

Briefing for May 7, 2018

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Your morning briefing

07.05.2018 Jessica Smith Cross 0

Headlines

A Progressive Conservative candidate under fire for bigoted remarks is distancing himself from his past comments and asking for compassion from the public over the things he posted online while struggling with mental illness between 2005 and 2013. "I was active on social media throughout much of this time, posting things that are so far removed from who I am and what I stand for that I can't even fathom my frame of mind in writing them," London West PC candidate **Andrew Lawton** [told QP Briefing Sunday](#).

Meanwhile, the Tories [fired high-profile social conservative Tanya Granic Allen](#) as a candidate on Saturday after the Liberals held a press conference to alert the media to some of her past comments, including a 2014 speech in which she said hearing about the promotion of sex-ed and gay marriage in her ancestral country of Croatia made her "almost vomit in disbelief." On Sunday, the Liberals doubled down on their attack and called on to explain why neo-Nazis had endorsed his campaign.

A new poll in *Maclean's* should be music to NDP ears: The PCs are at 40 per cent of decided voters, the NDP at 30 and the Liberals at 23. Moreover, Pollara found that Liberal support is much softer than that of the NDP — more decided Liberal voters would flock to the NDP if it appeared that party would have the best shot at stopping **Doug Ford** than New Democrat voters would decamp to the Liberals in the opposite scenario — and voters have significant warm and fuzzy feelings about NDP leader **Andrea Horwath**.

Journalist and activist **Desmond Cole** joined [our weekend podcast](#) to talk about race and activism, and how they shape politics and public policy in Ontario. Cole weighed in with his view of racism in Ford Nation politics and why he believes the Liberal government's efforts toward police reform have failed. Please note, this podcast contains explicit language.

In case you missed our other recent stories:

- [PCs drop Tanya Granic Allen as a candidate after Liberals release video of her comments on sex ed and gay marriage](#)
- [Doug Ford criticizes "golden parachutes" at Avista, but doesn't offer details](#)
- [Human rights watchdog applauds law to curb solitary confinement, despite broader justice system concerns](#)
- [Milloy: An all-candidates' debates survival guide](#)
- [Who's lobbying for whom](#)

In other news:

The Liberals are asking Elections Ontario to investigate the Tories' "Ford Nation Live," a series of television news-style videos produced by the campaign, which use a staffer in place of a journalist. "Nowhere on the Ford's Fake News videos does the Conservative Party identify itself as having created it — a requirement in the Elections Financing Act," the Liberals said in a statement.

Justin Trudeau isn't planning to campaign with Wynne, according to the *Globe and Mail*, while **Andrew Scheer** is going to lend a hand (and probably a few smiles) to the Ford campaign and **Jagmeet Singh** will help out Horwath, his former leader.

A "tidal wave" of government spending announcements has washed over Sudbury, right before the election, local politicians tell CBC.

In the opinion pages:

- Ford is the least experienced and the one with the most to lose if he performs badly in tonight's debate, according to Bill Kelly.
- Ford might appear to be under sedation as he aims to keep his temper in check in the debate, but the real test should be what kind of premier he wants to be, writes Adam Radwanski. (subscribers)
- **Adam Kassam**, chief resident physician in the department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation at Western University, suggests appointing "a Senator of Health" to take health-care decisions out of political hands.
- **Paul Wells** notes that making bogus threats about an opponent's plans to gut health care usually precedes an election loss.
- **Micahel Coren** says "I told you so" over the booting of **Tanya Granic Allen**.

Bills and Motions

Second Reading of Bill Pr79, An Act respecting the Kingston Health Sciences Centre.

Second Reading of Bill Pr80, An Act respecting Emmanuel Bible College.

Second Reading of Bill Pr81, An Act to revive Home Air Support Inc.

Second Reading of Bill Pr82, An Act to revive 504260 Ontario Ltd.

Second Reading of Bill Pr83, An Act to revive Esquire Ventures Inc.

Second Reading of Bill Pr84, An Act to revive 2297970 Ontario Inc.

Second Reading of Bill Pr85, An Act to revive Tencrest Realty Ltd.

Second Reading of Bill Pr86, An Act respecting the Luso Canadian Charitable Society.

Second Reading of Bill Pr87, An Act to revive 2258733 Ontario Inc.

Second Reading of Bill Pr88, An Act to revive James Wilson Holdings Limited.

Third Reading of Bill 53, An Act respecting the establishment of minimum government contract wages. Hon. Mr. Flynn.

Third Reading of Bill 31, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes. Hon. Mr. Sousa.

