

CO Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Thursday, March 8, 2018

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Please see attached Cabinet Office's Transcript of Provincial Question Period for Thursday, March 8, 2018.

- MCI - PC MPP Gila Martow asked a question to Education Min. Naidoo-Harris about a shortage of French-language teachers. In her response, Min. Naidoo-Harris answered by mentioning Ontario is: conducting information campaigns to recruit internationally educated teachers; creating bridging programs to help newcomers adjust as well as mentoring opportunities; streamlining evaluation of credentials for internationally educated francophone teachers.
- MSA - In a response to PC Interim Leader Vic Fedeli, Min. Sousa mentioned within his answer that the government was choosing to support seniors and elder care.
- MCI & MSA - In his response to MPP Deb Matthews question about the government's strategy to reduce gender-based violence, MSW Min. Coteau mentioned that the government was increasing supports for inclusive counselling services, for demographics such as the elderly, francophones, newcomers and racialised communities.

Official opposition questions included long-term care beds, auto-insurance rates and steel tariffs. NDP Questions today included: hospital beds, the French-language university and healthcare funding.

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

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Transcript of Provincial Question Period
41st Parliament, 2nd Session
Thursday, March 8, 2018

The following is a partially edited transcript of Question Period.

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MPP Fedeli to Minister Sousa Re: Provincial Budget 2018

>> Interim PC Leader Vic Fedeli: Thank you. Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of finance. February 21st, 2017, the Minister of finance said, quote -- we are looking at a balanced budget in this coming budget next year as well and the year after that. Wrong. The province's books will be balanced this spring and for the foreseeable future insists finance Minister Charles Sousa, quote. Wrong. The Minister of finance again said -- I will confirm that we are on track to deliver balanced budgets for the next two years as well. Wrong. This government can't be trusted. Mr. Speaker, after two years -- Of promising a balanced budget, how does the finance Minister think he has any, any credibility with the people of Ontario?

>> Minister Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we have worked hard and long -- throughout the past five years. Mr. Speaker, because of the hard work of the people of this province, we also have a surplus, Mr. Speaker, right here -- Over the last 40 years of Conservatives had balanced the budget only three times, Mr. Speaker. During the federal government, they record the largest deficits in history and largest debt accumulation anywhere in Canada's history. We're balanced. We're in surplus. We're ever going to continue to work for the people of Ontario.

>> Interim PC Leader Vic Fedeli: Back to the Minister. Again, the Minister of finance said, quote -- we have outperformed, and as a result we're coming to balance next year and the year after that. His fall economic statement said, quote -- the government is continuing to project a balanced budget 2017/18 and ongoing balance in 18/19 and 2019/20. News reports announced Sousa confirmed last fall that Ontario's 2018 budget will be balanced, as will budgets over the next two years, Speaker. None of that was correct. This is the opposite of the truth, spread by a government willing to say anything to -- power. Mr. Speaker, how account Minister of finance. Tell us one thing when he knows the complete opposite to be true?

>> Minister Charles Sousa: So we've taken a hard stand. Discipline and determined approach to balance the budget this year and to have a surplus now. Now we have a choice. Now the Conservatives have made their choice. They have already said they are going into deficit. They further say that they're going to make cuts through a lot of revenue generation, including carbon pricing. They have a \$16 billion hole in their plan, Mr. Speaker. What are they going to cut? What are they going to do? We made our choice here. Mr. Speaker, we've chosen to support mental health. We've chosen to support social services. We've chosen to support students and elder care. We could choose not to do those things, Mr. Speaker. In these uncertain times we choose to support them, recognizing that there's some turbulence in the market. We are not going to let anybody behind.

>> Interim PC Leader Vic Fedeli: Back to the Minister. Let me read more quotes. Quote -- finance Minister Charles Sousa announced that not only will the province's budget be balanced this year, it will continue to not slip into deficit in 2017 or '19 as well. Now we know that's not accurate. The 2017 budget read -- not only are we presenting a balanced budget this year, we are on track for balanced budgets in '18/19, 2020 and '19/20. We know that's not accurate. After two years of promising a balanced budget, I guess we can't be surprised the Minister decided to support Liberal insiders instead. Mr. Speaker, we need to know was it the Premier who made the Minister of finance run an \$8 billion deficit?

>> Minister Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we are tracking to remain fiscally responsible for the province of Ontario -- The people of Ontario have asked -- To manage government finances effectively. They also asked us to help them manage their finances as well. We could choose not to do that, Mr. Speaker. We could choose not to support mental health. We could choose not to support hospitals. We could choose not to support students and more education. We could choose not to support elder care and seniors care. We could choose not to do those things just to stay in balance. But we chose our values and our values are shared with the people of Ontario. Value health -- We're not going to cut --

