

Evening Media Scan: Hydro Rate Reduction - October 20, 2017

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MEDIA SCAN: HYDRO RATE REDUCTION PLAN

October 20, 2017

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TV Transcripts

Global Premier Wynne Serves Patrick Brown with Notice of Libel

Source: Global

Oct 20, 2017 6:09 PM (19)

Anchor: Premier Kathleen Wynne has served opposition leader Patrick Brown with notice of libel. It relates to statements Brown made about Wynne's involvement in the Sudbury by-election scandal. The Premier has testified in the trial of two senior Liberals, but is not charged with anything herself. Here's what Brown said in the halls of Queen's Park that has prompted a threat of legal action.

Patrick Brown, PC Leader [Clip]: That the Premier will give us answers. We're not getting them in the legislature. Maybe when she stands trial and that in itself is astonishing.

Anchor: Brown would not take that back, so today, this from Wynne's lawyers to Brown: "Your stubborn refusal to retract your defamatory statements has exposed you to an award of aggravated and punitive damages." In response, Brown accuses Wynne of trying to deflect attention from other issues, like this week's scathing Auditor General's report on hydro.

Online Coverage

National Post: Kathleen Wynne moves to sue Patrick Brown for defamation about Sudbury trial

News - National Post

Fri Oct 20 2017

Section: Canada

Byline: The Canadian Press

TORONTO - Ontario's premier took another step toward a defamation lawsuit against the province's Opposition leader Friday after he refused to retract comments suggesting she is personally on trial.

Kathleen Wynne's lawyer demanded in a letter last month that Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown withdraw comments he made a day before the premier testified as a witness at a trial in Sudbury, Ont., involving two provincial Liberals facing Election Act bribery charges.

Brown had told reporters he hoped Wynne would give answers about the scandal "maybe when she stands trial" and went on to describe her as a "sitting premier, sitting in trial."

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne testifies at the Sudbury byelection trial on Sept. 13.

After receiving the lawyer's letter, Brown said he would "ignore her baseless legal threat." When asked to explain why, he said it was a "sad day for Ontario" to see the premier "debased" and "humiliated" by testifying in court.

Wynne's lawyers followed up Friday with another letter to Brown saying it constitutes a notice of libel.

Brown's comments about the premier being debased and humiliated are another defamation, her lawyers wrote.

"Our letter of September 13, 2017 was intended to provide you with an opportunity to partially mitigate the damage you have done with a retraction, an apology, and an undertaking to refrain from making any further defamatory statements about Premier Wynne," Jack Siegel and Sheldon Inkol wrote.

"Not only did you refuse to make a retraction or to apologize, you chose to compound the problem by making further defamatory statements.

Patrick Brown says he'll ignore threats of legal action over comments he made about Ontario premier(nationalpost.com»))

Kathleen Wynne demands that Patrick Brown retract comments about Sudbury trial or face legal action(nationalpost.com»))

Accordingly, a legal action will now be commenced against you for defamation."

Brown repeated the comments about the premier being debased and humiliated Friday in a statement responding to the libel notice.

He suggested the notice was a way for the premier to distract the public from another ongoing trial involving two staffers of former Liberal premier Dalton McGuinty, and a critical auditor general report earlier this week on the Liberal government's plan to cut hydro bills.

"Make no mistake, it is political corruption that's on trial," Brown wrote. "And the premier is oblivious to the fact that her party is politically corrupt."

Ontario PC Leader Patrick Brown: "Rather than criticize the fact that opinions have evolved, we should celebrate it."

Brown suggested Wynne should be the one to apologize, for "years of waste mismanagement and political corruption in this province."

"We as a province need to put this ugly chapter behind us and move on," Brown wrote.

Wynne's lawyers said Brown's status as leader of the Progressive Conservatives increased the likelihood that his statements would be repeated by others, therefore "increasing the potential harm to the premier's reputation."

The "stubborn refusal" to retract the comments has put Brown on the hook for potential aggravated and punitive damages, they wrote in the libel notice.

The lawyers also warned Brown that he must preserve all relevant documents, because if Wynne proceeds with a lawsuit he will be required to disclose them all.

Premier Kathleen Wynne during question period at Queen's Park in Toronto, Ont. earlier this month.

Speaking in Windsor, Ont., after meeting with two U.S. governors on Friday, Wynne was vague about her hopes for what would come from the libel notice.

"An acceptable outcome for me is to have a debate about the truth, whatever the subject we're talking about, to talk about the facts and talk about the substance of the issues," she said. "That's to me the best outcome in any political situation."

Progressive Conservative Bill Walker apologized last month after receiving a letter from Wynne's lawyer for remarks he made suggesting the premier was under investigation and facing charges in connection with the Sudbury bribery trial.

Wynne previously sued former Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak and another Tory member of provincial parliament after the pair said she oversaw - and possibly ordered - the destruction of documents related to two cancelled gas plants. Those are the allegations for which the two

McGuinty-era staffers are currently on trial.

