



## Queen's Park Today – Daily Report April 12, 2024

### Quotation of the day

“It’s not about virtue signalling, it’s about getting the work done properly.”

*Government house leader **Paul Calandra** rejects the NDP’s call for the government to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic before the justice committee conducts an in-depth study of the issue.*

***Written by Alan S. Hale***

### **On the schedule**

The legislature will resume on Monday, April 15. There are two sitting weeks before the next constituency break.

### **Thursday’s debates and proceedings**

In the morning, MPPs began second reading of the PCs’ new housing legislation: **Bill 185**, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act.

After question period, members voted on third reading of **Bill 155**, Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario Amendment Act, which passed unanimously (Ayes 95; Nays 0).

In the afternoon, the house then wrapped up debate on the government’s motion to approve the budget, the vote on which was deferred until Monday.

During private members' time, MPPs debated second reading of the NDP's **Bill 172**, Affordable Energy Act, which proposes the creation of a new provincial agency called Affordable Energy Ontario. This vote was also deferred until Monday.

The PCs once again withheld unanimous consent to block the Liberals from taking part in the private members' debate.

## **Premier watch**

Premier **Doug Ford** presented the City of Kitchener with a cheque for \$14 million from the Building Faster Fund after it exceeded the 2023 housing targets set by the province by 39 per cent.

He also swung by the St. Jacobs Market while he was in the Kitchener-Waterloo area.

## **Bank of Canada doesn't care about economy**

At his news conference, Ford once again lashed out at the Bank of Canada, saying the central bank doesn't "care about the economy, they don't care about people's lives" after it declined to lower the benchmark interest rate on Wednesday.

Bank governor **Tiff Macklem** said a rate cut in June is "within the realm of possibilities" if inflation continues to slow.

Ford said inflation has slowed enough already.

"I do not understand what [Macklem] is doing," said the premier. "Even though they promised [a rate cut at] under three per cent inflation — and it's well below three per cent now — they're still keeping it at five per cent. They're gouging people."

The Bank of Canada's target rate is two per cent. Canada's inflation rate was 2.8 per cent in February, according to Statistics Canada's Consumer Price Index, while inflation in Ontario was 3.3 per cent. Inflation numbers for March are due to be released next week.

## **Bill 185 measures**

Ford was asked about some of the policies in **Bill 185**, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, including giving municipalities the power to give tax breaks and other incentives to companies in return for development projects.

Asked how the province will ensure municipalities don't promise tax breaks they can't afford, Ford said the incentives are necessary to attract companies to Ontario that are also being courted by jurisdictions in the United States.

Reporters also asked about the bill's proposal to remove authority over planning decisions from regional municipalities and put local municipalities in charge. Ford insisted lower-tier municipalities are in favour of the move.

"All the towns want to do their own planning, they don't want duplication happening. Nothing wrong with the region — they're great — but you just get things done a lot quicker without another layer of government," said Ford.

He also defended **Bill 185's** provision to exempt building projects proposed by universities from the *Planning Act*, describing it as "as-of-right student housing," even though the new rules would apply to any building where a publicly funded university is the primary proponent.

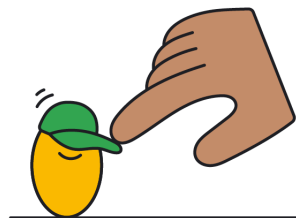
### Domestic violence laws need 'teeth'

Reporters also asked Ford why the province is holding off on declaring intimate partner violence to be an epidemic until after the justice committee completes an in-depth study of the issue. The premier explained that he wants the committee to give the government recommendations on how to beef up its domestic violence laws.

"We've put \$1.4 billion towards gendered violence, so it's not a lack of money — we're pouring money into it — but it's one thing to pour money and pass legislation, but let's put some teeth into this," Ford said. "It has to stop."

