

Infomart Newsletters

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Morning News Clippings

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Date: Wednesday, January 24, 2018
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Clippings Summary

News - 6 Results



Have Wynne's Liberals learned their lesson?; With the conviction of a former McGuinty aide, one wonders if the party has moved away from blatantly political decision-making

The Globe and Mail - Wed Jan 24 2018
Tone: **Negative**
Byline: MARCUS GEE

Ad Value: \$16,312
Reach: 309154 **Page:** A9

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www.hydroworld.com - Tue Jan 23 2018
Tone: **Neutral**
Permalink

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Peterborough This Week - Tue Jan 23 2018

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Full Articles



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When a judge found the chief of staff to Dalton McGuinty guilty of deleting government records, **Ontario** Premier Kathleen Wynne was quick to distance herself from the whole affair. "This matter involved former staff to the former premier," her spokeswoman said.

That is correct as far as it goes. There is nothing to connect her to the misdeeds uncovered in the trial of McGuinty aide David Livingston. She has condemned those misdeeds.

Her spokeswoman went on to say "this is not how anyone in government should operate, and it is not how a Premier's office should operate."

But Ms. Wynne and the Liberal government she leads do not get a free pass. She served under that "former premier" as a leading cabinet minister. She was co-chair of the Liberals' 2011 election campaign. Fear of losing that election helped lead the Liberal government to cancel two new **natural gas power** plants, in **Oakville** and Mississauga, that were facing noisy local opposition.

The decision was blatantly political. The Liberals were in danger - they eked out a minority in the end - and they wanted to get the **gas**-plant issue off the table before facing the voters. The cost to the **public** purse was immense: up to \$1.1-billion when all the expenses, from moving the plants to settling with the builders, were totted up. Two damning reports from **Ontario's** Auditor-General paint a clear picture of mismanagement.

These events formed the context for the trial of Mr. Livingston and his co-accused, deputy chief of staff Laura Miller (who was found not guilty). The opposition parties at Queen's Park were on the hunt, trying to ferret out documents that would reveal the Liberals' wrongdoing in the **gas**-plants affair. The Liberals were struggling desperately to fend them off. Under attack, Mr. McGuinty abruptly announced his resignation and prorogued the legislature.

That, says Justice Timothy Lipson of the **Ontario** Court of Justice, was the "grim political backdrop" against which Mr. Livingston sought special access to computers in the premier's office. He had the hard drives wiped clean. The judge calls it "a 'scorched earth' strategy, where information that could be potentially useful to adversaries, both within and outside of the Liberal Party, would be destroyed."

This is not ancient history. It didn't happen under a Conservative or an NDP government. It happened under a Liberal government, the direct predecessor to the one that is still in **power**.

Ms. Wynne said after becoming Premier that she was sorry for the mistakes the government had made. Her message was that the Liberals had learned their lesson. But have they? The original sin here was the cancellation of the **gas** plants. The Liberals threw away hundreds of millions of dollars to hold off defeat at the polls.

They are still doing it. Last spring, Ms. Wynne faced a growing **consumer** revolt over rising **electricity rates**. Her polling numbers were dire and an election, scheduled for June of this year, was approaching. In an obvious panic, she announced a **plan** to cut **rates** by a quarter.

She would accomplish that mainly by lifting some **electricity** costs off the shoulders of current **ratepayers** and piling them onto future ones. By stretching out the repayment of **hydro-utility** debts, she would lower the interest payments in the short term. It is no different than choosing a smaller car or mortgage payments and taking longer to repay. It hurts less at first, but costs much more in the end. The province's Financial Accountability Officer estimated the net cost

to taxpayers at \$21-billion, a figure that puts the **gas**-plants billion in the shade.

So, really, the Liberals learned nothing from the **gasplants** mess. Back then, they were willing to waste a fortune in **public** funds to save their own skin. Now, they are willing to waste an even bigger fortune to precisely the same end. A thirst for self-preservation whatever the cost is the constant.

