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Quotation of the day

“[Friday's] announcement by the Wynne government is an obvious attempt to distract from the Liberal bribery trial now underway, and the upcoming Liberal gas plant scandal trial.”

NDP MPP Gilles Bisson questions the timing of the Liberal's marijuana legalization announcement

Today at Queen's Park

On the schedule

The House will convene for its first question period of the fall session at 10:30 a.m.

In the afternoon, MPPs will begin debate on **Bill 139**, Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act. This bill sets up a Local Planning Appeal Tribunal to replace the Ontario Municipal Board. It also modernizes how the province will guide the conservation of watersheds.

According to schedule provided by the Government House Leader's Office, the other bills up for debate this week are **Bill 142**, Construction Lien Act, and **Bill 148**, Fair Workplaces and Better Jobs Act. New legislation could be introduced and added to the roster.

Committees this week

The Standing Committee on Estimates will meet Tuesday and Wednesday to organize its fall schedule. The committee will begin the annual process of reviewing the estimates of various ministries, including the Ministry of Energy, in the coming weeks.

The Standing Committee on Government Appointments will meet Tuesday to audition appointees to the Niagara Grant Review Board and the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN. The Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly has an administrative meeting on Wednesday.

Sudbury by-election trial

The trial against Ontario Liberal Party CEO and campaign organizer **Pat Sorbara** and fundraiser **Gerry Lougheed Jr.** began last Thursday in Sudbury. Sorbara and Lougheed are facing charges under the Elections Act for both bribing would-be candidate **Andrew Olivier** not to run as a Liberal candidate and for offering Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault** incentives to run instead.

The trial's [opening statements](#) revealed Thibeault would only agree to run for the Liberals if he was guaranteed "the full support of the party, some money during the campaign to make up for the loss for his MP salary and paid jobs for two of his staffers." At issue is whether Sorbara agreeing to hire these staffers constitutes bribery.

The courtroom was played a [previously unreleased recording](#) of a phone call between Sorbara and Olivier that took place shortly after former NDP MPP **Joe Cimino's** resignation, the event that prompted the Sudbury by-election. During the call, Sorbara and Olivier discuss tensions between his campaign and the Sudbury Liberal Riding Association, which Olivier alleges was being run by former Liberal MPP **Rick Bartolucci** and his "gang." Sorbara accused Bartolucci of leaking negative news about the Liberal Party to the media and they agree the party needed get over its in-fighting if the Liberals want to "get this riding back." During the conversation, Sorbara implied Olivier could be selected as the Liberal Party's nominee – but that it might be a contested race – and scheduled an in-person meeting with him.

In a remark that proved true – with calamitous results for the Liberals – Sorbara described Premier Wynne's excitement going into the Sudbury by-election: "She's in a very determined place about getting this riding back."

In the courtroom, Sorbara and Livingstone's lawyers argued that Olivier was never an official candidate, so when Sorbara later offered him a job within the Liberal Party in exchange for walking away from his dreams of becoming an MPP, she was not contravening the Elections Act. A list of 17 witnesses the prosecution intends to call is available [online](#), as is an [exchange of text messages](#) between Thibeault and Olivier that contains the phrase "cluster fuck."

The trial against former McGuinty staffers **Laura Miller** and **David Livingstone** over the deletion of emails pertaining to the cancellation of two gas plants is scheduled to begin today at Old City Hall. Miller and Livingstone's lawyers are expected to request a one-week [adjournment](#) so their defence teams can study newly-obtained evidence from the Crown.

Duguid out

Economic Development Minister **Brad Duguid** announced he will not run for re-election next spring. Duguid, who suffered a heart attack last year, said he is considering his “next challenge” and added that “this decision has nothing to do with polls or any personal dissatisfaction.”

It is not clear whether the announcement will prompt Premier Wynne to shuffle her cabinet. For his part, Duguid said he would be “honoured to continue to serve in cabinet at the pleasure of our premier.”

Other than former Environment Minister **Glen Murray**, who resigned in August, Duguid is the highest profile MPP to announce he is stepping aside before next June’s vote.

