

CO Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Thursday, December 14, 2017

From: "Herman, Alan (MCI)" <alan.herman@ontario.ca>
To: "@MCI-L-Comm-MCI Top Issues" <mci-l-comm-mcitopissues@msgov.gov.on.ca>, "@MCI-L-Comm-MCI-MO Top Issues" <mci.l.comm.mci.mo.top.issues@ontario.ca>, "@MCI-L-Comm-OSS Top Issues" <mci.l.comm.osstopissues@msgov.gov.on.ca>, "@MCI-L-Comm-OSS-MO Top Issues" <mci.l.comm.oss.motopissues@msgov.gov.on.ca>, "@MCI-L-Communications" <allcomm@msgov.gov.on.ca>
Date: Thu, 14 Dec 2017 12:14:31 -0500
Attachments: 20171214 - Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript.doc (112.13 kB)

Please see attached Cabinet Office's Transcript of Provincial Question Period for Thursday, December 14, 2017. Today was the final Question Period for the year.

MCI did not receive any questions of interest.

MSA

MPP Christina Martins asked a question to Min. Hoskins about seniors drug benefits. Min. Hoskins's response touched on provincial and national pharmacare.

Official opposition questions were on a number of topics including the hydro rate reduction plan, wind turbines and Ring of Fire. NDP Questions today included: hospital funding & patient volumes, hospital hydro rates and provincial park parking fees.

The official Hansard will be available later today by clicking on the link below.

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From: Selvasadan, Assumpta (CAB)
Sent: December 14, 2017 11:59 AM
To: @CAB-ProvLegQP
Subject: Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Thursday, December 14, 2017

Transcript of Provincial Question Period
41st Parliament, 2nd Session
Thursday, December 14, 2017

The following is a partially edited transcript of Question Period.

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MPP Brown (Scott) (MacLeod) to Premier Wynne Re: Wynne Government Record

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. 'Twas the last question period before Christmas, when all through the House, the Minister s were retiring, but scandals they couldn't do without. Though see the waist high -- waste highlighted with the auditor with care. Will the Premier admit her hydro plan is unfair?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of the question I want to wish everyone in this House a very happy holiday and merry Christmas, Mr. Speaker. And to all the people of the province at this time of year, whether it's Hanukkah, whether it's Christmas, celebration of light, celebration of light and darkness is really important and so I hope everyone has an opportunity to spend some time with the people who they love the most. And now in response to the verse from across the way, Mr. Speaker, I will just say that our plan to help people with their electricity costs, our plan to make the system more fair for people, in urban centres and in rural centres Mr. Speaker -- Is just that. It is fair and it is meaning that people are seeing an average of a 25% reduction if their hydro bills.

>> MPP Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the Premier. The Minister s have briefing books

reading with dread while visions of scandal dance that through their heads. The Premier own visions ways the opposition she'll trap. Why won't she close the education skills gap?

>> Premier Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, in terms of education in this province, you know, where -- today we're celebrating the move towards recognizing, supporting, funding the Aboriginal technical institutes, Mr. Speaker. We have students in this province who are enjoying free tuition. We are putting into our curriculum exp Eriential learning and working with unions and yorking with business, Mr. Speaker, working with corporations to provide learning opportunities for young people. We have put in place more supports for young people to get jobs and support employers who hire young people. So, Mr. Speaker, in fact, in fact education is a priority for this government. It always has been. And it is why, Mr. Speaker, we see companies coming to this province because of our highly skilled work force.

>>MPP Lisa MacLeod: Members sprang from their chairs to see what's the matter. Away to the chamber they ran in a flash while the treasury stop paying for partisan ads with taxpayer cash?

>> Premier Wynne: I have some editors and critics here, Mr. Speaker. The verse from the other side. Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, this is the only province in the country, this is the only government in Canada that has in place rules around advertising, Mr. Speaker, that we have put in place because, because of egregious breaches of partisanship in the past, Mr. Speaker. And so we're very, very committed to that. We have rules in place about partisan advertising, Mr. Speaker, and those will stay in place because we believe and we are the first government to put those in place and we believe that it's important that government advertising not be partisan. That's why those rules are in place.

MPP Fedeli (Yurek) (Jones) to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> MPP Vic Fedeli: Speaker, the families were nestled, ice cold in their beds while 12% more hydro cuts danced in their heads. They prayed for relief from cold and from cough. Can you please, Premier, promise you won't cut their hydro off?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In keeping with the Christmas theme, it's only that party that's talking about coal, which is something that Santa gives to naughty people, Mr. Speaker. It's that side that's getting all the coal this year, Mr. Speaker, especially when you look at our hydro plan. Our hydro plan gives a 25% reduction on all bills for families and as many as half a million small businesses and farms, Mr. Speaker. And now, in their -- people garnishee, thank you for the MPP For Ancaster for that and the people's garnishee, they're now sneakily including our own platform in their bill, Mr. Speaker. So what is it, Mr. Speaker ? Are they sticking with coal or do they want to stick with green, Mr. Speaker ? On this side of the House, we're sticking with green. We want to ensure that our system is clean and reliable and green. So that we can continue to breathe clean air, not coal, Mr. Speaker, like that they're putting in everyone's stocking.

