

Daily Ontario Print Media Scan and Calendar for October 17, 2017

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Please note: This is intended as a brief summary. More comprehensive coverage will follow in the Top Issues Summary at 9 AM.

*** Calendar ***

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*** Toronto Dailies ***

1. * Ontario Auditor Examines Plan To Cut Hydro Bills *
(CBC News Online – <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-hydro-bills-auditor-general-report-1.4356744>)
2. * Loblaws Lays off 500 Office Workers to Cut Costs *
(Globe – B2; Online – Secondary page)
3. * Get Back To Bargaining, Colleges and Union Urged *
(Star – A8; Online – Homepage, below the scroll)
4. * Report Cites Power Bills for Job Losses in Ontario *
(Post – FP3; Online – Secondary page)

*** Regionals ***

R1. * Sarnia: "Secrecy claims 'nonsensical'," The Sarnia Observer, Paul Morden A1 *

*** 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. ***

*** TORONTO DAILIES ***

Links:

www.theglobeandmail.com

www.thestar.com

www.torontosun.com

www.nationalpost.com

1. * Ontario Auditor Examines Plan To Cut Hydro Bills *

(CBC News Online – <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-hydro-bills-auditor-general-report-1.4356744>)

CBC News reports that today Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk will reveal the results of her investigation into the government's Fair Hydro Plan. The government says the plan has reduced household electricity bills by 25 per cent from the peak hit in the summer of 2016 by borrowing an extra \$26 billion through Ontario Power Generation. The report will look at how the rate cuts are financed and whether the plan is fair for taxpayers and hydro customers. Auditor Lysyk has already told a legislative committee in May that to borrow the money on OPG's books rather than the province's is "contrary to public sector accounting standards." Opposition critics have said the plan's relief is temporary and does nothing to actually reduce hydro prices. The Financial Accountability Officer also examined the Fair Hydro Plan in May and projected the net cost to taxpayers at \$21 billion.

2. * Loblaws Lays off 500 Office Workers to Cut Costs *

(Globe – B2; Online – Secondary page)

The Loblaws Co. Ltd. is laying off 500 office workers in an effort to reduce costs. A memo to workers informed them of the cuts yesterday and many of the positions were eliminated immediately, according to Sarah Davis, Loblaws president. The jobs came from all levels of store support offices, including various executives. However, Loblaws says it still expects to create more jobs than it eliminates this year through major investments in omni-channel financial service and other growing areas. The move follows grocery retailer Metro's decision to lay off 280 workers last week. Loblaws spokesperson Kevin Groh said the job cuts related to a variety of pressures and are not related to any single one, including a rising minimum wage.

3. * Get Back To Bargaining, Colleges and Union Urged *

(Star – A8; Online – Homepage, below the scroll)

Deb Matthews, Ontario's Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development and opposition members are urging both sides in the college strike to get back to the bargaining table. Said Matthews, "We want students back in the classroom as quickly as possible." However, Minister Matthews said it was too early to speculate on back to work legislation, noting, "We have to let the collective bargaining process work and give it the space to do that." The Ontario Public Service Employees Union wants half of faculty to be full time, is looking for job security for part-timers and wants a 9 per cent wage increase over three years. The colleges are offering improvements to benefits and a 7.75 per cent wage increase over four years.

4. * Report Cites Power Bills for Job Losses in Ontario *

(Post – FP3; Online – Secondary page)

A new report from the Fraser Institute, published Tuesday morning, says electricity prices in Ontario are to blame for most of the manufacturing job losses in the province. "Ontario first built up its manufacturing sector on the back of low power prices," said University of Guelph economics professor and co-author of the report Ross McKittrick. However, since Ontario passed its Green Energy and Green Economy Act in 2009, McKittrick said the sector has been steadily declining at a faster rate than in comparable jurisdictions in Canada and the U.S. "Global factors such as world demand, exchange rates and technological change cannot explain the poor performance of Ontario's manufacturing sector, since it is clearly lagging behind multiple comparable Canadian and American jurisdictions," the report states. "What is different in Ontario are rising electricity costs, which have likely placed too large a financial burden on Ontario's manufacturing sector and hampered its competitiveness." Power prices for medium-sized industrial users in Toronto have risen 48 per cent between 2005 and 2016 and almost 51 per cent in Ottawa.

