

Top Issues

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Disclaimer: *The views and opinions expressed in these summaries are those of the media cited and do not reflect the views and opinions of the Ontario Public Service.*

CALENDAR

March 3, 2017

Premier Wynne to make calls to Ontarians about Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan

10:00 a.m. / Toronto: Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne makes calls to Ontarians about Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan. (Main Legislative Building, Room 281, Queen's Park)

MPPs speak about Ontario's plan to lower electricity bills and ensure fairness

1:45 p.m. / Ottawa: MPPs Bob Chiarelli, Nathalie Des Rosiers, John Fraser, Marie-France Lalonde and Yasir Abbas Naqvi speak about Ontario's plan to lower electricity bills and ensure fairness. (Hydro Ottawa - Main Gate, 3025 Albion Rd. North)

TOP ISSUES

Issue: Ontario's New Hydro Plan Set To Save Ratepayers 25 Per Cent On Bills

- The **Toronto Star** reports the Ontario government has an electricity relief plan that will save hydro ratepayers 25 per cent on their bills starting this summer. However, the **Star** notes that the plan will result in an extra \$25 billion in interest charges over the next 30 years.
- Premier Kathleen Wynne said the additional cost is the trade-off for easing prices now. The premier said the province's new plan is similar to a homemaker extending a mortgage term to get lower monthly payments.
- Premier Wynne said to reporters on Thursday that she does not "expect a celebration as we make these announcements today. People are struggling with electricity costs that are too much for their families to bear. For too long, governments – my own included – have made mistakes in the way we've structured Ontario's electricity system."
- Billions in new hydro systems investments were being billed to ratepayers over 20 years, and the province has decided to amortize those costs over 30 years. This will result in an annual cost to the treasury of \$1.83 billion.
- The premier said that hydro bills will increase no more than the rate of inflation, which is about 2 per cent, over the next four years. The premier noted that this year's spring budget will still be balanced as the province promised.
- In response to the new hydro plan, Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown said he hopes the province's move is not just for show. "I want to see a drop in hydro rates. I think that everyone that pays a hydro bill wants to see a drop. But ... the majority of people are going to be disappointed that this is just for show," he said. "This is a Band-Aid on a bullet wound."
- Brown also said, "The Liberal's plan is to kick this can down the road. Not deal with it now, not fix the problems, not fix the root cause, but to literally take the can and kick it way down the road so they can get re-elected."
- NDPs have also responded to the province's move, saying that it "does not make sense" for the Ontario government to borrow billions for the rate relief after insisting there was little money to build new infrastructure unless the province raised money by privatizing Hydro One.
- The Ontario government said that along with their electricity relief plan, they will introduce new measures to subsidize rates, including offsetting the high delivery charges in rural areas. Also, low-income families will benefit from a 50-per-cent increase in subsidies under the Ontario Electricity Support Program. The steps toward hydro rate reduction will cost the province \$2.5 billion over the next three years.
- While Ontario's residents are happy to see reduced hydro rates, industrial hydro customers said the province has provided little relief for their soaring electricity costs, which are driving businesses out of the province.

- The province's proposed hydro rate relief legislation will not reduce rates for businesses. Instead, it will implement an expanded rebate program for those that can shift their consumption to off-peak hours. Companies in Northern and rural Ontario will also benefit from a reduction of electricity delivery charges.
- Byron Nelson, president of the Toronto-based manufacturing company Leland Industries Inc., said his company is hoping to build a new factory outside of Canada. He said Ontario's high hydro rates are driving that decision.
- Similarly, the **Windsor Star** reports that the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce CEO and president Matt Marchand said the cost of power in Ontario is his membership's top concern. He said high hydro prices mean lost local economic opportunity and forgone jobs. The automotive and agricultural sectors are the local region's top two economic drivers, and manufacturing and greenhouse operations "require a lot of energy," he said.
- In Timmins, Mayor Steve Black said that while the city is happy there will be relief on hydro rates and therefore the city's budget, the province needs to provide more details on the effects of the reduction. Chief financial officer of the Timmins and District Hospital, Bryan Bennetts, also said hydro rate reductions will be beneficial, but that he needs to know more details to see what effect it will have.
- In response to Premier Wynne's hydro move, a **Globe and Mail** editorial said that the premier is lowering hydro prices in the short term in order to raise political clout in light of an upcoming election. The Globe said that, since the short term reduction in rates will lead to high electricity costs later on, the Ontario government "has found yet another way to make Ontarians pay more for electricity."