MPP Fedeli to Minister Jaczek Re: Long-Term Care Beds

>> Interim PC Leader Vic Fedeli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question's for the Minister of health. Speaker, I want to start by running through the facts. There are currently more than 20 -- or 32,000 seniors on the waiting list for a long-term care bed in Ontario. And with -- Without increased capacity, the wait list is expected to reach almost 50,000 in the next three years. Speaker, that is no way to treat society's most vulnerable. Ontario can and must do much better. The Liberals' band-aid solutions simply are not enough. Mr. Speaker, will the Liberal government commit to building 15,000 new long-term care beds over five years and 30,000 beds over the next ten years?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And as we've said so many times in this House, every Ontarian deserves to grow old with dignity in a safe, secure and compassionate environment. In fact as I believe the members opposite have heard from our Minister of finance, very much the theme of our budget this year will be about caring for those individuals in society who of course deserve the very best health care possible. And so we've been clear since last year's budget and in fact throughout our term that support for the long-term care sector is very important, and this is why we continue to make critical investments in this sector. And so our funding for long-term care homes has increased by some \$348 million. Just since 2013. Our investment in long-term care homes increased by \$80.5 million this year alone, and I'll continue to explain our commitments in the

supplementary.

>> Interim PC Leader Vic Fedeli: Back to the Minister. In northern Ontario, seniors make up the greatest percentage of the population, larger than any region in the province. In Nipissing, the North Bay regional health centre has experienced overcrowding due to the lack of long-term care beds available. The closing of Lady Isabelle has pushed more and more patients to North Bay regional health centre, leading to the overcrowding and hallway medicine at that hospital. It is imperative that Lady Isabelle long-term care facility is replaced -- Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that Lady Isabelle is replaced by another long-term care home in Trout Creek. No senior should have to wait five years for a nursing bed. Mr. Speaker, why does this government believe having seniors wait five years for a long-term bed is acceptable?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And of course through the last number of years since we took office, we have opened over 10,000 new long-term care beds and redeveloped 13,500 long-term care beds, and specifically in the north, I have a very long list of homes that have been redeveloped in that time. And we will continue to look at the -- And we will continue to work with our Indian partners to establish where the need is greatest and where we need to establish more long-term care facilities. Just in the last few years, I'd like to draw the member's attention to residence St. Joseph in Sudbury that was opened in March of 2011. Extendicare in Sault Ste. Marie in April 2013. Extendicare in Timmins October 2013. Thank you.

>> Interim PC Leader Vic Fedeli: Thank you. Back to the Minister. In my own riding in Nipissing, there's a desperate need for more long-term care beds. Castle Home in North Bay is seeking redevelopment, something the government first announced in 2010. Back then, it was a \$40 million project. Today, for the exact same project, it is now a \$60 million project. While nothing has happened for almost a decade, our needs have become even greater. A local councillor has said that, quote, 16 additional beds will be applied for, which would be the most efficient use of additional space to the current building design. Mr. Speaker, will the government support the redevelopment and additional beds for Castle Home?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, as we've made very clear, we will be investing in 5,000 new long-term care beds over the next four years, as well as providing 15 million more hours of nursing, personal support and therapeutic care annually for residents in long-term care homes. There was a call for applications that closed just last Friday. We are reviewing those very closely as we speak, and no doubt announcements will be made in the near future. But what I don't understand, Mr. Speaker, is that the opposition parties have, in their people's guarantee -- we don't know if that's going to be their platform -- but in that document, there was no money for hospitals or for long-term care.

MPP Horwath to Minister Jaczek Re: Hospital Beds

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: I want to start by wishing everyone around the legislature and women across the province a happy international women's day, Speaker. Speaker, my question to the acting Premier. Joel Guacy is a Londoner. He reached out to the MPP from London West this week because he was angry about the Premier's response to her question about Stuart Cline. Mr. Guacy said it was inexcusable for the Premier to deflect blame to the insurance company for Mr. Cline's heartbreaking story and refused to take responsibility for what happened. He said he knows Mr. Cline's family was telling the truth because the same thing happened to him in December. Why won't the Premier and this Liberal government take responsibility for what's been happening to families like the Clines?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And of course we do acknowledge the tragedy that occurred in this particular case for this family. And both the Premier and I have expressed our -- our deep condolences of course to the family. We know that our health care professionals on the ground are always ready to assist in situations like this. We know that there are beds available for critical care patients in Ontario, and we are absolutely committed to ensuring that the communication between people, the insurance companies and our health professionals is improved

and looked at very, very carefully. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, on December 1st Joe guacy suffered a heart attack while he was in Arizona with his wife. He was rushed to the hospital and was stabilized and ready to be transported the very next day but Joe's insurance company told him that there were no beds available at home much the insurance company had even lined up a cardiologist at London health sciences to take care of him, but Joe spent three more days in that Arizona hospital before his insurance company sent him home on a commercial flight with orders to see his doctor immediately. Can the acting Premier tell Joe and his wife Beverly why he never did get a hospital bed in Ontario?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we said, there are beds available in these situations. What appears to be happening is that there's a breakdown in communication between potentially -- and I'm just speculating the many, many steps involved in situations like this. There are physicians involved in the country where the resident is travelling. There are physicians here ready to discuss the individual case. There are lhin staff responsible for the coordination regionally, and certainly my ministry officials are always ready to go the extra mile to ensure the highest quality of care for Ontarians. We are going to do everything in our power to ensure that families have confidence that their loved ones returning from abroad will be able to receive the care they need here in Ontario.