*** REGIONALS ***

R1. * Sarnia: "Secrecy claims 'nonsensical'," The Sarnia Observer, Paul Morden A1 *

Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley is dismissing recent reports regarding an investigation into industrial spills in Chemical Valley as "drive-by reporting" that does not reflect the way the city is today. Bradley notes that it was the community that raised the issue in the past and led to enforcement. Ontario's minister of environment and climate change said Monday that the province is "committed to funding a health study to understand the localized impact of air pollution on Sarnia residents and will be working with the community in the coming weeks to determine how best to do that." The community has been pushing for a study into health impacts since 2007. Sarnia MPP Bob Bailey says he first wrote to the provincial government calling for the study in 2008, repeated in 2010 and "those actions went unanswered." Bailey says he will push the province to make good on Monday's commitment, calling for a timeline to be set. Environment Minister Dianne Saxe said she was happy to hear about the health study, but also wants to see the ministry improve regular monitoring of air pollution.
(<http://www.theobserver.ca/>)

CALENDAR

Fraser Institute to release a report 'Rising Electricity Costs and Declining Employment in Ontario's Manufacturing Sector'

5:00 a.m. / Toronto: The Fraser Institute releases a report, Rising Electricity Costs and Declining Employment in Ontario's Manufacturing Sector. (www.marketwired.com)

Minister Milczyn to make an announcement

9:00 a.m. / Hamilton: Minister Milczyn, Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy, makes an announcement. (Food4Kids Hamilton Halton Niagara, 405 Whitney Avenue)

MPP Martins to introduce a PMB, 'Putting Your Best Foot Forward Act, 2017'

9:00 a.m. / Toronto: MPP Cristina Martins holds a press conference to introduce a Private Members' Bill, 'Putting Your Best Foot Forward Act, 2017'. (Media Studio, Queen's Park)

OPSEU Mental Health Division to hold a media availability

10:00 a.m. / Toronto: OPSEU Mental Health Division to hold a media availability. Sponsored by MPP Cindy Forster. (Media Studio, Queen's Park)

Auditor General Lysyk to table her report on the Ontario government's Fair Hydro Plan

10:30 a.m. / Toronto: Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk tables her special report on the Ontario government's Fair Hydro Plan at 10:30 a.m. in the Legislature, followed by a noon news conference in the Queen's Park Media Studio.

The Commons House affairs committee to hear witnesses on Bill C-50, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act

11:00 a.m. / Ottawa: The Commons House affairs committee hears witnesses on Bill C-50, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (political financing). Appearing at noon are commissioners Karen Shepherd (Lobbying) and Mary Dawson (Ethics); 1 p.m., Greg Essensa, Ontario chief electoral officer. (Room 237-C, Centre Block, Parliament Hill)

Auditor General Lysyk to discuss her special report on the Fair Hydro Plan

12:00 p.m. / Toronto: Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk hold a press conference to discuss her special report, The Fair Hydro Plan: Concerns About Fiscal Transparency, Accountability and Value for Money. (Media Studio, Queen's Park)

NDP Leader Horwath to hold a media avail after touring the Fort Erie Racetrack

1:00 p.m. / Fort Erie: Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath holds a media availability after touring the Fort Erie Racetrack. Also attending, Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates, Fort Erie Mayor Wayne Redekop and representatives of the Fort Erie Live Racing Consortium. (Warm-up paddock, 230 Catherine Street)

Minister Thibeault and MPP Sandals to respond to the Auditor General's report on the Fair Hydro Plan

1:30 p.m. / Toronto: Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault and Treasury Board president Liz Sandals respond on behalf of

the Government of Ontario to the Auditor General's report on the Fair Hydro Plan. (1 p.m., technical briefing.)
(Kenora/Nipigon/Nipissing Room, Second Floor, MacDonald Block, 900 Bay Street)

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