

Queen's Park Today – Daily Report September 12, 2017

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Quotation of the day

“It is a big social change that should not be rushed to suit a political timeline. No other province in Canada is rushing this. This is too important.”

PC leader Patrick Brown says the government is rushing its marijuana policy in order to divert from ongoing ethics trials against Liberal insiders

Today at Queen's Park

On the schedule

The House will convene at 9:00 a.m. to begin second reading debate on **Bill 142**, Construction Lien Act.

In the afternoon, MPPs will begin second reading debate on **Bill 148**, Fair Workplaces and Better Jobs Act. After a series of summer committee hearings on the first reading stage of the bill, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs reported it back to the House with amendments on Monday afternoon.

Debates and proceedings

PC MPP **Ross Romano** took his seat in the House for the first time. Romano was elected in the Sault St. Marie by-election on June 1.

NDP MPP **France Gelin** introduced a private members' bill entitled, **Bill 149**, An Act to Establish the Ministry for Mental Health and Addiction.

In the afternoon, MPPs began second reading debate on **Bill 139**, Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act.

Bill 139 aims to overhaul the municipal planning process, get rid of the Ontario Municipal Board, strengthen the province's conservation authority and improve the management of watersheds to prevent flooding.

The NDP supports the bill, but argues it took the Liberals far too long to introduce it. The PCs oppose a section of the bill they warn would allow conservation officers to enter private property without a warrant.

In the park

McMaster University has an MPP reception scheduled for Tuesday evening.

Accerta, the company that administers the province's Healthy Smiles Program, will host an MPP gathering in the Legislative Dining Room at 5:30 p.m.

Gas plants trial

Former McGuinty staffers **Laura Miller** and **David Livingston** both pled not guilty to charges relating to the wiping of government hard drives that contained emails about former premier **Dalton McGuinty's** decision to cancel the construction of two gas plants in 2011.

Miller and Livingston's lawyers successfully requested a weeklong adjournment of the trial in order to study new evidence provided by the Crown.

Topics of conversation

- Hamilton Mayor **Fred Eisenberger** is also pursuing an Amazon HQ2 bid, citing Hamilton's proximity to the U.S. border and its world-class educational sector as advantages.
- The Ontario Convenience Stores Association added its voice to the dissent against the minimum wage increase, saying it will cost small stores up to \$50,000 per year.
- Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault** told reporters he is scheduled to testify in Sudbury on September 19 and/or September 20.
- According to Advanced Education Minister **Deb Matthews**, one third of Ontario's college and university students are getting their tuition free this school year, thanks to changes to the province's OSAP rules.
- In response to a *Toronto Star* [investigation](#) into temporary work at an industrial bakery in the GTA, Labour Minister **Kevin Flynn** said the "equal pay for equal work" provisions in **Bill 148** will remove the incentive for employers to use temp agencies. Flynn said he wants to change the system so it is in a company's best interest to hire full-time employees.

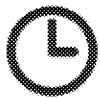
- Former attorney general **Michael Bryant** penned an op-ed warning consumers about the lure of Big Weed. Bryant agrees with the Liberal's plan to regulate the sale of weed through government-run stores, but said the party is offering "nothing progressive or meaningful on treating those made unwell by what we used to call vices."

Today's events



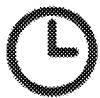
September 12 — *Online*

The Financial Accountability Officer will release an assessment of the economic impacts of the government's minimum wage increase plan.



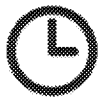
September 12 at 9:00 a.m. — *Burlington*

Transportation Minister **Steve Del Duca** and Tourism, Culture and Sport Minister **Eleanor McMahon** will make an announcement at Appleby GO Station.



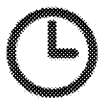
September 12 at 9:30 a.m. — *Guelph*

Advanced Education Minister **Deb Matthews** will host an OSAP roundtable with University of Guelph students.