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I can assure the Minister that nobody has any confidence that the people of -- that are travelling are going to get the care that they need if they have to come home in an emergency situation. It is failing over and over and over in our province. The breakdown is not in communication. The breakdown is in our hospital system, and it's a breakdown this this Liberal government has caused because of cuts and underfunding. That's the breakdown, Speaker. Joe guacy, Stuart cline, David Ronald, Danny Marchand, Larry Dan. All of these people were told that they couldn't go home because there were no beds available when they faced a health care emergency. Can the acting Premier tell us right now how many more Ontarians waiting in pain will have to. Take time to convince somebody that the overcrisis in this system is a real thing and not just a communications problem with insurance companies?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Apparently the leader of the third party didn't understand that there were beds available in these cases. But we are asking questions about how this disconnect is occurring and we will work to ensure all Ontarians benefit from our health care system whether it's at home or abroad. I will be inviting members of the insurance associations to directlyly meet with officials from the ministry of health and myself. What is clear is there are beds available in Ontario for patients travelling from abroad and I look forward to discussing ways in which we can facilitate communication from the insurance companies to the hospitals and make sure all Ontarians are the able to get home in a safe and timely manner. Thank you.

MPP Horwath to Minister Jaczek Re: Hospital Overcrowding

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Thank you. This is also to the acting Premier, Speaker. For the clines ronalds and guacies the hospital overcrowding and hallway medicine crisis means watching a loved one stuck in a foreign hospital. For other families it the means watching a loved one spend 24 hours in a chair in a busy E.R. In pain or a wife watching her husband suffer as his heart surgery gets rescheduled for the fourth time. For families in Kitchener- Waterloo, it means waiting -- worrying, rather, that your local hospital is operating well over what experts consider a safe capacity. Yesterday I revealed that the pediatric mental health unit at grand river hospital in Kitchener-Waterloo reached an astonishing 100% occupancy in November. Why are the Premier and her Liberal government -- Premier and her Liberal government still refusing to admit hospitals in Ontario are facing consistent overcrowding that is negatively affecting families?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. And again we are turning to this situation where we are absolutely committed to improving the situation in hospitals. It is precisely why last fall we invested in some 1,200 additional hospital beds. The member opposite perhaps doesn't recall that in the 2017 budget, we invested over \$500 million in funding, over a half billion

dollars in Ontario hospitals. It means that all Ontario hospitals are receiving at a minimum a 2% increase in funding this year. It's a significant new investment in hospitals. It will mean reduced wait times, better access to more procedures and an improved experience for all Ontarians at their local hospitals. We know that this has been a difficult winter. We know we've had a very bad flu season. This has been adding to the pressures on our hospitals. But we have a plan to address this situation, Mr. Speaker.

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Speaker, after 15 years they're trying to improve a system that they created a crisis in in the first place. That's the problem that we have in Ontario. And let's face it. The 2017 budget fell \$300 million short of what the hospitals said they needed as a bare minimum to keep a system in crisis, you know, moving along in a very bad state. Freedom of information documents also reveal that the mental health unit at grand river was operating at or above 100% capacity every single month from September through December. Surgery, stroke, medicine units were over 100% in nearly every month in the same period. The MPP For Kitchener- Waterloo says that hospital overcrowding stories are now the top issue that she's getting in her constituency office. This overcrowding crisis is real and it is not going away and it needs to be fixed now. When will this Premier and this Liberal government actually take some action?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And of course that's exactly what we're doing. We've been planning not only in the hospital sector but in all the other pieces of the health care system. We've opened some 503 transitional care spaces out of hospital for up to 1,700 patients who don't require care in a hospital. Those alternative level of care patients. But specifically at grand river hospital. I'd like to ensure that the member opposite knows that we certainly value the great work that's being done by our health care partners. All those frontline workers in the Waterloo region as a whole, and specifically to grand river hospital we added 14 additional beds, and through the 2017 budget, the government increased annual funding to grand river hospital by \$5.5 million. We continue to support them in their delivery of high-quality health care.

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Speaker, frontline health care workers in our province are stretched to the max. They are run off their feet. They leave work in tears because they're not able to provide the quality of care that they know they should be providing to the people of the province, and that problem on the foot of this government who has been cutting back hospital budgets for years and years and years. This crisis is absolutely a result of decades of bad decisions, bad choices by this Liberal government and the Conservative government before them. It didn't happen overnight but it has been getting worse under this particular Premier's watch. What is it going to take for the Premier and her Liberal government to admit that this is not just a flu season surge but rather the result of decades of cuts to health care services and hospitals that Ontario families rely on?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, to set the record straight, since 2003 we've increased our investments in health care each and every year, allowing us to treat more patients, provide better care and reduce wait times to some of the shortest in the country actually validated by the Fraser institute, you will recall. So in addition to our assistance to grand riv hospital, we have in the Waterloo region construction of the groves memorial hospital well under way to expand capacity in the region and we know that all three Waterloo hospitals are participating in the dedicated off-load nurses program. We do value both our paramedic services and the nurses in the E.R. And we're doing everything we can to ensure that there's a smooth and scission of patients into the hospital. And so we are providing some \$16 million to municipalities to provide additional resources in this regard. Lest we forget. What did the NDP Do during their time in office? They closed 24% of acute hospital beds. Closed 30% of mental health beds in --

