

***Transcript of Provincial Question Period
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Unedited Transcript

The following is a partially edited transcript of Question Period.

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MPP Brown to Premier Re: School Safety

Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Last night global's Tom Hayes asked a question for parents and teachers. He asked about violence in our schools and specifically what this government is going to do about it. Just look at some of the stories we heard. Halton region mother who recently moved from Durham said my kids are now out in Halton region. And guess what? The same problem exists here, too. A teacher from niagara said this, I quote -- this seems like an epidemic in the Ontario school system all across the province. Clearly the system is broken, Mr. Speaker. How long will parents have to worry about their children and how long will teachers have to fear for their safety before this government finally acts?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister of education will want to speak to the specifics, but I know, Mr. Speaker, having met with representatives of our education partners, I know that we are working with them and that there's a particular request to work together to set up a practice, Mr. Speaker, whereby we can ensure there are the resources that are need under our schools, particularly on issues of wkplace safety, Mr. Speaker. And so that speaks to our commitment to not just workplace safety for teachers and support workers but also safety for everyone who either goes to our schools, Mr. Speaker, parents who come into the school and everyone who works in the school. We are working with our partners and we will ensure, Mr. Speaker, that we put new supports in place if those are required.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. When there's violence in the classroom, the government has a duty and an obligation to act to protect the safety of our teachers. But of course the Minister of education passes the buck again and again. She leaves this epidemic up to the local school board saying it has nothing to do with the government. She tells everyone not to worry because local school boards have policies. But, Mr. Speaker, this is not a local issue. This is across the province. As the niagara teacher told us, this is an Ontario-wide epidemic. What has to happen? What tragic event has to happen before the government realizes it's their responsibility and they can't pass the buck any longer? Mr. Speaker, how bad does this epidemic have to get until we can get a commitment from the province and from the Premier directly that they're going to take this issue seriously?

>> Premier Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, you have that commitment. The people of Ontario have that commitment. Our education partners have that commitment. The parents in our schools and most importantly, Mr. Speaker, the students in our schools have that commitment. That's exactly why we continue and we take responsibility. We continue to increase the resources in our schools including, Mr. Speaker, the special education grant which is projected to be approximately

\$2.8 billion in 2017/18 and that grant is important, Mr. Speaker, because that is the grant that allows school boards to hire the support staff, to hire the resources that they need in the classroom, Mr. Speaker. So we understand that there needs to be a vigilant -- vigilant and ongoing discussion about what resources need to be in schools as education evolves, Mr. Speaker. We have inclusive schools in this province, Mr. Speaker. We continue to increase funding and we are working with our partners to make sure supports are in place.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier. The Premier's position seems to be everything's fine. The govt's doing their job and they'll continue to leave this to the local school boards. The reality is everything isn't fine. It isn't roasty. The exposé I'd encourage the Premier to watch and Tom Hayes interviews and highlighting the real challenges that students and teachers are facing. The reality is this is not the teachers' fault. We know teachers don't have adequate support and training to deal with this violence in the classrooms. We know this is an epidemic that has got atrociously bad. This is not an appropriate work environment for anyone. It's not acceptable. I want the Premier, I want the government to understand they can't pass this off. So my question, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier is this. Do the liability and responsibility for the safety of our teachers not belong to the Minister of education. Or are they going to again pass it off to the school board?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let me be clear once again. We understand that we are absolutely responsible for the supports that are in our schools. We take this very seriously. Of course, Mr. Speaker, if there are incidents of violence then those are unacceptable for all of the people in a classroom or in a school, Mr. Speaker, which is exactly why, in my previous answer, I talked about the increased resources that we are putting in our schools and we will continue to work with our education partners. I have met with representatives of teachers' federations who have said to us that they think that, as the classroom and the population evolves, as the classroom changes, Mr. Speaker, that we need to make sure that we have the resources and the training in place for everyone who works in our schools. We will work with our partners. The Minister of education is doing that. As we continue to increase funding in our schools. Both of those things go together, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Brown to Premier (Thibeault) Re: Hydro Advertising

Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Surprise, surprise recent hydro bills across the province were stuffed with what appears to be partisan advertising. It appears like there's no line this Liberal government will not cross. Mr. Speaker, what I'd like to know specifically from this Premier is how much did this partisan Liberal advertising cost in hydro bills?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: I not Minister of energy's going to want to speak to the supplementary but let me just say that what is happening across the province is people are seeing their electricity bills go down, Mr. Speaker. They're seeing reductions of their electricity bills. That's what our fair hydro plan is about, Mr. Speaker. I understand the leader of the opposition wants to talk about anything but the fact that he doesn't have a plan and did not ever have a plan to reduce people's electricity bills. We are doing that people are seeing those reductions on their bills millimetre and that's exactly as it should be as people struggle to manage their finances on a day-to-day basis, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, it's amazing that the Premier can defend this propaganda with a straight face. It's wrong. She knows it's wrong. The member for Prince Edward- Hastings wrote to the auditor general about these Liberal ads stuffed in hydro bills n.her response she essentially said this is not the first time the Liberals have used hydro bills for partisan purposes. They jammed election-style ads in hydro bills just before the 2011 election. Now we know the government has no shame. They will continue to cross lines to try to pitch this alternate reality of their farce of a hydro plan. As usual the Liberals will do anything to look out for the Liberal party, not for ratepayers in Ontario. I ask this. When do they realize that they have to stop using Ontario taxpayer resources to push their own partisan agenda? It's getting worse and worse. Will you listen to the auditor general and do the right thing?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things we continue to do as a government, Mr. Speaker, is bring forward a plan that will reduce rates by 25% by July 1st of course, Mr. Speaker, if this legislation passed. That's 25% reduction for small businesses. That's 25% reduction for farms, Mr. Speaker, and 25% -- For all families right across the province. When it comes to making sure people -- this government that brought forward that plan. It's this government that is making sure that those 800,000 families in this province that live in the rural or northern -- Actually will see a 40 to 50% reduction. What they also know, Mr. Speaker, is the opposition have no plan and when they have no plan for electricity, Mr. Speaker, that just means they have no plan for Ontario.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier. Partisan false propaganda. That's what this is, Mr. Speaker. The auditor general had this to say. She said the