The only thing that has changed is the scale of their ambition.

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Sean Conway is setting aside his guitar to stand at the podium and run for **Peterborough's** member of provincial parliament.

On Monday (Jan. 22) Conway won his party's nomination and will be running against Conservative Dave Smith and Liberal-incumbent Jeff Leal.

According to a statement by the NDP, Conway is a passionate musician who wishes to drive arts funding.

"Sean has already been out in the community talking to folks about [party leader] Andrea Horwath's **plan** to bring **Hydro** One back into **public** hands and get control over our **hydro** bills again, and the NDP **plan** to implement truly universal pharmacare," says **Oshawa** MPP Jennifer French in the statement.

The sale of **Hydro** One, rising **hydro rates**, minimum wage and health care are already talking points headed into the June provincial election.

"I'm excited to be representing the NDP and to be on Andrea's team for the June 2018 election," said Conway.

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The collapse of a **wind turbine** in Chatham-Kent is another reason to be concerned about a **wind** farm in Dutton Dunwich, the municipality's mayor says.

Photos of the toppled tower in a **wind** farm southwest of Chatham have been shared on social media and sparked debate about the safety of **wind** turbines that dot Southwestern **Ontario**.

Dutton Dunwich Mayor Cameron McWilliam said the tower collapse is particularly concerning because Invenergy, the original owner of the Raleigh **wind** farm in Chatham-Kent, is the same company behind the **wind** farm in his municipality.

"Normally when that happens, any new construction it's all halted until it can be determined what happened," he said. "It just makes sense."

Invenergy received approval from the **Independent Electricity** System Operator (**IESO**) in 2016 to build a **wind** farm in Dutton Dunwich even though residents voted overwhelmingly against **wind** farms in a 2014 referendum.

The Chicago-based company is working through the planning process for project, called the Strong Breeze **Wind** Farm, and construction of between 16 and 20 turbines could begin next year.

McWilliam said he has always had an issue with how the project proposes setbacks of 550 metres from a house, which he said is not far enough considering the **greater** length of the towers.

The turbines at the Raleigh farm are 80 metres high, according to a 2009 document from the **Ontario** Ministry of the Environment.

Invenergy has proposed the towers in Dutton Dunwich be 110 metres high.

"A taller structure has a bigger **turbine**, bigger blades," McWilliam said. "It's just common sense prevails that you know there's going to be more noise and more potential for vibration."

No one was injured in the tower collapse in Chatham-Kent that was discovered Friday morning. The collapse was a first for the municipality that is home to more than 500 **wind** turbines.

McWilliam said he thinks "they've just been lucky in Chatham-Kent." He pointed to other incidents in Europe, as well as a **turbine** which caught fire in **Huron** County.

Jamie Littlejohn, a spokesperson with Dutton Dunwich Opponents of **Wind** Turbines, said it could only take one **turbine** collapse to cause injuries.

He said he would like to see the Ministry of Environment and **Climate** Change take action following the Chatham-Kent incident, but he doesn't expect them to do much.

"I want them to put a stop to them all. That's what I would like to see happen, not just in Dutton Dunwich, but throughout **Ontario**," he said.

"That's what I would like to see, until the engineering is looked at a little better, find out what actually happened. There should be a moratorium on them."

McWilliam said he has received several emails from community members about tower collapse and he expects council will discuss it at a future meeting.

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Unplugged from reality of energy needs

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If you ever wonder how academics and activists combine to end up utopian, antipoor and anti-middle class all at once, look no further than calls for savings and pension divestment from **Canadian** oil and **gas** companies.

One academic from **Toronto**'s Ryerson University wrote of how "we are facing an impending disaster" from fossil **fuels**. The professor had several demands: That companies "reduce their **carbon footprint** to net zero" or be forcibly wound down.

If they don't voluntarily commit economic hara-kiri, towns and cities must even more massively subsidize green industries to put hydrocarbon industries out of business.

Finally, a demand that the Canada Pension **Plan** drop its oil and **natural gas** holdings.