MPP Cho to Minister Sousa Re: Auto Insurance Rates

>> MPP Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question is for the Minister of finance. Before the 2014 election, Premier Kathleen Wynne promised to reduce the auto insurance rates by 15%. The Premier later on called 15% reduction is nothing but a stretch goal. Yet today the average auto insurance premium in Ontario is still almost 55% higher than the average of all other

Canadian provinces. Can we record this as another broken election promise? Why would Ontarians ever trust this Liberal government say?

>> Minister Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite I believe would know we have just brought forward a whole slew of initiatives to try to reduce the fraud within the system, which is causing the premiums to go up. And as the member knows, we took -- we put -- We've worked with David Marshall who's brought in 35 recommendations, one of which is to provide a standard treatment plan to eliminate some of the nonsense that happens with the most common of injuries. Another one is provide independent examination centre to avoid conflict of interest so that people are assessed effectively. The other one is a serious fraud office to go after those who are committing some of the frauds so we can go attend to that and put some teeth within the commitment with OPP Officers. The other one is it's fsco. The financial services authority who are going to look at the postal code initiative to try to curb some of the activity and of course contingency fees in the legal community and trust some of those issues so that consumers and victims are protected. We have an expert panel that's alleviating some of these stresses and we are working and the rates have gone down on average. We need to ensure that they remain even lower.

>> MPP Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you to the Minister of finance. The riding I represent comprises of postal code m1s, m1 B m1x and m1b. The residents of these postal codes pay the highest auto insurance rates in Canada. Why our -- are our riding residents being gouged by the Kathleen Wynne Liberals? Didn't you get the message during the 2016 by-election?

>> Minister Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I mean I appreciate the member trying to be cute with the question but the fact of the matter is those postal codes and those initiatives have severe impacts on the overall -- We're addressing those very initiatives through the financial services regulatory authority that has a consumer office and are looking at those postal codes. The member may suggest that we reduce them on one end but then you're going to increase it in the northern parts of Ontario. That's not fair as well, Mr. Speaker. We need to get after the root causes. That's what we are doing. We need to initiate and alleviate some of the stresses in those postal codes by implementing these programs and I hope the member opposite will agree with them so that we can foster some reduction in those rates and go after those communities and help those people who are affected in those urban locations.

MPP Natyshak to Minister Zimmer Re: North Kent Water Safety

>> MPP Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the acting Premier. Speaker, I want to welcome members from waterwell first who are here to fight for safe drinkable water for their communities. Speaker, water is life. Without it, nothing survives. But for a long time now, families in Chatham- Kent have been dealing with black water coming from their wells jeopardizing their lives and their livelihoods. Water on family farms that surround wind turbine became black and undrinkable when Samsung began construction on these turbines. That's no coincidence. This Liberal government says that the water is safe to drink. Nothing to look at and that these families are overreacting. Well, I've seen first hand what the water looks like and the scientists that have shown that sediment is actually black shale, which is known to carry heavy metals like arsenic, lead and uranium. My question is to the acting Premier. Why does this Liberal government refuse to do a simple health. Investigation to provide certainty for these families?

>> Minister David Zimmer: Thank you, Speaker. I can tell you that the ministry of environment and climate change takes these matters of groundwater quality very seriously. The ministry has undertaken a review of water quality data to ensure residents the water is safe. And thus far, the analysis has not shown a connection between water quality and the construction activity. The company has informed the ministry that they are working with homeowners to provide and pay for licensed well contractors to inspect their wells and to answer any questions that they may have regarding this issue.

>> MPP Taras Natyshak: What an unbelievable answer from the acting Minister, whatever he is. These families are not just worried about the quality of the water of their wells for their own sake. Many of them operate commercial farms. They need water to keep their livestock alive. Because science has shown how dangerous it is to drink some of them are watering them with bottled water. They think it's unethical to give contaminated water to their livestock for other families to consume. It's unacceptable this Liberal government has taken the word over Samsung and it's a sad day in Ontario where this is the quality of water that the government and Premier -- The ministry had a very --

>> Minister David Zimmer: Speaker, in the face of that diatribe, here is a fact. The Chatham- Kent medical officer of health has confirmed that the water particulates do not possess a health risk to residents. In fact there was a -- Two weeks ago water wells first met with the ministry staff. They shared the results of the expansive testing, and again the Chatham- Kent medical officer of health has confirmed that the water particulates do not pose -- pose a health risk. Speaker, we will continue to monitor the health impacts closely during the construction and the operation of the turbine.