Newspapers: "Cheaper hydro now will cost more in long run," **The Toronto Star**, Rob Ferguson and Robert Benzie, A14
 "Excluded from Ontario's hydro cuts, firms say they can't compete," **The Globe and Mail**, Shawn McCarthy and Greg Keenan, A1
 "Local firms seek power price relief," **The Windsor Star**, Doug Schmidt, A1
 "Premier Wynne pulls a power move," **The Globe and Mail**, A10
 "Tories target Hydro bill 'Hail Mary,'" The National Post, Allison Jones, A6
 "Wynne's sleazy, reckless and brilliant hydro scheme," **The National Post**, Kevin Libin, A8
 "Hydro Slash," **The Toronto Sun**, Shawn Jeffords, A4
 "Weighing in on solution," **The Toronto Sun**, A4
 "Don't trust Wynne to fix own mistake," **The Toronto Sun**, Lorrie Goldstein, A5
 "Wynne's \$25B hydro boondoggle," **The Toronto Sun**, A14
 "Wynne's shocking re-election campaign," **The Toronto Sun**, Tom Adams, A15
 "Bringing order to hydro pricing isn't an easy job," **The Ottawa Citizen**, David Reevely, A3
 "Faulty Wiring," **The Ottawa Citizen**, Christina Spencer, A9
 "Ontario hydro bill cuts will cost more long-term," **The Hamilton Spectator**, Allison Jones, A11
 "Welcome help with hydro bills," **The Hamilton Spectator**, John Roe, A12
 "Hydro cost cut greeted with a mix of praise," **The Timmins Daily Press**, Alan S. Hale, A1

Television: **CBCNW**, 5:37 PM (6); **CBC**, 6:42 PM (19); **CityTV**, 5:45 PM; **CP24**, 6:00 PM (1); **MCTV**, 6:46 PM (29); **CKVR**, 6:20 PM (14); **CP24**, 5:00 PM; **MCTV**, 6:46 PM (26); **MCTV**, 6:42 PM (25); **CKVR**, 6:02 PM (2); **MCTV**, 6:00 PM (1); **CTVNN**, 5:26 PM (4); **CKVR**, 6:00 PM (1); **CKWS**, 6:03 PM (2); **Global**, 6:16 PM (19); **CBCNN**, 5:19 PM; **CKWS**, 6:00 PM (1); **CKPR**, 6:03 PM (2); **Citytv**, 6:28 PM (12); **CKCO**, 6:37 PM (20); **CKPR**, 6:00 PM (1); **CKCO**, 6:11 PM (5); **CBC**, 6:05 PM (4); **Citytv**, 6:09 PM (5); **Global**, 6:33 PM (2); **Citytv**, 6:07 PM (4); **CBC**, 6:03 PM (3); **Global**, 6:03 PM (13); **CFPL**, 6:19 PM (11); **CBC**, 6:02 PM (2); **Global**, 6:01 PM (12); **Global**, 5:59 PM (11); **CBC**, 6:00 PM (1); **CFPL**, 6:02 PM; **CBCNW**, 5:14 PM;

CFPL, 6:00 PM (1); **Global**, 5:33 PM (2); **Global**, 5:30 PM (1); **CFTO**, 6:23 PM (18); **CFTO**, 6:21 PM (17); **CJOH**, 6:06 PM (4); **CFTO**, 6:03 PM (2); **CHCH**, 6:37 PM (20); **CJOH**, 6:04 PM (3); **CFTO**, 6:00 PM (1); **CHCH**, 6:03 PM (3); **CHCH**, 6:02 PM (2); **CHCH**, 6:00 PM (1)

Radio: None

Issue: Ontario Struggling to Track Spread of Fentanyl Epidemic

- Experts say Ontario cities are struggling to gauge how often fentanyl is killing people, as they are working with data as much as a year old. The Ontario chief coroner's preliminary 2015 estimate is 707 opioid-related deaths, with 203 or 29 per cent involving fentanyl.
- Determining what killed a suspected opioid overdose victim remains a time-consuming task for coroners. Health Minister Eric Hoskins said the ministry is working with the chief coroner "to accelerate that process and to make sure he's got the resources he requires to do that work as quickly but, of course, as completely and responsibly as possible."
- An opioid epidemic in B.C. has led to an emergency being declared, and there are signs of a growing problem in Ontario. "There's a range of activity on this issue happening in communities right across Ontario. It's at a fever pitch," said Michael Parkinson, a drug strategy specialist with the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council.
- Ontario lacks a standardized system across the province to track the overdoses. According to Dr. Bonnie Henry, B.C.'s deputy provincial health officer, the province was able to recognize and declare an emergency in April 2016 because the province was already tracking overdoses on a regular basis. She said Ontario has had a challenge to understand the scope of the fentanyl problem in part because it was slow to collect data systematically.
- Dr. Kieran Moore, associate medical officer of health for Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Public Health, said those on the front lines need to be on the lookout for anything unusual. He called on "the eyes and ears of public health" at emergency departments, urgent care clinics and family medicine clinics to report any overdoses from narcotics.
- Moore added that data in daily emergency department visits can serve as a backup monitoring system. He said local provincial health units also have access to weekly counts of confirmed overdoses with demographic information.
- Ontario's chief medical officer of health Dr. David Williams said, as of April 1, the weekly opioid data from emergency departments will be used to fill gaps and strengthen surveillance. He said new tools to aggregate opioid overdose information are also being developed to identify trends based on geography, demographics and opioid type, alongside monitoring of narcotic dispensing and an early-warning system for carfentanil.
- ***The Windsor Star*** reports the city's opioid-related death rate is double the Ontario average. Local health officials say they are looking to act quickly to collaborate on a plan of action.
- A report released Thursday found a tripling of opioid-caused emergency department visits between 2003 and 2015, and a near-tripling of opioid overdose deaths between 2007 and 2015. The rate of overdose deaths for Windsor-Essex per 100,000 population was 10.7 in 2015, which is double the Ontario rate of 5.1.