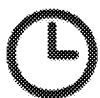
September 12 at 10:30 a.m. — *Toronto*

Premier **Kathleen Wynne** will attend question period.



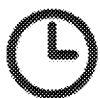
September 12 at 12:00 p.m. — *Toronto*

Premier **Kathleen Wynne** will hold a caucus meeting at Queen's Park.



September 12 at 1:00 p.m. — *Hamilton*

Advanced Education Minister **Deb Matthews** will host an OSAP roundtable with McMaster University and Mohawk College students.



September 12 at 7:00 p.m. — *Toronto*

Three prominent real estate developers, **Mark Mandelbaum**, **Philip Reichmann** and **Jack Eisenberger**, will host a fundraiser for the Ontario PC Party at a private residence at 1 Bedford Road.

News briefs – Governmental

Ministry of Housing

Housing Minister **Peter Milczyn** announced the City of Toronto will receive \$90 million in new funding over the next three years to help fight homelessness. The funding will go to local, community support organizations that will “help those most in need find stable housing” and is expected to assist over 1,880 households. Toronto Mayor **John Tory**, who attended the announcement, said the new funding will provide tangible benefits to people who are struggling.

The funding will come from the province’s \$200 million supportive housing program, which was announced in March 2017. The remaining \$110 million will be split among other municipalities experiencing chronic homelessness. Those announcements will be made over the next few months.

News briefs – Non-governmental

Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario

PC leader **Patrick Brown** held a news conference to outline his plans for the fall session. Brown said the legacy of 14 years of Liberal government is that Ontarians are poorer than ever. He attributed the decrease in average wages to scandals, policies that favour Liberal insiders and a business environment that is not conducive to job creation.

On marijuana policy, Brown said he is not willing to sign onto the government’s plan because it lacks “due diligence.” He said he respects this “new environment where marijuana is legal” but distribution systems must be designed to keep communities safe.

He said the Liberals rushed the release of their marijuana plan in order to distract from the ethics trials facing Liberal staffers: “It is a big social change that should not be rushed to suit a political timeline. No other province in Canada is rushing this. This is too important.”

Brown also recommitted to taking action on climate change, warned about a pending Hydro One rate hike that could cost families \$141 per year and celebrated the PC Party’s nomination of **Caroline Mulroney**.

New Democratic Party of Ontario

NDP leader **Andrea Horwath** also weighed in on the marijuana plan, echoing Brown’s accusation that the Liberals rushed their policy for partisan reasons. She called the Liberal Party’s plan “half-baked,” lacking details such as taxation levels, pricing and product availability. “There are far more questions than answers and that’s not fair to Ontarians,” Horwath said.

Horwath said she does not have her own platform on marijuana distribution because the NDP does not have the staff and resources to create a detailed health and community safety plan.

The NDP leader also doubled down on her push for more hospital funding and a solution to the capacity crisis at emergency departments across the province.

Question period

PC lead-off

Hydro rates

- PC leader **Patrick Brown** kicked off question period by asking about Hydro One's recent request for a rate increase. He called on the premier to block any future hydro rate increases.
 - Brown asked why Hydro One is raising costs for Ontarians while simultaneously spending \$6.7 billion to acquire U.S.-based utility Avista.
- Premier **Kathleen Wynne** responded by praising the Fair Hydro Plan's success in reducing electricity bills by between 25 and 50 per cent over the summer.
 - She noted that under the Fair Hydro Plan all rate hikes, including the increase requested by Hydro One, will be held to inflation for the next four years.

Purdue grant

- Brown also asked about the 2008 grant the government provided Purdue Pharma, the manufacturers of OxyContin, noting that when the grant was authorized, Purdue was already facing three class-action lawsuits concerning the addictive properties of the drug.
- Economic Development Minister **Brad Duguid** said the agreement "specifically stated that Ontario's funding could not be used directly or indirectly for any work related to the OxyContin line of drugs."
- Brown called Duguid's response another "Liberal shell game" and compared the move to giving funding to a cigarette company, but asking them not to manufacture cigarettes: "No matter what the money was earmarked for in the grant, the money was given to the maker of OxyContin."