government's most recent advertising on its fair hydro plan would not have passed review. That's the auditor general. Further, the auditor general said they found that advertising to be misleading and self-congratulatory. It's not just opposition. Not just the media saying this hydro plan is a farce. It is the independent legislative oversight saying it's misleading and self-congratulatory in terms much these ads. Clearly the Liberals are using taxpayer money for their own partisan gains. That's not acceptable. Mr. Speaker, will the Liberals pull their hydro election ads and stop campaigning on taxpayers' dime? It's pretty simple request. Will you simile do the right thing and stop abusing taxpayers for their own partisan gain?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the P.C.S don't want the people of Ontario to know there's going to be a 25% reduction coming by summer, Mr. Speaker. I know that the P.C. S don't want people tock especially with the utilities. We have about and I know they don't like telling people of Ontario what's actually happening, Mr. Speaker, because they have no plan when it comes to electricity. Mr. Speaker, they don't know -- they have -- you know, when it comes to their approach, Mr. Speaker, their approach doesn't lower bills for families. It doesn't lower bills for small businesses. It doesn't lower bills for long-term care homes. And it doesn't do anything to address Ontario's indigenous communities, Mr. Speaker. And why is that? Because, Mr. Speaker, they have no plan. When they don't have a plan for electricity, they have no plan on what to do in Ontario, Mr. Speaker. We have brought forward a plan that's going to reduce bills by 25% that will help everyone in this province.

MPP Horwath to Premier (Naqvi) Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, in less than an hour the Liberal government is going to force through you a time allocation motion that severely limits debate on their hydro financing scheme, borrowing scheme really is what it is. When that happens this legislature will have had about 7 hours of debate on this bill. Seven hours, Speaker. Seven hours for legislation that will impact people's lives for the next 30 years. It's ludicrous. Why does this Premier insist upon ramming this legislation through the House ?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the government has leaders want to speak to the procedural mechanisms. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to just make it clear that what we are doing is working to help people in their lives. Whether it is the fair hydro plan, Mr. Speaker, or whether it's ohip plus pharmacare, which will give all children across the province from zero to their 25th birthday free medication, Mr. Speaker. Those are -- that we believe are critical. It is outrageous to me Mr. Speaker -- It is very pricing -- surprising the NDP Has indicated they will vote against both those measures, Mr. Speaker, and they would rather, would rather focus on procedural mechanisms and games, Mr. Speaker, that actually deal with the substance.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, what is outrageous is the plan that the Liberals are trying to ram through this legislature that will cost people more money in a couple years' time when it comes to their electricity bill. Look, in addition to the limited debate that they're allowing here, they're also going to limit where the people of Ontario will have an opportunity to have their say. All of the public hearings that they've just had a change of heart on this morning are going to be happening here in Toronto. Why won't the people in London be able to have their say, Speaker, or the people in Windsor or in Ottawa or in Thunder Bay or anywhere else outside of Toronto, Speaker ? Why will those Ontarians not have a chance to have their say on this legislation?

>> Minister Yasir Naqvi: Well, Speaker, thank you very much. I can tell you on this side of the House we are extremely proud to bring forward bill 132. That is going to provide for immediate relief for all Ontarians by cutting their hydro bills by 25%, Speaker. In fact, Speaker, the bill does not Speaker, it is beyond comprehension. It's why the NDP's again giving Ontarians a significant relief from their hydro bills. Speaker, NDP Say they haven't had enough time to debate this bill. Yet they announced the opposition to this bill within the first hour of introduction of this bill. Clearly their minds are made up. They don't want to help Ontarians.

>> Andrea Horwath: What the NDP Is against is giving the people of Ontario the shaft on their hydro bills. That's what this government is about to do. This

morning, this morning we did. We did call on this government to have a change of heart and to provide an opportunity for more public hearings, and of course the Liberals said no and then they had a sudden change of heart. But not surprisingly the government has decided to have all of the public hearings here in Toronto. That is not giving the people of Ontario a safe, Speaker. That's giving some people an opportunity to have a say, a say. So here we have an extremely important piece of legislation that's going to impact people's hydro bills in a very negative way in the short order. And this government's not prepared to seek input from people across the province. Why?