>> MPP Jeff Yurek: So the Minister of energy rises to spin in Q.P.. People are asking for relief. We all hear the pleas. But instead the Minister rises and spins with a bluster. Again, will they give 12% off bills is the question we muster?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're actually giving 25% off, Mr. Speaker. That's something that they voted against. And so they can bluster and moan all they would like, Mr. Speaker, but we're making sure that we're helping families in this province. We're making sure that, at the end of the year, that people have seen a lower hydro bill, Mr. Speaker. Not unlike what they did, Mr. Speaker, where they vote against it every single time. They vote against making sure that we have a clean system. They vote against voting that we give people a reduction, Mr. Speaker. And when you look at their plan, even, even the independent energy analysis are saying all of these new costs will put pressure, Mr. Speaker, on making sure that we can continue to invest in hospitals, invest in schools, invest in roads, Mr. Speaker. Building this province up is what we have been doing. And we, Mr. Speaker, will make sure that we can do this with a clean, reliable and affordable electricity system.

>> MPP Sylvia Jones: Energy environment and the Minister of finance even infrastructure the member from grant. Around the caucus room they say, will you introduce long-lasting energy relief today?

>> Minister Thibault: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We introduced long-lasting energy reductions, Mr. Speaker, in July. They're now talking about doing something, Mr. Speaker, that will not reduce anybody's bills, Mr. Speaker. It's actually going to make it more difficult for people. At the end of the day, when you're talking about \$12 billion in cuts, Mr. Speaker. \$12 billion in cuts, what are they going to cut? Which programs, Mr. Speaker ? When it's talking about energy. Are they going to cut the Ontario electricity support program that helps low-income individuals? Are they going to cut the first nation delivery tax -- Mr. Speaker, are they going to cut the first nations delivery tax credit. You know what, Mr. Speaker ? We've seen this before just like the Harris years, Mr. Speaker. They're going to cut and slash everything. That's what they're known for, Mr. Speaker. We can guarantee that.

MPP Horwath to Premier Wynne (Hoskins) Re: Hospital Funding

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. I want to start by on behalf of Ontario's new Democrats wishing everyone the best of the holiday season and a merry Christmas and urging people to remember those in our communities that are struggling. Speaker, my question's for the Premier. For more than a year I've been hearing the heartbreaking stories of Ontario families who are being forced to receive their medical care in public hallways and storage closets and shower rooms inside our overcrowded hospitals and for more than a year this Premier has said everything is fine and she and her health Minister have accused anyone criticizing them of fear mongering. But just yesterday the Ontario hospital association said that our hospital system is indeed on the brink of crisis. When will this Premier finally admit that the hallway medicine crisis in Ontario hospitals isn't fear mongering. It's what patients across this province are exp Eriencing each and every day

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear on this side of the House that we recognize that there's more that needs to be done in health care. Consistently every year we have made changes. We have increased funding. So, Mr. Speaker, to suggest that somehow we've been complacent and we have not recognized that there are challenges is just not the case. It's not true, Mr. Speaker. And we have addressed that concern by in our last budget increasing funding to hospitals by \$500 million, Mr. Speaker. We have demonstrated that commitment by in the recent weeks working to solve the problem of the surge of need because of the flu season, Mr. Speaker, opening beds, making sure that that capacity is expanded. So on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we are consistently looking for solutions, working with organizations like the Ontario hospital association. Working with nurses, working with doctors, Mr. Speaker. To suggest that we've been complacent is just not accurate.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, they haven't been complacent. They've brought hallway medicine to Ontario. That's what they did. Doctors, nurses, patients and families have been pushing the Premier and her Minister to take action on the overcrowding crisis atppppppppppppppppppppppppornity. It's not a surge, Speaker. Beginning in may 2016, we started to release evidence of severe overcrowding in hospitals such as Toronto sickkids, London health sciences, Hamilton health sciences, the Sault area hospital, Peterborough hospital, Scarborough, Ottawa hospital, Thunder Bay hospital, Sudbury, Brantford general, Etobicoke general and of course brampton civic and many, many more. After more than a year of hearing just how bad this crisis is, why is the Premier still ignoring it?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, putting \$500 million into the budget is not ignoring the problem. We are absolutely clear, Mr. Speaker, that there needs to be continued support and increased support for the health care system. That's why a 3% increase to hospitals across the board in the budget was what we put forward, Mr. Speaker. So again to suggest that we are not working to solve challenges, to suggest, Mr. Speaker, that we don't recognize that hospitals need support, that long-term care needs support, Mr. Speaker, that home care needs support, that mental health needs support, Mr. Speaker, we have added support, added money in each one of those areas. And we will continue to do so, Mr. Speaker. We recognize that health care is a cornerstone of how we see ourselves in this province and how we see ourselves in this country. Our publicly funded health care system is essential and we will continue to support it. We will continue to increase support as the need increases.

>> Andrea Horwath: Premier, this Speaker, this Premier shorted the current budget by \$300 million. That's what she did. Just yesterday we released information showing that St. Joe's hospital in Hamilton reached the dangerously high occupancy level of 139% in August of this year. The hospital has anywhere between 5 and 31 people waiting in the emergency room every day for an inpatient bed. The Premier's

solution for St. Joe's hospital or Hamilton, 24 temporary beds. It would be laughable if it wasn't so terribly wrong for patients who need a proper hospital bed. Not a stretcher against a wall without a call button, without privacy and without the decency, the dignity that people deserve in hospital. When will this government actually get it together. And start fixing the problem they created in our hospital system?

