

CO Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Tuesday, October 24, 2017

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Please see attached Cabinet Office's Transcript of Provincial Question Period for Tuesday, October 24, 2017.

MCI did not receive any questions of interest.

MSA did not receive any questions of interest.

Both opposition parties asked questions about the hydro-rate reduction plan and about long-term care homes. The Ontario Progressive Conservatives also asked about Ontario Municipal Board and youth homelessness. As well, the Ontario New Democrats asked about the college strike and the impact of pollution on First Nations Communities.

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

http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/house-proceedings/house_proceedings_home.do?locale=en

From: Stinson, Jeffrey (CAB)
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Transcript of Provincial Question Period
41st Parliament, 2nd Session
Tuesday, October 24, 2017

The following is a partially edited transcript of Question Period.

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MPP Brown to Premier Wynne (Sandals) Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Let me share a message complex accounting and financing structure for the rate reduction in order to avoid showing a deficit or increase to net debt. We understand that it creates -- It's going to cost us \$4 billion. What the government has not answered is who is going to pay that \$4 billion? They like to be a little too cute about that. I want the Premier to stand up here today and tell Ontarians exactly who is going to pay that additional \$4 billion due to her schemes?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as I have said in this House and I have said in the public, Mr. Speaker, outside of this House, there were massive investments in an electricity system that had been degraded. When we came into the office in 2003, there was a system in this province that had been neglected. There were Brown-outs and blackouts and thousands of lines -- thousands of kilometres of line that needed to be rebuilt. We made those investments, and there was a cost associated with that. Mr. Speaker, what we know is that that cost has been born by people in the province today, Mr. Speaker, and they were saying to us, and they were saying to all of us in the legislature that their electricity prices were going up too quickly and too high, Mr. We addressed that. People are seeing a reduction.

>> Patrick Brown: The Speaker: Again to the Premier, that's a pretty clever spin for how you made the decision, a calculated decision to blow \$4 billion. A billion here, a billion there. It's not a laughing matter. People can't afford their hydro bills. So Mr. Speaker, let me share a quote from two. This isn't an accounting disagreement. It's not even particularly advanced civics. Leaders should be held to count for their decisions they make and the government should make it easier for voters to

do so by insuring their decisions are clear and understandable. Fact is this the Liberals disagree on this point says a lot on where the party that ran on basic no-nonsense reforms in 2003 has ended up 14 years later. That's a direct quote from T.V.O. My question is when did this happen? When did they stop caring about the people of Ontario?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think any party in this province that cares about the people of Ontario would have a plan to reduce electricity prices as well as reliable electricity system. Anyone who cares about the people of Ontario wants to make sure that the lights go on when you flick the switches, Mr. Speaker, that we don't have Brownouts and blackouts and the costs of that, Mr. Speaker be born in a reasonable way. We were very clear, Mr. Speaker, that the cost of the upgrades that had to be made to the electricity system. When we brought forward our fair hydro plan that those costs would be born over a longer period of time. I think it's fair when government after government after government neglected the electricity system when it was finally upgraded -- It's been clear, Mr. Speaker, that our plan does this, provides for the reasonable bearing of these costs. Cost of those investments moves over a longer period of time. We've been clear, Mr. Speaker that the fair hydro plan keeps the costs of borrowing because that is the logical thing to do.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker again to the Premier what, I can't get an answer on, we have an auditor-general's report that says you are wasting \$4 billion, because the manner you're doing the scheme, \$4 billion, \$4 billion that Ontario families can't afford, and now in the midst of T -- Mr. Speaker, in the midst of this bombshell that the government's wasting \$4 billion, the auditor-general still hasn't gotten the e-mails she requested. I'm worried this is Pete's project 2.0. Why is it taking so long? Are they furiously deleting e-mails? Why is it taking so long to have the proper disclosure? Weren't they supposed to be the most transparent government? What have they become, Mr. Speaker?

