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MORNING UPDATE NEWSLETTER

# Morning Update: Canada, U.S. say NAFTA agreement within reach; B.C. alleges 20 years of deception in opioid lawsuit

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Good morning,

These are the top stories:

## Canada, U.S. say a NAFTA agreement is within reach

Canadian and American negotiators are in pursuit of a North American free-trade deal before the Friday deadline set by U.S. President Donald Trump, separating into working groups to address key disagreements, including the dispute-resolution mechanism at the heart of Ottawa's bargaining position. Trump and Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland said talks this week have made progress and said a deal could be had by the end of the week.

Canada has offered to give American farmers more access to its protected dairy market in

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JULY 23



Opening up Canada's milk market would lower prices for consumers. Canadians can expect to pay lower prices for milk, cheese and other dairy products if the United States wins greater access to Canada's supermarkets.

Konrad Yakabuski writes that Chrystia Freeland's so-called friends in Mexico have bid her adios on NAFTA: This week, Ms. Freeland's former amigos happily threw her under the bus as Mexican Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray and Economy Secretary Ildefonso Guajardo negotiated a bilateral U.S.-Mexico trade deal that gives ground on several key Canadian priorities (for subscribers).

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## **The B.C. government is alleging 20 years of deception in its opioid lawsuit**

British Columbia has launched a lawsuit against dozens of players in the opioid industry, alleging 20 years of misinformation and deception by pharmaceutical firms and distributors that knew or should have known the drugs were addictive and seeping into the illicit market.

The lawsuit, the first of its kind by a government in Canada, not only targets the drug manufacturers, but also takes aim at retail giants that sold the drugs, in an effort to recover public-health costs associated with an opioid epidemic that has killed thousands of Canadians.

The list of more than 40 defendants includes manufacturers such as Purdue Pharma, whose OxyContin pain pill has been implicated in Canada's overdose epidemic; retailers such as Shoppers Drug Mart Inc. and the Jean Coutu Group (PJC). Inc.; and distributors and wholesalers. Purdue has acknowledged in the United States that its marketing of OxyContin was misleading, but its Canadian operation has not made a similar admission of wrongdoing. The lawsuit's allegations have not been proven in court.

## **Falling Ontario test scores are adding to the country's math debate**

How to teach children math has ignited fierce debate in Ontario, and in the wake of record-low

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JULY 23



Results released Wednesday showed that less than half of the province's Grade 6 pupils – 49 per cent – met the provincial standard in math in the 2017-18 academic year, a one-percentage-point decline from the previous year and a five-percentage-point drop since 2014.

While many teachers have said standardized tests are not reflective of the way children learn in the classroom, Education Minister Lisa Thompson has promised to “restore proven methods of teaching the fundamentals” and examine teacher training in university education programs.

Could you pass the Grade 6 math test? [Try our quiz.](#)

## Threatened killer whales among issues in key Trans Mountain legal case

The Federal Court of Appeal will release its long-awaited ruling on challenges to the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion on Thursday, and the survival of killer whales is among the many questions the court must address. The case is one of the most important legal decisions to date for a project that would nearly triple the capacity of an existing pipeline, and that Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has insisted will go ahead. The court has heard a combined challenge – 16 cases involving 31 parties questioning the National Energy Board's approval of the project – all consolidated into one ruling.

First Nations have contended in court that they were not properly consulted and Vancouver and Burnaby have raised safety and pollution concerns, but environmental groups have focused on endangered orcas (for subscribers).

Got a news tip that you'd like us to look into? E-mail us at [tips@globeandmail.com](mailto:tips@globeandmail.com) Need to share documents securely? Reach out via [SecureDrop](#)

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

### Nova Scotia sinkhole continues to grow, now 'undercutting' nearby parking lot

A sinkhole that has swallowed trees and picnic tables in Oxford, N.S. has grown to a gaping 34 metres by 29 metres since last week. The area, located in an Oxford park, remains roped off while geologists and emergency officials assess the area around the muddy hole, thought to be

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JULY 23



## MORNING MARKETS

### Stocks sink

Stock market gains came to a grinding halt on Thursday, held back by concern that China will be left behind as the United States reaches trade agreements with other North American countries and Europe. Tokyo's Nikkei gained 0.1 per cent, but that's where the good times stop. Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 0.9 per cent, and the Shanghai Composite shed 1.1 per cent. In Europe, London's FTSE 100, Germany's DAX and the Paris CAC 40 were down by between 0.5 and 1.1 per cent by about 5:30 a.m. ET. New York futures were also down. The Canadian dollar was below 77.5 US cents.

## WHAT EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

### How Mike Pence can help Canada on NAFTA

"Can Mike Pence, the boring and barely visible U.S. Vice-President, help the Canadian cause in nailing down a trade deal this week? Don't bet against it. If there is one man in Washington who has good reason to oppose Donald Trump's protectionist passions, it is his veep." –

Lawrence Martin

### Does the Bernier Party stand a chance in Canada?

"Historically, the leaders of insurgent political movements, such as Reform and the Bloc Québécois, have tended to tamp down – not trumpet – the xenophobic strains of their movements for fear that anti-immigrant messages would alienate more voters than they attracted. Mr. Bernier may be calculating that political realignments over time have made his gambit electorally viable." – Michael Adams, president of the Environics Institute for Survey Research and author of *Could It Happen Here? Canada in the Age of Trump and Brexit*.

### John McCain was the right kind of Republican

"The gifts he brought to Congress went beyond his policy positions, which Democrats often didn't like and were indeed sometimes disastrously wrong, such as his dogged support for the

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JULY 23



## The Globe guide to the 2018 fall movie season

After a long season of summer blockbusters, movie buffs can look forward to four months of awards bait, prestige dramas, and films divorced of any cross-platform synergy. Barry Hertz presents his guide to the films that hope to keep you warm this fall.

### MOMENT IN TIME

Aug. 30, 1963: Fed up with a long, tedious process that involved fact-checking translations and transmitting telegraph forms, U.S. President John F. Kennedy wanted a faster way to connect with the USSR. The Russians agreed with him, realizing a direct link was necessary after the Cuban missile crisis set off worries of a nuclear war around the world. In the midst of the Cold War, a hotline was set up between the two nuclear powers. It became a critical link during tense relations. The first serious use of the hotline was in 1967 during the Six Day War. Messages between President Lyndon Johnson and the Soviets could be answered within an hour, which was groundbreaking back at that time. Despite its name, the connection was not a telephone, but a teletype machine for written messages. Over the years, the teletype became a fax machine, and then a secure e-mail connection - which still still exists today between the United States and Russia. In 2016, President Barack Obama sent a note to Russian President Vladimir Putin warning against Russian interference in the past American presidential election. It was the only time the Obama administration used the hotline, according to a report by NBC News. – Nadine Yousif

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