That lawsuit was resolved in 2015, though it is not known whether it was settled or withdrawn.

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CBC News Ontario's energy minister defends Fair Hydro Plan accounting
CBC.CA News
Thu Oct 19 2017, 2:53pm ET
Section: Sudbury
Byline: CBC News

Ontario Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault says Ontario's Auditor General may not like the accounting behind the Liberal's Fair Hydro Plan, "but that's the way we've always done this."

This week, auditor general Bonnie Lysyk released her report on the the Liberal's "Fair Hydro Plan." That plan has reduced the average household electricity bill in the province by 25 per cent.

Lysyk's stated the government is "improperly" accounting for the \$26 billion in the debt the province is taking on to cut hydro bills in short term.

That money is being borrowed through Ontario Power Generation, so it won't appear on the province's books. Ontario residents will pay off that debt through electricity rate increases spread out over the next 30 years.

"We worked hard to come up with a plan that reduced bills by 25 per cent," Glenn Thibeault, the MPP for Sudbury and Ontario's energy minister said in an interview Thursday.

"It wasn't just us that agreed with the accounting of this. Our provincial controller, all of the Ontario public service accountants, all the bureaucrats, KPMG, Ernst and Young and Deloitte ? all agree that the plan we put forward is the way we've always done this."

But Lysyk says if accounting maneuvers are all that's required for a government to be able to say they've got a balanced budget at the end of the day, "It's a slippery slope ? You might as well not have Canadian accounting standards, because governments will be able to choose the bottom line they want."

Lysyk also says the plan could result in Ontarians paying up to \$4 billion more than necessary in interest.

Thibeault disagrees with that prediction.

"We know that that number is going to be a lot lower," he said.

"This is an accounting dispute. We're going to continue to work with the auditor general's office. But we have all of our people too saying what we've done meets the public sector accounting standards."

Meanwhile, the Wynne Liberals are also being accused of hiding hydro emails from the auditor.

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Global News: Kelly: Why do Ontarians support Wynne's flawed
900 CHML
By: Bill Kelly
Radio Host - 900 CHML

<https://globalnews.ca/news/3815292/bill-kelly-why-do-ontarians-support-wynnes-flawed-hydro-plan/>

There seems to be general agreement with Ontario's auditor general, that the Wynne government's plan to reduce our hydro bills, is going to cost us a lot more money in the long run.

So why do public opinion polls show that the plan is so popular with Ontario voters?

A financial planner friend of mine offered some insight into my question.

He told me that, from a purely financial perspective, taking out a 20-year mortgage to buy a house is a lousy move too because you end up paying a lot more for the house because of interest payments.

But people do it anyway because the monthly payments are a lot more affordable than paying the true cost of the house up front.

And so it is with our hydro bills; if that amount owing number on our hydro bill is lower than last winter, we're happy consumers.

But that's not to say that Ontario voters give a thumbs up to the government's hydro strategy; we're still ticked off at how badly managed and costly hydro in Ontario has become and we're frustrated that neither the NDP nor the PCs have come up with a better plan to lower our hydro bills.

Ontario hydro may be a total disaster, but the government has made the cost of that disaster more affordable to consumers, and in the absence of anything better, we'll take that deal.

Intelligence MPP: Smith blasts Liberals on report

Friday, October 20, 2017 2:07:02 EDT PM

<http://www.intelligencer.ca/2017/10/20/mpp-smith-blasts-liberals-on-report>

BELLEVILLE - Ontario's Auditor General has said Ontarians will be on the hook for \$4 billion more after the next election thanks to the Ontario government's hydro plan.

"From 2028 on, ratepayers will be charged more than the actual cost of the electricity being produced in order to pay back the borrowings," Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk said in her report.

"Applying the government's complex accounting/financing structure could result in Ontarians incurring extra interest costs over 30 years that could total up to \$4 billion more than necessary."

Putting Ontario ratepayers on the hook for \$4 billion more in additional costs isn't sitting well with a number of members of the Ontario Legislature, including Prince Edward-Hastings MPP Todd Smith.

"The policies of this government have forced thousands of Ontarians into energy poverty already," Smith stated. "What today's Auditor report revealed is that now, not only will Ontario ratepayers be paying more after the next election, they'll be paying \$4 billion more on their electricity bills just to keep the plan off the government's books."

The complex financing and accounting structure the government has set up not only adds to the cost that will eventually be paid by ratepayers, it also calls into question the province's budget and its debt burden, stressed Smith.

"The province's independent Auditor General says that you can't believe the province's books," Smith added. "This report is a damning condemnation of how Kathleen Wynne and this government have systematically attacked and destroyed faith in our public institutions."

Smith went on to state the motivation for trying to hide the cost of the massive hydro debt scheme from ratepayers is all about next year's election.

"From the beginning, this was only about protecting Liberal poll numbers not Ontario ratepayers," Smith concluded. "And now, we're all going to pay for it, whether we like it or not. Every Ontario household is basically going to be paying \$800 on their electricity bill to help Kathleen Wynne's re-election chances."