The premier told reporters he spoke with **Brian Sweeney**, the father of a Sault Ste. Marie woman who was [killed along with her three children](#) by her partner in October, on Wednesday evening.

Choose what your tweens  
can see on YouTube.



Learn more



Family Link not available in Québec

## Waterloo Region threatens to expropriate farmland after PCs ask

Premier **Doug Ford** acknowledged that the province is behind a controversial proposal by Waterloo Region to assemble 770 acres of farmland near Wilmot Township for future industrial and economic development.

In March, farmers along Highway 8 just outside of Kitchener were offered compensation for their properties — and told that if they don't accept by March 20, their land [will be expropriated](#).

At a press conference in Waterloo yesterday, Ford said the province told Waterloo Region to locate lands that could be set aside for major projects.

"I have to be fully transparent — what we're doing across the province, we're asking municipalities and regions to assemble land," said Ford.

"We sent some forms out — I think it was about a year ago — saying, 'if you want to assemble the land, we'll be there for you and if you don't, I understand that.'"

Ford confirmed there is currently no proponent "waiting to jump in" and develop the lands outside Kitchener, but the government believes having lands ready for potential industrial projects would help attract more big projects like the Volkswagen battery plant being built outside St. Thomas.

"We're pretty confident companies are going to come and put a facility there," Ford said of the Kitchener parcels. "A lot of smaller towns, like Wilmot, need money. What better way than to clear some land and create development?"

### Mayor straddles a tightrope

However, the move to pressure farmers into selling has been roiling the local community for weeks, and the Township of Wilmot is not picking sides.

Wilmot Mayor **Natasha Salonen** issued [a statement](#) Wednesday, stating that the negotiations between the region and farmers "like all real estate transactions, take place one-on-one."

"The township is not, and should not, be involved directly in those discussions and subsequent transactions," said Salonen, who also acknowledged the "considerable concern about the absence of information available in the public domain" that the Region of Waterloo's tight-lipped approach to the process has caused.

"As your government representatives at the local level, we continue to advocate on behalf of landowners, ensuring that the process is fair and equitable."

The local community is divided on the idea of turning farmland over to industrial use.

Last week, a coalition of local chambers of commerce known as the Business and Economic Support Team of Waterloo Region (BESTWR) published [an open letter](#) arguing that “preparing shovel-ready land is critical and will be pivotal to the ongoing success of our future economy.”

“We are frequently turning away investment because we do not have large and shovel-ready parcels of land. We cannot as a community continue to reject opportunities for stable, secure and well-paying jobs,” said Greater KW Chamber of Commerce CEO **Ian McLean** on behalf of BESTWR.

Meanwhile, local residents, environmental groups and affected farmers have been pushing back at [well-attended public meetings](#), by presenting to [the regional council](#) and by writing [open letters](#) of their own.

“This decision feels like a betrayal of farmers,” wrote members of Faith Climate Justice Waterloo Region. “Whether or not the province is obliging the region to take this action — forcing farmers to sell their land and homes for unreasonably low offers on absurdly short timelines — it’s clear we all need to speak out.”

Pressed about the effort to expropriate farmland, Ford said that “doesn’t sit well with me.”

“I’m all for assembling land across the province, but I don’t know. Personally, I think it should have been handled a little differently, with a real estate company. It really bothered me when I heard that,” said the premier, who stressed the government wants “willing participants” in its push to prepare shovel-ready lands.

Asked if he supports using farmland for industrial purposes, Ford said “That’s going to be up to the municipalities to decide.”

## Today’s events

### **April 12 at 10 a.m. — Ottawa**

Transportation Minister **Prabmeet Sarkaria** and Ottawa Mayor **Mark Sutcliffe** will hold a press conference.

### **April 12 at 10 a.m. — Toronto**

NDP Housing critic **Jessica Bell** will announce a new private member’s bill “to make homes more affordable and spur the construction of missing middle homes, including fourplexes.”