Ring of Fire

- PC MPP **Ross Romano** used his first question as MPP to ask about Ring of Fire development. Romano said the Liberals spent years deferring infrastructure development because said they were waiting for the support of all nine Matawa First Nation communities, but according to the government, only three agreed to the construction of the new road.
- Wynne said late last week a fourth Matawa First Nation, Aroland, indicated they are interested in working with the government.

Minimum wage increase

- PC MPP **John Yakabuski** called on the government to commit to an economic impact analysis of the proposed minimum wage increase.
- Labour Minister **Kevin Flynn** said it is “disappointing” the PCs do not support paying people who work full-time a living wage.

The PC Party did not ask any questions about the ongoing Sudbury by-election trial or the gas plants trial.

NDP lead-off

Sudbury by-election trial

- NDP leader **Andrea Horwath** called on Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault** to step down for allegedly accepting a bribe when he agreed to run for the Liberals in Sudbury.
- At issue is whether Thibeault’s request that the Liberal Party provide paid jobs to his existing federal constituency staff, as a condition for him to run as a Liberal candidate, is considered bribery under the Elections Act.
- Horwath asked whether Premier Wynne knew about Thibeault’s demand.
- Attorney General **Yasir Naqvi** refused to answer any questions about the matter while it is before the courts.

Gas plants trial

- On the subject of the gas plants trial, NDP MPP **Peter Tabuns** reminded the House that Premier Wynne shut down legislative hearings on the cancellation of the plants.
 - He asked, “Why is it that the only way to get the truth out of this government is to haul them into court?”

Appointments and employments

Board of the Internal Economy

- Liberal MPP **Arthur Potts** was appointed by the Liberal caucus to serve on the Board of Internal Economy.
- Potts replaces **Peter Milczyn**, who was appointed to cabinet in August.

Committee membership

Changes were made to the make-up of eight standing committees on Monday:

Estimates

- Liberal MPP **Mike Colle** replaces Liberal MPP **Bob Delaney**
- Liberal MPP **Ann Hoggarth** replaces Liberal MPP **Joe Dickson**
- Liberal MPP **Nathalie Des Rosiers** replaces Housing Minister **Peter Milczyn**

Finance and Economic Affairs

- Liberal MPP **Mike Colle** replaces Housing Minister **Peter Milczyn**
 - Milczyn had to step down from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the committee that he chaired, because of his cabinet appointment.
- The chair is now vacant.

General Government

- Liberal MPP **John Fraser** replaces Liberal MPP **Mike Colle**
- Liberal MPP **Soo Wong** replaces Liberal MPP **Nathalie Des Rosiers**
- Liberal MPP **Lou Rinaldi** replaces Liberal MPP **Ann Hoggarth**

Justice Policy

- Liberal MPP **Amrit Mangat** replaces Liberal MPP **Mike Colle**
- PC MPP **Ross Romano** replaces PC MPP **Bill Walker**

Social Policy

- Liberal MPP **Harinder Malhi** replaces Liberal MPP **John Fraser**
- Liberal MPP **Joe Dickson** replaces Liberal MPP **Amrit Mangat**
- Liberal MPP **Bob Delaney** replaces Liberal MPP **Lou Rinaldi**

Government Agencies

- Liberal MPP **Lorenzo Berardinetti** replaces Liberal MPP **Amrit Mangat**

Legislative Assembly

- Liberal MPP **Amrit Mangat** replaces Liberal MPP **Harinder Malhi**

Regulations and Private Bills

- Liberal MPP **Granville Anderson** replaces Liberal MPP **Lorenzo Berardinetti**
- Liberal MPP **Jim Bradley** replaces Liberal MPP **Soo Wong**