>> Minister Liz Sandals: Yes, thank you. And Speaker, I totally disagree with the characterization of the accounting. Let's stop and think about how the electricity sector works and what is normal for the accounting in the electricity sector. When O.P.G. Borrows to finance nuclear generators or hydro, whatever, it appears on o.p.g.'s books. When Hydro One borrows to fund new transmission lines or in the area where is they're the local distributor, it's on their books. When Toronto hydro -- it's on their books. Well, hydro, it's on their books. It is the norm in the electricity sector that the borrowing done by that electrical utility goes on that utility. It is further true that O.P.G. And Hydro One already have great accounting and that has been approved by the auditor --

MPP Brown to Premier Wynne Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. When the F.A.O. Was introduced, the financial accountability office, the Liberal Minister said I wish there was someone at the beginning, a neutral third party who could have gone to get the input and proceed with any of the problems that arose. They celebrated the creation of this office. Now they have a situation where they're ignoring the F.A.O. They've been in a year-long battle with the Ombudsman. Every chance they get, they attack the auditor-general. There doesn't seem to be a nonpartisan officer in the legislature they don't disagree with. Is there a single officer they're not willing to disparage and are willing to support?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the reality is we work with all of the officers of the legislature, Mr. Speaker. Our officials work with them. Our Minister s work with them, Mr. Speaker, and we do our utmost to answer their questions and to provide the information that they need, Mr. Speaker, and from every single report that comes to us from the legislature, we can make improvements, Mr. Speaker. It is a very important process. We value the input. We value that critical eye, and we will continue to work with all of the officers of the legislature as we have done throughout our term.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier, they say they enjoy working with the legislative

officers. Yet on every single occasion, they disparage them. They thank them for the report, but the reports are saying this is a House of cards. Their numbers do not add up. You even have one report said that they make up their own accounting rules. Mr. Speaker, that's not working with them. That's ignoring them. That's attacking them. There was one article that I read yesterday that said Ontario's war on the truth, the government only liked to deal in truths or facts if it suits their political survival. Now I know in debate who I'm going to believe? Do I believe the fact of the auditor-general or the fact of this Premier and government. The track record is, again and again our legislative officers are correct, and this government's numbers are wrong. My question is when will this government stop her war on our independent legislative officers?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'm always happy to debate the truth. I'm particularly happy to debate the truth with the leader of the opposition, any time, Mr. Speaker. The truth is we had a situation in terms of electricity prices in this province that needed to be addressed. And Mr. Speaker, there was question after question after question in this House from a party that had no plan to address electricity prices in the province about what our plan was. We brought a plan forward, Mr. Speaker and people across this province are seeing on average a 25% reduction on their electricity bills. We were very clear that over the period of -- Over the period of the next generation, Mr. Speaker, we would smooth the costs and would be a premium attached to that as there is with mortgage, Mr. Speaker. We were also clear -- Also clear we believe it was fair, Mr. Speaker when a huge investment in upgrading the electricity system was made that it would be fair for -- Not just this generation but the next generation who will pay part of that cost.

>> Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier, the Premier stands in this House and insists her government is not attacking our independent legislative officers. The Minister of energy went so far to personally contact journalists the day before her report was released to say the auditor's interpretation of flawed, even before they seen the report. Minister, senior Minister s are calling journalists to say and attack the -- Mr. Speaker, calling journalists the nigh before to attack the auditor-general does not sound like a government working with our legislative officers. So my question, Mr. Speaker, is for a government that says they were about openness and transparency and working with our legislative officers, I want to know if the Premier condones her Minister s calling journalists the night before to attack the auditor-general. Do you condone that?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker as I said in my first answer, it's extremely important that we work and respect the officers of the legislature and we do. I would sit down with the officers of the legislature and have conversations about what was going on in the ministry before reports were written. They work with the officers of the legislature to make sure they have all the information they need. It's a very important function and today the Environmental Commissioner's annual report is going to be out. There will be criticisms of the things that we have done as a government, Mr. Speaker. There will be acknowledgement of progress that's been made, and most importantly, there will be a direction forward in terms of how it improve. And we'll continue to work with the Environmental Commissioner as we do with all of the officers of the legislature. The very important function, Mr. Speaker and we'll continue to work with them as we have in the past.