MPP Fraser to Minister Sousa Re: Provincial Budget 2018

>> MPP John Fraser: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Speaker, and that the date has been selected for the 2018 Ontario budget and I know there's plenty of speculation on what that budget will include. Minister, I know that we've already made important investments for the people of Ontario, investments that are changing people's lives like free pharmacare for everyone under 25 that has already benefitted nearly 1 million people in just two months. We made College and postsecondary education more accessible and nearly 200,000 students will be leaving university and College with less debt through free tuition. We raised the minimum wage making workplaces fairer for hardworking people across this province, and I know the people of Ontario are looking forward to the budget and, Mr. Speaker, could the Minister please --

>> Minister Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member from Ottawa south. I wish to announce officially, in this House, that the Ontario budget will be delivered on Wednesday, March 28th. I'll have the pleasure and the privilege of delivering my sixth budget, and this budget is about making a choice, a value choice. It's about values shared by the people of Ontario. We remain committed to what matters most to them, continuing to invest in child care, health care and in mental health. Care that the people of Ontario depend upon because we know a healthier Ontario where no one is left behind is without doubt a stronger Ontario, Mr. Speaker. We will not stop fighting for the people of Ontario.

>> MPP John Fraser: Thank you, Speaker. Again to the Minister of finance. As the parliamentary assistant -- as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of health, I'm proud of the investments we've made in things like palliative care and home care. But we do know that, no matter who emerges as the new Conservative leader, they have no plan for climate change. And that leaves a \$16 billion black hole in their guarantee. And that hole they'll have to fill with people's jobs and the services that they need, services like ohip plus, new hospitals, new schools, and we know that they're going to deny the minimum wage. So I ask the Minister if he remains committed to building new schools, new hospitals, public transit, if he remains committed into investing in things like support for the most vulnerable. 100,000 new child care spaces. Mr. Speaker, to the Minister .

>> Minister Charles Sousa: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. The difference between us and the party opposite isn't just one of dollars and decisions, Mr. Speaker. It's about values. And in the face of some uncertainty, with real economic anxiety, I've heard throughout my conversations across the province we must continue to invest in our greatest strength and that of course is the people of Ontario. It's the hard working Ontarians that created 800,000 net new jobs since the recession. Mr. Speaker, Ontarians need to know what will the Conservatives cut from their \$16 billion fiscal hole? Is it 20 billion from our new and upgraded hospitals? Will they cut the \$7 billion booster shot to health care supports? Or are they going to cut \$16 billion in infrastructure for schools? On this side of the

House we remain committed to creating more opportunities for the people of Ontario and we will not let the Conservatives put these cuts into programs and put Ontario at risk.

MPP Yurek to Minister Des Rosiers Re: Fish and Wildlife Special Purpose Account

>> MPP Jeff Yurek: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. My question's to the Minister of natural resources and forestry. Speaker, for seven years I've been trying to get a simple answer from the government regarding fish and wildlife special purpose account with little or no success. This account pulls together all revenues from fishing and hunting licence fees and Royalties and must be reinvested back into wildlife management. Unfortunately instead of using these funds for their intended purposes this government continues to use this account as a personal slush fund. Speaker, they spend it on dinners. They spend it on House keeping services, psychologists, buying and selling and renting housing. Can the new Minister explain how any of the above related items that I mentioned have anything to do with wildlife conservation in Ontario?

>> Minister Nathalie Des Rosiers: [Speaking in French] Voice of Translator: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [End of Translation] We will have the occasion this afternoon to continue to debate this issue. Now I don't really understand why anyone would object to the fact that this funding has allowed us to stock almost 8 million fish in a year in Lakes all across Ontario. To have conservation officers to enforce our law to ensure that fish, there continues to be fish and that we don't overhunt or overfish. Invest in a great public education program, learn to fish. 4,000 people have learned to fish effectively, safely and sustainably through that program. It conducts research. Now if people need to be there to do this work, and I think part of it, does the member object to people being paid or having benefit? I think that's the problem. I think -- we want to ensure that we continue to deliver this program effectively, and that requires people, and people should be paid. And have access to benefits. Thank you.

>> MPP Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. No one's objecting to the fund. In fact the Progressive Conservative party created the fund. This government has corrupted the fund unfortunately, Mr. Speaker. Through the lack of transparency, this government continues to disrespect our hunters and anglers throughout this province. Today when we debate my private member's bill to return transparency to the special purpose account and create a system for hunters and anglers to enquire about the expenditures, will the Minister do the right thing, support my bill, ensuring all moneys collected from these fees goes directly to wildlife conservation and not paying for someone's steak dinner?

>> Minister Nathalie Des Rosiers: Mr. Speaker, I think the fund is used appropriately and it is monitored. It has a lot of people -- there's an advisory panel that does provide advice. Indeed I'm not the only one saying this. There's a quote from Mr. Angelo Lombardo, executive director of the Ontario federation of anglers and hunters. Who does support this fund and says and I quote -- we need to remember that resource management needs people. We can't grow and stock fish without people. We can't do assessment and surveys without people. We can't do research without people. And these people, sir, need to be paid and they need to be paid and we've been spending the entire week talking about mental health. And the benefits having people that have access to benefits such as mental health benefits is important. I think we stand by this fund. It's done great things for Ontario and will continue to.

