

Queen's Park Today – Daily Report November 28, 2017

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Quotation of the day

“The issue is what are they going to cut. That question needs to be answered.”

Deputy Premier Deb Matthews says the PC Party's platform contains a \$12 billion hole that will lead to unidentified service cuts.

Today at Queen's Park

On the schedule

The House will convene at 9 a.m. to continue second reading debate on **Bill 177**, Stronger, Fairer Ontario Act. The government is likely to introduce a time allocation motion on the fall economic statement legislation.

Bill 177 and **Bill 175**, Safer Ontario Act, are both scheduled for debate in the afternoon.

A spokesperson for Government House Leader **Yasir Naqvi** said the government is aiming to pass the following six pieces of legislation before the end of the fall session on December 14:

- **Bill 139**, Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act;
- **Bill 142**, Construction Lien Act;
- **Bill 160**, Strengthening Quality and Accountability for Patients Act;
- **Bill 166**, Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, 2017;
- **Bill 174**, Cannabis, Smoke-Free Ontario and Road Safety Statute Law Amendment Act; and
- **Bill 177**, Stronger, Fairer Ontario Act.

Debates and proceedings

Bill 177, Stronger, Fairer Ontario Act, was debated briefly in the afternoon.

MPPs also debated the government's police oversight revamp legislation, **Bill 175**, Safer Ontario Act, at second reading. NDP members expressed opposition to provisions in the act they say will lower workplace protections standards for injured and pregnant police officers. The PCs say police officers were not consulted about the update to the Police Services Act, and that the changes reveal a provincial distrust of officers.

Bill 148, Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, was granted royal assent on Monday afternoon. This enacts a \$14 minimum wage on January 1, 2018.

A number of provisions in the bill come into effect immediately, including the ban on employers misclassifying their employees as "independent contractors" and the ban on mandatory high heel shoes. Increases to the length of critical illness leave and parental leave come into effect on December 3; rules around paying seasonal and temporary workers the same as full-time employees come into effect on April 1, 2018.

PC MPP **Sam Oosterhoff** introduced **Bill 182**, Compassionate Care Act. If passed, Oosterhoff's private members' bill would mandate the minister of health to develop a provincial framework to support improved access to hospice palliative care. The framework would have to be updated every five years.

In the park

The Dairy Farmers of Ontario and FilmOntario both have lobby day and evening receptions scheduled.

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs will also hold a lobby day.

The Ontario Council of Hospital Unions has an MPP breakfast scheduled and the Ontario Pork Producers has a reception scheduled in the afternoon.

Topics of conversation

- The Ontario Liberal Party is calling on the PC leader to provide the public with details about the Hamilton police force's investigation into allegations of fraud at the Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas PC nomination meeting. The OLP wants to know which PC officials have been questioned and whether either PC Party director **Bob Stanley** or PC Party president **Rick Dykstra** are under criminal investigation.
- *Globe and Mail* columnist **Campbell Clark** looks at the nationwide trend of politicians offering voters "guarantees." From Brown to **Jagmeet Singh** to **Jason Kenney**, Clark called the guarantee "a piece of consumer-marketing hucksterism that is particularly ill-suited for the process of choosing a government."
- Premier **Kathleen Wynne** is in Chongqing, China on Tuesday to hold a roundtable with members of the Canada China Business Council. According to the premier's office, the Ontario delegation reached business agreements exceeding \$1 billion while in Nanjing. These are expected to create 1,100 jobs in Ontario.

- The Toronto Board of Trade released a transit uploading strategy it is calling “Superlinx.” The TBOT wants Ontario to upload transit operations from across the GTA and the Waterloo Region in order to build a better-integrated system and fare model more quickly. The organization said a Superlinx operator could build transit lines “better and faster than is currently possible.”
- Researchers at the University Health Network’s OpenLab have developed a patient care management tool that will be used by 27 hospitals across the province. Patient Oriented Discharge Summary or PODS is a “standardized yet adaptable tool” that provides patients with easy-to-understand instructions to follow after being discharged from hospital.
- An Ontario Superior Court Justice has certified two class action lawsuits against Ontario prisons. The lawsuits concern the frequency of staffing-related lockdowns at provincial corrections facilities from May 2009 – November 2017.
- Ontario Power Generation announced the Darlington refurbishment project remains on-time and on-budget as it begins the next major phase of the refurbishment, the removal of Unit 2’s reactor components.

