

Queen's Park Today – Daily Report September 27, 2017

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Quotation of the day

“We’re going into a political campaign. There are going to be contrasts drawn between who I am and who the opposition leaders are. And what we’re doing and what they will do. That’s part of the political process.”

Premier Kathleen Wynne provides a diplomatic description of the political attack ads that are coming down the pipeline ahead of next June’s vote

Today at Queen's Park

On the schedule

The House will convene at 9:00 a.m. to continued second reading on **Bill 139**, Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act.

During the Standing Committee on Public Accounts’ weekly meeting, PC MPP **Lisa MacLeod** will put forward a motion requesting the auditor general conduct a value-for-money audit on the proposed Metrolinx GO stations at Kirby and Lawrence East.

Bill 154, Cutting Unnecessary Red Tape Act, will continue to be debated at second reading during the afternoon session.

Debates and proceedings

In the morning, MPPs continued second reading debate on **Bill 152**, Representation Statute Law Amendment Act, which adds two new northern ridings. The PCs are calling for the government to authorize the committee chosen to study the bill to hold public consultations in the north during an upcoming constituency week.

Two private members' bills were introduced:

- NDP leader **Andrea Horwath** introduced **Bill 157**, Domestic and Sexual Violence Protection Act. Horwath's bill amends the Employment Standards Act to allow an employee who experiences domestic or sexual violence access to 10 days of paid leave and up to 13 weeks of unpaid leave.
- NDP MPP **Cheri DiNovo** introduced **Bill 158**, Protecting Vulnerable Road Users Act. The legislation increases penalties for drivers who kill or injure a pedestrian, first responder or other vulnerable road user.

In the afternoon, the House continued second reading on **Bill 139**, Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act.

Wynne hosts U.S. leaders

Premier **Kathleen Wynne** hosted a small delegation of U.S. leaders from the Washington region at Queen's Park on Tuesday: Virginia Governor **Terry McAuliffe**, Maryland Governor **Larry Hogan** and Washington D.C. Mayor **Muriel Bowser**.

The visit coincided with ongoing NAFTA trade talks in Ottawa. Governors McAuliffe and Hogan said they travelled to Toronto to "reassure" Canadians, government and business leaders that "this relationship is important to us."

Premier Wynne stressed that subnational governments have "a lot of authority" to work together on issues such as trade and climate change.

"I know there's a lot of confusion coming out of Washington, but don't worry about that ... Do business directly with the states and cities instead," said Hogan.

Asked about U.S. protectionism, Governor Hogan warned about reading too much into the "bluster and rhetoric" coming out of the White House. "If you take a look at the long haul, I don't think [future trade policy] is going to look anything like what the worst fears are," he said.

GTHA mayors meetings

Premier **Kathleen Wynne** hosted GTHA mayors and chairs for their sixth joint summit. In a news conference following the meeting, Wynne said the leaders discussed three main issues, including the implementation of legalized cannabis, increasing the housing supply and the \$100 million Municipal GHG Challenge Fund, which will provide municipalities with funding for green retrofits to public buildings and upgrades to drinking water and wastewater facilities.

Attorney General **Yasir Naqvi** said he will host a law enforcement summit on cannabis legalization this fall. The summit, which will be held somewhere in the GTA, will involve municipal leaders and regional police services to determine the best way to ensure new laws are enforced. Wynne said she heard from municipal leaders who are already ensuring that anytime an illegal pot shop opens in their jurisdiction it is immediately shut down.

Wynne said Housing Minister **Peter Milczyn** is putting out a call for municipalities with unused provincial land in their jurisdictions to approach the province with land use ideas that include building rental and affordable housing.

In the park

The Egg Farmers of Ontario will hold their annual MPP omelette breakfast at Queen's Park.

Four other organizations will also host lobbying days and receptions: the Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance, the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, Enbridge Gas and Union Gas and the Eye Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

The Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance is calling for a \$270 million annual funding increase to the province's health promotion budget in order to fund awareness of preventable chronic diseases.