MPP Gelinas to Premier Wynne (Hoskins) Re: Long-Term Care Homes

>> MPP France Gelinas: Voice of Translator: My question is for the Premier. Nd of Translation]. 14 long-term hairs in the city of Toronto are even planning to move out of the city or seriously considering it. That means they are 1,800 frail elderly people in Toronto right now that could be forced to move or risk losing their homes. What's the Premier's plan to make sure that these 1,800 seniors aren't forced out of their homes?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question from the member opposite, and I understand that the long-term care association is going to be coming out tomorrow with some information about some of the challenges that Thi believe the sector is facing. What we know, Mr. Speaker is we need more long-term care beds and more support for people who

are aging in the province including more home care. We continue to increase funding and we know that as the long-term sector goes through a transformation to upgrade beds. Because that's what this is about, Mr. Speaker. This is about making sure frail elderly seniors have the very best environment in which to spend their days, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to work with the long-term care association. We understand there are challenges. We'll work with them to solve those challenges.

>> MPP Gelinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If every home that is considering leaving Toronto actually does, what will that mean for the 1,800 seniors in those beds? What is the Premier's plan to make up the loss of those beds for Toronto seniors and their families?

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I think from the outset, I want to emphasize that of the 20 long-term care homes in Toronto referenced by the C.B.C. Today, we have not received a single application or proposal that suggests or advocates for any beds whatsoever to leave Toronto, Mr. Speaker. And I want to emphasize as well that no long-term care beds can leave any community without my explicit written approval. Mr. Speaker, and also in June of this year, I was very proud to be in downtown Toronto in west donlands announcing a brand-new redevelopment in Toronto and I'm happy to speak about that in the supplementary.

>> MPP Gelinas: Back to the Premier. The Premier's legacy when it comes to long-term care beds can be described in one word: Less. There's less funding, less oversight, less beds available and less dignity for the parents and grandparents. When will the Premier finally acknowledge a crisis that she and her government have helped to create in our long-term care system and help seniors meet the needs they have.

>> Minister Hoskins: It is not my intention nor will it be for long-term care beds to leave a community, any community. The member from Nipissing knows we're working very closely together on a long-term care solution for trout lake to keep those beds in that community and the member for Brandt, I won't reference you directly, Speaker, but there are many communities around the province I'm working to make sure they retain those. Earlier this year, downtown Toronto and downlands a lot for profit long-term care operator and celebrated the brand-new redevelopment on new land they purchased in downtown Toronto. It can be done, Mr. Speaker. There will be no movement -- there can be no movement of beds without my express written approval. We're working with all stakeholders to find solutions that work for them and work for their clients.

MPP Gelinas to Minister Hoskins Re: Long-Term Care Homes

>> MPP France Gelinas: Voice of Translator: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [End of translation]. The beds that are moving they have failed for deck teas to make the proper planning and make the investment in our long-term care facilities. Back in 2007, the Liberal government programmed to redevelop 35,000 long-term care home beds by 2017 so that the residents would have the facilities they need to live in. But by 2014, 7 long years later, they were only 5,000 beds under redevelopment and 30,000 of them had not changed a bit. T residents were still waiting for appropriate care. Can the Premier tell us how many long-term care beds are still in need of redevelopment today?

>> Minister Hoskins: I'm proud of the changes and improvements we've made in long-term care system since 2003. We have built or our partners have built with licences provided to them 10,000 new long-term care beds across this province. And our partners as we for-profit and not for profit have already redeveloped 13,500 long-term care beds. We're on track for a total of 30,000 over a 10-year period. And we're working with virtually every community, Mr. Speaker. We're finding those important creative ways that reflect and appreciates and respect their requirements for the operators and the business models that need to work for them. Most of all, both parties come together because we're focused on client care.

>> MPP Gelinas: It's not just the redevelopment of beds this Liberal government is failing at. We hear

horror stories daily, seniors being left in beds for 16 hours straight, not being able to reach the bathroom in time, being left to sit in soiled clothes for hours on end because no one is there to help them, not to mention the cases of abuse that make the front page of the papers. The Premier has a chance to do the right thing right now for the seniors and their families. Will the premier expand the government inquiry into the murders committed by Elizabeth Wettlaufer to include the broad systemic issues that needs to be fixed in our long-term care system?

>> Minister Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, the member office knows and we have spoke about this many times in the legislature that the public inquiry, the justice has the scope within the terms of reference to address whatever issue in long-term care homes she believes is Perin the meantime -- pertinent that will result in the highest level of safety and security and quality of care for residents that call long-term care home. I'm increasingly frustrated that the third party is opposed to everything we do and propose like the humber development redevelopment site, the 150 beds there that will open up this calendar year they spoke to yesterday. I wonder if the members from Windsor are opposed to the 20 additional acute-care beds we're adding to Windsor or if the welland is also opposed to the 26 new beds we're adding in acute-care at the welland site. It's very difficult to see what they're for and what they're against.