>> Minister Naqvi: (Transcript cut out for beginning of response)...We don't want to delay people of Ontario. Our government wants to have that 25 right away. The NDP Wants to debate the issue.

MPP Horwath to Premier Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

Andrea Horwath: My next question's also for the Premier. In 2013 the Premier said this about her party's cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants and I quote, I never said this wasn't a political decision. Ment. Will the Premier admit right now. That her hydro borrowing scheme is just a political decision design today try to -- Hold on to power in the next election.

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our decision to reduce people's electricity bills by 25% has everything to do with people's ability to pay their electricity bills and to manage their budgets, Mr. Speaker. That's what our plan is about. And, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the \$50 billion of investment that has been made in the electricity system to make it clean, renewable and reliable, Mr. Speaker, investment that was necessary because previous governments have not made those investments, Mr. Speaker, and we were dealing with a degraded electricity system in 2003, we recognize that the costs associated with that needs to be spread over a longer period of time. That's what we're doing, and in doing that, Mr. Speaker, we are able to give people immediate relief, 25% reduction this summer, and, Mr. Speaker, in rural and northern communities, some people will see. A 40 to 50% reduction, Mr. Speaker. That is in response to people's need in this province. That's what the fair hydro plan is about.

>> Andrea Horwath: Last fall the Premier also admitted that soaring hydro bills were per his her mistake in the first place. She said and I quote, I take responsibility as leader for not paying close enough attention to some of the daily stresses in Ontarians' lives. Electricity prices are a prime example. Why is the Premier pushing forward, Speaker, with a hydro borrowing scheme when documents know -- documents show, rather, as she knows that it will cause hydro bills to go up even further and cause even more stress for the families and businesses that she just apologized to six months ago.

>> Premier Wynne: So, Mr. Speaker, I've been very clear that we were working on a number of initiatives. We removed 8%, Mr. Speaker, from people's bills. We renegotiated the Samsung contract, Mr. Speaker. We've been working on this not for months but for years to remove costs from the system because we recognize that those investments to upgrade the system were costly and had a cost associated with them. In removing 25% from people's bills, Mr. Speaker, we have said that that means that the costs will be shared over a longer period of time. And in the short term that 25% reduction will help people immediately. In the midterm, Mr. Speaker, we will hold those bills down to the rate of inflation, and in the long term, the long-term electricity plan, long-term energy plan is being developed and we will continue to take costs out of the system. This is immediate

relief, Mr. Speaker, but we recognize. That there's a longer-term plan that's needed. That plan is being developed, Mr. Speaker.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this Premier and this government are the plagued by scandal. The Sudbury by-election, bribery charges, the broken promise not to sell Hydro One, the gas plant decision and now, ramming an ill thought out hydro borrowing scheme through the House with no F.A.O. Assessment, with just six sitting days left and very very little time for the people of Ontario to review it and most importantly when she knows it will end up costing people in this province more on their hydro bills. When will the Premier put an end to Liberal scandals and just admit she has no real plan to lower people's hydro bills, only another political decision.

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, people across this province are going to see a 25% reduction on average between 23 and 2% reduction on average. On Nair electricity bills by summer, Mr. Speaker. People in northern and rural communities, many will see up to a 40 to 60% reduction, Mr. Speaker. On January 1st, 2018, children across this province will have access to free medication, Mr. Speaker. This fall, this September students will be going to College without having to pay tuition. Low-income families will go -- Kids will be going to university and to College and taking training programs without having to pay tuition. My job as Premier is to put in place plans that are real, that give people real relief and that work and have real-time --

MPP Fedeli (Hardeman) to Sousa Re: Ontario Budget

MPP Vic Fedeli: Thank you and good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Later this morning we'll be voting on the government's budget measures bill. This includes giving the availability did to municipalities to implement a new hotel tax. On this new tax, the Liberal MPP From mississauga-streetsville stated, and I quote, this is a bad idea and I do not support it. He went on to say, and again I'm quoting, to attempt to tax out-of-town residents is taxation without representation. Even the Premier's own members have serious objections to this bill. I ask the Premier, is that why debate was cut off? Did the Premier not want the member from mississauga-streetsville and others to share these objections with the legislature?

>> Minister Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite was correct on one point. We are passing a bill this afternoon to pass a first balanced budget since the depth of the recession, Mr. Speaker. A balanced budget that's going to meet the needs of the people of Ontario. A budget that's going to support all our children under the age of 25 with free medication, a budget that's going to provide supports for education and health care, with record investments. A budget that's going to provide for more roads and bridges and public transit, Mr. Speaker. And next, Mr. Speaker, we are going to provide the city of Toronto and other municipalities with more powers at their request. Mr. Speaker, what's important here is that we're providing for the people of Ontario and that member opposite should be supporting that as well.

>> MPP Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, my question is back to the Premier. Premier, the member from mississauga-streetsville isn't the only one of your members that disagrees with your policies. The Liberal member from Beaches-East York said, quote, the rent controls that were brought in by the previous NDP Government under BOB Rae decimated the affordable housing market in Toronto, and other communities in Ontario because it didn't allow the private sector to contain the bill. He went on to say, quote, I would resist tremendously any amendment to this legislation that would bring -- Premier, did you cut off debate on bill 24 so that your members couldn't raise these objections in the legislature?