Today’s events



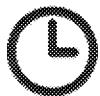
November 28 at 9 a.m. — Mississauga

Transportation Minister **Steve Del Duca** will make an announcement in the Ministry of Transportation parking lot with four Liberal MPPs from Brampton: **Harinder Malhi, Amrit Mangat, Vic Dhillon** and **Linda Jeffrey**.



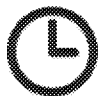
November 28 at 9 a.m. — Toronto

Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Minister **Jeff Leal** and Education Minister **Mitzie Hunter** will make an announcement at Perth Avenue Junior Public School.



November 28 at 9 a.m. — Toronto

Minister of Seniors Affairs **Dipika Damerla** will make a health care announcement at the Alzheimer Society of Ontario.



November 28 at 10 a.m. — Scarborough

PC leader **Patrick Brown** will make an announcement at Leland Industries.

 November 28 at 10 a.m. — Toronto

Grassy Narrows representatives will hold a press conference at Queen's Park to call on government to commit to building and operating a Mercury Home and Treatment Center in Grassy Narrows so that people suffering symptoms of mercury poisoning can receive care near their families and community.

 November 28 at 10 a.m. — Toronto

Lieutenant Governor **Elizabeth Dowdeswell** and Minister of Seniors Affairs **Dipika Damerla** will present the 2017 Ontario Senior Achievement Awards in the Lieutenant Governor's suite at Queen's Park.

 November 28 at 12:30 p.m. — Toronto

Infrastructure Minister **Bob Chiarelli** will address the Empire Club of Canada at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel. Chiarelli will discuss how the province's long-term infrastructure plan is "building better lives."

Funding announcements

- The **Ministry of Economic Development and Growth** announced \$5 million in funding for Think Research Corporation. The ministry said the investment will help the health care software company "improve and expand its cloud-based technology platform and services" while creating 228 new jobs in Toronto.
- The **Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care** announced \$1.5 million in funding for 10 energy-efficiency projects at Sick Kids Hospital. The funding flows through the province's \$64 million Hospital Energy Efficiency Program, which is funded by cap-and-trade revenues.

PC platform hits Queen's Park

As expected, the PC Party's "People's Guarantee" dominated the conversation at Queen's Park on Monday. Dubbing the platform a "magazine," the Liberals maintain the PC strategy is a vehicle for \$12 billion in service cuts. Deputy Premier **Deb Matthews** conceded the PC Party's marketing and political calculus could be "advantageous" but warned that leader **Patrick Brown**'s record dictates that he will "say anything to get elected" and then do a "bait-and-switch."

"There are \$12 billion worth of cuts embedded in this. They don't talk at all about where these cuts are going to be made but we know they will come from healthcare and they will come from education because those are the biggest parts of the budget of Ontario," Matthews told reporters. "Of course they're not advertising that."

Finance Minister **Charles Sousa** took issue with the Tories plan to run a deficit in their first year in office: "The first step in managing debt is to eliminate the deficit and control the debt using the measures like we are now."

Sousa said Brown's carbon tax will be twice as expensive as the existing cap-and-trade program and warned that the PC's projections for finding savings in the system are unattainable: "My concern is his projections to find savings in the system when we are already doing those measures in our [Program Review, Renewal and Transportation] PRRT programs. We are finding a billion in saving every year. My concern, is [Brown's] desire to find further cuts and fund increased spending with reduced revenues."

Asked about the possibility of a personal income tax cut being added to the Liberal Party's list of campaign promises, Sousa did not unequivocally rule it out.

Transportation Minister **Steve Del Duca** said he is not threatened by the Tories' promise to provide \$5 billion for subways because "we know what happens when conservatives come to power and want to talk about transit and transportation in this region. They are never courageous enough to level with the people of the region. They'll put nice numbers in the window — like they have done here with this plan that they have — and when they come to power they'll reverse course like they did a number of years ago by killing and filling the Eglinton subway."

PC MPP **Todd Smith** defended the plan's deficit projection as a necessary reversal to years of Liberal government waste. "It's really hard as a fiscal conservative to look at a \$2.8 billion shortfall in the first year, but we realize the mess the Liberals have put us into. If we're fortunate enough to form government in June next year, that's going to be a difficult year. However we have to unwind some of the things the Liberals have brought in like the expensive cap-and-trade system that is sending hundreds of millions of dollars to Hollywood and Quebec."