>> MPP Gelinis: Thank you, Speaker. Front-line, long-term care workers are doing the very best they can, but they need help from this Premier. We need a find and fix approach to this crisis, and we need a Premier who will tackle these problems head on instead of turning a blind eye. She's heard the call of families with loved ones in care. Will the Premier finally stop ignoring them and expand the scope of the Wettlaufer inquiry?

>> Minister Hoskins: With the fear mongering of the NDP, they would likely close down every long-term care home. That's the rhetoric. I'm still wondering if the members from London and the third party F they agree or disagree with the 24 new acute-case beds that we're opening this calendar year at London health sciences or the 24 new acute-care mental health beds or if the leader of the party agrees or disagrees with the three neonatal intensive care beds we're opening or the 30 new beds at the Hamilton. Or the 24 new acute-case beds in downtown hame Hamilton. I need to know because they seem to oppose everything. They seem to be against everything.

MPP Walker to Minister Hoskins Re: Long-Term Care Homes

>> MPP Bill Walker: My question is for the Minister of health. You found \$25 billion for an election scheme to cover up your hydro issues. Today we have 1,800 seniors and 14 homes that could possibly close. You've said on record you'll not allow any homes to move. Will you put that in writing? Will you not give express written permission for a home to lose? Seniors have lost trust. Minister, today, I want you to again reiterate you won't allow any home to move?

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: I will not allow any home to move beds without my explicit written permission. That's what is required in the legislation, Mr. Speaker. That's been the case every single time when an operator has come forward. But of the -- I think it's critically important that Torontonians and those in the G.T.A. That rely on these beds in Toronto and the surrounding areas they know clearly and that there's no rhetoric or narrative that opposes this truth, Mr. Speaker, that that is the reality, that I need to approve them. But of the 20 long-term care homes in Toronto referenced by the cbc this morning, I've not, the ministry has not received a single application from them, which advocates or requests a movement of beds outside of Toronto.

>> MPP Walker: My question is going to the Premier. Today 32,000 seniors were on a wait list. 20 homes have threatened to close. That could be the tip of the iceberg. 1,800 seniors at risk of losing their long-term care beds just in Toronto let alone the rest of Ontario. The executive director of family counselling said it's always a concern that homes may have to move outside of the city. It involves moving a vulnerable population from their homes. It's an unneeded stress you can end today. Mr. Speaker through you to the Premier, will you guarantee the residents and their families

their homes won't be closing and equally how many beds will you build to get those people off that 32,000 wait list?

>> Minister Hoskins: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And we fully understand and are cognizant of and appreciate the partners in the long-term health care system have. The investment the government makes towards the capital cost of redevelopment is between 60% and 80% of that total capital cost. That's a significant contribution. I think we can all agree on that. But Mr. Speaker, we are working with our partners. We are working with both the not for profit and for-profit operators that are look at creative solutions to provide the highest quality of care and upgrade their facilities through redevelopment so they can provide that standard of care that all of us would expect for our loved ones. We're doing that and cognizant of the different challenges that exist across the province. I have referenced one example. In downtown Toronto and mark my words. There will be other examples in Toronto because we're working so closely to make sure this works for everyone.

MPP Tabuns to Minister Duguid Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> MPP Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. To the Premier. This morning I moved a motion to force this Liberal government to release e-mails to the public that were examined by the auditor-general in her recent report on hydro. These e-mails showed the Liberal government spent an extra and unnecessary \$4 billion to hide the damage that their \$40 billion hydro borrowing scheme will visit on the people of Ontario. Unsurprisingly, Liberals voted against the motions to avoid having to disclose these embarrassing e-mails. Will the Premier release the e-mails to the people of Ontario right now of her own accord?

>> Minister Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of questioning that comes up from time to time when a request is made for information, and the government does everything that it has to do and wants to do it comply. That's exactly what is happening now. The e-mails that have been requested are being complied with. In fact as of today, over 30,000 e-mails have been moved forward, and whatever's left are there to come. I think the commitment that the Minister has made as best as they can is to have these e-mails to the auditor-general, I believe, by November 1. Mr. Speaker, it takes time to do this. It's not something we do in our offices. It's something that our public servants do to insure the e-mails requested are indeed the e-mails provided. It takes a little bit of time. That's how these things work. We're happy to comply and work and we will.

