

Queen's Park Today – Daily Report November 22, 2017

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Quotation of the day

“I think that Patrick Brown and the PCs for way too long have been good at criticizing and very, very weak on their own plans. This is the weekend we've all been waiting for.”

Deputy Premier Deb Matthews says she will be watching the PC policy convention closely this weekend.

Today at Queen's Park

On the schedule

The House will convene in the morning for third reading debate on **Bill 148**, Fair Workplaces Better Jobs Act. Pursuant to a time allocation motion, there will be only 30 minutes of debate on the labour reform bill before it is called for a vote. The legislation, which would bump the minimum wage to \$14 per hour in less than six weeks, will likely receive its final vote after question period.

Bill 174, Cannabis, Smoke-Free Ontario and Road Safety Statute Law Amendment Act, is also scheduled to be debated at second reading in the morning.

PC MPP **Todd Smith** will introduce a private members' bill entitled Garrett's Legacy Act in honour of a 15-year-old boy who died of a [head injury](#) after a soccer post fell on him.

The fall economic statement bill, **Bill 177**, Stronger, Fairer Ontario Act, will be debated at second reading in the afternoon.

Debates and proceedings

Bill 174, Cannabis, Smoke-Free Ontario and Road Safety Statute Law Amendment Act, was debated at second reading during the morning session.

PC MPPs attempted to use unanimous consent motions to remove the Smoke Free Ontario Act, which includes changes to vaping rules, and the school bus camera provisions from **Bill 174** into separate bills, but they were not granted permission from the House.

PC MPP **Randy Hillier** got himself [kicked out of the House](#) for refusing to withdraw a remark calling the government's use of omnibus legislation "criminal." Hillier said he was "speaking truth to power" to stand up for people who vape for tobacco harm reduction.

The afternoon was used for opposition day debate. PC leader **Patrick Brown** put forward a motion calling on the government to reimburse Ontario taxpayers for the hundreds of millions of dollars in annual losses incurred by the province for exporting surplus energy to neighbouring U.S. states. The motion was defeated by the Liberals and the NDP (Ayes 22; Nays 49).

In the park

The Ontario Chiropractic Association will hold its lobby day on Wednesday, including a scheduled MPP lunch reception.

The Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association will host an evening reception.

The Ontario Federation of Labour will hold a rally on the Queen's Park lawn to encourage all MPPs to pass **Bill 148**, Fair Workplaces Better Jobs Act.

Topics of conversation

- Lawyers in the gas plants trial will deliver their closing arguments on Wednesday.
- The most recent Quebec-California cap-and-trade auction sold out. Ontario joins the Quebec-California carbon market on January 1, 2018.
- Federal Employment, Workforce Development and Labour Minister **Patty Hajdu** announced Tuesday that the federal government will provide financial support to students affected by the Ontario college strike.
 - The funding will only be available to students who are already recipients of the Canada Student Grants and Loans program, a federal program targeted to low and middle-income students, that is similar to OSAP. The minister's office would not provide the exact amount of funding that students can receive, saying it will be decided by their college's financial assistance office.
- TTC CEO **Andy Byford** is leaving Toronto to lead New York City's MTA as its president and CEO, effective mid-January 2018. The TTC said it has begun the search for Byford's replacement and hopes to have him or her in place by July 2018.
- Two third party organizations have [registered](#) with Elections Ontario ahead of the June 2018 election: Association of Municipalities of Ontario and Ontario Proud.

- The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport is seeking a design consultant for a new 20-acre park on Ontario Place's East Island. "Celebration Common" will be used for outdoor cultural activities, festival and communities events and link with the waterfront bike trail.
 - Meanwhile, the City of Toronto's Rail Deck Park is now projected to cost \$1.665 billion.
- During a speech at the Ontario Federation of Labour's conference, NDP leader **Andrea Horwath** said, if elected government, the NDP would introduce an Ontario Food Strategy that promotes access to local food for all Ontarians.

Today's events



November 22 at 9 a.m. — Toronto

The Ontario Forestry Coalition, a coalition of businesses and northern municipalities, will hold a news conference at Queen's Park to call on the government to support the forestry sector and dispel rumours that the industry is harming endangered species.



November 22 at 12 p.m. — Toronto

NDP leader **Andrea Horwath** will deliver a speech on "What's Next for Ontario" for the Empire Club and the Fairmont Royal York.



November 22 at 12:45 p.m. — Etobicoke

Transportation Minister **Steve Del Duca** will attend the launch of MADD Canada's new SmartWheels program that warns elementary students about the risks of alcohol, drugs and driving. The launch will take place at Second Street Junior Middle School.



November 22 at 1:15 p.m. — Toronto

Tourism, Culture and Sport Minister **Eleanor McMahon** and Francophone Affairs Minister **Marie-France Lalonde** will make an announcement at Passerelle Intégration et Développement Economique, 2 Carlton Street.



November 22 at 3 p.m. — Toronto

Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** will make an announcement on housing at the Lawrence Heights Redevelopment Project.



November 22 at 6:30 p.m. — Toronto

The Ontario Liberal Party will hold a fundraiser in support of Infrastructure Minister **Bob Chiarelli** at ORO Restaurant with special guest **David Herle** of the Gandalf Group.