>> Minister Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has just made reference -- The member opposite just made reference to 16 measures, comprehensive measures to try to cool the market, to address demand and supply in our housing sector. To provide and support the people of Ontario and homeowners who are trying to get into the market. The member opposite is suggesting otherwise. Again they're voting against the people of Ontario. They're not supporting the very families that are trying to get into the marketplace as we've addressed in those measures going forward, Mr. Speaker. I asked the member opposite and

first question, what will they cut as we proceed forward in these measures, Mr. Speaker ? Will they cut pharmacare for the children of our communities? Will they cut hospitals and education and schools -- That's what they're voting for. They're voting against the people of Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Gelinas to Hoskins Re: Hospital Wait Times

MPP France Gelinas: Voice of Translator: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[End of Translation] For the Premier. Families in brampton know that their hospital is dangerously overcrowded. The emergency room sees about 160% more people each and every day than they were designed to care for. People like jamie-lee ball have suffered for days on end on stretchers in hallways and 87-year-old Rufina passed away after spending five long days in the hallways of the E.R. The Premier could do something to fix the overcrowding at brampton civic but she refuses to act. How much longer do the good people of brampton have to wait before this Premier actually does something to fix the overcrowding at the brampton civic hospital.

>> Mr. Speaker, the people of Ontario don't have to wait much longer at all. In fact just a few short minutes from now, we'll be voting on a budget which I hope the member opposite will support that contains more than \$500 million of new investments added to the base of hospitals across this province. Every single hospital will get a minimum of a 2% increase to their budget, and in addition to that, we have reserved significant funds specifically for hospitals like the brampton civic. And, Mr. Speaker, we're adding an additional \$10 million to the brampton civic this year, subject to the approval of the budget which I hope the member opposite and her party will support for that very reason. I have to remind Ontarians as well how proud I was to be standing beside the Premier just a few short weeks ago when we opened the brand-new Peel memorial. Health wellness centre, which is providing extraordinary service. To the people of brampton, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Gelinas: Thank you, Speaker. The Premier was at Osler health this morning and she could have announced that her government will stop the overcrowding at Brandon hospital but she failed to do that. Brampton civic needs at least 200 more beds in the short term and more like 600 more beds in the long term. The Premier's failure to step up and fix the overcrowding crisis means that patients like jamie-lee and Rufina will continue to suffer from hallway medicine. People will continue to wait for days in hallways without a proper hospital bed and hospital care. Why does the Premier think that hallway medicine is good enough for the people of brampton?

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Well, of course that's an unfair characterization of the position of this party, Mr. Speaker. That's precisely why we invested approximately half a billion new dollars last year, an additional more than 500 million this year in this budget, and in just a few minutes the member opposite has the opportunity to support those investments, Mr. Speaker. And those investments include a multibillion-dollar investment in a brand-new hospital that

will benefit Mississauga and Etobicoke. The trillium -- the new hospital in mississauga, the trillium network, Mr. Speaker. And it's part of capital investments of \$20 billion over the next ten years for new hospitals, for redevelopments, for expansion. Precisely I would hope precisely to address the kind of issue that the member opposite has raised today.

MPP Milczyn to Naqvi Re: Ontario Municipal Board Reforms

MPP Peter Milczyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Attorney General. Last fall our government undertook to fix the Ontario municipal board and land use planning system. Mr. Speaker, the government held a series of town halls and stakeholder meetings across the province to hear from Ontarians directly. And I held two town halls in my own riding of Etobicoke-lakeshore. Speaker, I can tell you from listening to my own constituents' concerns and from my 17 years' experience on city council, the status quo is not working. Substantial changes for land use planning system means people and communities first. I was extremely pleased today here the news that our government is taking action to overhaul the province's land use planning appeals system more importantly giving communities a stronger voice and ensuring people have access to faster, fairer and more affordable hearings. Can the Attorney General tell us how community consultations help to inform the government's proposed action?

>> Minister Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. I do want to truly really thank the member from Etobicoke- Lakeshore first for his guidance to both myself and to the Minister of municipal affairs on this very important issue. Being a planner himself, having served on the Toronto city council of course he brought forward a lot of practical experience that was very helpful. Thanks to the member for his hard work on behalf of his community and advice to us. Speaker, we did some extensive consultation on this issue, as you know. We held town halls with over 700 identities from Windsor to Ottawa. Virtually every sector we heard from ideas for improving the O.M.B., Ontario municipal board, and the hearing process. At the end of the day, Speaker, people want more community involvement and more local controls over planning decisions. Speaker, in coming weeks we will introduce legislation to transform Ontario's land use planning system, including creating the local planning appeals tribunal which would if passed replace the Ontario municipal board. And eliminating –

>> MPP Milczyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank the Attorney General for his answer. I'm very proud today that our government is committed to giving communities a stronger voice and create a more level playing field. I know my constituents are extremely pleased by this commitment to overhaul the planning system. Mr. Speaker, the chief planner of the city of Toronto, Jennifer Keesmaat, has called our government's reforms a generational change. Toronto city councillor Josh Matlow has said government should be commended for finally tipping the balance of power away from developers and towards residents and municipal governments. This is how we plan communities. Speaker, the government is committed as part of its proposed legislation to establish supports

to help citizens participate in the tribunal process. Cot Attorney General tell us more about the local planning appeals support centre?