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Christmas and the holiday spirit from the P.C. Party, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important that we recognize the quality of the health care system we have in this province. When we look at hospital mortality rates, when we look at cancer outcomes, when we look at avoidable debt from health outcomes compared to other provinces, compared to other developed countries, Mr. Speaker, Ontario outperforms all other provinces and is close to the top of the oecd. In fact we have the lowest rate of potential years of life lost in Canada. We have the best five-year survival rates for prostate, breast, colorectal and lung cancers in Canada. Our mortality rate for these same four cancers is among the best in the world. We need to be proud of the outcomes that we've achieved Collectively as a province in this society, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Horwath to Premier Wynne (Hoskins) Re: Hospital Overcrowding

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. You know what we have in this province? We have the lowest number of beds per capita in hospitals. We have the lowest funding per patient in hospitals in our country. That's what we have after 14 years of Liberal government. Between April 2016 and April 2017, we should all remember that brampton civic hospital treated 4,352 patients in the hallways, Speaker. The facility was overcrowded the day it opened. The Premier's complete lack of understanding about the needs of this fast-growing community is absolutely shocking. It mirrors her complete lack of compassion about the overcrowding and hallway medicine crisis that she created all across Ontario. Does this Premier really not get it, Speaker ? Or is properly funding hospitals simply not a priority?

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, as we approach this holiday season, I want to specifically recognize and acknowledge our health care workers across this province, our health care planners, our doctors, our nurses, the frontline workers, the support workers, the administrators, the support workers that are doing an exceptional job in this health care system. And that exceptional job, Mr. Speaker, is reflected in the results that we're seeing. Mr. Speaker, we have the second-best rate to access to a family doctor in the province. We have the second-best survival rate for breast cancer in the entire oecd, Mr. Speaker. We need to be proud of that. Mr. Speaker, we have, the Fraser institute reported just last week that Ontario has the best wait times in the entire country. Mr. Speaker, we have wait times that are four weeks better than the second-best province. That's thanks to our hard working health workers. Thank you for that investment.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, yesterday I visited the hospital for sickkids right here in Toronto. It's a world-class hospital, an incredible provincial asset and the home to incredible professionals who provide lifesaving care to tiny little babies. But even at a prestigious hospital like sickkids, they are struggling with overcrowding and with funding that just isn't keeping up. When I was there talking to moms and nurses and other health care providers, the neonatal intensive care unit was at 114% occupancy. Why has this Premier driven Ontario's incredible hospitals, like sickkids, into an underfunding and overcrowding crisis that's hurting patients and families each and every day?

>> Minister Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, we know that there is more work to be done, that there are further investments to be made. That's why as the Premier referenced half a billion dollars in this year's budget. Half a billion dollars in last year's budget. An additional \$100 million this fall invested into our hospitals resulting in the creation of 1,200 new acute care beds, the equivalent of six community hospitals, Mr. Speaker, and other important investments like the 125 individuals who up until last week reside under Toronto and G.T.A. Hospitals but didn't need to be there. Now they're in a rehabilitation environment, an environment which reactivates them at the humberside, the finch side of the former humber hospital. Mr. Speaker, these investments that we're doing approximately 600 of those rehabilitation investments to make sure that we're investing --Where our hospitals, their C.E.O.S, leader shim and Ontario hospital association tells us where we need to make those investments.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, sickkids hospital started yesterday with 337 patients but they're only

budgeted funded for 288 patients. That's what the overcrowding crisis looks like just down the street from here. There are six baby babies and all those have families. Those six families shoved together in a single room. Nurses are almost tripping over the equipment because there isn't enough space, and now -- there's also red tape that's taped around the babies' areas on the floor where there should be walls to prevent the spread of infection. Sickkids is an incredible hospital. There is no doubt about it, but it has been starved of operating funding by this Premier and her government. And now the Premier's temporary beds aren't the real answer, because sickkids hospital is literally so full. Run out of room. When will this Premier do the right thing, make sure hospitals can keep up with growth and fund the capital infrastructure, expansion that kids -- sickkids hospital needs right now?

>> Minister Hoskins: Well, I will agree with this one point, Mr. Speaker, that sickkids is a world-class hospital. Mr. Speaker, we increased their budget this year alone by \$9 million. We've added neonatal intensive care units to sickkids hospital this year. We gave them a planning grant, Mr. Speaker, so we could plan for future capacity, that we could make those necessary investments so it can continue to deliver that high-quality world-class care. Those are the investments that we're making in every hospital right across this province. And I'll end by saying, Mr. Speaker, we value and deeply appreciate the work of the Ontario hospital association, the leadership across our hospitals, across our health care system, from the frontline worker to the C.E.O. And everybody in between and the volunteers that make our health care system great. We value their investments, their commitments, their passion, their compassion. Especially I think we remember at this time of year, Speaker .

MPP Yakabuski (Smith) to Minister Flynn (Thibeault) Re: Government Record

>> MPP John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Sadly this Christmas, we have really bad news. Santa's elves and his reindeer can't work all night through. With so little time and joyful children at stake, will you give Santa an exemption to bill 148?