Newspapers: "Ontario health-care workers struggle to track spread of fentanyl epidemic," **CBC News** (online), Staff Writer
"Local opioids death rate double Ontario average," **The Windsor Star**, Brian Cross, A1

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: Choice Between Preliminary Inquiry and Speedy Trial ‘Extortion’: Lawyers

- Four lawyers involved in a Toronto murder case are accusing the government of strong-arm tactics after they say the Ontario Attorney-General’s department made their clients choose between a preliminary inquiry and the right to a timely trial.
- The pressure arises from a Supreme Court of Canada ruling in July that, reacting to what it called a “culture of complacency” in the justice system, set time limits for cases.
- The Attorney-General’s office refused comment while the case is before the court, but Barb Glendinning, one of two prosecutors on the case, said the information provided to The Globe and Mail is inaccurate. The other prosecutor did not respond to the **Globe**.
- In the case in question, the lawyers’ clients are accused of first-degree murder in the 2014 shooting death of 31-year-old Tariq Mohammed at a Chinese restaurant in downtown Toronto. All face possible life sentences in the case.
- Mr. Derstine, who represents one of the accused, Derek Oppong, said the prosecution raised the idea of a direct indictment (the legal mechanism for skipping a preliminary inquiry and going straight to trial) after a pretrial hearing in December, however, “It was not raised as a certainty, it was said as if it might happen,” he said.
- Later, after the preliminary inquiry was under way, the Attorney-General’s department sent defence counsel a fax saying it was considering going straight to trial and asking them to give their views on it promptly. One defence lawyer asked Ms. Glendinning if they could waive the right to a timely trial instead, she said she would think about it.
- In January, near the beginning of their four-week preliminary inquiry, which was scheduled six months in advance, Ms. Glendinning insisted the accused provide written waivers of their right to timely justice or the preliminary inquiry would be shut down and the case would go directly to trial, the defence lawyers said.
- The defence counsel decided they wanted to negotiate and suggested that they would agree that any time used up by the preliminary inquiry would not be counted toward any claim that the case should be dismissed because of unreasonable delay. Mr. Derstine says that offer was rejected out of hand. Mr. Derstine called the move “extortion”.
- Ultimately, the defence lawyers chose to waive their right to a timely trial and go ahead with the preliminary hearing. In interviews, they said the charges were tenuous, and all clients had a real chance the charges could be reduced or even dismissed at a preliminary inquiry. They also said the preliminary inquiry might add a month or two at most to the case.
- The incident follows a November memo issued by the government giving prosecutors wider latitude to seek approval from the Attorney-General for a direct indictment. The memo appears to have had a distinct effect, because there was just one direct indictment in 2015, and five in 2016 (to the end of November); but there have been 11 from December until now, according to figures provided by the Attorney-General’s office.

Newspapers: “Lawyers decry Ontario’s court tactics,” **The Globe and Mail**, Sean Fine, A1

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: Metrolinx Eyes Alternate LRT Supplier

