

Contents

Your morning briefing	2
In brief: Estimates of something or other, high-speed rail and autism support funding	5

Your morning briefing

24.10.2017

Headlines

They're baa-ack. The Working Families Coalition is back in the saddle a little more than seven months before the scheduled election with an attack ad against PC Leader **Patrick Brown**. The ad, released this morning, comes on the heels of an attack ad by Working Women of Ontario, a new third party, [reportedly funded by the Service Employees International Union](#), which has sponsored Working Families in the past.

Regular readers will know the Working Families Coalition is a union-funded third party advertiser that took in nearly \$3.5 million in contributions from labour groups during the 2014 election period and spent nearly \$2.5 million on ads that primarily targeted then-PC leader **Tim Hudak**.

In 2014, 14 unions contributed \$100,000 or more to Working Families' advertising budget during the reporting period (from the writ drop to three months after the election) and many spent more on their own advertising campaigns. This time, each third party's spending during the four-week writ period is capped at \$100,000 and spending during the six-month period before the scheduled writ drop (Nov. 9 to May 9) is capped at \$600,000. There's also a law prohibiting third parties from attempting to circumvent those limits including by splitting themselves into two or more third parties, and from colluding with political parties or third parties.

In other news, the judge in the Sudbury bribery trial is expected to rule today on the [defence motion for a directed verdict](#). If the defence teams win, the judge will direct an acquittal and the whole show will be over. If the Crown wins, the defence will still have an opportunity to put on its case, calling witnesses of its own. **Gerry Lougheed** and **Patricia Sorbara** are charged with bribery, under the provincial Election Act, in relation to the 2015 by-election in Sudbury. *QP Briefing* will have a reporter on scene to bring you the very latest.

Meanwhile, the Canada Revenue Agency is investigating 2,800 preconstruction condo flips in the Toronto area for tax evasion, [the Globe and Mail reports](#). Ontario Finance Minister **Charles Sousa** had warned about the practice he called "property scalping."

Eight long-term care homes are "intending to leave" Toronto over the high cost of rebuilding their facilities to meet new standards, [CBC reports](#). Six more are "at risk of leaving" and a group representing nursing homes says the provincial government subsidies aren't enough in Toronto, where everything costs more.

Don't forget to [follow our Question Period liveblog](#) at 10:30 this morning. And in case you missed our stories yesterday:

- [First Nations communities weren't consulted on riding named after them: Chiefs](#)
- [Ontario to add 1,200 new hospital beds with \\$140M in-year funding boost](#)
- [Brown refuses to back down to Wynne libel notice](#)
- [Cabinet Office lawyer defends actions in gas plants email testimony](#)

- In brief: Estimates of something or other, high-speed rail and autism support funding

Meanwhile, the *Toronto Star* has [taken a close look at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's review](#) of about 250 cases of illnesses, mostly cancer, connected to the General Electric plant in Peterborough with a “lethal legacy,” that had previously been denied.

CN has been ordered to pay costs back to the province stemming from two train derailments near Gogama in 2015, [the Timmins Press reports](#).

And up there in Ottawa, the federal Liberals [are set to unveil their fall economic statement today](#) and the province's autumnal fiscal update is expected soon. The federal Grits [scored an upset victory in yesterday's Quebec by-election](#), even as the controversy over alleged conflicts between Finance Minister **Bill Morneau**'s substantial personal holdings and the duties of his office rages on — [now featuring Bombardier](#).

In the opinion pages:

- Postmedia says Morneau [doesn't get it](#)
- **Luisa D'Amato** [says high-speed rail is fake news](#)
- **Martin Regg Cohn** [wonders if the premier has lot the plot](#) in the ad wars

Bills, motions, debates

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 18, 2017 on the motion for Second Reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend, repeal and enact various Acts in the interest of strengthening quality and accountability for patients.