MPP Gelinis to Minister Lalonde Re: French-Language University

>> MPP France Gelinis: [Speaking in French] Voice of Translator: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the francophone Minister. Today we have hundreds of young people who are participating in the parliament and they would like to know, when you gave the mandate to -- for the planning of the French university, you insisted that the university should have a governance for and by francophones meaning administration, student life, academic life, research and

infrastructure. The governance for and by francophones, is it by the Toronto francophones or by our Ontario francophones?

>> Minister Marie-France Lalonde: Voice of Translator: Thank you very much for the question and once again I would like to welcome to our young parliamentarians here. It is a pleasure to welcome you every year. You know a francophone university is a historical moment for us in Ontario. We will have a university with a governance by and for francophones, and I am very proud to improve the offer of services in French, especially the southwest centre year after year and report after report and also from the community of Toronto. They all told us that there was a necessity to have that type of program. So it is with pleasure that we will continue our work with the francophone community.

>> MPP France Gelin: [Speaking in French] Voice of Translator: I told you that we're asking questions but we're not always receiving answers. Last fall you finally talked about Mr. Francois, our French services commissioner, for changing the law on French services. The commissioner presented his report in June 2016. The law on French services is over 30 years -- [Transcription Cut Out]

>> Minister Marie-France Lalonde: [Transcription Cut Off Beginning]...An action plan which will allow us to support and to improve the process of designation and we will go forward with the pilot project, which will bring us to a more efficient designation. And in the end we will improve French services in our province, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. [End of Translation]

MPP Matthews to Minister Coteau (Naqvi) Re: Gender Based Violence Strategy

>> MPP Deb Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of community and social services. Speaker, today is international women's day, a day when we celebrate women's achievements throughout history and across nations and continue the work for more equitable society. Appropriately, Speaker, last week we announced the unprecedented investment of \$242 million in Ontario's new gender based violence strategy. This is tremendously exciting. It shows our government's continued commitment to antigender based violence in Ontario. Speaker, I've seen first hand the extraordinary work that violence against women agencies like Anova in my community of London do every day. We know violence against women agencies provide crucial services like the emergency shelter, counselling and transition and housing supports to help women and their children rebuild their lives. Speaker, can the Minister tell the House what this new gender based violence strategy will mean for violence against women's shelters and services across Ontario?

>> Minister Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for her advocacy on -- tireless advocacy on this issue. She's been really important in moving this file forward. Thank you so much. I want to thank all of the V.A.W. Agencies across the province and their staff who work so much to support this initiative. I'm thrilled to share an announcement that we made last week, including \$150 million over three years towards increased services and support for women and their children who have experienced domestic violence. Mr. Speaker, that means 1,000 more women and children will have a safe bed when they're escaping domestic violence. It means 2,000 more women and their children will receive critical counselling services when needed and this means more inclusive services to better respond to the needs of the elderly, Francophone, newcomer and racialized communities. I'm so proud to be part of a government.

>> MPP Deb Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for that answer. I have to tell you I'm very proud to be part of a government that recognizes the need for strong services for women and survivors. So whether it's women in the workplace or women facing sexual assault or domestic violence, our government has worked hard to make sure that women feel safe. The investment that the Minister of community and social services outlined will most definitely be a positive step to ensure all women feel protected. However, Speaker, we recognize that victim supports is only one part of the solution. We know that another part is ensuring the justice system is more responsive to the needs of survivors. We know that the justice system can be hard if not truly intimidating. I know that I have heard clearly that the current process needs to be more survivor

centered and trauma informed. Can the Minister please tell us about the investments we've made to help those survivors in the justice –

>> Minister Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, it's a great honour to get a question from the great Deb Matthews. Speaker, as my Colleague has mentioned, it's -- It's never ok and need to seize on a conversation. And this conversation has grown. Survivors are coming forward. They are demanding change and support. And, Speaker, we need to answer. Within the justice system we're doing this in two ways. By strengthening our support for survivors and those at risk and our justice system is responsive to the needs of survivors and their families. Speaker, this includes a 35% increase to the overall budget for sexual assault centres and providing free legal advice to survivors province wide. Speaker, these investments will have a massive impact for survivors all across Ontario. But, Speaker, as I look across the floor to the official opposition, I see an opposition that has a plan that includes millions of dollars in cuts. I would like to tell this House even \$1 billion in cuts, Speaker, as my ministry would completely scrap this new investment which will not be acceptable.

MPP Martow to Minister Naidoo-Harris Re: French-Language Teacher Shortage

>> MPP Gila Martow: [Speaking in French] Voice of Translator: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question to the Minister of education. Four years ago, the Liberal government decided to considerably reduce the number of students in Colleges in Ontario because there were a lack of teachers. People in the francophone community told the government not to reduce the training of frongo phone -- francophone teachers because it was already obvious for them that there was a lack of francophone teachers. As per usual, this government ignored advice of people who know this field the best, and they decided to get rid of few spots for francophone teachers training. Mr. Speaker, could the Minister explain why her government ignored that advice and decided to reduce the training for francophone teachers?