- Metrolinx says it is in talks with another company to supply vehicles for the Eglinton Crosstown LRT project.
- In affidavits filed Thursday, Metrolinx claims Bombardier's failure to deliver vehicles on time could lead to "extreme" financial losses for Metrolinx if it is not permitted to find another supplier. They claim that Bombardier's performance has exposed Metrolinx to "massive financial consequences and reputational damage."
- The affidavits were filed in response to an application for an injunction Bombardier filed earlier this month in an attempt to prevent Metrolinx from cancelling its \$770-million contract for 182 LRVs. A hearing on Bombardier's injunction request is scheduled for March 21.
- Mark Ciavarro, a Metrolinx project director, estimates that damages for late delivery could cost Metrolinx up to \$500,000 each day the vehicles are delayed. Under the terms of a separate contract, Metrolinx is responsible for damages to the consortium building the \$5.3-billion Eglinton Crosstown in the event that the late delivery of vehicles prevents the line from entering service on time. The line is scheduled to open in 2021.
- The affidavit argues that Bombardier is attempting "to force Metrolinx into many months of litigation" to prevent the agency from finding another vehicle manufacturer in time for the Crosstown opening. The documents do not name the other potential supplier Metrolinx is negotiating with. A spokesperson for the agency declined to comment.
- Last fall, Alstom, a French manufacturer that is building LRVs for Ottawa, said it wanted to take part in the bidding process if Metrolinx sought other vendors for Toronto's LRT lines. The Alstom spokesperson did not respond to requests for comment Thursday.
- In October, Metrolinx served Bombardier with a notice of intent to terminate the contract. It claims Bombardier has broken the contract by failing to provide the pilot vehicles or a realistic schedule for delivering the rest of the fleet and for not supplying skilled workers and equipment to complete the order.
- Metrolinx says there remains "chronic and ongoing quality control problems" due to "inconsistencies" between Bombardier's plants in Thunder Bay, and Sahagun, Mexico. "Bombardier has been unable to manage the problem of how two employees in two different countries can measure the same part and reach different conclusions," a statement said.
- In its own court filings, Bombardier charged that Metrolinx is deliberately trying to sabotage the contract because some of the LRT lines that were planned have since been cancelled or deferred and the agency no longer needs all 182 vehicles it ordered.

Newspapers: "Metrolinx in talks to replace Bombardier," **Toronto Star**, Ben Spurr, A1
"Metrolinx considers options in showdown in Bombardier," **The Globe and Mail**, Oliver Moore, A7
"Metrolinx eyes alternate LRT," **The Toronto Sun**, **The Canadian Press**, A39

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: Trustees Mull Closure of 12 UCDSB Schools

- On Thursday, Grenville MPP Steve Clark called on school trustees to stand up to the Ministry of Education by putting a moratorium on school closures across Ontario.
- Clark said that board staff recommended shuttering a total of 12 schools in the Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB), with a final decision on how many schools will close coming on March 23.
- “Basically, one in four elementary schools this board has in Leeds Grenville are slated to close,” Clark said. “It’s just unbelievable that the board would not take recommendations that were given to them. They didn’t move forward on some of the suggestions that municipalities offered them to work together.”
- UCDSB board staff released a report on February 15 that said enrolment decline and provincial funding cuts for operating and maintaining schools meant some needed to close. “The board has significantly more instructional space than it receives funding to operate and to maintain our schools ... The provincial funding the board receives for all aspects of schools favours the consolidation of schools to demonstrate optimal levels of enrolment and efficient use of school space,” the report said.
- However, on Thursday Clark urged the board to reject the report and challenge the province. “It’s devastating when a school is closed and children have to get on a bus and go long distances,” he said. “One board has to stand up to the province and I hope it’s this one.”
- Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown has called for a March 7 debate at Queen’s park about a moratorium on school closures.

Newspapers: “Trustees mull closure of 12 UCDSB schools as MPP asks them to fight province,” **CBC News**, Julie Ireton

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: Ottawa to Update Ambulance Dispatch Policies

- The City of Ottawa is changing the way it deals with ambulance dispatches. The move is in response to the findings of an extensive review by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, which were released in November.
- The ministry's review found that Ottawa's paramedic service has "an overall, ongoing and systemic problem" that leaves patients waiting for ambulances come from far distances even though closer vehicles are available. It also found violations of rules and standards for how ambulances should be dispatched.
- On February 24, the province updated those findings, clarifying that Ottawa's dispatching issues came at a time when the Ottawa Paramedic Service was "using all the tools available to them to dispatch the closest ambulance based on their regional knowledge, existing local operating policies, directives and paramedic service deployment plans."
- Peter Kelly, acting Ottawa Paramedic Service chief, said on Wednesday to city council that the paramedic service will release proposed revisions by Friday of some of the dispatching policies flagged by the ministry's review. Kelly recommended the city "update" its policies.
- Ottawa allows its paramedics 30 minutes to file paperwork, restock and clean up their ambulance after dropping a patient off at an area hospital. A city policy also prevents ambulances from being dispatched when the paramedics are 30 minutes from the end of their shift. Other cities do not have such policies.
- The ministry's report found the city's policy "does not allow for a seamless ambulance service and negates Ottawa Paramedic Service's own mandate of sending the closest ambulance to all high priority calls."
- The Ottawa Paramedic Service "has agreed to comply with the direction of the (ministry), as required, and both the new... policies will be communicated to staff and implemented on March 3, 2017," Kelly said in his report to council.
- In December, Anthony Di Monte, Ottawa's general manager of emergency and protective services, admitted paramedics are hitting "level zero" daily, meaning there are no ambulances within the city available for dispatch.