>> Minister Kevin Flynn: Well, Speaker, this is -- it's going to be a lot of very happy families this Christmas, Speaker -- because their mothers and their fathers will be earning even more money. These are people that have been earning \$11.60 an hour, trying to raise families, trying to buy food, Speaker, trying to buy Christmas presents. Trying to buy a Christmas tree, Speaker. All the normal things that we want for each and every one of our families is contained in bill 148. Everything we try to do for the people we care about when we work and come home, Speaker, is in bill 148, and the grinch across the aisle voted against it, Speaker

>> MPP Todd Smith: Speaker, Santa will know who's been naughty and nice. For he has his list and he's checking it twice. The bad ones get coal, but I'm told last year he missed you. But this year he won't. Will he get his coal from evista?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas everywhere we go. You know, Mr. Speaker, you look in Ontario. You've got clean air. You've got clean electricity, you know. I can't make it rhyme, Mr. Speaker. I was trying. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. That's all I had. But really, at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, you know Hydro One has been working hard in this province to be a better-run company and they're doing just that, Mr. Speaker. Winter disconnections have ended. You know, Mr. Speaker, they're actually going to continue to work hard to continue to be a better company and what we've done through our fair hydro plan is allow them to actually give a reduction to all of their customers in rural and northern parts of our province of anywhere between 40 and 50%, Mr. Speaker. And on that, that is good news, Mr. Speaker, because that is more money in the pockets of these people and like the Minister of label said earlier. That they can do other things with that, maybe buy more Christmas presents for their kids, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Campbell to Minister Thibeault Re: Hospital Hydro Fees

>> MPP Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Hydro bills have gone up 300% under this Liberal government, and families across northwestern Ontario are paying the price for decades of hydro privatization under this government and under the Conservatives before them. Now

we've learned that Dryden Regional Hospital's hydro bills have increased by a staggering 44% in just five years. The hospital is doing everything that it can to conserve energy. They've made significant investments in retrofits, yet their bills continue to soar. Why is this Premier letting down the people of northwestern Ontario and forcing our hospitals to take money out of front-line care just to cover up their soaring hydro bills?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've actually worked hard with Hydro One, which is in that area, Mr. Speaker, to reduce bills for all residential customers between 40 and 50%, Mr. Speaker. When I was in Atikokan early on, Mr. Speaker, that agency, that entity said that the bills in that community have been reduced between 34 and 40%, Mr. Speaker. So we're going to continue to work with these kind of companies to bring forward this type of relief, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to hospitals, they have also been utilizing many of the programs that we have put in place working with their L.D.C.S and have seen significant savings, Mr. Speaker, that they are now able to then put back into care and many of these hospitals, Mr. Speaker, are talking about the impact that the electricity has on their overall costs, Mr. Speaker, is only 1%, Mr. Speaker. So we've got programs in place that will continue to help these institutions and the residents of the province.

>> MPP Campbell: Northern hospitals and northern families need a Premier who cares about making life more affordable and stopping the cuts to our frontline health care. But this Premier keeps letting northwestern Ontario down. Dryden Regional Hospital is suffering from sky-high hydro costs because of the privatization of our hydro system by Liberals and Conservatives alike. Our hospital is not getting the relief that it needs. So they've come up with a capital plan that would allow the hospital to go off the grid. Yet this government refuses to deliver the funding they need to implement that plan. Why is this Premier delivering one disappointment after another to the people who need health care and who also need to be able to pay their hydro bills all across northwestern Ontario?

>> Minister Thibeault: Again, Mr. Speaker, since coming into office we've increased hospital funding by 54% allowing us to treat more patients and provide better care and reduce wait times to some of the shortest in the country, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that hospitals sent 1.6% on average of their total operating budgets on hydro. Also, Mr. Speaker, we just invested \$50 million in over 100 hospitals to make sure that they can help them retrofit, Mr. Speaker, to even reduce their bills even more, Mr. Speaker. That means that well over 90% of the hospital budgets go towards the rest, Mr. Speaker. Hiring nurses and doctors, keeping wait times low and ensuring patients have access to the high-quality services that they need, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to action, when it comes to making sure that we're helping hospitals, we're helping individuals, we're helping families right across this province. We're doing it with health care and doing the same with electricity, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Martins to Minister Hoskins Re: Pharmacare

>> MPP Cristina Martins: Thank you, Speaker. My question's to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Our government has made significant investment in the drug benefits received by seniors in recent years and continues to provide one of the most generous programs for seniors in Canada, and the seniors in my riding of Davenport are grateful for this. As part of the 2017 budget, our government is giving children and youth a better start in life by moving to make prescription medications free. I know the Minister at several times has spoken about how this step in providing free access to prescription medications for all Ontario's children and youth is just the first step towards a full provincial pharmacare program. Could the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care be able to update the House on the status of ohp plus ahead of its official launch next month?>>.Minister

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have to say I am so proud and so proud of this Premier for her leadership -- Nationally and in this province on this issue of pharmacare. And, Mr. Speaker, it is true. We're only weeks away from the biggest advancement of medicare in this province in generations, Mr. Speaker. There are only a few short weeks to go until 4,400 drugs become absolutely free for everyone in Ontario age 24 and under through ohp plus. And last week we officially launched a new website where people can go and search for their medications and see that they will be available free of charge. It's important to stress that ohp plus will cover every single drug. On Ontario's formulary, asthma inhalers, epipens, diabetes test strips, oral contraceptives, cancer drugs and drugs for --

>> MPP Martins: Thank you, Minister. I, too, am also proud to be part of a team that has worked to make this historic advancement in medicare. I want to thank you and our Premier for your leadership as we move to a full provincial formulary program. I have no doubt that this new program will improve access to prescription medications for more than 4 million children and young people and will help many families to afford the medications their children need to stay healthy. I know that much of the focus when we look at prescription drugs for youth will be focused on access to antibiotics, inhalers and epipens. I think all of us in the legislature can agree how important that is. But there are often accessibility issues for medications we do not often talk about. Would the Minister be able to inform the House about the full scope of health options ohip plus will offer?

