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Your morning briefing

28.11.2017

Headlines

It's a land appeal rush! Developers are stampeding to appeal problematic applications to the Ontario Municipal Board before it's too late. The powerful provincial tribunal will have some of its authority waylaid with the expected passage of new legislation this week, restricting its ability to overrule city council decisions — rulings that often favoured developers. City data shows appeals to the OMB on major development applications to Toronto have more than doubled compared to the same period last year, the *Toronto Star* reports.

Canadaland does a deep dive on the "King of Canadian Conservative Shitposting." **Jeff Ballingall**, an ex-Navigator consultant, is now "weaponizing Facebook against the Liberals" with attack videos and waves of online followers, the news site reports.

Our stories from yesterday:

- Liberals pledge cash to make hospitals greener — through an action plan PCs pledge to scrap
- In Brief: 'Patrick Bland,' the curious case of Mike Strange, no more mandatory high heels, and gender-neutral birth certificates
- Parties spar over deficit spending and cuts in Progressive Conservative platform
- Recently proposed private member's bills: palliative care, gas price controls and flood avoidance

In other news:

The country's two biggest newspaper firms have inked a deal to swap 41 newspapers — and promptly shut down most of them in regions where they compete with existing publications. Announced Monday, the agreement between Postmedia Network Canada Corp. and Torstar Corp. is an attempt to shore up steadily leaking ad revenues as print media struggles to stay afloat in the wake of Ottawa's rejection of subsidies for the industry. On top of wiping out nearly 300 full-time and part-time jobs, the closings will leave dozens of communities with a single newspaper, mostly in Ontario, the *Globe and Mail* reports. That may be why Canada's competition watchdog aims to review the deal, *CTV* notes.

TVO offers up a brief history of the LCBO, those buzzkillers, from morality background checks to brown paper bags.

Premier **Kathleen Wynne**, abroad on a trade mission, has inked \$1 billion in business deals with China that will create more than 1,100 jobs in Ontario, the *Star* reports.

Meet the new director of the embattled York Region school board. **Louise Sirisko** is a special education expert who's "willing to listen, and learn" – a necessary trait after two years of controversy around the board's perceived insensitivity and entitlement, the *Star* reports.

The blowback from the free-speech controversy at Wilfrid Laurier University has arrived, and its faculty are seeking shelter. More than 60 professors wrote an open letter asserting the institution must protect faculty and students who are being targeted online and off due to the fallout from its reprimand of teaching assistant **Lindsay Shepherd** earlier this month, the *Globe* reports.

Come 10:30 a.m., tune into our live blog of Question Period shenanigans at Queen's Park [here](#).

In the opinion pages:

- **John Michael McGrath** labels Progressive Conservative Leader **Patrick Brown's** new platform *Liberal-lite*.
- **Andrew Coyne** calls the fresh PC policies *vapid mush*.
- **Barrie McKenna** says the pledges are "fiscally risky and economically incoherent."
- **Mark Bonkokoski**, however, claims Brown is brewing the antidote to the Liberal Kool-Aid.
- **Jerry Agar** argues Brown is trying to beat Wynne by being Wynne, in his policies anyway.
- **Steve Paikin** stresses the Tory platform's thumbs-up from a respected economic analysis institute.
- Finally, Postmedia says you should side with freedom-loving Laurier profs.

Bills

Resuming the debate adjourned on Nov. 27 on the motion for Second Reading of Bill 175, An Act to implement measures with respect to policing, coroners and forensic laboratories and to enact, amend or repeal certain other statutes and revoke a regulation.

Events

9 a.m.

Dipika Damerla, Minister of Seniors Affairs, will make an announcement, on behalf of Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Alzheimer Society of Ontario, 20 Eglinton Ave. W., 16th Floor, Toronto.

9 a.m.

Steven Del Duca, Minister of Transportation, will make an announcement. He will be joined by **Harinder Malhi**, MPP for Brampton-Springdale, **Amrit Mangat**, MPP for Mississauga-Brampton-South, **Vic Dhillon**, MPP for Brampton West, and **Linda Jeffrey**, Mayor of Brampton. MTO Carpool Lot, Courtney Park Dr., Mississauga

9 a.m.

Jeff Leal, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and **Mitzie Hunter**, Minister of Education will make an announcement. Perth Avenue Jr. Public School, 14 Ruskin Ave., Toronto.

9 a.m.

Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission will hold a hearing to consider applications for commercial radio licences to serve the Grimsby/Beamsville and Georgina markets. Holiday Inn Toronto Yorkdale, York North Centre Room, 3450 Dufferin St., Toronto

10 a.m.

Ontario PC Leader **Patrick Brown** will make an announcement. Leland Industries, 95 Commander Blvd., Scarborough.

10 a.m.

Grassy Narrows Chief, Elder, and Grandmother speak out for Mercury Home and Treatment Centre. Media Studio, Queen's Park, Toronto.

4:45 p.m. (CST)

Premier **Kathleen Wynne** to participate in a roundtable discussion and reception with members of the Canada China Business Council (3:45 a.m. EST). Westin Liberation Square, 222 Xinhua Rd., JieFangBei ShangQuan, Chongqing, China.

