

Top Issues for April 28-29, 2018

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Top Issues

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TOP ISSUES

Issue: Ontario Progressive Conservatives Make Child Care Announcement

☐ On Saturday, the Ontario Progressive Conservatives (PCs) announced that if elected, they will cover up to \$6,750 of child care costs for families through a tax rebate program.

☐ PC MPP Laurie Scott announced the plan, which includes a tax break for forms of care including babysitters, nannies, licensed operators and independent child care providers.

☐ “Low income families would receive 75 per cent of their child care costs back, at a maximum of \$6,750; higher income families would receive an incrementally lower rate, bottoming out at 26 per cent of child care costs for families earning \$150,000 or more,” notes The Toronto Star.

☐ According to The Toronto Sun, “Toronto is the most expensive place for child care in the country, with costs in the neighbourhood of \$3,000 a month for families with more than one child.”

☐ The Ontario PCs say their plan will cost approximately \$389 million annually and would begin on January 1, 2019.

☐ The provincial Liberals released their child care plan last month, which includes providing free child care for preschoolers aged two and a half and older until they reach kindergarten.

☐ The Toronto Sun notes that under the Ontario Liberal plan, a child would have to be in a licensed child care centre to qualify. “Under the Liberal plan, people whose kids have a nanny or an independent child care provider would be out of luck,” says the newspaper.

☐ The Ontario New Democrats (NDP) have alternatively announced that they would provide free child care for all families who earn less than \$40,000 a year and would implement child care costs of \$12 a day for all other families.

☐ The PCs argue that their plan is better than the two other major provincial parties because their rebate system puts money back in the hands of Ontarians.

☐ Linda White, a child care policy expert from the University of Toronto believes the PC plan raises concern on demand outpacing supply. “If it increases demand, without addressing the scarcity of supply, then what, in fact, it could do is drive up prices,” said White.

Newspapers: “PCs announce tax-rebate plan for child care.” (Sunday) Toronto Star, Salmaan Farooqui, A8; and “Ford Has A Better Idea For The Kids; Announces flexible child-care plan.” (Sunday) Toronto Sun, Liz Braun, A4.

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: Ontario PC Leader Doug Ford Promises to Cut Hydro Bills

☐ Progressive Conservative Leader Doug Ford has promised to cut an additional 12 per cent from electricity bills, despite criticizing a 25 per cent rate reduction put in place by the current government.

☐ PC Leader Ford said he would fund the subsidy by returning to ratepayers the province’s annual \$350 million dividend from its share in Hydro One.

☐ “We all know we are paying billions more for Kathleen Wynne’s desperate attempt to cling to power,” said PC Leader Ford.

☐ The Ontario PC plan would bring a 12 per cent relief on top of the current 25 per cent rate cut in the Fair Hydro Plan. PC Leader Ford said the plan would save the average Ontario family around \$14 a month on their hydro bills.

☐ If elected, PC Leader Ford said that he would start a “commission of inquiry” to look into the province’s accounting but would not immediately cancel the Fair Hydro Plan.

☐ “We’re going to be reviewing that,” said PC Leader Ford. “That was, as far as I’m concerned, the wrong thing to do, borrowing down the future and the only people who are going to pay for it is our children, our great grandchildren,” he said.

☐ The Fair Hydro Plan was introduced by the Ontario government following widespread anger over the rise in hydro bills in the last decade.

☐ Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk said this week that the government’s deficit projections over the next three years were understated by billions, in part because of the Fair Hydro Plan.

☐ PC MPP and energy critic Todd Smith said that if elected the Ontario PCs will face difficulty altering the Fair Hydro Plan. “This was a very convoluted, confusing plan that the Liberals put in place,” he said.

☐ Colin Nikolaichuk, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Energy, said the Ontario PC leader’s prior promise to fire Hydro One’s chief executive and replace the utility’s board was creating uncertainty in the electricity sector. “Doug Ford’s plans don’t add up to anything but empty promises that will eventually dig their way into people’s pockets,” he said.

☐ In contrast to the Ontario PCs, the Ontario New Democrats have pledged to cancel the Fair Hydro Plan and get Hydro One back into the hands of the public. They have also promised to reduce hydro bills by 30 per cent overall.

