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Sent: 2017-03-24 1:19:31 PM
To: Terry Young [/O=IMO/OU=MSX1/cn=Recipients/cn=Terry Young]
Subject: Queen's Park Update - Friday, March 24, 2017

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Friday, March 24, 2017

In the news

Today, a new poll by the Angus Reid Institute found that Premier **Kathleen Wynne's** approval rating has hit an all-time low. The Premier's approval rating dropped to 12 per cent since the last survey in December, which found 16 per cent approved of the Premier's performance. The poll was conducted from March 6-13, after the Premier's announcement to drop hydro rates by 25 per cent in response to rising electricity cost concerns.

Meanwhile, Premier **Kathleen Wynne** and Economic Development and Growth Minister **Brad Duguid** convened senior automotive sector leaders to discuss the looming renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The meeting, which included trade union leaders and corporate executives from five automakers who manufacture in Ontario, comes after the Premier's concerted lobbying effort of 27 American Governors whose states trade substantively with Ontario.

Yesterday, Legislature Speaker **Dave Levac** stated that the Liberal government's advertisements about proposed hydro rate reductions did not constitute contempt of parliament. The PCs made the case that the advertisements mislead the public into thinking the rate cut had been approved, when there is no existing legislation. Both the PCs and NDP criticized the the advertisements as a partisan use of government resources to re-elect the government. Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault** said the ads will help Ontarians bring down their hydro bills this summer.

Meanwhile, the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) confirmed that half of Ontario residents that were without power have not been reconnected, more than a month since a bill banning power disconnections in the winter was passed. Both the PCs and NDP continue to criticize the Liberals for failing to put pressure on energy distribution companies to restore electricity. PC

Energy Critic **Todd Smith** remarked that the Liberals only took legislative action when criticized by the opposition and have not worked to ensure the policy takes effect. NDP MPP for Nickel Belt **France Gelin** said the non-enforcement would lead to vulnerable Ontarians "fall[ing] through the cracks".

Ontario's natural gas rates will increase starting April 1. The Ontario Energy Board agreed to let Union Gas raise its prices on northwestern Ontarians by an additional \$50.30 per year, an extra \$40.76 for Ontarians in the northeast, and an additional \$20.20 for southern Ontarians. Enbridge rates will rise an average of eight dollars per year, and Natural Resource Gas Ltd. customers will see an increase of \$10 on average. The OEB stated its decision to allow the increases was mostly influenced by the expiring of government credits.

Opinion Highlights

- Without help from the federal budget, Ontario has to tackle the GTA housing bubble on its own. (John Michael McGrath, *TVO*)
 - In an era of fake news, the Ontario Liberals are making things worse. (Brian Platt, *Ottawa Citizen*)
 - Don't blame foreign buyers for soaring GTA home prices. (Christine Van Geyn, *Huffington Post*)
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Insights | Affordability

By Kanivanan Chinniah

This morning, Angus Reid released a new poll that found Premier Kathleen Wynne's approval rating sat at 12 per cent. Crucially, Angus Reid also found that 74 per cent of Ontario residents say their hydro bills are "unreasonable" while 76 per cent expect rates to increase further due to

the partial privatization of Hydro One. This will almost certainly cause the government to double down on affordability issues before the election.

Despite this, the Premier commands substantial authority as the Ontario Liberal Leader and will likely fight the next election. She appears to enjoy broad caucus and cabinet support. Several senior cabinet ministers owe their own position and authority to the Premier, while almost 20 caucus members have only known one Ontario Liberal leader.

The government has shown willingness to respond to Ontarian concerns about affordability. This willingness culminated in the removal of the provincial portion of HST on hydro bills, the launch of the Fair Hydro Plan and the veto of Toronto's tolling plan. It's also why Finance Minister Charles Sousa asked for federal help to cool Toronto's housing market.

The government also knows that they will need to actively win back the trust of Ontario's voters. After the Premier and Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault launched the Fair Hydro Plan on March 2, the government did not make any other announcements for two full days. Over the past three weeks, government advertisements promoting the plan saturated airwaves and Ontario Liberal volunteers were on the ground handing out flyers.

With energy affordability top-of-mind for Ontarians, energy affordability will be the top priority for the Premier's office. Until the next election, there will be no shortage of opportunities to engage with other government departments on issues that directly impact affordability.

Kanivanan Chinniah is an Associate Consultant at Navigator Ltd.

Social Media Snapshot



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Events at a Glance

Tuesday, March 28, 2017

The Hon. Tracy MacCharles, Minister of Government and Consumer Services

Time: 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Location: Delta Hotel Toronto, 75 Lower Simcoe Street, Toronto

RSVP: <https://www.empireclub.org/events/honourable-tracy-maccharles/>

Wednesday, March 29, 2017

Dismantling racism in Ontario is key to Canada's success: The Hon. Michael Coteau, Minister of Children & Youth Services and Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism

Time: 11:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Location: InterContinental Hotel, 225 Front Street West, Toronto

RSVP: <http://economicclub.ca/events/display/dismantling-racism-in-ontario-is-key-to-canadas-success>

Tuesday, April 4, 2017

Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca will outline the reasons behind the province's foundational investments in transit and other modes of transportation by outlining the challenges inherent in building a modern, adaptable infrastructure in a time of enormous technological disruption.

Time: 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Location: Fairmont Royal York Hotel, 100 Front Street West, Toronto

RSVP: <https://www.canadianclub.org/Events/EventDetails.aspx?id=3346>

Queen's Park Schedule

The legislature will resume on Monday, March 27, 2017.

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