Smith called the Liberal government's accusation that his party will cut \$12 billion in services "laughable." He said after the first year the PC Party will balance the budget and begin repaying the province's debt.

NDP leader **Andrea Horwath** said, if people don't think Premier **Kathleen Wynne** and the Liberals have been "palatable" over the last couple of years, then "they have no reason to switch to the conservatives because their plan is pretty much identical. And that's worrisome. The thing that makes it even worse is these \$6 billion worth of cuts."

Horwath is only accusing the PC Party of projecting \$6 billion in hidden cuts because she is not counting cap-and-trade revenue losses as service cuts.

Question period

PC lead-off

Income tax cut

- PC Finance critic **Vic Fedeli** said Ontario used to be a province where “if you worked hard, spent wisely and saved diligently, a family could get ahead,” but since 2012 the province’s income status fell below the national average for the first time ever.
 - He blamed the stagnating middle class incomes on the Liberal government’s cozy relationship with “high-priced executives.”
- Fedeli said the only way to make life more affordable is to lower taxes, which is why the PC Party guarantee includes a 22.5 per cent cut to income tax for the middle class.
 - “We need to lower taxes in Ontario after years of Liberals raiding middle class families to pay their Liberal insiders,” said Fedeli.
- Finance Minister **Charles Sousa** said cutting revenues and reducing government spending is not what is best for the people of Ontario. He said page 76 of the PC’s plan makes it very clear that the party intends to pay for a tax cut by slashing more than \$12 billion from government services.
 - He noted multiple times that when PC leader **Patrick Brown** was a member of the Harper government, it presided over the biggest debt increase in the history of Canada. (Harper’s spending was related to lifting the country out of the 2008 recession).

Childcare

- PC MPP **Sylvia Jones** said the Liberal legacy is Ontarians carrying the highest childcare costs in the country. She said the PC plan would give a family with two children and a household income of \$55,000 a child care refund of over \$10,000.
- Treasury Board President **Deb Matthews** said the PC Party has “demonstrated their ability to promise anything to get elected and then, as soon as they get elected, change their mind.” She said the \$12 billion in cuts in the small font at the back of the “magazine” is in the tradition of the party.

Palliative care

- PC MPP **Jeff Yurek** said internal documents obtained by an FOI reveal the government will fall 35 per cent below its own target of expanding hospice access by the of the year.
- Health and Long-Term Care Minister **Dr. Eric Hoskins** asked why there isn’t a single word about palliative care in the party’s “People Magazine” plan.
 - Hoskins said the only PC plan is to “cut, cut, cut.”

Climate change

- During a friendly Liberal question about climate change, Environment Minister **Chris Ballard** said PC leader **Patrick Brown** would scrap the government's Climate Change Action Plan, which is currently "helping Ontarians fight climate change in their everyday lives through millions of dollars of investments in green solutions."
- The PCs heckled the Liberals on their environmental record, in particular that the government continues to allow water bottling companies to extract 7.6 million litres of water daily with expired permits.

NDP lead-off

Hydro One sell-off

- NDP leader **Andrea Horwath** asked how Hydro One's strategy of lining the pockets of private investors via the Avista purchase is good for Ontario's ratepayers.
 - "Now we learn that the privatized Hydro One — which apparently this government doesn't control, even though they said they would — wants its customers to pay yet again for new prepay meters."
- On Hydro One's prepaid electricity meters proposal, Horwath was adamant: "Prepaid meters do not belong in Ontario, period ... and this government needs to put a stop to it."
- Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault** reiterated that the prepaid meters proposal will be a voluntary, opt-in program. He outlined the benefits of the Fair Hydro Plan.

Health care worker safety

- NDP MPP **Cindy Forster** asked about the CUPE report on workplace violence in the health care sector that was released at Queen's Park on Monday morning.
- Labour Minister **Kevin Flynn** admitted violence facing hospital workers and homecare workers is an issue, but the government has been working on it for two years. He said the first phase of that work had to do with hospitals, but it is now beginning to study issues facing personal support workers.
 - "Violence in the healthcare sector is not an option," Flynn said.