

January 2025

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ELECTION WRITS DROP TO BE ISSUED ON JANUARY 28TH – ELECTION FEBRUARY 27TH

Premier Ford is scheduled to visit Lieutenant Governor Edith Dumont on Tuesday, January 27th to ask her to draw up the election writs (one for each of the province's 124 electoral districts) for a general election. Ontario law prescribes that elections are called on Wednesdays and held on the fifth Thursday thereafter so the election day will be February 27th.

Once the writs are drawn up and issued, the election will be in full swing. All Bills that remained on the Legislature's order paper (all Bills that have been tabled but have not made their way through the legislative process, passed Third Reading and received Royal Assent) will die.

What will the issues be?

- Ontario-US relations and who is the best leader to stand up to US President Donald Trump and his 25% tariff threat
- The opportunism of Premier Ford calling an unnecessary election
- Ontario's struggling health care system
- Ontario's lagging education system
- Cost of living issues/affordability
- Lack of affordable housing
- Ontario's aging infrastructure
- Jobs and the economy

Buckle up!

GOV'T ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM BRINGS HIGH-SKILLED IMMIGRANTS TO THREE COMMUNITIES

The "Regional Economic Development through Immigration" or the REDI program was announced recently by the Minister of Labour Immigration Training and Skills Development, David Piccini. It is a pilot program that will bring approximately 800 immigrants with skills in health care, technology and the trades to the following three communities: Thunder Bay in northwestern Ontario, Sarnia-Lambton in southwest and Lanark, Leeds and Grenville in the eastern reaches of the province. The program will be operational until the end of 2025. For more details, [click here](#).

INVESTMENT WILL CONNECT EVERYONE IN ONTARIO TO PRIMARY CARE BY 2029

Among several pre-writ announcements, on January 27th the provincial government made public an investment of \$1.4 billion to make sure that everyone in Ontario is connected to a family doctor or a primary care team. This investment is in addition to \$400 million already approved for primary care.

(Primary care teams are made up of a family physician or nurse practitioner and other health care professionals such as nurses, physician assistants, social workers, dieticians etc..)

The funds will be used to implement the Ontario Primary Care Action Plan developed by a task force chaired by Dr Jane Philpott (a family physician, former Dean of Health Sciences at Queen's University and

former federal Liberal Minister of Health) on behalf of the Ontario government that was mandated to address the primary care shortage.

One of the main thrusts of the Action Plan is to create and expand 305 new primary care teams by 2029 when everyone in Ontario will have access to primary care. The Action Plan calls for the creation of 76 in 2025-25 connecting 300,000 people, an additional 73 teams in 2026-27 connecting 500,000 more, 78 teams in 2027-28 connecting 600,000 and 78 teams in 2028-29 connecting 600,000.

For the government's announcement, [click here](#).

For a slide deck outlining the Action Plan, [click here](#).

CANADA-US TRADE FLOWS – THE RHETORIC AND THE FACTS

Here are the highlights of an article published by two Toronto Dominion Bank economists on January 20th titled Setting the Record Straight on Canada – US Trade. The article is an easy to read primer complete with charts and graphs on “what’s at stake and the facts behind the rhetoric.”

Canada's trade advantage in energy has been rising steadily in recent years, most recently on the back of the Transmountain Pipeline Expansion (TMX) that, in turn, has sharply boosted Canadian oil exports to the U.S. west coast in addition to Asian markets.

Canadian crude is a key supplier to U.S. refining, predominantly in the mid-West, with a steadily growing share in the Gulf coast. Since many refineries are built to process Canadian sour, heavy crude, it's difficult to shift away from that feedstock to alternative sources. This is true even from the

U.S.'s Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which is largely comprised of conventional crude. Countries that could fill the gap are Mexico and Venezuela, but the latter would require lifting sanctions. Given Mexico already enjoys the second largest trade surplus with the U.S., this shift in demand would further widen that chasm, potentially allowing it to overtake China in the pole position.

If tariffs were extended to Canadian crude oil, it could lead to an immediate jump in U.S. gasoline prices of as much as \$0.30-0.70 per gallon. One of the most price-transparent and inflation-sensitive areas for consumers is the movement in gasoline prices.