Liberals pledge cash to make hospitals greener — through an action plan PCs pledge to scrap

27.11.2017

The Liberal government pledged \$64 million on Monday to green projects at nearly 100 hospitals across the province, funded through the Climate Change Action Plan that the PCs plan to scrap should they form the next government next year.

The action plan is paid for with proceeds from Ontario's cap-and-trade auctions — the first three auctions raked in about \$1.5 billion this year, with the province poised to link with the Quebec-California carbon market Jan. 1.

At their policy convention last weekend, however, the Progressive Conservatives vowed to nix the broad greenhouse-gas reduction plan, dismantle cap and trade, and withdraw from the carbon market. The party, in its biggest break with current Liberal policies, promised to revert instead to a carbon tax should they take power after the June 7 election.

"We're going to stop sending hundreds of millions of dollars to California and to Quebec. We're going to keep all of the money here," PC energy critic **Todd Smith** told *QP Briefing* hours after the hospital retrofits announcement.

The auditor general has said that an estimated \$466 million will drain out of the Ontario economy in the three years after it meshes its market with California and Quebec, as carbon allowances come cheaper in those jurisdictions.

Asked whether a PC government would cancel the newly announced hospital retrofits — a program that would extend for four years — Smith said: "Any contracts that have been signed, we'll live up to the obligations in those contracts." Otherwise, "we're clearly getting out of the cap-and-trade program," he said.

The contracts for the hospital projects will be signed prior to the election, according to the government.

Environment Minister **Chris Ballard** denounced PC Leader **Patrick Brown's** proposed shift to a carbon tax.

"There's more than some people feeling incredulous, really, that Mr. Brown would be so irresponsible as to scrap a fantastic program like this cap and trade," he said Monday morning.

Ballard cited green upgrades for social housing and incentives to install more energy-efficient windows and insulation in homes. "These are all very positive ways that our cap-and-trade system drives down carbon emissions. It's something that Mr. Brown's plan can't touch," he said.

John Fraser, parliamentary assistant to the health minister, added that greenhouse-gas reductions aren't feasible "just with the tax that Mr. Brown's planning — it just won't work."

The PC promise to cancel most Grit green efforts under the Climate Change Action Plan would see electric vehicle supports and building retrofits canned, among other projects. The first round of hospital upgrades would remain intact, however, wrapping up by April.

Ballard's spokesperson said the new Tory platform would toss out plans for a slew of green projects, including:

- More than 500 hospital renovation projects;
- Repairs and retrofits to over 60,000 social housing units;
- 800 kilometres of bike lanes;
- 1500 more EV charging stations.

The PCs have said they would maintain the government's Regional Express Rail plans, which are currently budgeted with cap-and-trade funds.

The Tories project that the switch from cap-and-trade to a carbon tax would cost the government \$1.5 billion in the would-be PC government's first year, but they estimate that cancelling the Action Plan costs would save the government \$1.9 billion in each of the last three years of a four-year term.

The switch to a carbon tax would also bring in significantly more money, according to the PCs — \$2.4 billion more than cap and trade would by the 2021-22 fiscal year. That extra cash would be how the tax breaks in the platform are funded, which is why the PCs frame the carbon tax as "revenue neutral."

Cap and trade, in contrast, puts a ceiling on the amount of pollution companies in certain industries can emit. To raise that ceiling, they must buy allowances at auction or from other companies that notch below their emissions limits.

The premier has staunchly defended cap and trade as greener and more cost-effective. Fraser, meanwhile, said the new hospital upgrades — dubbed the Hospital Energy Efficiency Program — would eliminate five megatons of greenhouse gasses by 2050, with more than \$60 million in energy savings that would go back into green efforts.

About 65 per cent of the 180 projects at 98 hospitals on track for this year are heating, ventilation and air conditioning retrofits and replacements, while the bulk of the others are new LED lighting, according to the health ministry.

At the Hospital for Sick Children in downtown Toronto, where the announcement took place Monday morning, upgrades are slated to include more efficient lighting, a new water distribution system and refurbished cooling tower. Across the street at Toronto General Hospital, new cooling units for the server room are in the works.

With energy costs an ongoing issue for the beleaguered Liberal government, Ballard appeared to use the Toronto Argonauts' Grey Cup win Sunday as an upbeat morality tale ahead of next year's election.

"I really liked yesterday's game because it reminds me once again that when you're behind and some people think you don't have a chance how you can dig down deep and deliver fantastic results," he said.

Recently proposed private member's bills: Gas price controls

27.11.2017

Regulate Ontario Gas Prices (to be tabled), Gilles Bisson

NDP House Leader **Gilles Bisson** would like to see Ontario regulate gas prices. The MPP's private member's bill would grant the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) the power to control the markup on gasoline on a weekly basis. The idea is that consumers wouldn't be gouged and there wouldn't be big price variations from region to region.

Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault** has expressed his opposition to the idea, according to a *Canadian Press* report. He cites studies that show jurisdictions with this kind of price control, such as Newfoundland, wind up with more expensive gas.

The bill is expected to be tabled this week.