## Topics of conversation

- The PC Party's go-to internal pollster, Campaign Research, is back in the field, asking Ontarians how important it is that the government allow single-family homes to be replaced with fourplexes.
  - The poll aims to gauge the relative importance of the as-of-right fourplex issue — which the PCs recently came out against despite years of anti-NIMBY rhetoric — compared to other potential government priorities such as improving education and not raising taxes.
  - The poll also asks respondents if they would support or oppose banning cellphones in classrooms, allowing teachers to confiscate phones and blocking social media platforms on school Wi-Fi.
  
- Meanwhile, the PC-friendly CEO of the Ontario Real Estate Association, ex-party leader **Tim Hudak**, aired his grievances about the government's new housing bill. While Hudak celebrated its wastewater funding mechanisms and the elimination of parking minimums for some highrises, he said OREA is "disappointed" the province isn't upzoning all major transit corridors or mandating fourplexes.
  - "The province is making significant investments in transit and passenger rail, and building more homes along those lines is common sense," Hudak said in a statement, but "eliminating exclusionary zoning and allowing four units, as-of-right, province-wide, is an essential key to unlock affordable homeownership."
  
- In yet another development in the ongoing dispute between Ontario First Nations and Métis communities — which Premier **Doug Ford** promised to resolve in 2022 — the Chiefs of Ontario (COO) announced it is partnering with the Manitoba Métis Federation to hold an "identity summit aimed at tackling rampant identity theft faced by many Indigenous Nations in Canada today." The event will take place in Winnipeg on May 14 and 15.
  - The summit is explicitly aimed at the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO), which the COO has accused of appropriating Indigenous identity to infringe on Aboriginal and treaty rights after the provincial and federal governments supported a Métis self-governance agreement, which is set to be formally implemented once **Bill C-53** passes in Parliament.
  - "The claims being made by the Métis Nation of Ontario have no factual and legal basis and undermine all legitimate First Nation, Inuit, and Métis rights-holders," said Ontario Regional Chief **Glen Hare**. "We look forward to co-hosting this historic event with the Manitoba Métis Federation to address the issues that legitimate rights-holders are facing in all regions due to the federal government's deeply flawed **Bill C-53** legislation."
  
- The Liberal Party is crying foul after several Independent MPPs were removed from standing committees via a [government motion](#) Thursday. In all, six Independents lost their committee spots in favour of PC members, including Liberals **John Fraser**,

**Stephen Blais, Adil Shamji and Stephanie Bowman**; Green Leader **Mike Schreiner**; and Independent MPP **Bobbi Ann Brady**.

- This follows Grit complaints during the recent standing orders debate that the PCs were looking for ways to reduce the party's participation at committee.
  - "This government [is] attempting to silence their critics," said Fraser yesterday. "They don't like tough questions or to be held accountable."
- A [new poll](#) from Liaison Strategies has the PCs leading with 40 per cent of the vote, the Liberals trailing at 30 per cent and the NDP at 18 per cent.
    - Half of Ontarians also said they would abolish the federal carbon tax immediately, with 37 per cent saying they want to see it maintained.

## News briefs

### Consultations on how to power Toronto

- Energy Minister **Todd Smith**, Toronto Mayor **Olivia Chow** and Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) CEO **Lesley Gallinger** held a press conference at the Portlands Energy Centre — a natural gas plant that provides much of Toronto's electricity — on Thursday to announce the beginning of public consultations on how to power the metropolis into the future.
  - "While we could ramp up this plant [to] meet everyday demand, we can also start planning today to develop new, clean options to power future growth and to keep the lights on in Toronto, and that's what we are planning to do," said Smith.
- The year-long process of coming up with a plan for meeting Toronto's future energy needs will be conducted by the IESO and will begin with a public webinar on Tuesday "to seek input on demand forecasts for the city."
  - "Then we'll start a conversation about the options we need to consider," Gallinger told reporters. "One thing I want to make abundantly clear: at this stage we are looking at all options. Later this year, we'll present options and seek your feedback before we make our final recommendations early in the next year."

