

Queen's Park Today – Daily Report April 11, 2018

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Quotation of the day

“What I do take issue with is the niqab and burka because they are masks which cover the face. I don't believe people should dress like ninjas.”

From a series of controversial [blog posts](#) written by Tanya Granic Allen that have resurfaced as she battles for the PC nomination in Mississauga Centre.

Today at Queen's Park

On the schedule

The House will convene in the morning to complete debate on a time allocation motion on **Bill 3**, Pay Transparency Act. The motion, which was introduced Tuesday, guarantees the bill will be referred back to the House for third reading no later than April 24.

Bill 6, Correctional Services Transformation Act, will also be debated in the morning.

In the afternoon, the House will continue second reading debate on the budget bill, **Bill 31**, Plan for Care and Opportunity Act. Including today, there are 16 sessional days left for the government to pass its budget legislation before the writ drops on May 9.

Tuesday's debates and proceedings

Tuesday, April 10 was Pay Equity Day, and MPPs at Queen's Park wore red to highlight the persistent wage gap between male and female workers. April 10 represents the day women typically need to work until to make what their male counterparts made by December 31 of the previous year.

To mark the occasion, the House debated a time allocation motion on **Bill 3**, Pay Transparency Act, legislation that aims to make it easier for women to secure more equitable wages from their employers.

The following private member's bills were introduced and granted first reading:

- NDP MPP **Catherine Fife** reintroduced **Bill 37**, Protecting Vulnerable Road Users Act, which would amend the Highway Traffic Act to create stiffer penalties for drivers who injure pedestrians and cyclists.
- Liberal MPP **Arthur Potts** reintroduced **Bill 38**, Youth Political Engagement Act, which aims to lower the voting age to 16.
- Liberal MPP **Soo Wong** introduced **Bill 39**, Protection of Vulnerable Seniors in the Community Act, which would make it easier for retirement home workers to report suspected abuse of seniors.
- Liberal MPP **Sophie Kiwala** and PC MPP **Todd Smith** reintroduced **Bill 40**, Garrett's Legacy Act (Requirements for Movable Soccer Goals), 2018, to improve youth safety on the soccer pitch.
- Liberal MPP **Soo Wong** introduced **Bill 41**, Marriage Amendment Act. The bill would allow Ontarians to object to a marriage through the issuer of a marriage licence, which would launch an investigation into the objection before a licence could be issued.

MPPs debated the second reading stage of **Bill 31**, Plan for Care and Opportunity Act, for the remainder of the afternoon.

In the Park

The Ontario Convenience Stores Association is hosting its MPP lobby day on Wednesday.

An MPP awareness day for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder will also be held at Queen's Park.

Topics of conversation

- Islamophobic and anti-homosexual tweets and blog posts from former PC leadership candidate **Tanya Granic Allen** have led PC leader **Doug Ford** to distance the party from his one-time rival.
 - Granic Allen, the social conservative who campaigned largely to repeal Premier **Kathleen Wynne**'s sex-ed curriculum, is facing criticism for social media posts in which she compares women wearing burkas to "bank robbers" and expresses "shock" that the country of Malta legalized same-sex marriage.
 - In response to her comments, a spokesperson for Ford's office told the *Toronto Star* "these comments do not reflect the position of Ontario PC Leader Doug Ford or the party."
 - On Tuesday, Premier Wynne called the comments "completely unacceptable," saying it is now up to PCs "to decide how they will go forward."
- Former **Dalton McGuinty** chief of staff **David Livingston**'s sentencing hearing will continue Wednesday. Livingston was found guilty of unauthorized use of a computer in January for his role in deleting email communications pertaining to the Liberal's \$1 billion gas plant scandal in 2012.
 - The first day of Livingston's sentencing hearing was held on February 26, but Justice **Timothy Lipson** decided to delay his ruling until April 11. The Crown is seeking a six-month prison sentence.
- Twin reports were released Monday from the Clean Economy Alliance suggesting the province's cap-and-trade program has not devastated the provincial economy as skeptics said it would.
 - Analyzing GDP, employment rates, gasoline and natural gas sales, the Clean Economy Alliance found in the year after a price was placed on carbon emissions, the provincial economy marked a seven-year high in GDP growth. More than 150,000 jobs were added to the economy that year, and the unemployment rate dropped from 6.4 per cent in January 2017 to 5.5 per cent in January 2018.
 - A secondary report modelled the benefits and economic impacts of a revenue neutral carbon tax versus the current cap-and-trade plan. Both options were found to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to have no negative impact on the provincial economy.
- CUPE hospital staff from the Greater Toronto Area will join other health care sector workers in wearing a sticker that reads "Together for Respect" on their uniforms in silent protest of the ongoing labour dispute between hospitals and their unionized staff. Beginning April 18, rallies will be held at hospitals across the province to demonstrate workers' solidarity in securing a fair contract.

