

Queen's Park Today – Daily Report October 25, 2017

Today at Queen's Park.....	1
Today's events	3
News briefs — Governmental	4
News briefs — Non-governmental	5
Question period	6

Quotation of the day

“One who seeks to be a party's nominee is not running in a general election.”

*Justice Howard Borenstein delivers his ruling acquitting Liberal organizers of bribery charges related to the Sudbury by-election scandal
(via [Toronto Star](#))*

Today at Queen's Park

On the schedule

MPPs will convene at 9:00 a.m. to debate **Bill 163**, Protecting a Woman's Right to Access Abortion Services Act, at third reading. The bill will be voted on after question period.

During its morning meeting, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will consider PC MPP **Lisa MacLeod's** motion calling on the committee to complete a comprehensive study of the Auditor General's report on the Fair Hydro Plan's accounting treatment.

Afternoon debate will be dedicated to debate on **Bill 166**, Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act. **Bill 166** increases regulations on online ticket sales, the travel industry and real estate “double-ending.”

Debates and proceedings

In the morning MPPs debated **Bill 160**, Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act, at second reading. This was the fifth day of debate on the bill.

After question period, **Bill 152**, Representation Statute Law Amendment Act, was voted on at third reading. The bill passed third reading with all-party support (Ayes 87; Nays 0).

In the afternoon, the House debated an opposition day motion from PC leader **Patrick Brown** calling on the Liberal government to apologize for wasting \$4 billion on the Fair Hydro Plan. The motion was hotly debated and defeated by the Liberal Party (Ayes 27; Nays 51).

Goodbye Sudbury bribery scandal

On Tuesday afternoon, Justice **Howard Borenstein**, the judge in the Sudbury by-election trial, acquitted **Pat Sorbara** and **Gerry Lougheed Jr.** of the bribery charges they faced under the Elections Act. Following a request from the defence, Justice Borenstein delivered a “directed verdict” before the prosecution delivered its case.

In a statement, the Liberal Party said it had “always been confident” the facts surrounding the case would result in the court determining there was no wrongdoing. It chastised the opposition for demanding the prosecution put these “two innocent people through an ordeal of almost three years in order to defend themselves and their reputations.” The OLP welcomed Sorbara back to its campaign team.

PC leader **Patrick Brown** said in a statement “this whole episode is but one part of a consistent pattern of political corruption.” Brown said his party is worried about what else the Liberals have been able to keep hidden and “what scandal will come next.”

NDP MPP **Gilles Bisson** said Ontarians are “disturbed by the spectacle of two senior Liberals standing trial” and let down by hearing Premier **Kathleen Wynne** testify as a witness in court. He said the trial’s “glimpse of the inner workings of the Liberal party” revealed a party “obsessed with defending, protecting and promoting itself, not the people of Ontario.”

In the park

The Council of Academic Hospitals of Ontario is scheduled to host an MPP breakfast at Queen’s Park.

Representatives from the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care will hold a news conference to call on the government commit to equal pay and decent work standards for early childhood educators.

Innovative Medicines Canada, a coalition of research-based pharmaceutical companies formerly known as Rx&D, will hold a lobby day.

Drinks Ontario and Lymphoma Canada both have evening receptions scheduled for MPPs.

Topics of conversation

- Working Families Ontario released its first [attack ad](#) against PC leader **Patrick Brown**. The video portrays Brown as a weather vane atop Queen’s Park that can’t be trusted because he “blows with the winds of political opportunity.”

- A new group calling itself [Keep Transit Public](#) rallied at Union Station on Tuesday to oppose the province's use of P3s to build transit projects. CUPE Ontario led a similar group called Keep Hydro Public surrounding the Hydro One sell-off.
- Ontarians can fill out an [online survey](#) to provide input on the province's Greater Golden Horseshoe Transportation Plan from now until December 23, 2017.
- A [conversation](#) has started about where Ontario's legalized weed should be grown. Former agriculture critic **Ted McMeekin** told news outlets that growers should stay away from class 1 agricultural land and look to the north where soil quality is lower and jobs are needed.
- A coalition of four press freedom groups, including Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, awarded Toronto Hydro its annual Code of Silence Award for Outstanding Achievement in Government Secrecy. This [story](#) from the *Toronto Star* looks at the lengths the utility company went to to avoid complying with Freedom of Information requests about its use of consultants during a period when it was rumoured to be considering privatizing.

Today's events



October 25 at 9:45 a.m. — Toronto

Premier **Kathleen Wynne** and Health Minister **Dr. Eric Hoskins** will deliver remarks and participate in a ribbon cutting ceremony at the grand opening of the new Casey House.



October 25 at 11 a.m. — Toronto

Striking college faculty and students will hold a protest outside the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, 900 Bay Street.



October 25 at 12 p.m. — Toronto

Premier **Kathleen Wynne** will hold a cabinet meeting at Queen's Park.



October 25 at 12 p.m. — Toronto

Ontario Long Term Care Association CEO **Candace Chartier** will present the association's plan to build the sector up at an Economic Club of Canada event at One King West.

**October 25 at 3:45 p.m. — Toronto**

Tourism, Culture and Sport Minister **Eleanor McMahon** will make an announcement at Stan Wadlow Clubhouse.

**October 25 at 7 p.m. — Toronto**

The Ontario Liberal Party will hold its nomination meeting for the riding of Toronto—St. Paul's at Midtown Gastro Pub. The riding is currently represented by Health Minister **Dr. Eric Hoskins**.

News briefs — Governmental

Ministry of the Attorney General

The ministry released a statement on the passage of **Bill 152**, Representation Statute Law Amendment Act, at third reading. The bill allows two new northern ridings, Kiiwetinoong and Mushkegowuk—James Bay, to be proclaimed before the June 2018 election, bringing the total number of Ontario ridings to 124.