>> Minister Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the reality of the Ontario drug formulary is that it will offer through ohip plus more Independence, more opportunity and more health for our children and youth. Diabetes test strips and insulin for low-income families struggling to pay the bills every week will save them thousands of dollars each year. Birth control for the 22-year-old young woman at College pursuing a degree. January 1st is going to be a historic day for Ontario, not just for the 4 million children and youth who will be receiving those drugs absolutely free of charge, Mr. Speaker. I want to say again just how proud I am of this Premier, this team and this government for the leadership that has been demonstrated. And this is absolutely a first and a major leap forward. We are 100% committed to continue working with the federal government for a national pharmacare program so these benefits can be extended to all Canadians, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Clark (Walker) to Minister Duguid (Sousa) Re: People's Guarantee

>> MPP Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. The voters are sceptical, that is no lie, but we have to reflect and ask ourselves why. On this side of the aisle, it's plain to see. Premier, will you be accountable and sign the people's guarantee?

>> Minister Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is the last question period before Christmas and I must say with much passion, we will bring in a minimum wage of \$15, with or without your attention. We will lower energy rates. We will create jobs as well. This Christmas will be great for Ontario. We're working to make things swell.

>> MPP Bill Walker: To the Premier. In question period, politicians they go back and forth. People want change for taxes and support for the north. So I'll ask again, because no answer was found. Will you sign the people's guarantee when I sit down?

>> Minister Charles Sousa: The halls of legislature are haunted by the ghosts of Christmas past, Mr. Speaker. They bring to us today the likeness of the miser Ebenezer Scrooge from across the aisle. They who have wanted to make cuts to and support our families to deny the gifts of our province's prosperity. To share for all. On this side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker, we thank the Premier and the jolly red grandmothers of Ontario --Who like Santa Claus care for all of our children, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Gretzky to Minister Coteau Re: Youth Mental-Health Services

>> MPP Lisa Gretzky: Question to the Premier. Earlier this week my constituent, Ida Harry, shared with me the heartbreaking experiences she has endured while trying to help get help for her 12-year-old son, who lives and struggles with serious mental health challenges. Ida's son has been on wait list after wait list. He has waited for psychologists, waited for beds in support centres and waited in hospitals. Ida wrote to me and I quote -- "Our children are victims of the province's neglect to provide adequate mental health care for our youth. I implore the province and its officials to do something now, before it's too late." On Tuesday, my NDP Colleague from Hamilton Mountain introduced a motion that urges the government to eliminate mental health wait lists for children and youth. Will the Premier listen to Ida --And the thousands of families like hers, eliminate the wait list and do something now before it's too late for Ida's son and others like him?

>> Minister Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for the question. I want everyone here in the legislature and across the province to know that we're working hard to transform a

system that's built for young people to get the best possible services necessary. We recognize we need to do more as a government, as people of Ontario to deliver better as much as to young people and we've been looking for ways to transform the system. The moving on mental health strategy we put forward a few years ago, we backed that up initially with a \$100 million investment many has gone a long way but has brought us to a point now where we do have lead agencies across the province. We're reorganizing the way service delivery is being delivered on the ground and I'm working with the Minister of health to look for ways to further enhance youth mental health here in the province of Ontario. Because we want -- People to get the service they deserve when they need it.

>> MPP Gretzky: Speaker, back to the Premier. On Tuesday my Colleague from Hamilton Mountain also raised the issue of youth suicide. She highlighted that the majority of people who are treated in emergency rooms after a suicide attempt are not getting the follow-ups with necessary support. This certainly has been the case with Ida and her son. When Ida's son attempted suicide, they went to the emergency room, where they waited for six hours before speaking with a mental student and a counsellor. And after that, they were sent home. They made numerous trips to the hospital but have not received the support they need. Speaker, Ida asked me in her letter, and I quote -- "Does my son need to be on his death bed to get any help?" Speaker, will the Premier answer that question for Ida?

>> Minister Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, you know, my heart goes out to all the families in Ontario that have young people that struggle with mental health. Over the last, you know, 20 years, even in fact, Mr. Speaker, over last decade, what we've seen with mental health challenges here in the province of Ontario is a huge growth, and we think that partially because of the stigma that's been removed from mental health. And we've been working hard as a government to let people know that, you know, if they need services that they should go forward and get those services. We have 130,000 young people here in the province of Ontario that access services today. We know that more is needed and that's why we continue to invest. Mr. Speaker, we've invested into 72 school boards to bring in mental health leaders in all of our school boards across the province. We've provided funding to hire 770 additional -- Mental health workers across the province. We'll continue to do more to make sure young people get the help that they deserve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Dong to Minister Chan (McMahon) Re: International Trade and Tourism

>>MPP Han Dong: Thank you, Speaker. Good morning. While the Conservatives are entertaining us with their newfound talent, I have a real policy question for the Minister of international trade. Speaker, attracting international investments and helping business compete on a global scale is part of Ontario's plan to create opportunities of fairness for workers, businesses, people of this great province. Has seen the great work the ministry of international trade has seen so far in promoting Ontario globally. I know that during these trade missions business-to-business communication is integral. I also know that there's time for Minister s to speak to each business and learn about their global -- sorry their goals internationally. Each international works to promote Ontario as a great place to do business. Visit and discover. As his trade mission to China and Vietnam concluded last week, could the Minister share with this House more exciting deals signed?