Newspapers: "Ottawa to update ambulance policies," **The Ottawa Citizen**, Vito Pilieci, A6

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: Grassy Narrows Chief Criticizes PM Trudeau's Remarks on Mercury Crisis

- Grassy Narrows First Nation Chief Simon Fobister criticized Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as “passing the buck” Thursday after the prime minister described mercury contamination in the community as “very much” an Ontario issue.
- On Wednesday, Prime Minister Trudeau described the federal government as having only a supporting role to play in the cleanup effort in the northern Ontario community. “The Grassy Narrows issue is very much a provincial issue,” he said.
- Chief Fobister said the federal government also has a responsibility for the ongoing leak that has plagued the remote community for half a century. “Trudeau is letting my people down by failing to lead on solving our mercury crisis,” he said in a statement.
- “Trudeau must firmly commit to do everything in his power to clean up the mercury in our river and to ensure that mercury survivors receive proper support and state of the art care,” Fobister added.
- Ontario’s Environment Ministry said Thursday it looks forward to working with the federal government as a “key partner” in creating and implementing a comprehensive remediation action plan.
- Richard Pearshouse, a senior researcher with Human Rights Watch in Geneva, said the federal government has an obligation under international law to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights at issue in Grassy Narrows.
- Pearshouse noted that PM Trudeau had issued a statement earlier this year indicating Ottawa would help tackle the contamination “once and for all.” He also said that Canada is a signatory to a brand new United Nations convention on mercury, known as the Minamata Convention, which means Canada will have new obligations under international law.
- NDP MP Charlie Angus is urging the PM to visit the reserve to meet poisoned residents who live with serious health issues. “If the prime minister is willing to travel the world to say ‘Canada is back’, well, Canada is not back in Grassy Narrows,” he said. “He then needs to say there will be the resources in place to protect the lives and health of this community.”
- A spokesperson for Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, did not respond directly to the allegations, but said the federal government is involved in many ways. The spokesperson said the government is also working with First Nations and the province on renewing the Mercury Disability Board, which was set up in the 1980s and offers compensation to people who have mercury-poisoning symptoms.

Newspapers: “PM accused of ‘passing the buck,’” **National Post**, Kristy Kirkup, **The Canadian Press**, A10
“Grassy Narrows chief slams Trudeau,” **Toronto Star**, David Bruser and Jayme Poisson, A7

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: Niagara Falls, Region Ask Province to Terminate Casino Process

- Niagara Falls mayor Jim Diodati and Niagara Regional Chair Alan Caslin have asked the provincial government to cancel its ongoing process to select new operators for Casino Niagara and Fallsview Casino. They are calling for the province to start over and issue a bid to include four objectives the city originally proposed when Casino Niagara opened in 1996.
- The four objectives included job creation; economic development for the city and region; a significant and lasting contribution to the economic benefits from tourism; and maximizing provincial revenue. “Maximizing provincial revenue cannot be the only determining factor,” Diodati and Caslin stated in the February 21 letter.
- Falls Management Group currently operates the two casinos on behalf of Ontario Lottery & Gaming Corp. (OLG). Last year, OLG notified Falls Management it would not extend its contract beyond its original term, which ends July 10, 2019. The public call for new operators closes December 15.
- In October and November, the City and Niagara Region passed resolutions asking the province to postpone the process until the City's and Region's goals and objectives are respected and incorporated into the process and weighted just as strongly as or greater than revenue. They also asked to be “treated as key partners and involved in the process.”
- “The ministry may want to move on this, but they should not be hitting the gas pedal when thousands of livelihoods depend on it. They need to have dialogue with the community,” said NDP MPP Wayne Gates.
- “We are frustrated with the process to date, especially noting your letter sent to the City of Niagara Falls on June 2, 2016 assuring in writing that OLG would contact the host community to discuss the procurement process and opportunities for the city to provide input with proponents,” Diodati and Caslin stated in the letter.
- The two casinos in Niagara Falls are the largest employer in Niagara, employing more than 4,000 residents. Diodati and Caslin say that up to 1,400 jobs could be lost, along with millions in revenue, if the current process moves ahead. They fear it could lead to the closure of Casino Niagara.
- The letter also states an independent third-party report by HLT Advisory noted that the OLG modernization could lead to a lost payroll in the community of \$40 million to \$65 million and lost revenue to local suppliers of goods and services of \$5 million to \$10 million.
- The joint letter was sent to Finance Minister Charles Sousa. It was also circulated to Premier Kathleen Wynne, MPP Gates, MPP Jim Bradley, OLG President and CEO Stephen Rigby, OLG Board Chair George Cooke, NDP leader Andrea Horwath and Progressive Conservative Party leader Patrick Brown.

