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Your morning briefing

30.11.2017

Headlines

Ottawa has committed to fund a treatment centre for Grassy Narrows, a Northern Ontario First Nation plagued for decades with mercury contamination. The pledge comes half a century after a paper mill in Dryden dumped 9,000 kilograms of mercury into the English-Wabigoon River system, poisoning fish and people downstream, a *Toronto Star* investigation found. Chief **Simon Fobister** called the promise a "dream come true." The estimated \$4.5-million specialized medical centre means residents would no longer have to travel to Winnipeg or Kenora, Ont., for treatment.

Meanwhile, Ontario's medical watchdog has its jaws around cyber bullying doctors. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario has sanctioned six doctors for online attacks on their colleagues, according to the *Star*. Three more face disciplinary hearings over alleged "professional misconduct."

Our latest stories:

- Tory MPP to Grits: 'We're going to cut ...' you
- In Brief: Eyeball tattoos, mercury treatment and rental housing
- NDP seek to ban new for-profit clinics with amendment to omnibus health bill
- Hydro One unveils new-look bill for customers

Feel free to check out our 10:30 a.m. live blog of Question Period arglebargles and foofaraws [here](#).

In other news:

Women make up 58 per cent of public transit commuters in the GTA, census data shows, with gender inequality and pay gaps partly to blame, the *Star* found.

Telecommunications and intrigue fit like a phone in your hand. The *National Post* weaves a tale of spy vs. spy in an Ontario court case over who got a stake in WIND Mobile. About \$750 million is supposedly on the line.

Ottawa city hall may take Queen's Park up on its offer of allowing municipalities to impose mandatory taxes on all short-term accommodations — we're looking at you, Airbnb. Municipal finance staff are urging council to go for it, writes the *Ottawa Citizen's* **David Reevely**.

The *London Free Press* reports city council is gearing up for where to put pot shops, with a planning report suggesting they sit at least 500 metres from schools, pools, community centres and libraries — a go-to lounge spot for stoned "Where's Waldo?" lovers.

Port Hope homeowners are worried that a radioactive cleanup project did not share details about soil contamination, according to a *Global News* investigation.

Before Sears failed across Canada, it failed in Stratford — in the 1950s. The tale of its first decline and fall [here](#), courtesy of *TVO*.

From the opinion pages:

- The *Star* editorial board says the planned treatment centre in Grassy Narrows is long overdue.
- **John Miller**, a retired Ryerson University journalism professor, says the future looks grim for community newspapers.
- Former *CBC News* executive producer **Mark Bulgutch** tells readers they need to start paying for the content before their eyes.
- **Martin Regg Cohn** says Toronto school board trustees responded to pressure tactics, not research, in cutting cops from high schools.
- **Bob Hepburn** hails the PCs' new platform plank to build a comprehensive mental health system.
- The Fraser Institute's **Ben Eisen** argues PC Leader **Patrick Brown's** newly unveiled tax plan discourages expanding small businesses.

Bills

Resuming the debate adjourned on Nov. 27 on the motion for Second Reading of Bill 177, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes.

Resuming the debate adjourned on Nov. 28 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.

Private member's bills

Second Reading of Bill 74, An Act to proclaim the Trans Day of Remembrance. Tabled by NDP MPP **Cheri DiNovo**.

Committees

9 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Standing committee on justice policy, on Bill 174, An Act to enact the Cannabis Act, 2017, the Ontario Cannabis Retail Corporation Act, 2017 and the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017, to repeal two Acts and to make amendments to the Highway Traffic Act respecting alcohol, drugs and other matters. Committee Room 1, Queen's Park, Toronto.

2 p.m.

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs will meet. Room No. 151, Queen's Park.

Events

8:30-11:30 a.m.

Ontario Information and Privacy Commissioner **Brian Beamish** visiting Windsor to address key access and privacy issues. University of Windsor, Vanier Hall, Windsor.

8:30 a.m.

Hospitality & Tourism Industry is Launching A Sexual Violence and Harassment Intervention Training Program. **Indira Naidoo-Harris**, Minister of the Status of Women, **Kevin Flynn**, Minister of Labour, **Tony Elenis**, president ORHMA, **Dan Morrow**, head of Food & Beverage for MLSE, **Bill Pallett**, chairman of THRC, will be in attendance. Hyatt Regency Toronto Hotel, 370 King St. W., Toronto.

9 a.m.

Humber River Hospital, North America's first fully digital hospital, will be hosting a press event to mark the grand opening of Humber River Hospital's Command Centre, a first in Canada. Third-floor auditorium, Humber River Hospital, 1235 Wilson Avenue, Toronto.

9:15 a.m.

NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo to discuss Bill 74, Trans Day of Remembrance Act, 2016.

10 a.m.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) will be announcing a major inquiry to advance human rights in Ontario's criminal justice system. Ontario Human Rights Commission, 8th Floor Boardroom, 180 Dundas St. W., Toronto.

12 p.m.

Mitzie Hunter, Minister of Education, outlines the vision for public education in Ontario in the new economy. Royal York Hotel, Imperial Room, Toronto.

12 p.m.

Bardish Chagger, federal leader of the government in the House of Commons and small business and tourism minister, will deliver a keynote address during the WEConnect International annual "Power the Economy" conference. Beanfield Centre, Exhibition Place, 100 Princes' Boulevard, Toronto.

12:45 p.m.

Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, will make an announcement. Shoppers Drug Mart Pharmacy, 465 Yonge St., Toronto.

8:15 p.m. EST (9:15 a.m. CST)

Premier **Kathleen Wynne** to meet with Shenzhen Polytechnic. Shenzhen Polytechnic, West Campus, No. 2190 Liuxian Ave., Shenzhen, China.

10:15 p.m. EST (11:15 a.m. CST)

Wynne to witness an MOU contract signing ceremony between Ontario business delegates and their Chinese counterparts. Futian Shangri-La Hotel, 4088 Yi Tian Road, Futian District, Shenzhen, China.

11 p.m. EST (12:00 p.m. CST)

Wynne to deliver remarks at an economic speech and luncheon, Futian Shangri-La Hotel, Grand Ballroom 1&2, 4088 Yi Tian Road, Futian District, Shenzhen, China.

1:45 a.m. EST (2:45 p.m. CST)

Wynne to meet with the Beijing Genomics Institute and witness an MOU signing ceremony between Ontario business delegates and their Chinese counterparts. BGI Headquarters – China National GeneBank, Jinsha Road, Dapeng District, Shenzhen, China.

Hydro One unveils new-look bill for customers

29.11.2017

Customers of Ontario's largest energy company will open up a new-look bill in coming months

Hydro One has redesigned the monthly mailing to its customers, with the aim to make it easier to understand. The 12- to 18-month long redesign project, which involved 5,000 customer interviews and additional surveys, will be unveiled to customers beginning with December bills.

"It's probably been one of the largest sources of complaints from our customers," executive vice-president of customer care Ferio Pugliese said of bills that are frustrating to understand.

Pugliese explained that 35 per cent of the company's call-centre volume is related to understanding items on the bill, or billing practices. The redesign isn't just meant to give consumers peace of mind, but also reduce calls so Hydro One can focus on prioritizing other issues.

"This also reduces costs," he told *QP Briefing*.

The company's research found ratepayers wanted the "basics right up front," including what they owe, how much they used, and a chart to help visualize the context.

"What [customers] found most confusing was a lot of regulatory language," said Pugliese, adding the company reduced this text by condensing it to the important parts.

The new-look bill is also designed to be mobile-friendly for consumers checking their usage and how much they owe.

The redesign is part of a larger Hydro One effort to improve its public image following its 2015 privatization. Another initiative has seen the company voluntarily institute a moratorium on household power shutdowns during winter months for customers who owe money, so no one is left in the cold. The province later made the program mandatory for other companies.

In spite of its efforts, Hydro One has been repeatedly caught in the political crossfire at Queen's Park. The opposition parties frequently criticize the \$4.5-million earnings of CEO **Mayo Schmidt** and the company's recent Ontario Energy Board application to increase transmission rates. The NDP have for the past week criticized the company's request to implement prepaid hydro meters. Hydro One has also been criticized during Question Period for its proposed purchase of Washington-based energy company Avista, which was announced in July.

A hint at the province's energy politics will remain on hydro bills: the revamped Ontario Hydro bill will include a line item that spells out Fair Hydro Plan savings. Pugliese defends the decision on the grounds that consumers find it helpful. "We surveyed customers and asked if this was something they would like to see on their bill," he said.

NDP Leader **Andrea Horwath** was critical of the move. On the day that she again tabled a bill to make Hydro One wholly public, she claimed the government influences the company when it is convenient, but on other issues it hides behind a lack of control of the publicly-traded corporation.

"If you're wanting to advertise your political scheme on hydro bills, then you can also be telling Hydro One to ban prepaid hydro meters."

The Ontario government owns less than 50 per cent of Hydro One.

Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault** supported Hydro One's initiative, arguing it was a win for consumers.

"It really helps provide that clarity ratepayers are looking for when it comes to their bills," he said following Question Period.

Thibeault added that Hydro One will also make its re-design and findings available to other Ontario energy companies, which could voluntarily implement the new templates as soon as early 2018.