>>Minister Michael Chan: Thank you, Speaker. I thank the member for Trinity- Spadina for asking the question. Speaker, Ontario's plan to diversify trade is key to our continuous economic growth. It is important to remember that trade does not only involve goods, services such as health care, education and tourism. Trade missions provide Ontario the unique opportunity to showcase our province leading industry, in this case tourism. As a leader in global talent -- growth rate higher than any other G-7 country and diminishing small business tax rate, Ontario has much to offer. It is why in partnership with tourism Toronto, away China has selected Toronto to host their 25th anniversary leadership conference in Ontario. Speaker, this is an incredible opportunity for Ontario. And I would be delighted for the member from Burlington to speak more to this. Thank you.

>>MPP Dong: I want to thank the Minister for the response. And thanks in part to the investment this government has made to our tourism ministry, the sector has been a key economic driver to the province. I know Toronto has competed in some of the biggest destinations in the world for Amway China bid and it's very exciting to have been selected. I know many of them will be visiting my downtown riding of Trinity-

Spadina. By choosing Ontario to host their 25th anniversary leadership seminar, away China is giving a nod to Toronto as a world-class city. It also further dmoons that Ontario is a competitive destination for significant conventions. National, international conventions continue to be a major economic driver in Ontario, and we look forward to welcome amway China in 2020. Speaker, account Minister speak to the benefit of this international --Conference will provide? Thank you.

>>Minister Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for this excellent question. The news about amway China 2020 is a direct result of our government's strategic framework for tourism. I want to thank Mr. Chan and Joanne Belanger and her team at tourism Toronto as without their excellent collaboration and efforts, this would not have happened. We know, Speaker, that tourism is a vital economic driver for Ontario, supporting 380,000 jobs and generating over \$32 billion to our economy. China is Ontario's second-largest contributor towards spending with over half a billion dollars coming from over 200,000 tourists. So attracting international leadership events like amway China's 25th anniversary leadership seminar is great news. It showcases Ontario as a world-class tourism destination while promoting investment opportunities, and it will welcome over 10,000 distributors to Toronto, generating an estimated \$80 million in revenue and tourism spending from Toronto to Niagara Falls. Speaker we're delighted to welcome amway China 2020 to Toronto and very excited about what this is going to do for our economy

MPP Thompson (Nicholls) to Minister Duguid Re: Wind Turbines

>>MPP Lisa Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Wind turbines took a look does she still go up against the town's will just like the grinch ignoring council, this gives Liberal as thrill. They swear that the turbines are all science based. But will she admit real noise pollution proves that's just not the case?

>>Minister Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, it is the session before Christmas and I note with much joy, the kids in our land will enjoy plenty a toy. Our unemployment rate is the lowest in years. This Christmas, we may even enjoy a few beers from grocery stores nonetheless. And so we wish you all the best of the season and hope that, neck -- next year, the opposition will engage with more reason

>>MPP Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker. Wind turbines must go but the Liberals ignore, the demands of the people as they loudly implore. In the alley of carnage, the snow piles so high, but the need for a Barrier, will they always deny?

>>Minister Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's still the session before Christmas, and it's almost done. It's nice to spend time in this House and even have fun. We may be opposed to many an issue, but when we leave this place, rest assured we will miss you. Let us focus this session on those that are in need and let us work together so Ontario can still lead.

MPP Gates to Minister Hunter Re: School Closure

>>MPP Wayne Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. As the Premier knows, school, the jewel of niagara Lakes old town was closed. Now the community is rallying together again to save parliament oak. This time they're fighting to keep the school in the old town and turn it into a community hub and give back to the residents for generations to come. I fully support these efforts. However, dsbn has rejected an offer over the asking price in the town to buy the school. Which would keep it in community hands. The town previously gave the same building to the board for free. They rejected the work done by the community to keep parliament oak where it is and ensure it gets back to the community. Will the Premier intervene today and ask dsbn to reconsider selling parliament oak school. To the town so it can be used as a community Hubbell for the town?

>>Minister Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the member opposite for his question. I've been almost in daily dialogue with him about this particular issue. I know that he is well aware that my ministry and I are also well aware of the conversations that are happening between the school board and the town. I sent a letter, in fact, to the school board expressing the desire for them to work together with the town, and in the spirit of how do we look at the community needs in this instance and support the notion of a community hub. Our government has a policy, a stated policy. We have funding behind it to support community hubs across this province, because we know how vital these -- These public locations are to communities. And in this instance we are encouraging the school board to work together with the town.

>>MPP Gates: Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier. According to the education act, the Minister has the power to regulate the sale or lease of school sites. We know that niagara-on-the-lake has already endured the closing of parliament oak school. We have many community organizations that have come to the table and supported this, including the lord mayor pat dart, the town council and all of the residents every niagara-on-the-lake. Given that information, will the Premier stand with the town council of niagara-on-the-lake and the community and help us save parliament oak so it will remain in the old town for years to come? Thank you.

