TBS Issues Review for Tuesday February 14

From: "Bigley, Jane (TBS)" <jane.bigley@ontario.ca>
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Good morning!
Here is the Treasury Board Secretariat Issues Review.
Cabinet Top Issues for today will be sent later.

Minister Sandals is mentioned in a QP Briefing article on the pension panel report. She is quoted, **"We are committed to implementing the advice of this independent panel and will use it in preparing the province's financial statements," Treasury Board President** Liz Sandals **said in a release.**
Article in TBS Media Watch.

PENSION PLAN ADVISORY PANEL:

The Toronto Star(A7) reports a panel of accounting experts says that $10.7 billion in government-sponsored pension plans should count toward the province's bottom line. The article notes panel chair Tricia O'Malley said "We believe that an asset does exist — the net pension asset meets the definition of an economic resource, which is what an asset is." O'Malley likened the joint-sponsorship to co-owning a home that could not be sold off unless both partners agreed. "Many government assets are not accessible. A road is an asset to a government because it allows it to provide public services of transportation, but you can't move a road or you can't sell a road unless it's a toll road, but it's still an asset," she said. The Star notes Auditor General Lysyk is reviewing the report and will provide comment to the media later in the week. **Article in TBS Media Watch.**

The Toronto Star(A7) (and online) has a negative piece about the Auditor General, written by Martin Regg Cohn. He writes the AG has been caught out in a $10.7-billion miscalculation. "Even a watchdog can lose the scent - and bark up the wrong tree. Or worse, miss the fiscal forest for the trees. For the job requires not just independence but context. To be truly credible, an auditor general must fearlessly expose government boondoggles but also fess up to her blunders. " "Lysyk's lack of diligence - now overdue - is a damning indictment of an auditor gone awry." **Article in TBS Media Watch.**

QP Briefing reports (Feb 13) the government has accepted the panel's conclusion that pension surpluses are assets. The auditor general's stance won't be known until later in the week. The article includes comments from Tory finance critic Vic Fedeli: " Basically, they've gone out and hired people[2] whose findings would be more convenient for them ... They have appointed a private panel of auditors to come to the province's conclusion." OPSEU president Warren (Smokey) Thomas said he's concerned the panel's conclusion was politically motivated: "If I was going to fall on a side of advice, I'd fall on the advice of the auditor general," he said. "The government has gone to extraordinary length to have somebody try to disagree and discredit the auditor general." **Article in TBS Media Watch.**

Canadian Press reports in The Waterloo Record (A5) a n expert panel has concluded in favour of the Liberal government in an accounting dispute with the auditor general, giving it $1.5 billion more in breathing room as it has promised to deliver a balanced budget this spring. The article notes "Neither side was bound by the panel's findings, and if Lysyk still disagrees she could issue a "qualified opinion" on future sets of books. She said last year that if there was new information she would see if that changed her opinion, but if there wasn't, "I feel pretty solid that we got it right." **Article in TBS Media Watch.**

The Ottawa Sun's David Reevely (A11) reports " the Ontario Liberals have an extra $1.5 billion to spend between now and the next election and can still keep their promise to balance the provincial budget by 2018, thanks to a helpful ruling on how to handle surpluses in a couple of big provincial pension funds." His article notes, "The point is, we're talking serious money - the stakes in what's otherwise the most arcane public-accounting battle ever to spill out of a comptrollers' seminar and into the streets. " He writes the surpluses work in the government's favour – especially as an election approaches. **Article in TBS Media Watch.**

TREASURY BOARD :

The Toronto Sun has a commentary (A15) by Jerry Agar noting that " Toronto taxpayers is that they pay more in provincial and federal taxes than they get back in provincial and federal services. " **Article in TBS Media Watch.**

The Globe and Mail (B4) has a piece that notes Ottawa should partner with private sector on infrastructure. " it is more important for the government to fund projects that are "shovel worthy," rather than throwing money at projects that are "shovel ready" to meet artificial deadlines." **Article in TBS Media Watch.**

The Globe and Mail (A1) reports PM Trudeau won personal assurances from President Donald Trump during yesterday's meeting that the United States only wants to tweak the North American free-trade provisions that govern commerce with Canada. **Article in TBS Media Watch.**

The Globe and Mail (B1) reports jobs and supply chains are at risk from a NAFTA revision. A study done by the Ivey Business School at Western University and the Lawrence National Centre for Policy and Management said "Hampered trade will mean job loss, decreased economic output, higher costs of production, lower returns for investors, fewer choices and higher costs for consumers." **Article in TBS Media Watch.**

The Toronto Star(A1) reports the federal government forgoes as much as $47.8 billion in uncollected taxes every year, according to a new report that Ottawa has yet to release. These billions represent only a fraction of all taxes that go unpaid because they don't include taxes owed to the provinces and municipalities - all of which are in need of additional revenues to close budget deficits and deliver on major public works projects." **Article in TBS Media Watch.**

COMPENSATION and HR:

OPSEU reports (Feb 13) "equal pay for equal work" is now a reality for LCBO retail workers. " .a February 10, 2017 arbitration award creates a single wage grid for both full-time and casual retail workers. The new grid will mean an average increase of 9.5 per cent for three-quarters of the 84 per cent of Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) classified as casual workers, along with an improved guarantee of hours of work and the creation of 200 new full-time jobs." OPSEU president Warren Thomas said, "This is 2017 – equal pay for equal work should be the norm, not something that workers have to fight for." **Article in TBS Media Watch.**

The National Post has a column on workplace law written by lawyer Howard Levitt. He writes about a recent Ontario ruling that protected one employee from her ill-informed action of storming out of the workplace in the heat of the moment. **Article in TBS Media Watch**

I.T. and OPEN GOVERNMENT:

The Toronto Star (GT10) reports IBM's Watson computer is now fighting cybercrime. **Article in TBS Media Watch.**

The Daily Telegraph reports Britain's Chancellor is warning business to do more to protect themselves from cyber attacks. A new scheme to train up 100 of the "best and brightest" private sector employees in cyber-security skills will also be unveiled at the official opening of GCHQ's National Cyber Security Centre in London. **Article in TBS Media Watch.**

GENERAL GOVERNMENT and FYI:

The National Post (FP8) reports a study shows that executive pay that is disproportionate to a company's past performance may also signal poor returns are coming. **Article in TBS Media Watch.**

Canadian press reports (Benefits Canada) that Manitoba's Progressive Conservative government has raised the possibility of unpaid days off and reduced pension benefits for public-sector workers as part of its drive to reduce a billion-dollar deficit. **Article in TBS Media Watch**

CALENDAR:

No events scheduled.

Jane Bigley
Sr. Corporate Issues Management Analyst
Issues Management & Media Relations
Treasury Board Secretariat
77 Wellesley Street, West
8th Floor, Ferguson Block
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1N3
Phone: 416-325-8659
E-mail:Jane.Bigley@ontario.ca