November 22 at 7 p.m. — Ajax

PC leader **Patrick Brown** will attend the PC Party's Ajax nomination meeting to acclaim **Rod Phillip** as the party's candidate. The meeting will take place at Annandale Golf and Curling Club.

News briefs — Non-governmental

Financial Accountability Office

Ontario's temporary Financial Accountability Officer **J. David Wake** released a report on the [financial risks](#) of Ontario's plan to refurbish 10 nuclear reactors at Bruce Nuclear Generating Station and Darlington Nuclear Generating Station, and to extend the life of the six reactors at the Pickering Nuclear Station. The FAO warns that ratepayers could bare the burden if refurbishment project costs go over budget or if the cost of operating the refurbished stations is higher than expected. In the case of Bruce, ratepayers are on the hook for any cost overruns incurred until 12 months before each reactor refurbishment begins. A [table](#) in the report shows how five nuclear refurbishments in Canada experienced substantial cost overruns since 1999, often nearly doubling the budgeted cost.

This remains a risk despite the province's termination clauses, or "off-ramps," which the FAO said have "limited value to ratepayers" because the capital costs for nuclear stations are so high, it is often more expensive to exit a project than to complete it.

In a situation where Ontario's energy grid demand decreases, the province may have to shut down reactors or sell power to other jurisdictions for "low or negative prices." Ontario also risks losing out on "opportunity costs" if low-cost renewable generation options are developed over the next 50 years while the province still has \$25 billion in capital tied up in nuclear generation and is unable take advantage of it.

Despite the risks, Wake maintains that nuclear power will provide Ontario ratepayers with a low-emission, low-cost source of reliable energy for the long-term. He said the value of nuclear energy cannot be replicated by anything other than a return to fossil fuels. "There is currently no portfolio of alternative low emissions generation which could replace nuclear generation at a comparable cost," the report states.

The cost of nuclear power between 2017 and 2064 is projected to be an average of 80.7 \$/MWh, up from the current price of approximately 69 \$/MWh. The cost is expected to peak in 2027 because of the number of reactors offline during the refurbishment process, and then decrease.

Responses

Unlike its reaction to most FAO reports, the government was pleased with this set of projections. Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault** said his ministry put a lot of work into its nuclear strategy and this validates its claim that Ontario's nuclear fleet is its cheapest and cleanest form of electricity.

Thibeault said he is not concerned about major cost overruns or the province having to use off-ramps to exit a project. "We have an external third party individual working with OPG who can see the daily data to make sure there are no surprises. Before we would ever have to get to an off-ramp, we would know well ahead if there were serious issues and we would start dealing with those appropriately," Thibeault told reporters. "There are mechanisms in place to ensure we protect ratepayers and ensure everything remains on-time and on-budget."

The report was well-received by the PC Party and the nuclear industry.

PC Energy critic **Peter Tabuns** said he is skeptical the government has done the business analysis required to ensure there are no cost overruns.

Green Party of Ontario environment and climate change critic **Jose Etcheverry** criticized the FAO for not consulting stakeholders outside the nuclear industry. Etcheverry said the province needs an independent overview of the costs and alternatives to nuclear, including its plan for storing nuclear waste.

Question period

PC lead-off

Energy exports

- PC Energy critic **Todd Smith** asked the premier to confirm that the province lost \$1.25 billion exporting power to nearby jurisdictions since 2016, as reported in a [new study](#) from the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers.
 - He asked what the energy minister has to say to the millions of Ontarians who overpay for energy while the government subsidizes the export of energy to competing jurisdictions that are stealing local jobs.
- Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault** said when Ontario was a net importer of electricity in the early 2000s, the province's grid was unreliable and dependent on expensive energy from its neighbours: "In 2002 and 2003, Ontario paid \$900 million to import electricity."
 - Thibeault said every jurisdictions imports and exports energy, and his government does it at the net benefit of \$236 million every year.

TPP negotiations

- PC MPP **Lisa Thompson** asked about the premier's upcoming business mission to China and Vietnam, which she departs for this weekend.

- Thompson said when Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** was in Asia two weeks ago, he failed to show up to an APEC meeting with 10 other world leaders and “jeopardized Canada’s position in the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations.”
 - Thompson asked whether Wynne will put pressure on Trudeau to make sure he gets TPP talks back on track.
- Premier **Kathleen Wynne** said TPP talks are on track and that she is taking this trip to China and Vietnam to help companies secure opportunities for new markets and to expand existing markets.

The PCs also asked about the availability of drugs for rare diseases under OHIP+.

NDP lead-off

College strike

- NDP MPP **Peggy Sattler** said college students are confused about whether they need to fully withdraw from college or just for the semester in order to receive a tuition refund. She asked the government to ensure all students will be allowed to withdraw from their semester and start again in January.
- Advanced Education Minister **Deb Matthews** said students that withdraw from the semester could reapply in January if their program offers January enrollments, but that most students want to finish the semester they began.
- Sattler repeated her calls for the province to increase its hardship funding for students, saying \$500 is not enough to cover a student’s rent during the strike.

Hydro One

- NDP Energy critic **Peter Tabuns** once again called on the government to prevent Hydro One’s latest electricity rate increase.
 - “Will the minister stop cheerleading for Hydro One, and start protecting the interests of Ontario families and businesses?” asked Tabuns.

The NDP also asked about wait lists for youth mental health care and the government’s broken December 2015 promise to bring a PET scanner to Sudbury.