>>Minister Hunter: So, Mr. Speaker, I am very supportive of any solution that allows the use of this property for community, community use. And that's why we have a stated policy to support community hubs and that's why in fact we've been working together with the school board and the town to really encourage them to talk together to find a solution that best supports the local community and that's exactly what is happening. There is of course a process for the disposition of properties. My understanding is that the school board has followed that particular process. But this is about what is the best resolution for the local community. And that's what we are focused on. That's what we're working to bring those two parties together. The school board and the town to talk about how do we resolve this for the best use for the community --

MPP Potts to Minister Del Duca Re: TTC Line 1 Extension

>>MPP Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of transportation. Speaker, keeping with the holiday spirit, children across the province are very excited about the next few days and the next few weeks. Time off from school, presents under the tree. They have a lot to look forward to. Speaker, they're not the only ones who are excited about the great things in a are coming. Commuters across the G.T.A. Will soon be receiving a very early Christmas pront or let's call it a sixth day of Hanukkah present. The present is a first edition as well, Speaker. It is unlike anything the region has seen before. And the best part, Speaker, after years of planning and building, we only have to wait a few more days. So, Speaker, will the Minister please provide more information on what this present is, what makes it so unique and why commuters in the G.T.A. Can't wait to open it on December 17th?

>>Minister Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to begin of course by thanking the member from Beaches- East York for being such a strong advocate for transit here in the G.T.A. That member is absolutely correct, Speaker. Commuters in this region will be receiving one of the best Christmas or holiday gifts I can think of that a government can offer, Speaker. A new option for commuters to get from point "A" to "B." This coming Sunday, December 17, the Toronto-york- Spadina subway extension will see its first day of revenue service. In just three days that is, Speaker, commuters will have the opportunity to hop on board the first new subway extension in the G.T.A. To open up in 15 years. And this of course, Speaker, will be the first subway to cross regional boundaries. By hopping on board the line one extension, commuters will be able to move between the 416 and the 905 for a single fare, Speaker, and come this January, thanks to this provincial government, that fare will be only \$1.50 if you're hopping on the TTC From go or the union Pearson express. Speaker, tomorrow we'll be having a very exciting celebration with representatives from all levels of government to mark this wonderful occasion.

>>MPP Potts: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the Minister not only for his answer but for this great gift he's -- our government is giving to the people of the G.T.A. Speaker, I've no doubt that tomorrow will

be an incredibly exciting day and it's the first ride on Sunday morning that will be something for all of us to remember. And on this side of the House we know that the reasons to invest in transit are absolutely clear. It helps ease congestion. It promotes a better quality of life, reduces greenhouse gas emissions. It gives companies yet another good reason to invest in Ontario and it saves commuters money. Speaker, it is clear that the tisse, an \$870 million investment made by our government, will support all of these important outcomes and that will make this money very well spent. Speaker, noi this is just one of the very many transit projects going on in Ontario. Would the Minister please provide us with more information in greater detail what else commuters in the region can expect to see in the year to come? And thanks to our government's historic –ini transit.

>>Minister Del Duca: Speaker, I thank the member for his follow-up question. Of course he is right the line one extension to York university in York region is one part of the integrated Tran sit map we are building, Speaker. We're talking about go regional express rail, talking about the Eglinton cross town, the finch west L.R.T., Hurontario and Hamilton L.R.T., Speaker. Extending G.O. Train service to niagara, Speaker. Extending G.O. Train service to bowmanville, Speaker. And doing so much more right across this entire region. But coming back to the line one subway centre that opens up for service this Sunday, Speaker, the first train will leave the 9005, the city of Vaughan, at 7:57 A.M. I'll be on that train with my daughters Talia and grace. I strongly urge every single member here, regardless of where you live come down to the G.T.A. Whom on that first train. It truly is a day for transit celebration in the G.T.A. Thanks very much, Speaker.

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MPP Romano (Clark) to Minister Thibeault Re: Ring of Fire Development

>>MPP Ross Romano: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And this is for the Premier. Now we may not be the north pole, but we are on the way there. A no-man's-land we are not, but the Liberals just don't care. A great opportunity exists, with many jobs for hire. Why do they refuse to develop the ring of fire?

>>Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just like how we can rhyme off the reindeer, Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to rhyme off all of the investments that we make in northern Ontario, Mr. Speaker, let alone -- just let's talk about Sault Ste. Marie. Sault Ste. Marie this year, \$2 million for the institute every environment education and entrepreneurship. \$750,000 for the child and family centre at Sault College. \$900,000 for the waterfront and tennis centre, Mr. Speaker. Nohfc is supporting the arc expansion of the hos pis with a \$1 million investment, Mr. Speaker. Hospice. It just goes on and on, Mr. Speaker, ensuring the investments we're making in northern Ontario all the way from making sure we're four-laing highway 69, making our roads safer, Mr. Speaker. With \$173 million investment in that. Mr. Speaker, we're more than happy to talk about northern Ontario because it's this government that's making those investments

>>MPP Clark: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. Now, Speaker, we had some fun today with our question. After all, everyone has had a very busy session. So I want to end here with levity and with something light. Will the Premier join us, wish happy holidays, merry Christmas and to all a good night?

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do also want to take the opportunity to wish everyone a happy holidays, a merry Christmas, Mr. Speaker, and celebration of life, whatever you celebrate during this season, Mr. Speaker. I also think it's a good opportunity for us to acknowledge I think one MPP Who won't be back here come next year, which is Cheri Dinovo MPP From Parkdale-high parkI want to thank you for your service. With that, Mr. Speaker, sure we'll see her around this place in the very near future. Merry Christmas, everyone. Have a great holiday season.