>> Minister Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to thank the member opposite for this important question and I want to say to you that I actually had a discussion just this morning on this very issue association skolare cath leak. This is an issue many in the French community are raising. And I want you to know that we are working diligently and tirelessly to ensure we are dealing with a shortage of French teachers in our province. I also want you to know this is not an issue that is just specific to our province. I've actually had conversations with Minister s of education from other provinces who are also trying to make sure that they have the pieces in place to deal with this. The reality is we recognize the tremendous advantage students have when they speak more than one language and we want to make sure that we are supporting French as a second language and the demand for f.s.l.as much as we can. So we are doing a number of things on a number of different levels to deal with this issue. I'm happy to speak about that in the supplementary.

>> MPP Gila Martow: [Speaking in French] Voice of Translator: Again to the Minister. It is this government's fault. It is their responsibility. There's a reason why we have this problem. Hundreds of children in the southwestern school district in Ontario do not have qualified French teachers. I have met south Asian families in south brampton who are are furious because there is no spot for their children in French immersion. Mr. Speaker, the government is investing taxpayers' money in French services and in francophone university. Could the Minister explain to us, then, who is using these French services and go to -- and use these programs if we do not teach Ontarian students to the French language? [End of Translation]

>> Minister Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to take this question, and I just want to point out once again that we are very aware of this challenge and we are actually working very tirelessly to make sure that we're taking care of this challenge and ensuring that we are meeting the demand. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that the demand for F.S.L. Is exceeding the supply of teachers but we are taking immediate steps to boost the recruitment of new French teachers, once again an issue other provinces are dealing with across the country so here is what we're doing. We're developing information campaigns that inform internationally educated teachers about the opportunity of teaching in Ontario. We are creating bridging programs to help newcomers adjust and

mentoring opportunities. We're streamlining evaluation of credentials for internationally educated francophone teachers. We're working to increase access to the profession and we're creating a new supply and demand forecasting model so we can be more responsive. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, we are on it. We are doing a number of things. We're not complaining about the issue. We're actually having conversations. And coming up with solutions and working with our partners to take care of the problem.

MPP Horwath to Minister Jaczek Re: Healthcare Funding

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. My question's for the acting Premier. For years this Liberal government has starved hospitals of the funding they need and they're still at it, Speaker. Instead of funding every hospital properly, we've learned that the Premier is actually clawing money back from Kenora's hospital. At the beginning of February, Lake of the Woods district hospital was projecting a balanced budget. Now, after clawbacks from this government, they're facing a huge deficit. And every time this government cuts hospital funding, patients are the ones to pay the price with longer wait times and even more overcrowding. That's the last thing that northwestern Ontario needs, Speaker. Why is this government cutting funding for Kenora's hospital when every hospital in Ontario needs more investments, not less?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I guess I will just repeat the type of plan that we have for Ontario's hospitals. I know that the member is aware that in the 2017 budget we invested over \$500 million in funding in Ontario hospitals. So this was a major increase what we've been doing each and every year. The demographics of Ontario is precisely what we're studying very, very closely. We are looking at individual communities. Our local health integration networks are studying the needs in their particular community as I'm sure the member knows. These things are governed by local people. We value their input. We will be looking very closely as we move forward with our plan to improve hospital capacity at individual needs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I didn't want the Minister to repeat a failed plan. I wanted her to explain why she's cutting money from the Kenora hospital. The government -- doesn't seem to get it, Speaker. Hospitals have been starved for years by the Liberals and then before then by the Conservatives. We have a dangerous overcrowding crisis. People are being treated in hallways for days on end. And instead of fixing the problem and funding our hospitals properly, we find out that the Liberals are cutting funding for this crucial hospital and making it harder for the people of northwestern Ontario to get the health care that they need. Why won't this government stop the hospital cuts once and for all and stop cutting Kenora's hospital funding?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: And I only need to repeat our plan, because apparently it isn't sinking in. I have to say we are continuing not only to invest in hospitals but in all aspects of the health care system. And quite seriously, if she -- if the leader of the third party continues to fear monger in this way, I really find it really distressing. The NDP Voted against the get that provided an additional \$5.8 million for health sciences north this year alone and more than \$30 million in investments for northern hospitals. Lest we forget the NDP Also voted against our ohip plus plan that would have seen nearly 25,000 children and youth in this -- have free access to over 4,400 eligible prescription medications. And if NDP Leader Horwath is serious she should have supported the 2017 budget where we -- Health care funding.

MPP Martins to Minister Malhi Re: Gender Based Violence Strategy

>> MPP Cristina Martins: Thank you, Speaker. As you know today is international women's day. I want to take this opportunity to wish all the women here today, all the women in my riding of Davenport and my mother Armanda bento a happy international women's day. Today is the day to celebrate the incredible accomplishments of women past and present. It is also a day to recognize the work we still need to do to create a fair and equal society. My question, Speaker, is for the

Minister of the status of women. We know that this last year has been remarkable for women. Women and girls across the world have come forward. The me too and time's up movements have signalled a call to action. Account Minister of the status of women tell us what the government is doing to respond to these important calls for action? For change.