>> Minister Naqvi: Speaker, I was saying we will be creating a local appeal tribunal that will replace the O.M.B. We also will be eliminating lengthy and costly Dinovo hearings and independent support centre called a local planning appeal support centre to citizens participating in the tribunal process. This, Speaker, will support more clear and timely decision making. In the end of the day, the result is going to be fewer, shorter less costly hearings and more efficient decision-making process, giving communities a stronger voice and fostering a more level playing field. That is why. Residents across this province are supporting our proposal. It's been described as a bold step the province is taking. Speaker, I'm hoping that we'll bring this legislation and it will approved by this legislature.

MPP Wilson (N.Miller) to MacCharles (Sousa) Re: Service Clubs

MPP Jim Wilson: My question's to the Minister of government and consumer services. Speaker, in February of 2015, my private member's resolution concerning service clubs received all party support in this House. It called on the government to strike a committee to investigate the legislative regulatory Barriers and burdens facing service clubs such as the costs of audits, red tape when applying for lottery and liquor licences, taxes and fees to name just a few. The government sent my request to the standing committee on social policy for a mere one-half-day of hearings. The committee issued a summary of recommendations and since then we have heard nothing, despite my repeated requests for action on the issues raised by service clubs. Mr. Speaker, my question is simple. What has the government done to remove the regulatory Barriers facing service clubs in all our communities?

>> Minister Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the member for the quo. I think we all agree that service clubs play a very important role in our communities, and I congratulate the member for bringing the bill forward. And our government's very committed to looking at reducing regulatory burdens, red tape. In fact the -- Our communities. So I haven't heard from the member on this recently. So I would be pleased to discuss with him the next steps, and I, as I say, am a strong advocate for making things easier, especially our not-for-profit sector, Speaker. The member will know that the not-for-profit corporation -- these kinds of files are very important to me and to our community. Thank you.

>> MPP Nicole Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of government and consumer services. The rotary club of bracebridge has told me this government's ridiculous rules are creating unnecessary obstacles to fund-raising. The rotary club of bracebridge raises money for local events and causes and to support local families in need. Every year they raffle off a carp. This year they added a duck race but they are unable to get a licence to start selling raffle tickets for the car until the duck race is over. That means they will lose two months of time for selling the raffle tickets for the carp. Speaker, the committee heard about these issues more than six months ago. As life gets harder in Ontario under this government, communities and families rely moral and more on service clubs for help. Speaker, why has the Minister not made the recommended changes to help piece -- these volunteers who are trying to raise money for such worthy causes?

>> Minister Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite are highlighting a very important point. All of us are concerned about our service clubs to dot job they need in raising money and providing for gaming and bingo as well. Something I'm working on with the O.L.G. And the H.C. O. To determine

how to best provide those services and enable them to have more accommodations. I know working with some of the cities is also part of the issue where they have the wherewithal to advance some of those causes. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the concern. We share them with you. We want to make it easier for our service clubs to provide the service that they do so essentially in our communities.

MPP Vanthof to Sousa Re: Housing Prices

MPP John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. My question's to the Premier. Yesterday we learned that a brokerage in Hong Kong is advertising condo units with the promise to pay the non-resident speculation tax on the investors' behalf. This completely defeats the purpose of the tax. But the Minister of finance says it's fine because the government is still getting paid. Is the Premier interested in cracking down on speculation and keeping homes affordable or, like her Minister said, is she only interested in filling government coffers?

>> Minister Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, let's make no mistake. There's no loophole here. Should this legislation pass, by the way, then there will be a 50% speculation tax that will be -- 15%, that will be applied to all nonresident Canadian buyers who provide and purchase residential homes. In the greater golden horseshoe, Mr. Speaker. And no matter how it's being advertised by some independent all-in price by some other agency in another part of the world outside of Canada, the buyers will be paying the tax if they're a nonresident Canadian, and that's just the point that we're making, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Vanthof: Again to the Premier. A media reporter over the weekend revealed that the Premier avoided taking action against housing speculation even as Toronto home prices skyrocketed by over 33% in just one year. The article said, quote -- Premier Kathleen Wynne and Mr. Sousa told government officials that they needed the approval of the major banks to pursue speculation tax, unquote. Is the Premier unwilling to stop speculation and make homes affordable? Because she cares more about her banker friends than Ontario families who need affordable homes?

>> Minister Sousa: So, Mr. Speaker, there's a 16-point measure in this -- in our fair housing plan. We hope the members opposite will support them. They include rent control, Mr. Speaker. They include protections for tenants. They also include protection to provide for more supply into the mix and they apply a nonresident Canadian speculation tax on those that do not live in Canada and are crowding out families that are trying to buy homes. Mr. Speaker, we're providing for this and I hope the members opposite will support the very thing for the very same practices and measures we're putting out. Mr. Speaker, it's important enable our families and young people to get into the market if they wish. The members opposite, I believe, I believe they support that, but I'm not really certain at this point, Mr. Speaker, what they're getting at.