Opposition Day Motion: Whereas, the Auditor General revealed that the government's Fair Hydro Plan could cost Ontarians up to \$4 billion more than necessary... Therefore, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the Liberal government to issue an apology to the Auditor General and the people of Ontario.

Late Show: Peterborough GE workers WSIB claims.

Committees

9 a.m.

Standing Committee on Estimates will handle a deferred motion by Mr. Tabuns regarding the production of documents and review the 2017-2018 Estimates of the Ministry of Energy. Room 151.

3:45 p.m.

Standing Committee on Estimates will meet to review the 2017-2018 Estimates of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Room 151.

4 p.m.

Standing Committee on Social Policy will meet for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 139, An Act to enact the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal Act, 2017 and the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre Act, 2017 and to amend the Planning Act, the Conservation Authorities Act and various other Acts. Room 1.

Events

9:15 a.m.

Mitzie Hunter, Minister of Education, and Indira Naidoo-Harris, Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care, will make an announcement. A [live webcast](#) of the announcement will be available. College Montrose Children's Place, 180 Shaw St. (Lower Level 2), Toronto.

9:30 a.m.

The Child Welfare Political Action Committee Canada to launch its advocacy activities at Queen's Park. Sponsored by PC MPP **Bill Walker**. Media studio, Queen's Park, Toronto.

11 a.m.

Glenn Thibeault, Minister of Energy, joined by **Ted McMeekin**, MPP for Ancaster--Dundas--Flamborough--Westdale, His Worship Fred Eisenberger, Mayor of Hamilton and Brian Bentz, President and CEO, Alectra Inc., will make an announcement. 48 Hughson Street North, Hamilton.

11 a.m.

New report on domestic violence in the workplace to be released. Sponsored by Liberal MPP **Nathalie Des Rosiers**. Media studio, Queen's Park, Toronto.

1 p.m.

Press conference about the Code of Silence Award for Outstanding Achievement in Government Secrecy. Sponsored by NDP MPP **Gilles Bisson**. Media studio, Queen's Park, Toronto.

1:30 p.m.

Mitzie Hunter, Minister of Education, will make an announcement. Holy Name Catholic School, 690 Carlaw Ave., Toronto.

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23.10.2017

Treasury Board president **Liz Sandals** referred to figures in the Financial Accountability Office's report on the Fair Hydro Plan as "estimates of something or other" in Question Period Monday — which, apparently, "gobsmacked" the leader of the third party.

NDP Leader **Andrea Horwath** had asked in Question Period about the cost of consultants the government used in creating its Fair Hydro Plan, and in her question mentioned figures from the FAO report — including [the \\$4 billion the FAO estimated the government could save](#) by taking on the debt involved directly, rather than through the complex borrowing structure it plans to use.

"First of all, I think it's important to understand that the numbers that the leader of the third party is throwing around were estimates of something or other — projections that came from the FAO," Sandals responded.

And to that, Horwath shot back: "I have not been gobsmacked in this place for a long time, but for a minister to get up and talk about estimations of 'something or other' is pretty worrisome; for a governing party to do that is pretty worrisome."

The NDP leader continued to criticize the government's use of consultants in media scrums, using three synonyms for one part of the human anatomy in accusing the Liberal government officials of "protecting their own fannies," "backsides" and "political rear."

While in Kitchener Monday, Premier **Kathleen Wynne** announced the latest developments in her government's plan to build a high-speed rail corridor between Toronto and Windsor. The government [launched a website](#) with the latest updates on the plan, which it says could cut travel times across the corridor from over four hours to just over two. According to the website, it could be completed as early as 2031, with the formal environmental assessment process beginning next year.

Meanwhile, Children and Youth Minister **Michael Coteau** announced \$530,000 spending over two years on programs for autistic children and their families provided by the South Asian Autism Awareness Centre (SAAAC).

The Assessment, Development, Empowerment programs offer information to help families navigate autism services and the SAAAC CARES Parental Mental Health Program offers caregivers emotional support and counselling after their child's diagnosis.