufacturer, GlaxoSmithKline, says it should be available in local pharmacies that order it by mid-January. An existing vaccine is available against shingles — Zostavax — but it's not reported to be as effective in preventing it, especially among older people. "When we look at the impact on people's lives, shingles can be so devastating," said Wanda Morris, vice-president of advocacy at CARP, formerly known as the Canadian Association of Retired

Persons. "This is something we really need government to look at."

TB Regional Health Sciences Centre Experiencing Capacity Crisis - Anchor: Thunder Bay's Regional Health Sciences Center is experiencing a capacity crisis. Far more patients are currently in the facility than the hospital has beds for. Now, the influx was predicted, but it spiked much sooner than expected and that's left hospital staff scrambling to keep up with the additional load. Carlyle Fiset has details. Dr. Stewart Kennedy, Executive Vice President, Thunder Bay Regional: I've never seen it this bad for medical and surgery. Reporter: Bursting at the seams. That's how Dr. Stewart Kennedy described Thunder Bay Regional's current capacity situation. The acting president and CEO says the hospital is 70 to 80 patients overcapacity right now despite adding 22 extra beds ahead of Christmas. Dr. Kennedy: The predictions were there, but we now have gone past our 22 additional bed capacity and now we have to looking at adding additional beds in the hospital where we can find them and working with our system partners, St. Joe's and the LHIN to help actually find increased capacity in the community.

Bill 127 Now In Effect, Increasing Scope Of WSIB Benefit Entitlement - Anchor: While many businesses are focusing on the impact of the increase in the minimum wage, some may not have heard about Bill 127. It is a bill that will allow workers to claim WSIB benefits if they are diagnosed with chronic mental stress stemming from the workplace. CTV's Lyndsay Moggy joins us live this evening with details on how this bill will affect not only employers but employees as well. Reporter: Marina, changes to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act have officially kicked in. Bill 127 expands the scope of benefit entitlement to include work related chronic mental stress. Chronic mental stress is said to be caused by a substantial work related stressor. Or a series of stressors. For example being the victim of harassment or bullying. France Gelinas, NDP MPP: If you need to be off work two months or three months in order to get better, you will be covered. The nice thing about being covered by WSIB is that they also cover treatment. You may not know but a lot of the mental health treatments are not covered by OHIP.

Ombudsman Investigating 'Confusion' Over Shelters; City Also Launches Probe After Reports Of Homeless People Being Told Warming Centre Was Full - Toronto's ombudsman is probing city services for homeless people and the city is launching a review following controversy over available shelter space, as a potentially deadly cold snap continues. Ombudsman Susan Opler announced her inquiry Tuesday in a news release citing "recent confusion" over whether the crowded shelter system has room for homeless Torontonians who want out of the cold.

"We are concerned about reports that some people were mistakenly told there wasn't any space for them on Dec. 30," Opler said. "Ombudsman Toronto wants to ensure that these essential services for vulnerable people are being optimally delivered." At a news conference on Tuesday, Paul Raftis, head of the city's shelter, support and housing office, said, "There's no question we have to review the system we have in place."