In response to concerns from the Mushkegowuk people, Attorney General **Yasir Naqvi** said the province will consult with affected communities to determine a final name for the new riding of Mushkegowuk-James Bay.

Bill 152 also tweaks the Election Finances Act, which passed in December 2016, by closing the loophole that allowed party nominees to attend political fundraising events during the window between their nomination and the start of campaign. The bill bans nominees from attending fundraisers after the end of their “nomination contest period,” which is extended to three months after the candidate’s selection. This will give candidates a window to recoup money spent during their nomination race but will limit their overall ability to fundraise for the party before being elected.

Other tweaks include making it mandatory for political parties to clearly advertise “cost recovery events” and clarifying that politicians are allowed to attend party AGMs and policy conferences, even if the ticket fee goes to the political party.

Ministry of Education

Education Minister **Mitzie Hunter** and Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care **Indira Naidoo-Harris** announced the province is re-branding how it provides child and family programs. The province will build 100 new EarlyON Child and Family Centres that will act as hubs for childcare resources, parental support and play programs for children. The new facilities will be completed over the next three years and will cost \$140 million annually to run. Existing programs, including Ontario Early Years Centres, will be consolidated under the new EarlyON umbrella.

Ministry of Energy

Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault** launched a new electricity conservation program that is part of the province's Fair Hydro Plan. The \$100-million Affordability Fund encourages energy efficient home retrofits for low-income Ontarians by providing [free installation](#) of LED light bulbs and energy-efficient air conditioners and refrigerators. The ministry said a free home energy kit, which includes two LED light bulbs and a power bar, can save a household \$10 per year. An energy-efficient refrigerator can save up to \$90 per year.

News briefs — Non-governmental

Environmental Commissioner of Ontario

Ontario Environmental Commissioner **Dianne Saxe** released her [2017 annual report](#), "Good Choices, Bad Choices: Environmental Rights and Environmental Protection in Ontario." Saxe's report focused on the impacts of industrial pollution and poor government cleanup efforts on Indigenous communities. Pointing to mercury poisoning in Grassy Narrows, polluted air in Chemical Valley and the 36 First Nations under drinking water advisories, Saxe said, "The conditions faced by these Indigenous communities would not be tolerated elsewhere in Ontario." She recommended the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change update its air standards regulations and improve how it transmits real time air monitoring information. She also called on the government to "incorporate environmental justice as part of its reconciliation with Indigenous people."

She also said the province must launch new phosphorus controls to prevent frequent and wide-spread toxic algae blooms that are disrupting lake ecosystems and drinking water supplies. On the subject of aggregates, Saxe said the province must use multiple policy levers to promote the use of recycled aggregates over extracted aggregates, including by making "recycled aggregate procurement policies a prerequisite for municipalities to receive infrastructure funding."

Saxe said the province is failing to protect endangered species, specifically the Algonquin wolf, which has recently had its protected habitat range reduced by the Ministry of Natural Resources. She said there are as few as 250 mature Algonquin wolves and the species "stands little chance of recovery" unless hunting and trapping is prohibited throughout its entire range, not just in and around provincial parks.

The environment commissioner said that her request in last year's report that all ministries improve their compliance with the Environmental Bill of Rights was largely met.

Environment Minister **Chris Ballard** said he is working with the federal government to resolve all First Nations drinking water advisories within the next five years. He also said new sulphur dioxide air standards will be posted for consultation soon.

Appointments and employments

Ontario Liberal Party

- **Joe Dickson** was nominated to run for re-election in the new riding of Ajax. Dickson has represented the riding of Ajax—Pickering in 2007.

Question period

PC lead-off

Fair Hydro Plan

- PC leader **Patrick Brown** used his first round of questions to go after the premier over the cost the Fair Hydro Plan's "accounting scheme."
 - Brown asked the premier when government made the decision to waste \$4 billion.
- In a reference to [recently exposed emails](#) in the gas plants trial, Brown said he is worried the refusal to release Fair Hydro Plan emails will become "Pete's Project 2.0."
- Premier **Kathleen Wynne** said the government had to ensure the costs of upgrades to an electricity system were borne in a smooth way.
- Brown asked about a Global News [column](#) that reported Ministry of Energy staff "personally contacted journalists the day before the [Auditor General's] report was released to say the AG's approach would be flawed."
 - He asked when the government will "stop its war on Ontario's independent officers."

Ontario Municipal Board membership

- PC MPP **Vic Fedeli** asked why Liberal members of the Standing Committee on Social Policy did not support the PC amendment to **Bill 139**, Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, that would ensure there is a northern member on the OMB.
 - The PCs said the OMB does not just represent Toronto.
- Municipal Affairs Minister **Bill Mauro** said the PCs have been dogging the government about OMB reform for decades — and he is shocked this is the only substantive amendment the party could come up with.
 - Mauro said this must mean **Bill 139** is a pretty good bill.

NDP lead-off

Seniors care

- NDP MPP **France Gélinas** asked about a CBC News [story](#) about 14 long-term care homes, housing 1,800 seniors, that are considering leaving Toronto because they do not have enough funding to upgrade their facilities and pay high land costs.

- Health and Long-Term Care Minister **Dr. Eric Hoskins** said his ministry has not received a single proposal from a long-term care home mentioned in the CBC article that is looking to leave Toronto.
 - He said no long-term care home can relocate without his personal written permission.

Fair Hydro Plan emails

- NDP MPP **Peter Tabuns** asked why the Liberal members of the Standing Committee on Estimates voted down his motion requesting documents and correspondence related to the Fair Hydro Plan be made available to the committee.
- Economic Development Minister **Brad Duguid** said the Minister of Energy committed to delivering the requested emails to the Auditor General by November 1.