MPP Dong to Mauro Re: Ontario Municipal Board Reforms

MPP Han Dong: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of municipal affairs. Like the member from Etobicoke-lakeshore, I too had a consultation town hall O.M.B. Review with the member from Davenport. The Ontario municipal board is an independent ajude kaifb tribunal. When people disagree over how the community should grow, often O.M.B. Hears the case and makes a decision. These are important decisions and Ontarians we feel today will determine how we live, work and play tomorrow. We want a healthy and sustainable livable community. Many of my constituents have expressed concern that the O.M.B. Doesn't always give enough weight to the local perspective when it makes a decision. Yesterday the Minister, along with Attorney General, announced that our government is taking action to improve our land use planning appeal system. Would the Minister elaborate on some of the changes our government is proposing?

>> Minister Bill Mauro: I thank the member for the question. In the coming weeks, Speaker, legislation will be introduced that, if passed, would create the local planning appeal tribunal to replace the Ontario municipal board. The new tribunal would be mandated to give greater deference to the decisions of local communities. The member for Trinity- Spadina was one of many of our members I would say who held their own town halls and listened to what the con stch went had to say in addition to the consultations, at least a dozen or so held by our ministry. The feedback came back to us and was considered as a part of the review we heard that people wanted more community involvement, a more meaningful voice in the process, more local control over planning decisions, fewer hearings and a more transparent process. Speaker, that's what we're proposing. This process, if passed, will provide more certainty for all, including those in the development industry. Speaker, in the supplementary. I'm going to give some details on how we're providing more deference to local decision making if this legislation passes.

>> MPP Dong: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the Minister for the answer. I understand that, as providing more deference to local decision making, our government is proposing that a few cases to go to appeal body. And some local decisions are exempt from appeal. In my riding, the ossington community association had questions about how community would grow near transit areas. All Ontarians should be able to count on land use planning and appeal system that is efficient, transparent and predictable and one that gives residents a say in what's built in their neighbourhoods. Speaker, through you to the Minister, would the Minister explain how seeing a few municipal and provincial decisions go to tribunal will benefit communities in Ontario?

>> Minister Mauro: Speaker, again I thank the member. He is spot on, Speaker. We're proposing to bring fewer municipal decisions before the tribunal. New official plans, major O.P. Updates and detailed plans to support growth and major transit station areas would be sheltered from appeal. On the transit piece, we're proposing a tool that would put greater power in the hands every municipalities. When municipalities plan for transit support of densities around a major transit station in a way that reflects community concerns and circumstances, Speaker, we believe that planning should be protected at the discretion of the municipality. That's what we're proposing. All these changes would support the development of more livable, accessible and complete neighbourhoods. We've heard that too often O.M.B. Decisions don't consider local perspectives. These changes, Speaker, will reset the balance. That's why local governments are supporting this announcement. We've heard from a number of mayors right across the gtha and beyond who are very supportive of this, Speaker. We're proud of it and we think it's landed --

MPP Hillier to Premier (Thibeault) Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

MPP Randy Hillier: My question is for the Premier. Throughout April and May, I received hundreds and hundreds of letters from my constituents expressing outrage over their hydro bill and the excessive costs of electricity on their families and their homes -- and businesses. Every single one of these letters is addressed to the Premier and it has the hydro bill attached to it. Speaker, my constituents blame the Premier for her interference, her meddling and ideological pursuits which result under this hydro scandal. I'm going to send these letters over to the Premier with the page. These people deserve an honest answer and response from the architect of this anarchy. Speaker, will the Premier be straight with my constituents? In response? Or will they have to continue to rely on leaked Cabinet documents instead?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate, I appreciate the correspondence that the member has sent and that we certainly will look at it and respond, Mr. Speaker. And I assume that these letters have come into my office. I'll have to look at them, Mr. Speaker. You know what, I will say to each one of them is that we recognize that electricity costs needed to be dealt with. We recognize that making sure that we had a reliable, clean electricity grid had a cost associated with it, Mr. Speaker. And we recognize that it is very important that we take 25% off their bills by summer, Mr. Speaker, so that they will have an easier time -- Mr. Speaker, and. I will further say the way we are doing that is we are asking the people of Ontario over a longer period of time to pay for the purpose those upgrades of the electricity system. And even the playing field, Mr. Speaker. I will absolutely be happy to say that --

>> MPP Hillier: Speaker, again to the Premier. I asked for a straightforward and honest response because I read that confidential Cabinet document on the global adjustment smoothing, as well as so many others have. And it states, after this year, we can expect rates to continue to rise, and in ten years' time 50% higher. Everybody sees this as a sleight of hand, Speaker and craft electioneering tactic to try to refloat their floundering political ship. Speaker, the Premier needs to explain and be truthful to the people of Ontario, that what this government says in this House and to the media appears to be very different than what is being said behind those very secretive Cabinet doors. And I believe -- Suffering energy poverty deserve the truth. Does the Premier believe they deserve the truth?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Talking about being truthful, Mr. Speaker, let's be truthful about those bills. Those are Hydro One bills, Mr. Speaker. R1 and R2 customers, they will see 40 to 50% off on those bills, Mr. Speaker. I hope that that member will be honest with them and let them

know that he and his party are voting against that. 40 to 50%. And you are votings against that. Seniors in your riding. You're voting against -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for that. Through you, Mr. Speaker. I hope that the member is telling the constituents in his riding that they are getting a 40 to 50% reduction that he's voting against. I hope that he's telling the constituents in his riding that they have no plan, that they have no idea on what to do. The only thing that they can do, Mr. Speaker, is --