Liberal MPPs **Monte Kwinter** and **Mario Sergio**, and PC MPP **Julie Munro**, will also not run again.

Topics of conversation

- PC MPP **Bill Walker** has formally apologized for comments he made about Premier Wynne during a radio interview on AM640. Wynne’s lawyer threatened to sue for defamation after Walker said the premier was under investigation and facing four charges in conjunction with the Sudbury by-election trial and the gas plants trial. Wynne is not facing any charges.
- Former Toronto city councillor **Doug Ford** announced Friday he will run for mayor in 2018. This means Ford will not run for the Ontario PCs next spring, which saves leader **Patrick Brown** some grief – and deprives the Liberals of the chance to tie Ford’s bluster to their opponents.
- Ontario gained 31,000 jobs in August, the third increase in four months. The loss of 26,300 full-time positions was made up for by the addition of 57,500 part-time jobs. The unemployment rate dropped to 5.7 per cent.
- RBC [projects](#) the province’s economy will grow by 2.9 per cent this year — but predicts the cooling of the real estate market could affect growth in some industries by next year.
- Health and Long-Term Care Minister **Dr. Eric Hoskins** ordered the flow of harm reduction funds allocated for fighting opioid be accelerated. Hoskins, who recently announced \$222 million in new funding to fight the opioid crisis, said rushing the harm reduction funds will “ensure that the individuals who are most at risk can get the help they need in their communities as quickly as possible.”
- The Ontario PCs officially nominated **Caroline Mulroney** as the party’s candidate for York—Simcoe.

Today's events



September 11 at 9:00 a.m. — Nepean

Advanced Education Minister **Deb Matthews** will make an announcement at Algonquin College.



September 11 at 10:00 a.m. — Toronto

PC leader **Patrick Brown** will hold a news conference at Queen's Park to discuss the Ontario PC priorities for the fall legislative session.



September 11 at 10:30 a.m. — Toronto

Premier **Kathleen Wynne** will attend question period.



September 11 at 12:45 p.m. — Nepean

Advanced Education Minister **Deb Matthews** will host a roundtable discussion with students from St. Lawrence College and Queen's University to hear student perspectives on the new OSAP program. The roundtable will be held at St. Lawrence College's Innovation Hub.



September 11 at 1:00 p.m. — Toronto

Housing Minister **Peter Milczyn** will make a housing announcement with Toronto Mayor **John Tory** at WoodGreen Homeward Bound Campus.

Upcoming events of note



September 13 — Sudbury

Premier **Kathleen Wynne** will testify as a witness in the Sudbury by-election trial.



September 14 — Washington, D.C.

Premier **Kathleen Wynne** has been invited to deliver a lecture at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C. Wynne will discuss "Ontario's view on Renegotiating NAFTA: Building Economic Opportunities and Fairness on Both Sides of the Border."



October 3 — Ottawa

Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** will host the annual First Ministers' Meeting in Ottawa. Last year's meeting focused on climate change. This year federal, provincial and territorial government leaders will gather to discuss "strong, sustainable economic growth that benefits everyone." The politicians will also meet with Indigenous leaders to discuss promoting economic development in Indigenous communities.

News briefs – Governmental

Ministry of the Attorney General

In a joint media conference, Attorney General **Yasir Naqvi**, Health and Long-Term Care Minister **Dr. Eric Hoskins** and Finance Minister **Charles Sousa** released the province's strategy for selling [recreational marijuana](#).

Ontario will sell marijuana in government-owned stores that are managed by the LCBO. An online order service will launch on July 1, 2018, the date mandated for legalization by the federal government. Eighty stand-alone retail stores will open over the following 12 months, leading to a total of approximately 250 stores by 2020. Cannabis will only be sold to people over 19 years of age and cannot be consumed in public. All existing cannabis dispensaries will be shut down.

Naqvi will introduce legislation outlining this policy during the fall session. No information about pricing or taxation was included in the announcement, but the ministers did say the substance will be priced competitively in hopes of eliminating the black market.