For the full story, click on the following link:

<https://economics.td.com/ca-canada-us-trade-balance>

LATEST POLLS SHOW PCS MAINTAINING SIGNIFICANT LEAD

Mainstreet Research conducted a poll of 936 adults, aged 18 years or older who live in Ontario, between January 25th and 26th using land lines and cell phones. The margin of error is +/- 3.2% with 95% confidence level. Here's what the poll uncovered:

- In response to the question, "If the provincial election were held today, how would you vote?" all respondents replied as follows: 31% would vote PC, 24% Liberal, 20% NDP, 5% Green, 6% Other and 15% undecided
- In response to the question, "If the provincial election were held today, how would you vote?" decided and leaning voters replied this way: 36% would vote PC, 29% Liberal, 23% NDP, 6% Green and 6% Other
- 26% of all respondents said the cost of living/inflation is the most important issue impacting Ontario, 26% healthcare, 13% US relations/tariffs, 11% infrastructure/transit
- 41% supported an early election, 48% opposed it and 11% didn't know

The full report is available by [clicking here](#).

Meanwhile, Liaison Strategies surveyed 1,197 Ontario voters using interactive voice technology on January 15th and 16th and produced the following results:

- Among decided and leaning voters, 41% said they would vote PC if an election was held on the day the poll was taken (an increase of 1% from the Liaison poll taken January 8-9, 2025) 32% Liberal (+2), 19% NDP (-2), 5% Green (+1), 2% Other (-2)

[Click here for the full report.](#)

CRANE COUNT IN GTHA HOLDS STEADY AT END OF Q4

The number of active construction cranes operating in a particular region or city is often cited as a reflection of the overall amount of construction activity in that region or city. An article in Crane & Hoist magazine published on January 10th quoted the following crane counts in the GTHA compiled by UrbanToronto UT Pro:

- Durham – 9
- York – 26
- Toronto – 162
- Peel – 32
- Halton – 34
- Hamilton – 16

The total number of cranes actively working in the region at the end of the fourth quarter of 2024 (279) decreased by only 1 from the end of the third quarter 2024.

This was the seventh consecutive quarter with a decrease in the crane count. However, the decrease of 1 crane from Q3 to Q4 2024 was the smallest quarterly decline.

Toronto's crane count was down by 14 from the end of Q3.

To read the Crane & Hoist article, [click here](#).

INFLATION RATE DECLINES SLIGHTLY IN DECEMBER

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) annual increase in December 2024 was 1.8% according to Statistics Canada. That's down from the November 2024 annual increase of 1.9%.

Food purchased from stores increased 1.9%, shelter increased 4.5% and transportation increased 2.3%

Prices in provinces where the provincial and federal sales taxes are combined (like Ontario) were impacted more than provinces where the federal and provincial taxes are not combined, by the GST/HST tax holiday introduced on December 14, 2024 (and ending on February 15, 2025) and enjoyed the full benefit of no sales tax on:

- Food
- Beverages
- Restaurants and catering and other food and drink establishments
- Children's clothing and footwear
- Children's diapers
- Children's car seats
- Children's toys
- Jigsaw puzzles
- Video game consoles, controllers and physical video games
- Physical books
- Printed newspapers
- Christmas and similar decorative trees

For the full details, click on the following link:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/250121/dq250121a-eng.htm>

MILESTONE REACHED IN RING OF FIRE

Here are the highlights copied from the Government of Canada's Impact Assessment Agency announcement about an important milestone in the future development of the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario

Fifteen First Nation partners and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada have finalized the terms of reference for the conduct of the Regional Assessment in the Ring of Fire Area

A working group, made up of community members from 15 First Nation partners and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada, will conduct the regional assessment.

For the full version of the announcement, [click here](#) .

January 2025

PICKERING NUCLEAR STATION REFURBISHMENT MOVES TO NEXT STAGE

Here are the highlights from a January 23, 2025 Ontario government news release regarding the refurbishment of the Pickering nuclear station's "B" units. The Pickering Nuclear Station is located in Pickering, Ontario about 40 km east of Toronto on the shores of Lake Ontario:

The Ontario government has approved Ontario Power Generation's (OPG) plan to proceed with the Project Definition Phase, the next step toward refurbishing Pickering Nuclear Generating Station's "B" units to secure more power and create thousands of jobs across the province.

OPG will now proceed with the Project Definition Phase of the project, which will last through 2026.

As part of the preparation for refurbishment, the government has authorized OPG to sign a \$2.1 billion contract with CanAtom for early engineering and procurement to prepare for the execution of the Retube Feeder and Boiler Replacement Program, creating more than 2,400 jobs across the province.

Once refurbished, Pickering would produce more than 2,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity, equivalent to powering two million homes, to help meet increasing demand, driven by electrification and the province's surging economic growth.

Based on OPG's preliminary schedule, the refurbishment is anticipated to be completed by the mid-2030s.

For the full story, [click here](#).



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