MPP Bisson to McGarry Re: Softwood Lumber Industry

MPP Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. It's pretty clear watchings our federal government in the negotiation on the softwood lumber situation, that they're almost ready to throw in the towel for Ontario. The federal Minister of the crown has actually stated at this point they're going to focus on the job losses, that they know there's going to be job losses in the Ontario industry and that they're prepared to do something in order to offset those job losses. Madame Premier, there doesn't have to be one job lost in Ontario. Our industry is not subsidized much it's been found like that under chapter 19 of nafta not once but numerous times by chapter 19 to say that in fact we don't subsidize our industry. So my question to you is this. Would you stand up for Ontario and make sure that as the federal government comes up short when it comes to the Ontario industry, that we are there in order to deal with -- Making sure that they've got the money to survive the next three years until we get another positive ruling?

>> Minister Kathryn McGarry: Thank you, Speaker. I thank the member for the question. We on this side of the House are also very concerned about the softwood lumber dispute, and we've taken very strong action. Ontario's working with the sector to protect this important part of Ontario's economy and minimize the impact of these unreasonable duties. We've called on the federal government to create a loan guarantee program to protect forest companies here in Ontario. We're also providing \$74 million in funding to the forest industry to reimburse costs for their forest and public access roads, which will help to connect not only remote communities but also keep those workers going. We've been continuing to work at the federal government task force with my provincial Colleagues as well. To call on other measures, too. And I can address more of those in the supplementary.

>> MPP Bisson: Roads are not roads for forest kilometres. Those are roads for T companies. Of course we subsidize them because they're for cottage recalls. They're for anybody going into the bush to do whatever. So don't go down that line. The issue is we as an industry that we don't subsidize. We have an industry that has been found -- Speaker, to the Premier. We have an industry that is not subsidized, that has been found so. What I'm asking this government to do is that if the federal government comes up short, which it appears that they will, that Ontario will do as Québec did and make sure we have a fund in place in order to protect our industries for the three years that it's going to take to come to yet win another decision under chapter 19.

>> Minister McGarry: Thank you, Speaker. And I thank the member for the supplementary. And we on this side of the border are taking action. We are looking at all options on tomorrow. We continue to bring the Ontario voice to the federal government who are responsible for going out and negotiating. We have

named Jim Peterson, who is a former federal trade Minister, as our emissary and he's working on before of our workers. I wanted to point out to the member opposite that they downloaded those forest roads to the municipalities. Not only are we supporting a vote. We topped that up with 20 million more dollars that keeps those members and those contractors working from those forest companies in order to maintain and build those roads. C.E.O. Of e-commerce runs sawmill added the announcement of that extra money demonstrates the Ontario government's support for strong, reliable infrastructure northern Ontario. We continue --

MPP Hoggarth to Duguid (Moridi) Re: Innovation in Ontario

MPP Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of economic development and growth. Minister, we always hear about how well our economy is doing. We've been leading the G-7 in growth for three years, and now we have the lowest unemployment rate in Ontario as seen in the last 16 years. But the economy is changing. Many people are anxious about their futures and the futures of their children. The Minister, are the future generations of this province prepared for these changes? And what are we doing to support them?

>> Minister Brad Duguid: Speaker, it's so nice to get a question. Really happy to be able to get up on my feet. I'm almost out of practice. And it's time when our economy's all -- economies all over the world are struggling to achieve strong economic growth. Ontario's economy is consistently outperforming its peers. This week I and Minister of research, innovation and science had the pleasure of visiting discovery 2017, just down the street, Mr. Speaker. And we are absolutely astounded at what we saw there. Discovery is one way this province is building the culture -- a culture of entrepreneurialism among our young people. At the young entrepreneurs make your pitch competition, I met so many impressive high school students who were providing innovative practical solutions to everyday programs. Their ideas ranged from financial literacy apps for students to innovative ways to grow blueberries. Seniors connected to their doctors. Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you, when we see those young people at discovery, when we see those young entrepreneurs, every confidence in our --

>> MPP Hoggarth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that answer. Technology is advancing in an unprecedented rate in Ontario. I'm happy to see that this government puts the hard work and advocacy forward to make sure Ontario's scientists and researchers are supported in every capacity. Every morning I wake up and read more and more articles about new exciting companies opening up offices in Ontario to attract workers from our highly skilled talent pool. I understand that over the past two -- two days, several Ministers have been attending the Ontario centres of excellence discovery 2017 conference, and folks on the direction of innovation in Ontario. Could the Minister please tell the members of this legislature what was presented at discovery -- could the Minister -- and the work our government has been doing to support innovation in Ontario?