>> Minister Harinder Malhi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to my Colleague for this very important question on this very important day. Speaker, this week our government introduced two groundbreaking strategies. Then now next our women's economic empowerment strategy and it's never ok Ontario's gender based violence strategy. These strategies build on the work -- on our government's commitment to a fair and equal society for everyone regardless of your gender, gender identity or expression. It's never ok Ontario's gender based violence strategy with an investment of up to \$242 million responds to that call to action and social change that we are in. There's been 43 years since the united nations officially recognized international women's day. We have accomplished so much in that time but we still have far to go. This is why our government is fully committed to gender equality and to improving economic achievements of women. That is the why we're building a fairer and more equal Ontario that includes historic new investments for women and girls in this province.

>> MPP Cristina Martins: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the Minister. It is clear that the future is changing for generations of women and girls in Ontario. I'm pleased to see our government building on our commitment to create a province free from domestic and sexual violence. Speaker gender-based violence can happen to anyone but women and children are most at risk. The risk is even greater for women who are racialized, indigenous, newcomers, LGBTQ 2 are living with disabilities. We know that women often face other barriers that get in the way of their opportunity to fully participate in our society. The Minister mentioned then now next Ontario women's economic empowerment strategy. Account Minister outline how this strategy will benefit women and girls in this province?

>> Minister Harinder Malhi: Thank you M.. Thank you again for the question. It's time for all women - it is the time for all women's economic empowerment. I say this not only because it is fair but it is right and because stronger, more inclusive economy is good for everyone. Then now next, Ontario's women's economic empowerment is historic because it invests in women and their futures. It is historic because empowerment includes new legislation to help break down wage barriers women face in the workplace. Speaker, we are also taking steps to promote women's corporate leadership. We're working to ensure that women make up to at least 40% of the appointments to each provincial board and agency by December of 2019. We are also encouraging T. -- TSX listed issuers to set and achieve a target of 30% women on their boards and we are taking the lead on this. We've already taken that lead.

MPP Romano (Oosterhoff) to Minister Del Duca Re: Steel Tariffs

>> MPP Ross Romano: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Deputy Premier. The steel mill in Sault Ste. Marie Algoma will not be able to survive a 25% tariff on steel. Since the three US Tariff recommendations were first released a few weeks ago, I've been trying to develop relationships with friends south of the border, specifically developed a great relationship with Michigan state senator Wayne Schmidt. Senator Schmidt is equally concerned of the effect that these tariffs, specifically closure of Algoma's mill, will have on his economy in Michigan. In fact he stated to me just this past Tuesday if Algoma closes, Michigan will immediately be forced into a recession. Working with the senator and other political representatives to convince the president that the US Economy needs us as much as we need them. My question, Mr. Speaker, will you join me in my diplomatic efforts. Exclusion to the 25% tariff in order to save the thousands of jobs in my community and in our --

>> Minister Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. I thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for the question. Of course repeatedly on this side of the House, the Premier, various Ministers and our Cabinet backbenchers. Everyone Collectively has said repeatedly that we are determined as a

government to do what is in our core, what is our responsibility to the people that we are proud to represent, Speaker and that is to stand up at every turn for our workers and for our businesses. We very clearly understand that in communities like Sault Ste. Marie, Hamilton and others that as the Americans go forward with the tariffs on steel and aluminum, that president trump has referenced over the last number of days, that there would be very serious ramifications and that's exactly why, Speaker, we have said repeatedly and we've been working closely with our federal partners to make sure that Canada and Ontario can gain the exemptions. My understanding. Is that there will be an update provided perhaps even later today. We'll continue to press hard and push hard and that member's community can fully understand and appreciate our Premier and our government are standing right beside them and right with them to make sure that we continue to provide support.

>> MPP Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you, Speaker. My question is also to the Deputy Premier. Hamilton steel industry and business community are also deeply concerned after the United States pledged to impose a 25% tariff on steel. Hamilton chamber of commerce president Keenan Lewis said this is the worst case scenario for Hamilton. He continued saying ultimately there are up to I think about 40,000 jobs or so that could be impacted in Hamilton by this announcement. That's 40,000 god, stable, well-paying jobs that are at risk because of the rise of protectionism. And this dangerous wave can be rolled back through diplomacy and negotiation, the prosperity of Ontarians is safeguarded. My question nonpartisan. Will the government join members on this side of the House on our mission to ensure Canada's exempt from the exorbitant tariffs?

>> Minister Steven Del Duca: Speaker, just because the member inserts the notion that this is not partisan into the question doesn't actually make all of us on this side forget where they were last week on these issues, Speaker. On bill 194, legislation that our government introduced a number of days ago and passed the fairness and procurement legislation, Speaker. When members including the member from saw Sault Ste. Marie and members on that side had the opportunity to stand with us. Most importantly, Speaker, not just to stand with us but to stand with the people that they are supposed to be representing and fighting for, they missed that opportunity, Speaker. They didn't just miss the opportunity, Speaker. They repeatedly attacked our Premier and our government for doing what is at our core --For standing up for the people, the workers and the businesses of this province. [Applause] And I would expect those members --