Newspapers: “Ford vows to cut 12% more from hydro bills.” (Saturday) Toronto Star, Robert Benzie, A10;
“Ford promises 12% hydro rate cut if Tories elected; Plan that would see more costs shifted to all taxpayers borrows idea from ousted PC leader.” (Saturday) The Globe and Mail, Justin Giovannetti, A16;
“Ford vows deeper cuts to hydro rates; ‘Good Start’.” (Saturday) National Post, Shawn Jeffords, A5;
and
“Ford unrolls 12% cut to hydro bills; Build upon Liberal plan derided by Tory leader.” (Saturday) Toronto Sun, Shawn Jeffords, A6.

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: Court Rules For Public Access To Tribunal Records

☐ Ontario Superior Court Justice Edward M. Morgan has ruled against provisions in the Ontario's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) that delay or block public access to tribunal records, and gave the province a year to consider how to make its tribunal system more open and accessible to journalists and the public.

☐ The Toronto Star's legal challenge sought to make it easier to get more complete access to records and documents related to their public hearings at various administrative tribunals that make decisions on everything from landlord and tenant disputes to human rights complaints.

☐ While some tribunal hearings are usually open to the public, some tribunals require members of the public and media to file formal freedom of information requests for access to documents related to those hearings.

☐ The Toronto Star argued that the rules of open courts should apply to the tribunals.

☐ In his decision, Ontario Superior Court Justice Edward M. Morgan wrote: "Emphasizing privacy over openness not only has a negative impact on the press ... Problematic landlords, police, and other actors, including repeat human rights offenders, vexatious litigants and the like cannot be discovered by members of the public who have to engage with them."

☐ Toronto Star lawyer Paul Schabas, who argued the case against the Attorney General of Ontario, called the ruling "a major victory."

☐ On Friday, as senior source in the Attorney General's office told the paper that the attorney general is "very unlikely" to appeal the decision but will be taking more time to review it.

☐ Ontario Information commissioner Brian Beamish, who administers Ontario's FIPPA law, declined to comment Friday, saying he needed more time to review the ruling.

☐ In particular, Justice Morgan identified the personal information exemption in FIPPA as being "a serious obstacle to disclosure" and "so broad as to swallow up the initial mandate to disclose records." The existence of personal information in records has been used by the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, the Landlord and Tenant Board and other tribunals to refuse "most if not all requests for production of records,"

☐ Justice Morgan did not get rid of some of the freedom of information requirements used by some tribunals, but he said the legislature needs to "revamp" the process to make it "charter compliant" based on a "presumption of openness rather than a presumption of confidentiality."

Newspapers: "Court strikes down secrecy in tribunals," Toronto Star (Saturday), Robert Cribb, A1

Television: None
Radio: None

Issue: Province Releases Numbers on Impact of Foreign Buyer's Tax

☐ Despite numbers released by the province this week which suggest the implementation of a foreign buyer's tax has cooled the Toronto region's housing market, industry observers remain skeptical on whether the legislation targeted the right audience.

☐ Many of the homebuyers flooding the market were not in fact wealthy individuals living overseas, but were likely middle-aged immigrants buying a second property, says The Toronto Star.

☐ While Toronto real estate broker John Pasalis acknowledges the impact of foreign investment in places like York Region, he believes domestic investment played a significant role in driving up prices with a more than 30 per cent year over year increase.

☐ According to the province, since the foreign buyer's tax was introduced, the number of offshore property transactions in the Greater Golden Horseshoe went down to 1.6 per cent in February compared to 4.7 per cent last May.

☐ Many homebuyers have expressed frustration with the legislation, such as Shahina Khan. Khan and her husband bought a preconstruction home just before the market dropped and got less than they were expecting from the sale of their previous house. They are now struggling to close on their new home.

☐ Shaun Hildebrand, senior vice president of Urbanation, believes the foreign buyer's tax has had little to no impact on the demand in the Toronto condo market. "It's viewed as a minor cost to most overseas purchasers," he said.

☐ The foreign buyer's tax was one of 16 measures introduced by the province last year as part of their Fair Housing Policy to tackle unaffordable housing in the region.

☐ The new legislation also includes the expansion of rent controls to newer buildings. However, according to Mary Todorow, a research and policy analyst with the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, the change has not made it easier for people to find affordable rentals.