Events

9:30 a.m.

Premier Wynne to make an announcement alongside Minister **Michael Coteau**. 65 Hartsdale Drive
Etobicoke.

9:30 a.m.

RNAO and ONA to hold joint media conference. Media studio, Queen's Park, Toronto.

12 p.m.

Marie-France Lalonde, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, will unveil a monument honouring the work of correctional services staff. Whitney Plaza, North-east corner of Queens Park Crescent East and Grosvenor Street, Toronto.

1 p.m.

PC Parliamentary Leader **Vic Fedeli** to discuss Focus on Finance. Media studio, Queen's Park, Toronto.

2 p.m.

Wynne, Horwath and Green Party leader **Mike Schreiner** to participate in a Youth Town Hall hosted by Laidlaw Foundation. Daniels Spectrum, 585 Dundas Street East, Toronto.

6 p.m.

Wynne, Horwath and and Ford to participate in leaders' debate hosted by City TV.

Doug Ford criticizes “golden parachutes” at Avista, but doesn’t offer details

04.05.2018 David Hains 0

PC Leader **Doug Ford** found another way to provoke anger against Hydro One, this time by calling a press conference to criticize the "golden parachutes" that executives from power company Avista will receive following its purchase by Ontario's largest hydro company.

"I don't believe we should be paying \$50 million when people are struggling to pay their hydro bills," he said at a downtown Toronto hotel, flanked by two novelty cubes of fake bundles of \$100 bills meant to represent payouts to executives. The cash cubes had been lent to the campaign by a supporter.

"Paid for with your hard-earned money, that's \$50 million in payouts going straight into the pockets of American hydro executives," added Ford, whose campaign team handed out thick Securities and Exchange Commission regulatory filings to show the numbers. The Washington-based company Avista was the subject of a \$4.4-billion acquisition initiated in 2017 (\$6.7 billion including debt). The buyout still has regulatory hurdles to clear before it is finalized.

Ford was asked multiple times if he thought the Hydro One acquisition was "bad" or if he would cancel the deal if elected premier. He declined to answer the questions and also did not offer specifics as to how he would reverse executive compensation at Avista, which is not yet owned by Hydro One. "I'm going to leave it up to the new board because I'm going to fire the \$6-million man and the board," he said, referring to Hydro One CEO **Mayo Schmidt**. The government of Ontario owns 47.4 per cent of the shares of Hydro One, a publicly-traded company.



David Hains

✓@DavidHains

Doug Ford's presser features two large cubes of fake \$100, enough to encourage BREAKING BAD's Hule to take a swan dive.

11:32 AM - May 4, 2018

The Ford presser followed a pattern that has been established at his other Hydro-related announcements, which have tended to be long on anger and short on policy details.

Ford previously said that as his first act as premier he would fire Schmidt, who earned \$6.2 million in 2017 compensation. He left it to PC energy critic **Todd Smith** to explain that,

although the government can't directly fire Schmidt, the PCs would threaten to fire the board unless they did so, and would replace it with people who would fire Schmidt. The PCs did not say how much this would cost at the time.

It then emerged that Schmidt would receive a \$10.7-million severance package in this scenario, as a result of a compensation change the board recently approved and which was mentioned in the company's management proxy circular. Ford later expressed anger at this amount, and called on the Hydro board and Schmidt to resign. He has also released his hydro plan, which is the same as **Patrick Brown's** in that it preserves the Fair Hydro Plan launched by the Liberals and promises to cut prices by a further 12 per cent, in part by reallocating Hydro One dividends that would otherwise be spent elsewhere.

Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault** was quick to criticize Ford's announcement. In a statement, he called Ford's claim that Ontarians would pay for Avista's executive compensation a "lie," adding: "Hydro One customers have not paid one penny to U.S. hydro executives at Avista. Nor will they in the future."

Thibeault elaborated that "In 2017 alone, the U.S. company that Hydro One is purchasing [Avista] turned a profit of over \$115 million USD. Salaries and severance payments do not come from Hydro One customers. The acquisition of Avista will not cost Ontario customers a dime."

In late 2017, Schmidt told *QP Briefing* that the general trend in the energy industry is for consolidation that will leave fewer but larger companies. Part of Hydro One's strategy is to be ahead of the curve on that trajectory, he added by way of explanation.

Tory leaders have a history of standing next to over-sized cubes of cash. Brown did it last summer to stress the Liberal cash-for-access scandal. And **Tim Hudak** campaigned beside what appear to be the same pallets of fake bills at the site of the cancelled Mississauga gas plant in 2014.