Reaction

- PC community safety critic **Laurie Scott** said her party does not trust the Liberals to get the roll-out right, but did not oppose the overall distribution strategy. Scott called for strong measure to crack down on drug-impaired driving.
- NDP attorney general critic **Gilles Bisson** said the announcement is a "partial plan" that leaves "the public with more questions than answers." Bisson called for more details on where distribution locations will be located, how pot producers will be priced and taxed and whether communities will be involved in decision-making processes.
- The Green Party of Ontario said it does not support the monopolization of marijuana and encouraged the province to licence independent retail outlets. Leader **Mike Schreiner** said this policy favours "big corporations and political insiders over local small businesses."

- The happiest reaction came from OPSEU president **Smokey Thomas** whose union stands to gain hundreds of jobs from the LCBO's management of retail stores. Thomas revealed that a clause in the collective agreement negotiated between the LCBO and OPSEU earlier this year mandated that frontline cannabis retail staff will be OPSEU members — suggesting Thomas had an idea this decision was coming.

Ministry of Education

Education Minister **Mitzie Hunter** released a new "[Education Equity Action Plan](#)" that aims to confront issues of inequality and racism in the education system. Citing "systemic barriers to student success," the three-year plan will analyze demographic data to identify and address disparities in suspension and expulsion rates amongst different student populations. It will also confront the how the "track system" is applied to Grade 9 students to ensure it is not leaving racialized students behind.

The plan also focuses on hiring and promoting more diverse teachers to ensure the workforce and senior-level management is as diverse as the province's students.

Treasury Board Secretariat

Treasury Board President **Liz Sandals** released the province's 2016-17 [public accounts](#). Sandals said the deficit for that year was \$991 million — \$500 million lower than projected in the spring budget. Government spending was down slightly, while revenue growth was up and the interest paid on debt was lower than projected. Sandals said the province is still on track to balance its 2017-18 budget.

The release of the public accounts prompted a [response](#) from Auditor General **Bonnie Lysyk** who maintained her "qualified audit opinion" that the province unfairly counted the assets in its co-sponsored pension plans towards its bottom line, leading to a \$1.444 billion discrepancy. This dispute has been going on for a year. Lysyk said the province's actual deficit was \$2.43 billion in 2016-17 and its debt was \$314 billion - \$12 billion more than shown in the public accounts.

Sandals said she does not "think the public is terribly hung up on accounting disagreements."

Lysyk also foreshadowed the findings of an upcoming report she is preparing on the province's Fair Hydro Plan. The auditor general said, "the accounting design the government created for the electricity bill reduction under the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan Act, 2017 may lead to a larger understated deficit and net debt next year." The report will be tabled this fall.

Appointments and employments

Ontario Investment Office

- **Ed Clark**, the premier's economic advisor, was appointed to lead a team of Ontario business leaders in the province's quest to land the contract to build Amazon's second headquarters.
 - In a statement, Premier Wynne said, "Ontario is perfectly situated to win this incredible investment, and this government is mobilizing a wide array of resources in order to bring Amazon's HQ2 to Ontario."

Ontario Chamber of Commerce

- **Rocco Rossi** was appointed president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, effective January 2, 2018.
 - Rossi is currently the president and CEO of Prostate Cancer Canada.
 - He is the former CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, a former Ontario PC candidate and was the manager of **John Tory's** 2003 mayoral campaign.

NATIONAL Public Relations

- **Drew Fagan**, the former deputy minister responsible for the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games and deputy minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, joined NATIONAL's public affairs strategy team.
- **Bob Richardson**, founder of The Devon Group and former executive-vice president of Edelman, also moved over to NATIONAL.

NEXT Canada

- **Sheldon Levy**, the former president of Ryerson University, was appointed CEO of the non-profit [NEXT Canada](http://nextcanada.ca), effective October 30.
 - Levy has been serving as the deputy minister of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development since December 2015.

StrategyCorp Inc.

- **Gabriel Sékaly**, the former assistant deputy minister at the Ministry of Education and associate deputy minister at the Ministry of Finance, has taken a senior advisor role at StrategyCorp Inc.