☐ “Our data continues to indicate that our measures have helped to calm the housing market. People are finding more affordable alternatives as housing supply has increased, and rent control measures are helping to ensure rental prices remain predictable for tenants,” said Ontario Finance Minister Charles Sousa.

Newspapers: “Did tax close the deal?; Industry takes stock of foreign buyer regulations’ effect.” (Saturday) Toronto Star, Tess Kalinowski, B1; and
“A taxing affair.” (Saturday) Toronto Star, B1.

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: Province to Investigate Toronto South Detention Centre Leak

☐ The province has launched an investigation into a leak from the Toronto South Detention Centre connected to Alek Minassian, the man accused in the van attack.

☐ The investigation was triggered by Toronto Sun article and photo of the accused inside the jail. The article cited anonymous sources that had spoken to or heard Alek Minassian allegedly say inside the detention centre that he had no regrets for the victims and that he wished he had been shot by the Toronto police officer who arrested him without incident.

☐ According to a spokesperson for the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, publicly sharing photos or information about an inmate is unacceptable conduct.

☐ Daniel Brown, a criminal defence lawyer, said the leak could play a role at a trial. “This type of information could significantly prejudice an accused person’s fair trial rights and it may undermine his evidence at trial,” Brown said.

Newspapers: “Province investigates story leaked from jail,” Toronto Star (Saturday), Liam Casey (Canadian Press) A18

“Province to probe Toronto jail leak,” Toronto Sun (Saturday), Canadian Press, A5

“Probe Launched Into Jail Leak Of Accused Killer,” National Post (Saturday), Canadian Press, A7

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: Rally Held To Voice Opposition to New Ottawa Jail

☐ Ottawa Citizen columnist David Reevely reports that letter, sent by the Correctional Services Minister Marie-France Lalonde, outlines new details about the new jail that will replace the Ottawa –Carleton Detention Centre. Reevely noted that the letter states that the new jail will have different levels of security for different inmates, proper health services and open visiting areas.

☐ According to Reevely, the letter, which was sent to people who’ve participated in the early planning for the replacement, is meant to counter criticism that the government is just building a bigger warehouse for provincial inmates.

☐ "This government will not be rebuilding the jails of the past," the letter says. "Our expectations for minimum conditions of confinement, staff and client safety, clinical supports, programming space, family contact and supports, and alternatives to segregation will be incorporated into the design of this institution from day one ... We plan on using this facility as an innovation platform to inform the transformation of the entire (jail) system."

☐ Reevely expressed scepticism about the promising sounding details. He notes that Toronto South Detention Centre, which he argues incorporated much of the same thinking, "instantly became a notorious hellhole" after it opened four years ago.

☐ Reevely writes: "Building the right space is necessary but not sufficient, and changing a culture is much harder than constructing a building."

☐ On Friday, several dozen protesters rallied in Ottawa to voice their opposition to a bigger jail. Critics of the project say the problem lies in putting too many people in jail in the first place, noting most of the prisoners at OCDC are awaiting trial, not serving sentences.

☐ Justin Piché, a criminology professor from the University of Ottawa, argued the money should be spent on treating drug addiction and giving support to people who have none in this city.

☐ Lydia Dobson from the Criminalization and Punishment Education Project said the event was organized so that different community groups can come forward and talk about different alternatives to incarceration.

Newspapers: "Judges denounce 'egregious' delays," Ottawa Citizen (Saturday), David Reevely, A4

"Protesters want more community support," Ottawa Citizen (Saturday), Tom Spears, A4

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: Youth in Hamilton Jail Moved in Preparation for Lockout

☐ Teens at a residential detention centre in Hamilton have been moved to jails in other cities as the Arrell Youth Centre prepared to lock out its staff at midnight Friday.

☐ The centre houses young men convicted or accused of serious crimes.

☐ "We cannot expose them to any sort of labour dispute. The wellbeing and safety of these youth are paramount," said Kim Ciavarella, the CEO of Banyan.

☐ 16 of the young people in the facility were moved to facilities in London, Guelph and Niagara, while three were moved east.

☐ "They are quite a distance away from their homes. It will affect them greatly. They have all their community supports and family supports close by here. A lot of times they are from marginalized families so it will be difficult for the parents to visit now," said Len Mancini, Ontario Public Service Employees Union Local 216 bargaining chair for the centre.