MPP Sattler to Minister McGarry Re: Provincial Park Parking Fees

>>MPP Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of natural resources. Speaker, 16 monthsing a this Liberal government decided to impose parking fees for the use of komoka provincial park, a park that was free for Londoners to use for decades and is much loved by the estimated 100,000

people who used to visit each year. One of my constituents, bill Boswell, was recently informed by the park superintendent that a total of \$67,000 has been Collected in parking fees. Assuming two people per car with each car paying for just one hour of parking, this translates into 25,000 visitors over 16 months, a drop in attendance of more than 75%. Speaker, does the Minister think that a paltry \$67,000 was worth depriving tens of thousands of Londoners, including seniors, people struggling with mental health issues. Others on low or fixed incomes, from the benefits of using this park?

>> Minister Kathryn McGarry: Thank you very much, Speaker. And thank you very much to the member opposite for that question today. Speaker, I wanted to really start out about how Ontario parks does fund its management programs, and all of the programs that are offered by our Ontario parks -- and there are 340 of them in the province of Ontario -- not all But all funded through gate receipts, Mr. Speaker. So all of the pranks, all of the trails, all of the infrastructure that the Ontario parks manages, all of the staff and all of the facilities that our visitors ho to our parks enjoy are all paid for through the special purpose account. I know that there have been many users in komoka park and it was unfortunate that we needed to move forward with another way of recouping some of the services.Paid for that park, including the washrooms facilities, new lighting, new parking lot facilities that the users have been asking for.

>>MPP Sattler: Speaker, 75,000 Londoners are no longer using this park. Again to the Minister. The fees of \$5.25 an hour or \$14.50 a day were imposed without any real consultation and with paving the only justification. Since the fees were introduced in August 2016, thousands of Londoners have signed my petition calling for the removal of the fees. The park is really only accessible by car and the data confirms the fees are creating huge Barriers to access. They are preventing Londoners from reaping the benefits of the enhanced physical and mental well-being that comes with the natural environment. Speaker, will the Minister do the right thing and remove the parking fees from komoka provincial park?

>>Minister McGarry: Thank you, Speaker. Again what I would like to say to everybody in this House is that all of the incredible services that our Ontario parks provide for the people of Ontario, all of the staff that provide the resources that people enjoy when they visit the parks, are paid for by gate receipts. And it's also worth noting to the member opposite that each Ontario provincial park has its own management plan and that management plan has been in progress for many years. So I don't have the authority to do that. It is the provincial parks and their management staff that step forward. But what I can say to everybody in this House is that we have an incredible opportunity in our province to enjoy many parks, some with services, some without. Many visitors come to Ontario specifically to see the parks. And I want to thank everybody. That's worked in our Ontario parks --

MPP Hoggarth to Minister McGarry (Mauro) Re: Bill 139

>>MPP Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of natural resources and forestry. On Tuesday, new legislation was passed titled "The building better communities and conserving watersheds act 2017." As members of the House know from debating this legislation, this bill provides important updates to our current land use planning system as well as our conservation authorities, giving more opportunity for Ontarians to have their voices heard. What some people might not know is just how important our conservation authorities -- conservation authorities are to us in the province. 09% of Ontarians live in a watershed managed by a conservation authority. Therefore my question to the Minister is can you tell me what changes this legislation will bring to Ontario's very important conservation authorities and how these changes will benefit the people of Ontario?

>>Minister Kathryn McGarry: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you very much to the hardworking member from Barrie for that question. And thank you again for giving me the opportunity to talk about our great new legislation that I'm very proud of. I know just how important this new lap is to so many communities around Ontario as I see firsthand the great work that the grand river conservation authority does in my own community of grand river and Waterloo region and Brantford I might add, Speaker, by modernizing the conservation authorities act we've delivered some real benefit to the people of Ontario, benefits like stronger oversight and accountability for conservation authority decision making, more clarity and consistency in the services that conservation authorities provide and increased public engagement and conservation authorities to ensure the people have a voice in their local conservation authorities. These important exchanges are necessary to ensure the environment will be there for years to come. And merry

Christmas to all and to all a good break.

>>MPP Hoggarth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that answer. When changes to the Ontario municipal board were proposed last year, the government held 12 town halls across the province to get feedback from the people of Ontario. Through those town halls we heard opinions from Windsor to Ottawa, from the G.T.A. To Thunder Bay and many members held town halls in their own ridings. People told us that too often the O.M.B. Doesn't consider local perspectives when it makes decisions, that too many decisions went to the board and that the process was complicated for community groups. We heard that people want more say in how their communities are developed. Through bill 139 the Minister of municipal affairs and the Attorney General proposed legislation that would overhaul the O.M.B. And replace it with the local planning appeals tribunal. Bill 139 received Royal assent this week. My question for the Minister is. Bill 139 respond to the concerns we heard during consultations?

>>Minister Bill Mauro: Speaker, thanks to the member for the question, Speaker. In years recently passed, planning was not fine so our government decided to table With the help of mnrf and the A.G., our ministry was diligent. The results plain to see. Bill 139 has received Royal assent. The will of the opposition tattered and bent. Because in the end it was plain for all to see, respect and deference for local decision making is the right place to be. Thank you very much, Speaker .bill 139. We consulted, we discussed and we went to committee. Bill 139 artificially delayed. What a pity. But persevere we did, knowing what was at stake, and progress, although slow, indeed we did make. With the help of mnrf and the A.G., our ministry was diligent. The results plain to see. Bill 139 has received Royal assent. The will of the opposition tattered and bent. Because in the end it was plain for all to see, respect and deference for local decision making is the right place to be. Thank you very much, Speaker .