## Funding announcements

### Widening Highway 7

- Transportation Minister **Prabmeet Sarkaria** and local PC MPP **Peter Bethlenfalvy** announced \$12 million to widen Highway 7 from Markham to Pickering from two lanes to four.
  - "Widening Highway 7 is a milestone investment from Ontario's 2024 Budget and another step in our government's plan to build a better Ontario," said Sarkaria, who could not give a timeline on when construction will start or finish.

## Money for batteries and salsa

- Economic Development Minister **Vic Fedeli** announced yesterday the province will spend \$12 million to support four proposed projects in the Windsor and Leamington area. They include:
  - DS Actimo Canada, a subsidiary of the South Korea-based company DSEV, which is building a 107,000-square-foot battery cell module factory in Windsor;
  - Kautex Textron, which is building a facility to produce battery casings;
  - Integrity Tool & Mold Inc., which is adapting new technology at its Windsor facility; and
  - Highbury Canco Corp., which makes pasta sauce and salsa, and is modernizing its facility.

## Question period

### Closing the First Nations infrastructure gap

- NDP Indigenous and Treaty Relations critic **Sol Mamakwa** pointed to the Chiefs of Ontario's [analysis](#) that it would take \$59 billion and 78,000 housing units to close the gap in living standards between First Nation reserves and the rest of the province. He asked what the PC government plans to do to help close that gap.
  - "Is Ontario going to continue to grow its wealth at the expense of First Nations who continue to go without?" asked Mamakwa.
- "Of course, the answer is no," replied Indigenous Affairs Minister **Greg Rickford**. He said the government is already working on "legacy infrastructure" for First Nations such as electrification projects to get "communities off diesel [and] building bridges." Rickford cast blame for the gap on the federal government for not living up "to its infrastructure opportunity in those communities."
  - "This isn't about jurisdiction, this is about a commitment from the Province of Ontario to build the kinds of roads that can create an opportunity to build state-of-the-art infrastructure in those communities. That's what this is always about," said Rickford, adding that the government has tried unsuccessfully to include Mamakwa in discussions about the projects.
- Mamakwa said responsibility for off-reserve housing for Indigenous people is shared by the province and the feds, and blasted the PCs for not including new funding for First Nations housing in this year's budget.
- Rickford insisted that "resources for off-reserve housing have increased under this government."



The NDP also asked about plans to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic in Ontario, **Bill 185**, funding for the Toronto District School Board, the two-year delay of EV production in Oakville and the doctor shortage.

### **Grade 7 students could have done better**

- Infrastructure Minister **Kinga Surma** didn't mince words when asked about Ontario Place for All's financial model suggesting that the Therme spa would be unprofitable for at least five years and may depend on taxpayer subsidies to remain afloat. She called the modelling "a joke."
  - "It was a presentation that I'm pretty sure Grade 7 and 8 students from schools in my riding could do a better job of," she said. "I will not be taking the advice of a political activist group that has no experience conducting an audit or building infrastructure."
- After Surma posted a clip of her comments on social media, Ontario Place for All [responded](#) by daring her to release the government's own numbers proving that the spa will turn a profit.
  - "We said it right in our press conference: come out from the back room and show us how the MegaSpa isn't going to be a drain of taxpayer dollars. We used assumptions because your government is hiding financial info from the public," said the group.

### **Independent questions**

#### **How many schools will be French?**

- Liberal MPP **Lucille Collard** asked how many French language schools the government is planning to build with the \$1.3 billion it promised to spend on new schools last week.
- Education Minister **Stephen Lecce** did not specify how many of the new schools the money is for will be francophonie.

### **PC questions**

PC backbenchers used all their questions to rail against the federal carbon tax.