☐ The Ministry of Children and Youth Services said that it hopes the union and Banyan will reach a resolution. "We want young people to access the services they need, when they need them and as close to home as possible. The protection and wellbeing of youth and staff is our main priority," said the ministry.

☐ The crux of the dispute between the union and Banyan is who should pay for the rising cost of benefits. According to The Hamilton Spectator, “Banyan wants staff to cover 20 per cent of the costs of benefit premiums and take a reduced package.”

☐ “This was a very fair deal on the table,” said Ciavarella.

☐ “To pay more money off our paycheque for things we normally didn’t pay for in the past was a tough pill to swallow for our members,” said Mancini.

Newspapers: “Hamilton youth jail emptied to prepare for lockout.” (Saturday) The Hamilton Spectator, Joanna Frketich, A6.

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: PCs Promise To Scrap Wind Farm Project

☐ Sarnia-Lambton MPP Bob Bailey says that if elected, a PC government would scrap a controversial wind turbine project planned for the border of Lambton County and Chatham-Kent.

☐ The 12-turbine Otter Creek project, which features the tallest turbines ever to be erected in Canada, is raising concerns because it is located near an aquifer. Bailey said it risks contaminating the water supply for St. Clair township and private wells in the area.

☐ Bailey says Doug Ford has publicly supported the cancellation of the plan, arguing “That project will be dead, Doug Ford said it. I have great concerns about it.”

☐ Bailey says he is concerned because the turbines will be built on the same Kettle Point black shale deposit that has reportedly caused problems elsewhere in the region.

☐ Bailey says he is not concerned about the money that corporations have already spent developing the project, noting “rightly or wrongly, at the end of the day, the government holds all the cards.”

☐ Bailey raised the issue in Question Period on Wednesday, but says the Premier and environment minister dodged the question.

☐ The Renewable Energy Approval Application for the Otter Creek project is currently under final technical review by the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change and is expected to be completed in a few weeks, after which an REA approval can be issued and construction can begin.

Newspapers: “PCs pledge to stop Otter Creek wind farm,” Sarnia Observer (Saturday). David Gough, A1

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: Community of Folyet May Lose Cellphone and Internet Service

☐ The community of Folyet in Northern Ontario may lose its cellphone and internet service because the cost of renting equipment space for the communications tower has become too

much.

☐ The equipment is located in the communications tower on Highway 101 (the OPP tower), which is owned by the Ontario government through Infrastructure Ontario, and is managed by CBRE Ltd, which leases the space to Bell Canada. According to Jim Passmore, chairman of the Folyet Local Services Board (LSB), CBRE is demanding a 700 per cent increase in rent at the tower. An email to the Folyet LSB from Bell indicates that the company considers the increase unreasonable and unacceptable.

☐ Passmore warns that a health and safety issues could emerge, as people in the community rely on cellphone service to keep in contact with emergency services. The local nursing station uses it to keep in touch with its parent hospital, Chapleau Health Services. The volunteer fire department also depends on cell phones to call out to firefighters.

☐ Passmore warns that the issue might become a concern in other small communities as well, noting "It's an age-old problem with these small communities. There's simply not enough people to make a lot of these services profitable...It's no mystery the province of Ontario is sinking in a sea of debt. They're just nickel and diming us all to death."

☐ Passmore says the local service board is sending a letter of concern to Bob Chiarelli, the Ontario Minister of Infrastructure.

Newspapers: "Folyet faces service cuts," The Timmins Daily Press (Saturday), Len Gillis,
A1

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: Activists Protest Grant to AcelorMittal Dofasco Over Pollution Record

☐ Environmental activist are protesting millions of dollars in provincial government assistance given to ArcelorMittal Dofasco while the company has ongoing air pollution problems at its Hamilton plant.

☐ The province announced \$22.7 million in funding for the company on Wednesday, \$15.2 million as a grant and \$7.5 million as a loan. The money will go toward an upgrade of the company's hot mill operation to become more competitive and produce higher quality steel.

☐ However, Environment Hamilton executive director Lynda Lukasik said, "If any taxpayers' money is going to the company, it should be to deal with their environmental challenges, in my humble opinion."

☐ Jochen Bezner, a local resident and member of the Coalition Against Pollution Hamilton agreed, saying "It doesn't set the right tone...to have outstanding (environmental) issues and at the same time being rewarded by the government."