Newspapers: “Niagara fears loss of casinos,” ***The Toronto Sun***, ***Postmedia Network***, A39
“Falls, Region want casino process terminated,” ***The St. Catharines Standard***, Ray Spiteri, ***Postmedia Network***, A5

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: Government Votes Against Child Care Private Member's Bill

- The government voted against a private member's bill introduced by NDP MPP Catherine Fife that would have limited new child care funding to non-profit centres only.
- After the vote, Fife said "That Kathleen Wynne's Liberals would stand and vote against not-for-profit care was a real disappointment to me, and to parents and child-care advocates around the province."
- Fife argued that thirty years of research shows quality is higher in non-profit child-care centres than in commercial or for-profit setting, and called it ethically and fiscally irresponsible for the government to ignore that evidence as it rolls out its childcare plan, noting, "We wouldn't dream of expanding our school system through private businesses and neither should we rely on for-profit corporations to care for our youngest and most vulnerable children."
- Indira Naidoo-Harris, the Minister responsible for early years and child care, argued that the child care money, while provided by the province, is distributed by municipalities, and said "If we suddenly tell them that they must put those funds only toward one sector and limit the choices, there may be adverse effects...By limiting what we are doing when it comes to for-profit care, it could result in higher fees for parents or, even worse, the centres could close."

Newspapers: "Liberals kill child-care funding bill," **Toronto Star**, Laurie Monsebraaten, A2

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: Ontario Colleges Ask To Discuss Funding Challenges With Premier

- Ontario's colleges continue to call on Premier Kathleen Wynne to meet with them to discuss a funding crisis that is expected only to get worse. George Burton, president of Canadore College, said on Thursday that while his college has been in touch with Deb Matthews, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development, it is still waiting on a response from the premier.
- Ontario's colleges first called on the premier to meet them in January after a PricewaterhouseCoopers report warned the colleges could face an annual operating deficit of more than \$400 million and what could be a cumulative \$1.9-billion shortfall by 2024-25.
- The colleges said the accumulated shortfall is due to a decline in provincial funding since 2007-8.
- The **North Bay Nugget** reports that the Ontario government's recent move to lower Ontarians' hydro rates by 25-per-cent should help colleges with their funding shortfalls.
- The **Nugget** also reports that customers under a program that gives a rate subsidy to those in rural and remote areas will be expanded so that ratepayers covered by local distribution companies with the highest delivery charges will see those rates cut between \$12 and \$75.
- Additionally, the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP) will expand its benefits, and an affordability fund will be established for electricity customers who do not qualify for the OESP.

Newspapers: "Next year will be a challenge," **The North Bay Nugget**, A1

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: OEB Approves New Natural Gas Pipeline in Chatham-Kent

- In a front page story, ***The Chatham Daily News*** reports the construction of a \$250-million natural gas pipeline from Union Gas' Dawn Compressor Station in Lambton County to its Dover Transmission Station in Chatham-Kent is expected to begin in May.
- Union Gas' application with the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) to increase the capacity of its Panhandle Transmission System was filed last June. The approval was received on February 23. The work is expected to boost the local economy while providing additional energy for commercial and residential customers in Chatham-Kent and Windsor-Essex.
- The project, expected to be completed by November, will see the construction of a 36-inch gas pipeline over a length of 40 kilometres. It will replace an existing pipeline.
- Andrea Stass, manager of media relations for Union Gas, could not confirm the number of workers that will be employed over the project's six-month duration, but said it's expected the work will generate considerable economic activity. "Where they can our construction contractors will use local contractors and local vendors," she said.
- Wallaceburg Chamber of Commerce president Karen Debergh said Thursday the pipeline project will be an enormous boost to the local economy. She said the pipeline project will provide an economic boost once local natural gas capacity has been enlarged, and it is expected to benefit Essex County's \$2-billion greenhouse industry.
- Stephen MacKenzie, CEO of the Windsor-Essex Economic Development Corp., called the OEB approval "great news" for the region and a "strengthening" of their infrastructure. He said the pipeline will open up the opportunity for smaller lateral lines that could be run off it to service business at additional sites in Windsor-Essex.
- "The fact that it creates the opportunity for further expansion is even an additional benefit," said MacKenzie.

Newspapers: "\$250M gas pipeline gets approval," ***The Chatham Daily News***, David Gough, ***Postmedia Network***, A1

Television: None

Radio: None

FRONT PAGE HEADLINES (GTA NEWSPAPERS)

March 3, 2017

Toronto Star

- Metrolinx in talks to replace Bombardier
- 'Clearly, a drunk can consent' (with photo)
- The court wasn't the only institution that failed her
- Sessions uproar thickens the fog surrounding Trump's Russia ties (with photo)
- Damning report slams Spence for 'egregious breach of trust'

Globe and Mail

- Lawyers decry Ontario's court tactics
- Coming in from the cold (with photo)
- Judge under fire for claiming 'a drunk can consent' in sex-assault case
- Sessions withdraws from Russia probe but stands by his testimony
- Excluded from Ontario's hydro cuts, firms say they can't compete

