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Your morning briefing

18.05.2018 [David Hains](#)

Headlines

Both the NDP and Liberals are calling for a [police probe](#) into the allegation that former PC Brampton East candidate **Simmer Sandhu** stole 407 ETR data from 60,000 people in his former workplace, and may have used the information to win the PC nomination. Sandhu denies the allegations, and resigned from the race on Wednesday. Meanwhile, the *National Post* reported on a [recorded](#) meeting between PC Milton candidate **Parm Gill** and **Rashid Qadri**, who Gill tried to convince not to run for the nomination, and suggested he could get a job in the legislature if the Tories won. The PCs deny there was any wrongdoing.

In an editorial board meeting with the *Hamilton Spectator*, NDP Leader **Andrea Horwath** said Hamilton could shift its \$1-billion in funding from its LRT to a [different transit project](#) if that was the will of council. The statement marks a shift for Horwath, who appears to be staking out a middle ground between Ford's promise to let Hamilton spend the money on any infrastructure it wants and the Liberals, who have said they would revoke the funding if the project is cancelled. Horwath has previously maligned Ford's stance as irresponsible, saying that all cities will want want the same deal to change plans and priorities.

In case you missed our stories Thursday:

- [Ford struggles to juggle trio of campaign controversies](#)
- [Interview: Why Horwath is feeling optimistic, and why she says she's ready to govern on day one](#)
- [Interview: Kathleen Wynne muses about the alternate paths of history](#)
- [Horwath rolls out transit plan as she slam the Conservatives](#)
- [Funding Portal: Week of May 14](#)

The *Star* profiles a [77-year-old Toronto social housing resident](#) who was forced to re-locate due to her crumbling home. But the residents of Firgrove are just the canary in the coal mine, as thousands more units could be closed in the coming years if Toronto Community Housing doesn't get the necessary funds for capital repairs.

The Liberals have made a promise to end "[postal code discrimination](#)" on auto insurance, reports the CBC. The NDP pointed out that the Liberals previously voted against the idea, and that the party's previous auto insurance promise was later revealed to be a "stretch goal."

The Liberals have [filed a complaint with Elections Ontario](#) over Ford attending an April fundraising event in contravention of the rules, reports the CBC. The Tory leader says he was misinformed about the nature of the event.

Canadian Press looks at [the songs](#) the leaders are using on the campaign trail to pump up their supporters.

TVO looks at how and why [Peterborough](#) is the quintessential bellwether in Ontario elections.

In Kingston, Wynne said she would be "[very, very worried](#)" about what a PC government would mean to education, reports the *Whig-Standard*.

The Conversation [provides a guide](#) to non-partisan voting guides.

The three main Thunder Bay-area candidates all say their parties [would continue](#) the basic income pilot project, reports CBC.

The *Windsor Star* recaps [three all-candidate debates](#) that we're held in the same room on one night.

The Ottawa Centre all-candidates debate was [downright civil](#) and policy-oriented, reports the *Ottawa Citizen*. The PC candidate did not show up for the debate, continuing a trend that has been seen in some other parts of the province.

And in the opinion pages:

- **David Reevely** looks at the [different transit and transportation promises](#) the parties are making, and says their priorities reveal underlying political philosophies.
- **Christie Blatchford** agrees with Wynne that the PCs should [call in the police](#) to probe the legitimacy of a number of Tory candidates, and whether breached data from the 407 ETR was used to help them.
- In the *Star*, **John Barber** [writes a eulogy](#) for Wynne's political career, opining that she was better than Ontario deserved.
- **Chris Selley** says the Liberals' [many attacks](#) on Ford only help the NDP.
- **Kelly McParland** writes that Hydro One is the [political gift that keeps on giving](#) for Ford.

- **Susan Delacourt** writes that when voters [decide they want change](#), they stubbornly cling to that idea.
- **Éric Grenier** analyzes [what the Ontario election says](#) about the 2019 federal election.
- U of T's **David Zarnett** writes in the *Globe* that Ontario was [taken to the cleaners](#) in its casino deal.
- **Rick Salutin** finds that [young voters](#) are attracted to Ford's populism.
- In *Maclean's*, **Gabe De Roche** [considers the flip-flop](#), and how sometimes it's not so harmful to a candidate's credibility.
- **Luisa D'Amato** hopes that private schools [get more attention](#) if a party other than the Liberals forms government.
- The *Waterloo Region Record* editorial board writes that [simplistic platforms](#) on hydro don't solve complicated and real problems.

Events

9 a.m. - Premier Wynne to make an announcement. 4th Floor Rooftop. 401 Richmond Street W., Toronto.

10:15 a.m. - Horwath holds event. Asubpeeschoseewagong First Nation, Band Administration Office, Grassy Narrows. Media availability.

11 a.m. - Ford will make an announcement. Advanced Medical Group. 230 Victoria St, London. Media availability.

1:15 p.m. - Wynne to visit Mill Creek Gardens. 3 Little York St., Orangeville.

3 p.m.- Wynne to tour Stevenson Memorial Hospital. 200 Fletcher Crescent, Alliston.

3:45 p.m. - Horwath holds event. 1520 Valley Drive, Kenora. Media availability.