That last idea isn't as unthinkable as it should be: New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced this month that he would direct the city's five pension funds to dump US\$5 billion worth of fossil fuel investments, which he boasted will be the biggest municipal divestment in the U.S. so far.

Calls to kill off carbon-based **energy** investments are also pushed by the more extreme voices in some environmental groups. One duo claimed (incorrectly) that "The end of the fossil-fuel era is on the horizon."

Such woolly thinking, a perennial problem in human societies, is evident in the notion that Canadians can just cut off one of the country's comparative economic advantages, oil and **gas**.

And then replace it, and the many products for end-use consumers, with **solar**, **wind** and other costly alternatives.

Reality check: Most alternative green **energy**, like **wind** and **solar**, is inconsistent in terms of **power** production, requiring conventional backups fuelled by fossil **fuels** or **nuclear energy**. Nor are other alternatives such as biofuels and batteries yet capable of replacing, for example, the jet fuel necessary to fly airplanes or the diesel that trucks use to transport food, medicine and **consumer** goods. Anyone who believes the end of fossil **fuels** is near is not operating in the realm of reason.

It's why the International **Energy** Agency wants more renewable and other **alternative energy**, but is realistic that oil and **natural gas** consumption will rise for decades. The IEA forecasts a 30 per cent rise in **energy** demand between

now and 2040, the equivalent of adding another China and India to the global demand curve. The IEA predicts the world will consume 105 million barrels of oil daily in 2040, up from an average of 96 million barrels daily in 2016. It also predicts **natural gas** consumption will rise dramatically. For instance, **natural gas** demand in China is forecast to triple between now and 2040.

Even California Gov. Jerry Brown, a champion of green **energy**, has continued to encourage oil and **natural gas** development. That's why California remains the thirdlargest oil-producing U.S. state. As 60 Minutes noted in a recent profile of Brown, "he refuses to curb oil production until there's a viable alternative."

Sure, one could demand that governments just enlist consumers and taxpayers in evermore subsidies for **alternative energy** efforts. yet most **renewable energy**, from **wind** to **solar**, is already heavily subsidized, and remains unreliable and expensive to end consumers.

For example, ontarians between 2006 and 2014 spent \$37 billion on above-market-price subsidies to providers of **wind**, **solar** and other **energy** alternatives. to produce even more will be additionally costly. also, as i detailed in my recent report Corporate Welfare Cash for the **Canadian** taxpayers Federation, **alternative energy** is already much more subsidized in Canada than is oil and **gas**. (that noted, oil, **gas** and **renewable energy** companies alike should be cut off from taxpayer-funded subsidies; that would help even the playing field among all potential **energy** suppliers.) Lastly, the notion that building subsidized **wind** turbines and **solar** panels in Canada can replace the jobs, incomes, exports and tax revenues of a long-profitable sector is folly. From newfoundland to **northern** British Columbia, there are 300,000 people directly employed in the oil and **gas** business with 650,000 spinoff jobs. oil and **gas** products represent \$136 billion in exports to the united states and \$22 billion in annual tax revenues to governments.

And that brings us back to advocacy against investment in the **energy** sector, the so-called divestment movement. in a rebuke to the divestment demands, Quebec credit union desjardins group recently ended its moratorium on pipeline project financing. depending on where desjardins goes on a more general social and environmental framework, that decision could be positive or merely a prelude to anti-**energy** investment decisions. Meanwhile, calls are growing for the Canada Pension **Plan** to be divested of **energy** investment. if that happened, a useful investment criteria - returns - would be sacrificed to anti-reality advocacy.

Plus, **Canadian** employment and income would be reduced by such a decision. it would harm the middle class and the poor. that's the problem with anticonsumer and anti-empirical advocacy dreamed up in academia and furthered by reality-blind activism. ideas have consequences, especially bad ones.

Mark Milke is an author, an **independent** policy analyst and contributing writer to Canadians for Affordable **Energy**. © Troy Media

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