☐ A company spokesperson responded by saying that the company has made hundreds of millions of dollars in capital improvements in recent years that, among other things, have helped improve its environment performance, and that benzene discharges have declined by 55 per cent from 2010 to 2016, while total particulate matter is down by 48 per cent since 1990.

☐ The Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change has issued three orders to the company aimed at reducing coke oven emissions significantly over time and the company has agreed to make \$90 million in upgrades in response.

☐ Bridgitte Marleau of the Ministry of Economic Development and Growth said that environmental performance is considered before economic development grants are issues and that companies must “be in compliance or demonstrate that they are dealing with any noncompliance issues.”

Newspapers: “Activists, Dofasco square off after Ontario provides funds to firm,” The Hamilton Spectator (Saturday), Mark McNeil, A8

Television: None

Radio: None

Issue: Retail Group Research Shows Use of Illegal Cigarettes Increasing

☐ The Ontario Convenience Stores Association (OSCA) commissioned research that shows the rate of contraband cigarette use has steadily shot up across Ontario, with Southwestern Ontario singled out as having the highest year-over-year increase.

☐ According to the research, more than one-third of all cigarettes are now bought illegally. Critics say the repeated tax increases on cigarettes have fuelled the demand for contraband cigarettes, wreaking havoc on the convenience store industry.

☐ OSCA chief executive David Bryans said the rising demand for illegal smokes was “hurting small business to a big degree,” noting 148 Ontario variety stores have closed in the past year, up from 90 during the same period last year.

☐ An annual analysis of discarded cigarette butts at eight London sites suggests contraband tobacco use was at 35.8 per cent last year, up from 26.8 per cent just three years earlier. London had the 11th-highest rate of contraband cigarette use in the province. Windsor, the only other Southwestern Ontario city included in the study, came in fourth on the list that was topped by Brampton, according to the research commissioned by the OSCA.

☐ London's fire department is especially warning of the fallout of illegal cigarettes, blaming them for four of the city's last five deadly fires. Store-bought cigarettes are made with special paper that makes them burn slower and self-extinguish, while illegal ones do not have that safety feature, which makes them more likely to ignite things if left unattended.

☐ According to a March report by Ernst & Young LLP, contraband tobacco has cost Ontario \$3.4 billion in lost tax revenue since 2013, with another \$1.6 billion projected to be lost by 2020

☐ Critics of illicit cigarettes suggest Ontario look to Quebec, where officials reduced the contraband rate from 40 per cent to about 15 per cent. Quebec slashed its rate, the lowest in the country, by bringing municipal police forces into the battle against illegal smokes and allowing them to reinvest the proceeds seized from investigations into the crime. All police officers, including special constables, were also given the power to enforce the tobacco tax law.

Newspapers: “Taxes ignite rising demand for illegal butts,” London Free (Saturday), Dale Carruthers, GT1

Television: None

Radio: None

FRONT PAGE HEADLINES (GTA NEWSPAPERS)

April 28, 2018

TORONTO STAR

- * Court strikes down secrecy in tribunals
- * The day Yonge Street became a war zone
- * Star's Tanya Talaga to deliver Massey lectures
- * Korean leaders' historic meeting sets table for talks with Trump

TORONTO SUN

- * RAPS MAKE WIZARDS DISAPPEAR (with photo)
- * ACCUSED VAN KILLER FACES TWO NEW CHARGES (with photo)

GLOBE AND MAIL

- * What brought them to the sidewalk (with illustration)

NATIONAL POST

- * HANDS ACROSS THE DMZ (with photo)
- * AN OPEN LETTER TO THE DRIVER
- * WHAT THEY SAW ON YONGE (with photo)

FRONT PAGE HEADLINES (GTA NEWSPAPERS)

April 29, 2018

Toronto Star

- * 26 stories of courage and compassion (with photo)
- * "I knew that it was going to be a man"
- * Could this be the one? Why Korean accord might be the real deal
- * IT'S NOT EASY BEING SERENA (with photo)

Globe and Mail

- * Does not publish on Sunday

Toronto Sun

- * WATCHDOG BITES WYNNE (with photo)
- * PEACE AT LAST? (with photo)

National Post

- * Does not publish on Sunday