

Briefing for March 21, 2017

Your morning briefing	2
Tories cry contempt over ads promoting Liberal hydro plan.....	4

Your morning briefing

21.03.2017 Sabrina Nanji O

Headlines

The *Toronto Star* has learned businessman **Allan O'Dette**, president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, [has scored a \\$340,000-a-year gig with the provincial government as the first chief investment officer](#). The Star reports O'Dette, who says he will be taking a pay cut, will lead 125 staffers at the Ontario Investment Office next month, and help new and expanding businesses navigate, er, business with government ministries. Economic Development Minister **Brad Duguid** likened the new office to "one-stop concierge shops."

In the meantime, Duguid and International Trade Minister **Michael Chan** are jetting off to Albany, New York, in an attempt to convince lawmakers to exempt Canada from a Buy American policy that could close lucrative access between the state and province, [The Canadian Press reports](#).

Bombardier [heads to the University Avenue courthouse today](#) to ask a judge to stop Metrolinx, the province's transit agency, from cancelling a \$770-million contract for light rail vehicles.

The Ontario Long-Term Care Association, with PC MPP **Bill Walker** in tow, was at Queen's Park yesterday to warn that a wait list for nursing home beds will increase to 50,000, if stable funding is not provided by the government, [The Toronto Star reports](#).

Potentially troubling news for PC Leader **Patrick Brown**, connoisseur of energy drinks: the Toronto Board of Health is recommending City Council ban the sale of the caffeinated drinks at certain city-owned, public spaces, [the Toronto Star reports](#).

Attorney General **Yasir Naqvi** was hammered by PC MPP **Laurie Scott** in yesterday's question period after she asked why the provincial government wouldn't follow her federal Conservative cousins and mandate provincial judges receive sexual assault training, [Metro Ottawa reports](#).

Ontario's review of provincial labour laws – for which a final report is expected to be made public soon – is an [opportunity to help mitigate racial discrimination on the job](#), **Avy Go**, clinic director at the Metro Toronto Chinese and South Asian Legal Clinic, and **Chris Buckley**, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, write in the Star. The op-ed just happens to be published on this, the United Nations-dubbed International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

As is tradition, federal Finance Minister **Bill Morneau** will be rocking a new pair of kicks when he drops the budget Wednesday. Morneau opted for a pair of pair of black dress shoes made in Mexico by Edmonton-based designer, Poppy Barley, run by sister duo Justine and Kendall Barber, [The Edmonton Sun reports](#). Choice footwear of budget days past include New Balance sneakers, mukluks and work boots.

Here's what you may have missed in yesterday's *QP Briefing*:

- [Speaker orders 'life and fire safety review' after firefighters free reporter locked in at the leg](#)
- [Seen: New committee lineups set](#)
- [Tories cry contempt over ads promoting Liberal hydro plan](#)
- [Ontario calling on Ottawa to help slow down housing speculation](#)
- [Patrick Brown calls Liberals' Facts Still Matter campaign a partisan attack](#)

Bills

Second reading of Bill 96, An Act to enact the Human Trafficking Awareness Day Act, 2017 and the Prevention of and Remedies for Human Trafficking Act, 2017.

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 8, 2017 on the motion for second reading of Bill 68, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to municipalities.

Committees

9 a.m.

The Standing Committee on Government Agencies will meet to consider intended appointments. Room 2.

Events

8 a.m.

Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault** to address the Ontario Energy Association. 401 Acadian Court, 401 Bay St., Toronto.

12 p.m.

Premier **Kathleen Wynne** to attend a caucus meeting. Queen's Park.

Tories cry contempt over ads promoting Liberal hydro plan

20.03.2017 [Geoff Zochodne](#) 0

The Progressive Conservatives say advertisements promoting the Liberals' plan to cut hydro costs are putting the cart before the horse — and the government in contempt of provincial parliament.

PC House Leader **Jim Wilson** rose on a point of privilege Monday morning, accusing the government of committing a “prima facie” case of contempt against the legislature. The Grits did so, he alleged, because the new ads were broadcast before the Liberal government backed up their hydro plan with promised legislation, thereby insulting the legislature’s role in the process.

“The advertising in question explicitly envisions a timeline and outcome for legislation which has yet to be introduced in the Legislature,” said Wilson. “That is why, in all of our releases, both sides of the House to this day from that ruling, we all say ‘if passed by the Legislature.’ This advertising makes no mention of ‘if passed by this Legislature’ in any of its forms, whether in social media or the radio.”

One of the Liberal backgrounders outlining their "Fair Hydro Plan" says that the government "intends to introduce legislation" to refinance electricity generation costs.

“[The ads] are blatantly partisan, and [the Liberals] are littering radio stations and social media in a sad attempt to save this government’s falling popularity,” said PC Leader **Patrick Brown** during Monday’s question period.

Premier **Kathleen Wynne** fired back that the Liberals had reformed the government ad rules after taking over for the Tories in 2003. Prior to the change, the first minister had been allowed to appear in ads, as ex-premier **Mike Harris** had done on occasion.

“Chaos was reigning, and the premier of the day had his face all over advertising,” Wynne said. “We changed those rules.”

The new ads targeted by the Tories inform radio listeners that they’ll soon receive an average 25-per-cent cut to their electricity bill, which includes the 8-per-cent HST rebate the Liberals first promised last September. Auditor General **Bonnie Lysyk**, a frequent critic of the government's promotions, has already reportedly said the ads wouldn’t have been approved by her office under the old rules, which the Liberals changed in 2015.

In defending themselves against the contempt charge, the Liberals maintain there is no bill in the house yet, and therefore, “no proceeding to obstruct,” said Government House Leader **Yasir Naqvi**. The Liberal government also claims it has the right to implement its policies at its own pace.

“Given that there is no bill or proceeding before the House, the very premise of privilege does not exist,” Naqvi added. “As part of its function, the government has a responsibility to raise awareness and communicate information about programs and services that affect Ontarians. This includes informing Ontarians of changes to their electricity bills so that they can use this information to plan for the future as they manage their household budgets.”

Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault**, against whom the contempt allegation is specifically aimed, says the Liberal government has spent “under a million dollars” on the ad campaign thus far. He said the campaign would be “in line” with what the government has spent previously, and suggested this would mean radio, television, print and social media ads.

“The more I talk to people in the province about the programs that we have, it just reminds me that we need to continue to do more to let people know about these programs,” Thibeault told reporters.

NDP Leader **Andrea Horwath** said the Liberals still haven’t revealed their “phantom plan” to reduce hydro rates, but are still promoting their policies.

“Now they’re once again using public money – public money – to buy advertising to help themselves politically as opposed to doing the right thing for the people of Ontario,” Horwath said.