>> Minister Reza Moridi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member from Barrie for that question. Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of -- over 3,000 of Ontario's innovators and finest entrepreneurs alongside people like McCarthy former head under president Obama. I was able to see our recent \$50 million investment in artificial intelligence through the Vector Institute in Toronto coming to life before my eyes. Mr. Speaker, a large feature of discovery this year was a

new and exciting suite of transformative technologies consisting of 5 networks, technologies, cyber security and autonomous vehicles. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to seeing these technologies flourish and laying the foundation for transformative economy in our province of Ontario. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Yakabuski to Del Duca Re: Highway 417 Expansion

MPP John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of transportation. I'm sure the Minister of transportation was as surprised as I was when the 2017/2018 budget was tabled and there was not a single mention of the continued expansion of highway 417 in Renfrew county. Mr. Speaker, All officials and my constituents were equally disappointed. This is a vital transportation corridor which is not only of great importance to the economic success of Renfrew county. It is also part of the trans-canada highway system. Speaker, will the Minister explain why this most important link did not speed any -- receive any priority in the government's recent budget? And can we expect him to ensure that mistake will be rectified in the next five-year infrastructure plan?

>> Minister Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. I do want to begin by thanking the member from Renfrew- Nipissing- Pembroke for his question. I have said before in this House, in response to a very similar question from that member on this exact same topic, Speaker, that I certainly do respect the advocacy that he brings to the discussion around this important infrastructure project. For his community. In fact, Speaker, I will say as I said a number of weeks ago to that member, I do appreciate the work that he's done locally including inviting me out to speak with municipal representatives from his community and others, including from our military, our military base in that part of Ontario. What I said that day when I went to that community, Speaker, was that I recognize the Minister of transportation that we have a critical need to make sure that we continue to invest in all of the highway projects that are deserving of the investment on every corner of the province of tomorrow. In fact, Speaker, it's what our government's doing. In this year's budget. There are nearly \$3 billion set aside to invest in capital highway, potholes and improvements, Speaker. I would be quite happy to provide additional information on the follow-up question I know that member's going to ask. Thank you very much.

>> MPP Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's kind words. What I'd really like to hear is the roar of diesel engines and bulldozers and tandem trucks. The Minister will recall his visit to Renfrew county last year. I know the visit was hopeful to the Minister and was most appreciated by the municipal officials and others in attendance. The Minister conceded that a compelling case for continued expansion of highway 417 has certainly been made. The requirement to show that the project is vital and worthy of the Minister's support has been made. Not having it in the recent budget was again, I say, a disappointment. Speaker, will the Minister please correct this glaring omission in the 2017/2018 budget and commit to putting the expansion of 417 into his ministry's next five-year infrastructure plan?

>> Minister Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. So again I'll thank the member for the follow-up question. It's very clear I think to everyone here in this chamber that he brings a lot of passion to the advocacy for this particular issue, Speaker. It's certainly something that I certainly appreciate. Speaker, you know, this member has said what he hopes to hear is that we're to be investing in highways in every corner of Ontario including in his community because he wants to hear the sound, the roar I think he put it, Speaker, of the machines that are building roads and highways and bridges again in every corner of Ontario. Speaker, that's why year after year, for the purpose literally five years that I've served here as an MPP, we have could be said invested unprecedented -- consistently invested in every corner of Ontario including in eastern Ontario. This year alone in the budget we are investing not only billions of dollars specifically for highways but overall \$190 billion over the next I believe it's 12 or 13 years, Speaker. An additional amount. Putting in, Speaker, because we understand for a couple of reasons we need to have the infrastructure for the future of our economy and for the quality of life we're proud to represent, Speaker. We also want to --

MPP Gates to Sousa Re: Auto Insurance Rates

MPP Wayne Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question's to the Premier. Premier, your government has consistently bragged in this House over what you claim to have done for people when it comes to auto insurance rates. Yet a report produced by David Marshall said that our auto insurance rates are, quote, almost 55% higher than the Canadian average. David Marshall's report also highlighted that despite our province having the lowest level of auto accidents and despite residents losing coverage under this Liberal government, we are paying by far the highest auto insurance rates in Canada. Before the last election, this government campaigned on reducing auto insurance rates by 15% and then said it was a stretch goal. Is the Premier proud of this record, and will she admit her auto insurance policies have made life harder for people trying to get by? Thank you.

>> Minister Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question and I thank David Marshall, - Mr. Speaker, for the work that he's done that we've S to provide even further measures to reduce auto insurance rates. Mr. Marshall was correct and we've been saying it from the beginning. We are having tremendously high costs of insurance in this province. And that creates higher premiums. So we have taken steps to reduce those costs over that period of time and rates have come down on average by almost 8%. We also want to further reduce them to more than 15%. In fact there are many companies that have already reduced their rates by 15% and more. Mr. Marshall's work is critical. It's out there for public content and for public discussion. And furthering supporting victims Drexler as opposed to to those providing greater costs within the system. You're right. In Alberta and other jurisdictions the costs are much higher -- much lower I should say. We have to get our -- ours lower, too. I hope you'll support those initiatives as well.