On Tuesday, former premier **Mike Harris** and former MPP **Norm Sterling** were in the Legislature to watch a tribute to former MPP **Ed Havrot**, a long-time PC representative of the riding of Timiskaming.

Topics of conversation

- Ontario Power Generation is borrowing money on the public debt market in order to comply with the Fair Hydro Plan. OPG announced plans earlier this month to take on up to \$2 billion in public shareholder debt. As [reported](#) in the *Financial Post*, marketing materials for the initial public debt offering explicitly tie the OPG's need-for-cash to its "commitment to Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan."
 - Under the Fair Hydro Plan, OPG must create a "trust" to refinance the Global Adjustment, decreasing ratepayers' electricity bills in the short-term.
- This is what the future Francophone Tribute Memorial at Queen's Park [will look like](#).
- Ontario Council of Hospital Unions and CUPE leadership is touring the province to discuss workplace violence in hospitals. According to OCHU, which represents 27,000 hospital staff, it is fighting for workplace violence provisions to be included in any new contract with the Ontario Hospital Association. Talks broke down between the two groups last week.
- A [report from TD economists](#) projects a swift increase towards the \$15 minimum wage could cost Ontario 50,000 to 150,000 jobs by the end of the decade. At the upper end, this would account for more than two per cent of total employment.
 - The report predicts Ontario will see more adverse affects to employment than Alberta, which is increasing its minimum wage to \$15 per hour at a similar pace, but has a higher median wage than Ontario.

Today's events



September 27 at 9:00 a.m. — Toronto

Accessibility Minister **Tracy MacCharles** will make an announcement at Sheraton Centre Hotel.



September 27 at 10:00 a.m. — Toronto

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



September 27 at 12:00 p.m. — Toronto

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



September 27 at 7:00 p.m. — Oshawa

The Ontario Liberal Party will hold its Durham candidate nomination meeting at Maxwell Heights Secondary School.

Polls

Angus Reid released its [quarterly report](#) on the popularity of Canada's premiers. Premier **Kathleen Wynne** remains the country's least popular premier. Wynne's approval rating increased by two per cent since June, but sits at just 17 per cent. This is up from a record low of 12 per cent in March 2017. Saskatchewan Premier **Brad Wall** and British Columbia Premier **John Horgan** are Canada's most popular premiers with 49 per cent approval and 48 per cent approval, respectively.

The **Ontario Energy Association** released the results of a poll conducted by **Innovative Research Group** from September 11 to 18. The poll found the public's interest in energy issues has "dramatically declined" since the introduction of the Fair Hydro Plan. Formerly the most important issue to respondents, energy has dropped to fourth place behind the economy, health care and affordable housing.

While the energy file has become heated, 46 per cent of respondents said they disapprove of the Fair Hydro Plan and only 19 per cent said it is a "good thing." The largest opposition to the Fair Hydro Plan came from PC supporters (69 per cent), but of Liberal supporters that were polled only 30 per cent said they support the plan.

Sixty per cent of those polled said it is time for a change of government at Queen's Park. If an election were held today, 40 per cent would vote for the PCs, 35 per cent would vote Liberal, 18 per cent would vote NDP and five per cent would vote Green. Complete poll details are available [online](#).

Funding announcements

- The **Ministry of Francophone Affairs** launched Programme Franco, a community grant program that will encourage new Francophone cultural events.
 - Communities can apply for grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000. The three-year program has a \$3 million budget.
- The **Premier's Office** announced it is providing \$100,000 in funding to the Red Cross for earthquake relief in Mexico.

News briefs – Non-governmental

Ontario Human Rights Commission

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has filed a [contravention application](#) with the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario alleging the province breached a 2013 legal agreement regarding the use of segregation. **Yusuf Faqiri** spoke at the press conference. His brother Soleiman, who had schizophrenia, died during a conflict with correctional officers in a segregation cell at a correctional facility in Lindsay last December.

The OHRC is calling on the Human Rights Tribunal to order the province to end the use of segregation for people with mental illness, except in extreme circumstances, as well as guarantee all inmates receive mental health assessments when entering correctional facilities.