Choose your own adventure: Kathleen Wynne plays the ‘what if’ game in a one-on-one interview

17.05.2018 Jessica Smith Cross

If someone were to write a book about this period in Ontario politics, perhaps they'd take a speculative leap and write a few alternate endings, showing us how things could have gone differently if only a few small things were changed.

Liberal Leader **Kathleen Wynne** might read it, curious to know what paths in this choose your own adventure-style novel about her life would have led her to a better place than where she is today: standing in third place in the polls on wrong side of a change election.

In a one-on-one interview with *QP Briefing* this week, Wynne engaged in a little speculation about what might have been.

What if... CTV had never published its story on the sexual misconduct allegations against then-PC leader **Patrick Brown**? It's quite possible he'd still be the Tory chief today — the story seemed to break open the vault of party unity, and damaging allegations about Brown's finances and electoral misconduct began to pour out.

So what would things be like for her, if she was running against Brown?

According to Wynne, some her party's plans would have been the same. "There were cuts inherent in the People's Guarantee, in his so-called People's Guarantee platform. And we were going to have to talk about what those cuts would mean."

Indeed, on the campaign trail today, she's talking about the cuts she believes PC Leader **Doug Ford** will have to impose — they're just bigger. At a media event in Ottawa Thursday, she said her party had warned against the \$6- to \$10-billion in cuts they believed Brown's platform would have required, but now the impact of the tax cuts alone proposed by Ford is an estimated \$20 billion over four years.

"That will mean that there will be devastation in education and health care," she'd said. "You can't take \$20 billion. That's practically the whole Ministry of Education budget. That's practically the money that funds all of our 5,000 publicly funded schools."

"Eighty-two or -three per cent of what government does is to pay people to deliver services, whether it is in hospitals or long-term care homes or in schools, that's what government does," she continued. "So you take \$20 billion worth of people out of communities and out of schools and hospitals, and you really undermine the very institutions that make this province what it is, and really cause havoc in people's lives."

Another what-if: Suppose **Vic Fedeli**, the PCs' bookish and avuncular former interim leader, had been allowed to helm the party through this election — a likely possibility, if the Tories' internal political turmoil had played out in a slightly different way.

How would things be for her on the campaign trail today?

"I think the level of the discussion would be different," Wynne said. "You know, Doug Ford is very much someone who campaigns in sound bites in slogans and really very, very little depth in terms of policies and real implications of the things that he says. And I think that he's kind of unique in that way — I mean he's unique in terms of Ontario politics, he's very much like, and we've talked about this, he's very much like Trump. It's like Trump's style. So I think that he is different from other people in his party in that way."

But perhaps Tory politics are only a branch path.

Many of the biggest criticisms of the premier are on the hydro file. The Liberal government's choices on the *Green Energy Act* and the gas plant cancellations occurred under the leader before her but motivate angry windmill opponents on call-in radio shows to this day. But the government's arguably slow response to rising electricity prices and the controversial financial scheme it has implemented to deal with them are squarely under her purview.

But if only as a thought experiment: Where would Wynne be if Ontarians never had a reason to get angry over the hydro file?

"Where would we be if government after government before ours had done the investments that needed to be done in electricity?" she asked in response. "We would be way better off. Because those investments would have been done over time, and the system wouldn't have been allowed to degrade. So that's, that's the 'what if' that I go to."

If that had happened, Wynne said her government wouldn't have needed to "make the investments" that it did to shore up the system, spending \$50 billion to fix the grid.

Perhaps then voters wouldn't have quite so high hydro bills to blame on the windmills — and she does admit there were mistakes in her predecessor's days when the province first plunged ahead into green energy.

But not necessarily any regrets.

"Under my predecessor, we jump-started an industry, and that's a really good thing," she said. "But the cost associated with the rebuild of the system was really hard for people to bear."

Those costs led Wynne to seek a solution to deal with them, the Fair Hydro Plan, which has faced sharp criticism from the auditor general and the press for its high costs and the apparent political motivation behind it.

In a nutshell: The plan includes a massive borrowing scheme that artificially lowered prices in advance of this election, and will contribute to increasing their costs in a few years when they're allowed to rise again, as ratepayers will be made to pay back the cost of the debt, with interest, on their bills. The unusual way the borrowing is structured increases the interest's costs but has allowed the government to keep the debt off its books and claim to have balanced its last budget.

Wynne said she believes things will be better years down the road, as the government of the day "takes costs out of the system" and believes that investments in better energy storage technology will allow the province to take advantage of the solar panels and windmills, so rates will go down and the repayment of today's debt won't be such a burden.

"To the political motivation: I mean, it was literally about people who were saying to us, and whose bills had gotten so high that they could not afford them, so we can call it political motivation or we can call it a solution to a problem," she said.

What-ifs aside, Wynne says she has found herself here before — in an election it doesn't look like she's going to win.

When she was elected in 2007, she'd fought what looked like an unwinnable campaign against then-PC leader **John Tory**, and back then, she'd had another possible alternate ending in mind.

"If I go back to 2007, when John Tory ran against me, Jane and I had a plan B, because really, nobody expected me to beat the leader, that just didn't happen," she said. "So, I would say, it feels a lot like it has felt before.

"I look at every election I have been in, and I always am prepared to lose. And I did lose my first election, to be school trustee — not that that was as big as running to be premier for the second time, but it was pretty devastating," she said. "You know, losing is not fun. You always have to be prepared to lose, and I always am."