## **Lobbyist registrations**

### **Consultants who registered, renewed or amended registrations from April 5 to April 11, 2024**

- **Walter Sendzik**, 12MSolutions
  - Clients: Shaw Festival
- **Amir Remtulla**, Amir Remtulla Inc.

- Clients: Vine Avenue Holdings Ltd.
- **Stephanie DiNucci**, Atlas Strategic Advisors Inc.
  - Clients: iLOOKABOUT Inc.
- **Michael Bonner**, Atlas Strategic Advisors Inc.
  - Clients: Global University Systems Canada, Inc.
- **Shawn Cruz** and **Devan Sommerville**, Counsel Public Affairs
  - Clients: Ontario Association of Certified Engineering Technicians and Technologists
- **Devan Sommerville** and **Philip Dewan**, Counsel Public Affairs Inc.
  - Clients: Ontario Association of Prosthetics and Orthotics
- **Felix Burns** and **Michael Ras**, Counsel Public Affairs Inc.
  - Clients: Electra Battery Materials Corp.
- **Devan Sommerville** and **Caroline Pinto**, Counsel Public Affairs Inc.
  - Clients: The College of Opticians of Ontario
- **Rob Elliott** and **Devan Sommerville**, Counsel Public Affairs Inc.
  - Clients: Canadian Publishers' Council
- **Alex Chreston**, Crestview Strategy
  - Clients: Capital Sports Development Inc., Northeastern University, SkipTheDishes Restaurant Services Inc.
- **Nicholas Pozhke**, Crestview Strategy
  - Clients: S. C. Johnson & Son, Ltd.
- **Ramiro Mora**, CWell Consulting Inc.
  - Clients: Storm Services
- **Patricia Wilde**, **Tara Zachar** and **Warren Kinsella**, Daisy Consulting Group
  - Clients: University of Toronto Press
- **Tara Zachar**, Daisy Consulting Group
  - Clients: Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation
- **Michael Dearden**, Dearden & Associates Inc.
  - Clients: Associated Canadian Car Rental Operators

- **Amy Brown**, Dr. Amy Brown
  - Clients: Ontario Chiropractic Association
- **John Whitehead**, Earnscliffe Strategies
  - Clients: Anderson College of Health, Business and Technology
- **Jonathan Sampson**, Enterprise Canada
  - Clients: Makos Health Associates Corp.
- **Mark Penner** and **Rob Shek**, Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP
  - Clients: Pocket MD Corp.
- **Rick Roth**, Global Public Affairs Inc.
  - Clients: International Information System Security Certification Consortium, Inc.
- **Rick Roth**, Global Public Affairs Inc.
  - Clients: Homewood Health Inc.
- **Ryon Dalir**, Global Public Affairs Inc.
  - Clients: Ontario Book Publishers Organization
- **Ryon Dalir**, Global Public Affairs Inc.
  - Clients: Ontario Stone, Sand & Gravel Association
- **David Campbell**, Gowling WLG (Canada) LLP
  - Clients: Molson Canada 2005
- **Daniel Matthew Boudreau**, Hill+Knowlton Strategies Canada
  - Clients: Seqirus Canada Inc.
- **Michaela Johnson**, **Jonathan Lesarge** and **Davin Shinedling**, Jenni Byrne + Associates
  - Clients: Fitzrovia
- **Frank Klees**, Klees & Associates Ltd.
  - Clients: York Major Holdings Inc.
- **Jared Burke** and **Dan Mader**, Loyalist Public Affairs
  - Clients: Innergex Renewable Energy
- **Kenzie McKeegan**, Loyalist Public Affairs
  - Clients: Gap Inc.