In a statement, Community Safety and Correctional Services Minister **Marie-France Lalonde** said the province knows it needs to do better and is working on the recommendations made by **Howard Sapers** in his interim report on Ontario's use of segregation. Sapers' complete review is expected to be released soon.

Lalonde said her ministry continues to "take immediate and decisive action to ensure that [Ontario is] both safeguarding human rights and ensuring the safety of those placed in our custody."

Appointments and Employments

Ministry of Housing

- Provincial Land and Development Facilitator **Paula Dill** will lead the Ministry of Housing's new **Housing Delivery Group**, which will work with developers and municipalities to make the construction of new rental housing projects happen faster.

Financial Accountability Office

- **J. David Wake** was appointed the province's temporary Financial Accountability Officer for a term of six months, or until a full-time Financial Accountability Officer is appointed.
 - Wake is also the province's Integrity Commissioner. He served as the Financial Accountability Officer over last winter when former commissioner **Stephen LeClair** was on medical leave.

Ontario Liberal Party

- **Arthur Potts** was re-nominated to run as the Liberal candidate in Beaches—East York.
- Indigenous Affairs Minister **David Zimmer** was re-nominated in Willowdale.

Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario

- **Esther Pauls** was appointed PC candidate for Hamilton Mountain. According to the party, Pauls owns a Runner's Den retail store and organizes an annual charity marathon in Hamilton.

Question period

PC lead-off

Hot schools

- PC leader **Patrick Brown** called on the government to declare a maximum temperature that would result in school closures. He said students are sweltering in classrooms without air conditioning and with windows that don't open.
- Premier **Kathleen Wynne** said she has "great faith" that decisions about closing schools or moving students to gyms can be made at the local level. She also noted that her government has provided school boards with \$1.4 billion for school retrofits.
- Wynne said she had to move a Monday meeting from her office to another room because she does not have air conditioning in "all the rooms" in her office, nor does she have air conditioning in her home.

Northern Ontario slur

- Brown asked the premier and Liberal MPP **Lou Rinaldi** – who is accused of calling northern Ontario 'no man's land' – to join him on a tour of the north.
- Premier **Kathleen Wynne** said Rinaldi is a "fine man" who has travelled the province widely and voted in favour of many bills that support northern Ontario, unlike the PCs.

- PC MPP **Ross Romano** and **Vic Fedeli** also invited Rinaldi to tour northern Ontario with them.
- Municipal Affairs Minister **Bill Mauro** congratulated the PCs on getting some headlines on this “ridiculous issue.” He offered Romano some advice, as a new MPP at Queen’s Park: “Just because they ask you to ask questions like this, you don’t have to do it. You don’t have to.”

Federal small business tax changes

- PC MPP **Monte McNaughton**, **Jeff Yurek** and **Toby Barrett** asked about the federal government’s proposed small business tax changes. They said Premier Wynne needs to tell her federal Liberal cousins to stop their “dangerous” attack on small businesses, doctors and farmers.
- PC MPP **Lisa Thompson** said the Liberal Premier of Nova Scotia is speaking out about the negative effects the federal government’s tax changes will have on farmers and asked why Ontario’s leadership will not.
- Agriculture Minister **Jeff Leal** said he and Premier Wynne have been in touch with federal Agriculture Minister **Lawrence MacAulay** about the issue.

NDP lead-off

Fair Hydro Plan

- NDP leader **Andrea Horwath** asked why the province is spending \$5.5 million on advertising that was explicitly designed to counter bad media coverage of the Ontario Liberal Party. Horwath said the government needs to fund solutions to high energy costs, not partisan advertising.
- Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault** said the only people benefitting from these ads are the people of Ontario who are learning about the Ontario Energy Support Program.

Other NDP questions

- NDP MPP **Wayne Gates** asked about unfair stabling practices at the Fort Erie Race Track. Gates said Woodbine Entertainment is limiting the frequency that horses can race at Fort Erie, a practice designed to kill the racetrack.
 - He said the government has said it is committed to saving small racetracks, but refuses to intervene.