- After being booted from the PC caucus Monday, MPP **Michael Harris'** seat in the legislature has been shifted to the back corner of the House beside former Tory leader **Patrick Brown** and former PC MPP **Jack MacLaren**.
 - Premier **Kathleen Wynne** said Tuesday she spoke with Harris over the weekend about his upcoming eye surgery, but that she had no idea about the sexual harassment allegations against him at that time.
 - Wynne said sexual harassment is "systemic," which is why it's important that victims are listened to: "It's very hard to come forward to talk about these issues, so everyone in positions of power and positions of authority needs to make sure people feel safe."
- Support for PC leader **Doug Ford** in the GTA's 905 region remains strong, according to the latest Ipsos [poll](#) conducted for Global News. In the 905, 45 per cent of decided voters support Ford compared to 26 per cent who support Liberal leader **Kathleen Wynne** and 24 per cent who support **Andrea Horwath** and the NDP. The Tories also enjoy a solid lead in central, eastern and southwestern Ontario.
 - The Liberals retain a five-point lead in the polls over the PCs in the 416 and are more popular with millennial voters aged 18-34. The New Democrats are polling well ahead of the other parties in northern Ontario with 45 per cent support.
 - The PCs are currently enjoying a double-digit lead over the Liberals and the NDP among men and women between 35-54 and 55-plus.
- Finance Minister **Charles Sousa** [announced](#) Tuesday that 87 new independent and chain grocers in Ontario will now be licensed to sell beer and cider.

Today's events

April 11 at 8:30 a.m. — Toronto

Premier **Kathleen Wynne** will deliver remarks at the Together We Care conference hosted by the Ontario Long Term Care & Ontario Retirement Communities Associations' at the Toronto Congress Centre.

April 11 at 12 p.m. — Toronto

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

April 11 at 1:30 p.m. — Toronto

Housing Minister **Peter Milczyn** will make an announcement at the Regent Park Presentation Centre.

April 11 at 6 p.m. — Toronto

The Jamaican Canadian Association will host a provincial leadership debate on issues facing the black community with Premier **Kathleen Wynne**, NDP leader **Andrea Horwath** and Green Party of Ontario leader **Mike Schreiner** participating.

April 11 at 6 p.m. — Sudbury

PC leader **Doug Ford** will hold a rally at Cambrian College. Ford will spend the earlier portion of the day touring local businesses and factories in the Sudbury region.

Appointments and nominations

Ontario Liberal Party

- Entrepreneur and community leader **Ramon Estaris** was nominated Sunday to run for the Liberals in York Centre.

PC Party of Ontario

- Former PC nomination candidate **Vikram Singh** was disqualified from running for the Tories in Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas. The party's provincial nominations committee, which had overturned the results of the previous nomination meeting, offered no explanation as to why.
 - Singh, a lawyer from Dundas, claims in court documents that he won more votes than winner **Ben Levitt** at the riding's original nomination meeting in May 2017. The "disorganized" and "hostile" nomination meeting led to an ongoing police investigation.
 - In December 2017, Singh dropped the lawsuit he had launched against the PC party over the contested nomination results. An affidavit from the legal proceedings from then-PC Party president **Rick Dykstra** said Singh had "inspired mistrust" during his nomination campaign.
 - The CBC previously reported that the Tories were "worried about public perception if the Singh family's decades-old link to the militant Sikh group Babbar Khalsa resurfaced."

Funding announcements

Ministry of Economic Development and Growth

- Economic Development Minister **Steven Del Duca** announced Tuesday a \$528 million contract for LRT vehicle Alstom.
- The funding, a slap in the face the ministry's previous streetcar supplier Bombardier, is expected to create 120 full-time jobs in Brampton while supporting an additional 500 spinoff jobs.
- The funding will help Alstom build a new manufacturing facility that will ensure Metrolinx has access to vehicles needed to open new LRT projects throughout the GTHA.

Treasury Board Secretariat

- Ontario will invest \$1 million over two years in the Digital Literacy + Coding Project that will help thousands of young people aged 12 to 15 learn how to code.
 - It is part of a long-term pledge by the government to boost the number of STEM students graduating in Ontario by 25 per cent to 50,000 annually within five years.

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

- The government is investing \$1.9 million over four years in White River Forest Products through the Jobs and Prosperity Fund. The update and modernization of the plant will help create and retain 176 jobs in White River.

News briefs — Governmental

Province holding off on legislated solution to ongoing York U strike

More than 3,000 striking faculty members at York University have rejected the university's latest contract offer. The strike, now entering its sixth week, shows no signs of concluding with a bargained agreement.