Toronto Sun

- Hydro bribe! (with photo)

National Post

- Our border is like 'SWISS CHEESE' (with photo)
- CBSA union president calls for new border patrol force
- Alleged Holocaust deniers entry upsets Jewish groups
- 'Clearly, a drunk can consent'
- Sessions steps away from Russia probe

TV NEWS SUMMARY (6:00 P.M. EDITION)

Stations surveyed: Global, CFTO, City TV, CJOH, CHCH, CFPL

[Disclaimer](#)

March 2, 2017

Global – 5:30 PM (Toronto)

1	Premier Kathleen Wynne has announced a new plan to lower hydro rates by an average of 25 per cent. Critics of the plan charge it is unfair for future generations.
2	Global News visits the Wexford Restaurant to gather reaction from patrons on Ontario's new plan to reduce hydro rates. Most patrons view it as political manoeuvring and unfair.
3	Peel police are trying to determine if there is a connection between two shootings that took place in same neighbourhood and an hour apart in Mississauga.
4	Montreal police have charged a 47-year-old man in connection with a bomb threat that led to multiple evacuations at Concordia University.
5	There are 25 minutes remaining for Lotto 649 ticket holders to visit an OLG store with a ticket check to claim a \$1 million prize.
6	Weather.
7	A study has found 48 per cent of people spend five hours or more looking at an electronic screen throughout the day. Global News interviews a psychotherapist who recommends unplugging incrementally.
8	Global News interviews pedestrians on whether men or women rely on their electronic devices more.
9	Global News features a Milton couple training for the UltraMan Hawaii World Championship.
10	Entertainment.
11	Update: Lower hydro rates will be achieved through refinancing the cost of electricity generation contracts.
12	Global News reviews how the Ontario government has downplayed the rising costs of hydro over the months.
13	Global News plays a video clip of Premier Wynne responding to Global's accusation that the new hydro rate reduction plan is pushing costs to the next generation. It also examines how the plan does not address structural issues.
19	Global News interviews Premier Kathleen Wynne on her new hydro rate reduction plan and the reasoning behind her decisions.

Global – 6:30 PM (National)

1	Complaints are mounting against a Nova Scotia judge who said that "clearly a drunk can consent" as he acquitted a Halifax taxi driver of sexually assaulting an intoxicated passenger.
2	The Ontario government is promising to cut hydro rates for residential customers by 25 per cent.
3	Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced today that he would recuse himself from any investigations in the 2016 presidential election.
4	Actor Tom Hanks bought a coffee maker for the White House press corps,

Global – 6:30 PM (National)

5	Prime Minister Trudeau will be in B.C. tomorrow where he is expected to meet with first respondents to discuss the opioid crisis.
6	A man has been charged after yesterday's bomb scare at Concordia University.
7	A crucifix has been returned to the wall of a Quebec City hospital after an earlier decision to take it down prompted complaints.
8	Federal transport minister Marc Garneau has sent a letter to his provincial counterparts urging them to get together on an action plan to curb distracted driving. Minister Del Duca comments.
9	Refugee advocates in Manitoba are calling for more resources to deal with the influx of migrants illegally crossing the Canadian border.
10	Snapchat made its debut on the New York Stock Exchange today.

CFTO – 6:00 PM (Toronto)

1	The provincial government unveiled their Hydro rate reduction plan today. Critics say the move simply pushes the debt onto younger generations.
2	Small businesses and residents say, despite the new Hydro cut, they will still be paying too much for their electricity.
3	Strong winds yesterday nearly blew a house over in Leslieville. An engineer has deemed the house structurally unsound.
4	Weather.
5	The TTC has announced that Line 4 will be closed for the weekend. Shuttle buses will be operating.
6	Police have identified the victim of a shooting last night in Mississauga
7	A shooting incident has occurred after police were called to a townhouse in Brampton. No one was injured.
8	A third shooting in Mississauga has occurred in the area of Dundas Street and Little John Lane. No was injured.
9	The family of a murdered doctor was in court today.
10	Two Canadian sisters who have been missing for 30 years have been found in the United States.
17	CTV News interviewed a woman who had previously spoken with the Premier and encouraged her to make Hydro cuts.
18	CTV News interviewed Premier Kathleen Wynne about the new Hydro cuts announcement.