- **Jared Burke**, Loyalist Public Affairs
  - Clients: New Haven Learning Centre
- **Nora Peterson**, NS Peterson Consulting Inc.
  - Clients: ToothPark and PEDIACENTRE
- **David Morgado**, ONpoint Strategy Group
  - Clients: Regional Municipality of York
- **Georganne Burke**, Pathway Group
  - Clients: Ohr Temimim, Star Interactive
- **Jennifer Chalmers** and **Dennis Chan**, Pathway Strategies, Inc.
  - Clients: Paladin Labs
- **Ryan Cole**, **Lee Greenberg** and **Andrew Boddington**, Policy Concepts Inc.
  - Clients: Faculty AI
- **Alexandra Rodgers**, Policy Concepts Inc.
  - Clients: Heart Valve Voice Canada
- **Amy Boddington**, Policy Concepts Inc.
  - Clients: EllisDon
- **Daniel Pascucci**, Rubicon Strategy
  - Clients: LaSalle Agri
- **Jan O'Driscoll**, Rubicon Strategy
  - Clients: Amazon Corporate LLC
- **Stefani Vukmanovic**, Rubicon Strategy Inc.
  - Clients: Eisai Ltd.
- **Bart Maves**, Sterlingbridge Marketing and Communications
  - Clients: E.S. Fox Ltd.
- **Kyle Sholes**, **Alexander Glista** and **Saad Baig**, StrategyCorp Inc.
  - Clients: The Regional Municipality of Durham
- **Brian Teefy**, **Jonathan Ricci** and **Saad Baig**, StrategyCorp Inc.
  - Clients: 2083850 Ontario Ltd.
- **Mackenzie Taylor**, Sussex Strategy

- Clients: Disability Without Poverty
- **Jordan Penic**, Sussex Strategy Group
  - Clients: Tesla Motors Canada ULC
- **Bonnie Hiltz**, Sussex Strategy Group Inc.
  - Clients: H2O Power LP
- **Christina Marciano**, Sussex Strategy Group Inc.
  - Clients: Ontario Water Works Association
- **Brian Zeiler-Kligman**, Sussex Strategy Group Inc.
  - Clients: AssessMed Inc., General Contractors' Association - Toronto
- **Heena Kapoor** and **Sabrina Daniele**, Temple Scott Associates Inc.
  - Clients: Canadian Franchise Association
- **David Angus**, The Capital Hill Group Inc.
  - Clients: Kyndryl Canada, VMware Canada Inc.
- **Shawn Berezin** and **Yaron Gersh**, The CCS Group
  - Clients: B'nai Brith National Organization of Canada
- **Connor Lund**, Upstream Strategy Group
  - Clients: Beef Farmers of Ontario

### **Organizations that registered in-house lobbyists from April 5 to April 11, 2024**

- Bruce Power Incorporated
- Definity Insurance Company
- ChargePoint Canada Incorporated
- Hydro One Networks Incorporated
- Hydro One Limited
- Trans Union of Canada, Incorporated
- Fédération des caisses Desjardins du Québec
- Air Canada
- IBT College
- LifeLabs
- Clover Health Solutions Incorporated
- Canadian Opera Company
- Innovative Medicines Canada
- Canadian Standards Association
- Association of Power Producers of Ontario

- Lakehead University
- Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan Board
- Ontario Road Builders' Association
- Ontario Trial Lawyers Association
- Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association
- Ontario Waterpower Association
- Ontario Association of Architects
- Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters Incorporated
- Mechanical Contractors Association of Ontario
- Mitacs
- Music Publishers Canada
- Fertilizer Canada
- Association of Consulting Engineering Companies | Ontario
- Vertex Pharmaceuticals (Canada) Incorporated
- Coca-Cola Limited
- McKesson Canada
- Tesla Motors Canada Unlimited Liability Corporation
- BASF Canada Incorporated
- CIBC

*Queen's Park Today is written by Alan S. Hale, reporting from the Queen's Park Press Gallery.*

*What did you think of this Daily Report? What would you like to see here?*

*Email [editorial@queensparktoday.ca](mailto:editorial@queensparktoday.ca) and let us know.*

*Copyright © 2024 Queen's Park Today. It is a violation of copyright to distribute this newsletter, in whole or in part, without permission.*