"We are willing to return to bargaining if CUPE presents a realistic counter-offer that can form the basis of an agreement," York spokesperson **Barbara Joy** told the *Toronto Star*. "As of now, they haven't done that."

Union reps told the *Star* the overwhelming rejection of the school's latest offer — 1,975 voted against ratification to just 319 in favour — provides them with "a strong mandate for our bargaining team and a powerful message to the administration to resume bargaining fairly."

Advanced Education Minister **Mitzie Hunter** told reporters Tuesday there is a deal to be had, and that the bargaining table is a better place to hammer out that agreement than to have one imposed by Queen's Park. "I am urging both sides, York and CUPE local 3903, to come to the table and to have the conversation they need to have to provide a resolution."

Early Tuesday, Premier **Kathleen Wynne** said both sides need to keep talking now that the latest vote has failed. "We have said to the university that there are contingency plans in place so that students will not lose their year," she said. "That is the most important thing from my perspective."

News briefs — Non-governmental

Liberal energy conservation and climate plans out of sync: Saxe

Environmental Commissioner **Dianne Saxe** is calling on the government to square its energy conservation goals with their own climate legislation.

Released Tuesday, the commissioner's latest [report](#) says provincial climate law requires Ontario to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels by 2030. But Saxe says the Liberals have no plan in place to make that happen.

"Ontarians must be prepared to reduce emissions from fossil fuel use by 40 to 50 per cent in the next 13 years," Saxe said. "This means more conservation and converting some fossil fuel uses to electricity instead," especially now that coal-fired generators have been phased out of the provincial energy portfolio.

Environment and Climate Change Minister **Chris Ballard** told reporters Tuesday that government policy does, in fact, tie together the Liberal's twin aims of reducing GHG emissions and promoting energy conservation. Ballard pointed to the GreenON rebate program and the cap-and-trade initiative as two key ways the government is allowing Ontarians to make choices that reduce their fossil fuel use. "These things are all in alignment," he said.

Green Party of Ontario head **Mike Schreiner** said it is "shocking" the province's energy strategy contradicts the Liberals' stated climate change obligations. Transportation and building heating are largely powered by oil and natural gas throughout Ontario, Schreiner said, and emissions are growing in both these sectors. "What is the point of having emissions targets if there is no plan for meeting them?"

Question Period

PC lead-off

Ontario debt limits

- Official opposition leader **Vic Fedeli** asked Premier **Kathleen Wynne** about Ontario's credit rating and why the government was risking the financial health of the province to win an election.
 - Wynne spoke of the "investments in people" that the Liberals have made since 2003.
 - Finance Minister **Charles Sousa** highlighted how Ontario's GDP outperforms that of Quebec.

Promise to lower corporate taxes

- Fedeli asked Wynne why the government has failed to implement its 2017 promise to lower corporate taxes to make the province more competitive.
 - Sousa told Fedeli the government did lower taxes by 22 per cent, making Ontario one of North America's most competitive jurisdictions.

NDP lead-off**Hospital overcrowding**

- NDP leader **Andrea Horwath** asked Premier Wynne, “Who is responsible for years of frozen hospital budgets and overcrowding?”
 - Health and Long-Term Care Minister **Helena Jaczek** said the government raised hospital operational funding by 65 per cent since 2003 to almost \$19 billion, with \$1 billion of that coming in the past two years alone.

Dental care

- Horwath asked Premier Wynne how the government settled on \$700 for a family of four for dental care each year when this is not enough to ensure proper dental care.
 - In a follow up, Horwath asked about the government’s plan to introduce a pharmacare plan and why so many people are excluded from their proposal.

Other questions:

- PC MPP **Monte McNaughton** asked Finance Minister Sousa about concerns the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has raised about burdens faced by small businesses.
- NDP MPP **Peggy Sattler** asked Premier Wynne about an ongoing fight at the Human Rights Tribunal about equal pay for midwives.
- PC MPP **Jeff Yurek** asked Health Minister Jaczek about the closure of a private mobility health centre in Elgin County.
- NDP MPP **Catherine Fife** asked Transportation Minister **Kathryn McGarry** why the government doesn’t crack down on drivers who seriously injury vulnerable road users like cyclists and pedestrians.
- PC MPP **Norm Miller** asked Health Minister Jaczek about whether the government would agree to keep two hospitals open in Parry Sound and Muskoka.
- NDP MPP **Cindy Forster** asked Advanced Education Minister **Mitzie Hunter** about the ongoing strike at York University by CUPE-backed research assistants and support staff.
- PC MPP **Todd Smith** asked Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault** about community disruptions caused by a wind development project in Prince Edward County.