City TV – 6:00 PM (Toronto)

1	The male suspect responsible for the shooting death of a 14-year-old girl in Rexdale in 2015 has been convicted.
2	Peel Region Police Chief Jennifer Evans is denying allegations made in a \$21-million lawsuit filed against her and the police force resulting from a March 2015 shooting.
3	A house under construction in Leslieville has been ordered to be demolished after high winds caused it to sway Wednesday night.
4	Premier Kathleen Wynne has announced a new plan to lower hydro rates by an average of 25 per cent. It will cost taxpayers an additional \$5.5 billion over the next three years.
5	The opposition are criticizing the Ontario government's plan to reduce hydro rates because it fails to address structural issues and pushes debt onto future

City TV – 6:00 PM (Toronto)

	generations.
6	Peel police have identified the victim of last night's shooting in Mississauga as 28-year-old Shane Thomas.
7	Weather.
8	U.S. President Donald Trump has defended his Attorney General Jeff Sessions amid allegations of ties to Russia.
9	U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions has announced he is recusing himself from the investigation into alleged Russian meddling in the U.S. election.
10	The family of a 17-year-old with a rare form of Spinal Muscular Atrophy is hoping Ontario will cover the cost of a new life-changing drug. Health Minister Eric Hoskins says he will negotiate with Biogen to see if the cost of the drug can be lowered.
12	CityNews replays highlights of its interview with Premier Kathleen Wynne on her new hydro rate reduction plan.

CJOH – 6:00 PM (Ottawa)

1	An investment advisor has been arrested for stealing millions from clients.
2	No children were hurt after a school bus crash in south Ottawa.
3	The province has announced that Hydro rates will drop another 17 per cent this summer.
4	CTV News interviewed Premier Kathleen Wynne about the new Hydro cuts.
5	Ottawa will be hosting the Red Bull Crashed Ice event tomorrow night.
6	Weather.
7	The Leadership of Ottawa Emergency Services met today to talk about a strategy to combat the city's opioid problem.
8	The Ministry of Labour has laid multiple charges against Claridge, a development company, after the death of a worker.
9	A Gatineau woman has died after a head-on crash at Hawkesbury.
10	US Attorney General Jeff Sessions has recused himself from any Russian probes.

CHCH – 6:00 PM (Hamilton)

1	Premier Wynne announced that her government plans to cut an additional 17% from hydro bills by refinancing the term of electricity generation contracts from 20 to 30 years. The plan could come with a price tag of \$1.4 billion a year in additional interest.
2	NDP Leader Andrea Horwath was in London where she discussed lower hydro bills with business owners and Oxford County Council.
3	A comparison of hydro rates among major cities across Canada.
4	Councils in towns with universities are seeking ways to prevent the practice of "brewfing."
5	A cement truck driver had to be freed after his truck flipped over in Milton.
6	A man has been charged with extortion and fraud involving Nations Fresh Foods.
7	The city of Hamilton says that crack laced with fentanyl is now available on the streets. The information appeared on Hamilton's new opioid surveillance and monitoring website.
8	Three Brantford adults overdosed on fentanyl yesterday.
9	Police arrested a St. Catharines man for possessing and trafficking heroin.
10	Niagara Police are looking for a man who robbed a CIBC in Grimsby.

CHCH – 6:00 PM (Hamilton)

20	Bloomberg TV Canada analysis of the impact of hydro rate cut on business in Ontario.
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CFPL – 6:00 PM (London)

1	The Liberal government officially announced its plan to reduce hydro bills by 17 per cent, but it will cost up to \$1.4 billion a year in extra interest costs.
2	Local businesses and residents are reacting to the hydro announcement. NDP Leader Andrea Horwath comments.
3	London police made several arrests after co-ordinated raids at five marijuana dispensaries across the city.
4	Weather
5	A developer has filed a \$ 53 million-dollar lawsuit against the city of London, alleging his highrise development would be permanently impacted by the proposed bus rapid transit route.
6	Downtown merchants have launched a petition calling on downtown London to withdraw support of rapid transit, saying they have not been properly consulted.
7	Three people are facing charges after a gun and drug raid.
8	Police are using analytics to help catch impaired drivers.
9	The federal government is giving \$3 million to several researchers at Western University.
10	Canada's leading futurist Richard Warzle gave a talk at Fanshawe College today.
11	Interview with Premier Kathleen Wynne.

Disclaimer: *The views and opinions expressed in these summaries are those of the media cited and do not reflect the views and opinions of the Ontario Public Service.*

RADIO NEWS SUMMARY (6:30 A.M. EDITION)

March 3, 2017

CBC Radio (Toronto)	
1	Radio Canada took a hidden camera into 10 apartment buildings exposing landlords asking for illegal deposits.
2	A community is shaken after a shooting in their Thorncliffe neighbourhood.
3	Metrolinx says it is still in discussion with an alternate rail vehicle supplier for the Eglinton Crosstown line as it continues its court battle with Bombardier.
4	Opposition parties are looking for holes in the government's new plan to slash hydro prices.
5	A candidate is pulling out of a Liberal by-election race in the G.T.A. over complaints of an unfair process.
6	The LCBO is recalling some Georgian Bay bottles of vodka for being too strong.