

Queen's Park Today – Daily Report September 21, 2017

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Quotation of the day

“I see this as a war by Patrick Brown on local party members. There's no other way to explain it.”

Jim Karahalios, a prospective PC nomination candidate in Cambridge, on [sudden changes to the nomination rules](#) that he says favour a parachute candidate

Today at Queen's Park

On the schedule

The House will convene at 9:00 a.m. to continue second reading on **Bill 152**, Representation Statute Law Amendment Act. This bill creates two new ridings in northern Ontario.

Two bills and one motion will be debated during private members' business in the afternoon.

- PC MPP **Monte McNaughton's** bill, **Bill 146**, Transparency in Gas Pricing Act, would require the cost of the cap and trade program to appear as a line item on natural gas bills;
- NDP MPP **Jennifer French's** motion calls on the government to adopt the recommendations of the coroner's inquest into the deaths of two firefighters on an unregulated training course; and
- PC MPP **Mike Harris's** legislation, **Bill 126**, Illegal Pill Presses Act, aims to fight the opioid crisis by banning pill press machines.

After voting on private members' business, **Bill 139**, Building Better Communities and Conserving Watershed Act, will continue to be debated at second reading.

Debates and proceedings

MPPs convened at 9:00 a.m. to begin second reading debate on **Bill 152**, Representation Statute Law Amendment Act.

Liberal MPP **Ann Hoggarth** introduced a bill entitled **Bill 155**, Life Leases Act. The bill regulates “life lease developments”, which offer tenants a “leasehold” form of ownership and some management control and are popular among seniors.

In the afternoon, PC leader **Patrick Brown** put forward a motion calling on the government to divulge the details of any new contract negotiations with Quebec concerning Ontario’s importation of Québec hydro.

The government said, “there is no basis for this motion,” noting that August’s [La Presse](#) story that prompted controversy about Québec-Ontario hydro agreements, was about a contract that was never signed.

The Liberals and NDP opposed the motion and it was defeated (Ayes 21; Nays 53).

Wynne in Québec City

Brown’s opposition motion was prompted by the second joint Québec-Ontario cabinet meeting, which will be held this weekend Québec City.

Premier **Kathleen Wynne** will be in Québec City on Thursday to meet with Québec Premier **Philippe Couillard** and give a keynote address in the National Assembly of Québec. She will be the first premier outside of Québec to do so.

A welcome dinner will be held for the cabinet members of both provinces at the Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec on Thursday evening.

While in Québec City, Wynne will meet briefly with **Jean-François Lisée**, the leader of the federal Parti Québécois, as well as Québec’s provincial opposition leaders **François Legault**, leader of Coalition Avenir Québec, and **Manon Massé**, leader of the Québec Solidaire Party.

Cannabis taxation

Finance Minister **Charles Sousa** told reporters he will meet with federal, provincial and territorial finance ministers on cannabis pricing and taxation in either November or December. In response to New Brunswick’s proposal to sell marijuana for approximately \$10 per gram, Sousa said that price point is “certainly something that we’re giving consideration to.” Sousa said uniformity across provinces is important, as is pricing the product competitively in order to shut down the black market.

Sousa said he predicts demand for the product will be “very high” judging by the number of illegal dispensaries that have come and gone. Sousa has not put forward any budget projects for cannabis revenues, but said, by extrapolating revenues earned by U.S. states onto Ontario’s population, \$100 million in gross revenues “is not a ridiculous number to consider.”

Topics of conversation

- The Cambridge PC riding association is [alleging interference](#) from the central PC Party in its nomination race. Cambridge PCs allege the PC head office changed the deadline for nomination candidates to apply without notice, meaning many local candidates did not have time to submit their applications. Riding association members are accusing **Patrick Brown** of interfering to benefit of candidates from outside the riding.
- The Crown is finished calling witnesses in the Sudbury by-election trial, which is adjourned until October 22. When the court reconvenes, the defence is expected to request the judge dismiss the charges due to a lack of criminal evidence from Crown witnesses.
 - A CBC journalist in Sudbury compiled the [top ten moments](#) of the trial, thus far.
- NDP MPP **Cheri DiNovo** announced she will resign her Parkdale–High Park seat in the New Year. DiNovo had previously said she would not seek re-election, but, while wearing a clerical collar, DiNovo announced she will return to her role in the Trinity-St. Paul’s United Church ministry in January 2018.
 - During her 11 years as a parliamentarian, DiNovo passed more private members’ bill than any other MPP in Ontario history. Many of them focused on LGBTQ rights.
- **Jeremy Roberts**, a failed PC nomination candidate in Ottawa West—Nepean, announced he will seek the federal Conservative Party candidacy in Kanata—Carleton ahead of the next federal election. Roberts lost the PC nomination to **Karma Macgregor**, the mother of **Patrick Brown**’s deputy chief of staff, amid [allegations](#) of ballot stuffing.
- The IESO awarded 390 small-scale renewable energy contracts under Ontario’s Feed-in Tariff Program. Of those, half went to projects with Indigenous participation. Ninety-eight per cent of contracts are for solar power projects. Combined they will generate 150 MW of renewable energy.
- Last Friday, Ontario’s Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change charged Volkswagen under the Environmental Protection Act for causing or permitting “the operation of vehicles that did not comply with emission standards prescribed by Ontario regulations.” On Tuesday, ministry officials raided Volkswagen’s Ajax head office to seize evidence.

Today's events



September 21 at 9:00 a.m. — Toronto

Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care **Indira Naidoo-Harris** will make an announcement at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School.



September 21 at 9:30 a.m. — Toronto

In a press conference at Queen's Park, CUPE Ontario president **Fred Hahn** will outline the details of further action the union intends to take against the government over the sale of Hydro One.



September 21 at 10:00 a.m. — Toronto

PC MPP **Mike Harris** will discuss his private members' bill, **Bill 126**, Illegal Pill Presses Act, in the Queen's Park media studio with a teenager who experienced an "unsuspected" opioid overdose.



September 21 at 11:30 a.m. — Toronto

Aviva Canada will release a poll on Canadian's attitudes towards texting and driving at the Aviva Digital Garage, 100 King Street West.



September 21 at 12:00 p.m. — Toronto

Indigenous activists will gather on the Queen's Park lawn for a Circle of Reconciliation Pow Wow and to call on the provincial government to designate June 21, National Indigenous Day, as an annual statutory holiday.



September 21 at 1:00 p.m. — Toronto

Tourism, Culture and Sport Minister **Eleanor McMahon** will welcome Team Canada competitors to the 2017 Invictus Games at Union Station.

News briefs — Governmental

Ministry of Transportation

Transportation Minister **Steve Del Duca** announced the province is cracking down on distracted and careless driving with the goal of making the roads safer for pedestrians and cyclists. Del Duca will introduce a new bill that creates a new offence category for “careless driving causing death or bodily harm” with fines of up to \$50,000 and two years in prison.

The bill will allow the province to suspend the licences of drivers convicted of distracted driving and will increase fines and penalties for drivers convicted more than once.

The ministry said it is also consulting on the use of cameras on school buses that capture drivers who illegally pass a school bus. The PCs have been pushing for action on **Bill 94**, **Rick Nicholls’** private members’ bill authorizing school bus camera systems.

News briefs — Non-governmental

OPSEU

During ongoing negotiations with their employer, 68 per cent of OPSEU’s college faculty members voted in favour of a strike, but no deadline has been set. According to OPSEU, its 12,000 college faculty members are seeking higher pay and more job security. “We’re delivering cutting-edge education, but 81 per cent of teaching is done by underpaid contract faculty with zero job security,” the union’s college bargaining chair **JP Hornick** said. The collective agreement expires on September 30, 2017.

In a statement, the College Bargaining Team said the OPSEU’s proposal to change staffing ratios would result in 4,280 contract jobs being lost, the union gaining academic control and \$400 million more in annual costs for schools. The College Bargaining Team said it has offered faculty a 7.5 per cent wage increase over four years, a new maximum salary of \$115,094, a lump sum payment, benefit enhancements, and no concessions – but OPSEU has proposed a 10 per cent wage increase over three years.

Question period

PC lead-off

Quebec energy deals

- PC leader **Patrick Brown** asked whether the government plans to sign a new energy agreement this weekend to import more power from Québec.
 - Citing a [La Presse story](#) from August, Brown said Ontarians now know that the government was considering a hydro deal that would put Ontario “on the hook for more power we do not need.”

- Brown asked if negotiations are taking place “for another sole-source deal that benefits Quebec instead of Ontario.”
- Premier **Kathleen Wynne** said the deal mentioned in the *La Presse* story was rejected. She said she looks forward to working together with Québec on everything from innovation to education to energy.
- (In the wake of the *La Presse* story, Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault** said another hydro deal with Québec would be possible only if it saved Ontarians money and benefitted the environment).

Surplus energy

- Brown asked why the government continues to waste \$1 billion in clean energy each year, as per the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers’ report this summer.
- Economic Development Minister **Brad Duguid** fielded questions on the province’s energy system because Energy Minister **Glenn Thibeault** was in Sudbury for the by-election trial.
 - Duguid said surplus power will be required when the province’s nuclear units come of the grid for refurbishment.

Infrastructure

- PC MPP **Sylvia Jones** said the public accounts reveal \$3.3 billion from the 2016-17 infrastructure budget was not spent — 20 per cent of the promised funding.
 - Jones called on the government to table a list of projects that were not started in 2016.
- Infrastructure Minister **Bob Chiarelli** said the province is spending \$190 billion on infrastructure over 13 years, and that “there is a tremendous amount that’s coming on track immediately,” including in PC-held ridings.

The PCs also asked about funding for St. Mary’s Hospital in Kitchener and manufacturing job losses.

NDP lead-off

Seniors’ care inquiry

- NDP leader **Andrea Horwath** repeated her call for the public inquiry into safety in long-term care homes, which is tied to the Wettlaufer murders, to be expanded.
 - Horwath called on the government to heed the NDP motion that was passed last week requesting an expanded inquiry into staffing levels, privatization and level of care.
- Premier **Kathleen Wynne** said, within the Wettlaufer inquiry, “there is plenty of scope in to actually allow for an investigation if there is a systemic issue that arises in the process of looking at this one case.”

- Health and Long-Term Care Minister **Dr. Eric Hoskins** said he wants **Justice Gillese**'s inquiry to get Ontarians the answers they are looking for and that the inquiry includes "the potential to look at systemic issues of oversight and accountability throughout the long-term-care system."

Mental Health

- Horwath also asked why the government voted against NDP MPP **France Gelin**'s bill to establish a separate Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions.
- Hoskins said not a single stakeholder has come to him to suggest a stand-alone Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions will be a positive thing for the system.

Sudbury by-election trial

- NDP MPP **Monique Taylor** brought up Premier Wynne's testimony in the Sudbury by-election trial. Taylor asked why the premier could not remember whether she talked to Thibeault about paid jobs for his staffers.
- Speaker **Dave Levac** would not allow Taylor question to stand because he said it was not related to government policy.
 - He said question period is not designated for discussion about a political party's process.

The NDP also asked about access to health care for transgender patients.