>> MPP Tabuns: Again to the Premier. This is a question of e-mails coming to the public, so the public can actually see for themselves what's going on. The people of this province have the right to know who authorized this \$40 billion accounting trick. Premier told Ontarians over and over again this she's the most open and transparent person ever to occupy her office. She talks a good game. But when it comes down to actually doing the things that are open and transparent, the people of this province have been let down every single time. Why won't the Premier take this chance to shoet people of Ontario that she can and in fact keep her promises and release these e-mails now?

>> Minister Duguid: I think I have responded pretty straightforwardly to the member in his first question. Let me say this about the other part of this question, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that there are three of Canada's leading accounting firms completely agree with the approach this government has taken. It's not a unique approach to this government or any government, Mr. Speaker. It's called a rate-regulated accounting approach. It's taken by six out of the eight independent systems operators across North America. It's perfectly normal. If the member is accusing something of being untoward here, I guess he's saying there's something going on in Alberta that's untoward or something in new England or new York state or Michigan that's untoward or something in the mid east and eastern seaboard or maybe Texas. This is a regular accounting process. It's time for the NDP And opposition to understand that this is a very legitimate way to account for these costs.

MPP Martins to Minister Del Duca Re: High-Speed Rail

>> MPP Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of transportation. We all know that Ontario is a competitive jurisdiction where people want to invest. This is manage I hear from different sectors whenever I cross this province. People want to come and invest in Ontario. Waterloo region has an ever-growing number of high-quality jobs. Ontario is home to large -- one of the two largest eco sectors. We need to make sure we have a world-class transportation network that connects commuters to these opportunities. That is why I am very pleased to know that our government is moving forward on high-speed rail all the way to Windsor with stops along the way -- Including one in Kitchener. Speaker, would the Minister provide more information on what our government has done to date to make high-speed rail a reality here in Ontario?

>> Minister Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member for her question. Our government has been very clear about the high-speed rails between Toronto and Windsor and we continue make progress on this. I was pleased to join Toronto. Announced the next important step which is the importance of to provide strategic support for this. The first of its kind in Canadian history cannot be taken lightly. We need the skills with the members of the innovation sectors just to name a view. It will play a critical role in engaging key partners. I know that through their hard work and our government's ongoing commitment, we'll deliver high-speed rail. Thank you very much.

>> MPP Martins: Thank you, Speaker and to the Minister for his answer. It is clear that high-speed raily is truly a historic project. We need to make sure we get it right. This is a project that will support not just today's generations but generations to come. As the Minister made absolutely clear in his answer, our government is committed to seeing this project through. Unlike the members on this side of the House, the parties opposite continue to flip-flop on their support for high-speed rail. One day they like it. This is disappointing to so many communities along the future line including London, Windsor, and Chatham who have representatives on the other side of the House. Would the Minister provide more information on why our government is absolutely clear on the fact that we need to move this project forward?

>> Minister Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. Again I want to thank the member from Davenport for their follow-up question and thank a moment to thank the members in our caulks and from London for their staunch advocacy for this project on a regular basis. On a regular basis these members going with the Premier and our entire team to make sure that we get shovels in the ground and build high-speed rail. We know from an economic standpoint it's absolutely essential that we get this job done. I can say once again on behalf of the Premier and our government, we're steadfast. We'll make this happen. We understand the critical importance of making sure that we do get it right and do get those shovels in the ground. We'll work with our advisory board to get it done in the right way and makes the most sense. To my caucus Colleagues. Keep pushing and keep prodding. This government, this Premier will make it happen.

MPP Fedeli (N. Miller) to Minister Mauro (Naqvi) Re: Ontario Municipal Board

>> MPP Vic Fedeli: Thank and you good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Yesterday MPP S had the opportunity to give northern Ontario an important voice in the decision-making process. The committee debated an amendment that would have put at least one northern member on the new local planning appeal support centre. That means northern communities would have a say with the reformed O.M.B. Unfortunately, the Liberal-dominated committee led by the member for north up-bertland quinte west through Rinaldi voted it down. Why does the government continually shut northern Ontario out? Why did the member of Northumberland-quinte west and lib ra-dominated committee denight the north an opportunity to have their voices heard?

>> Minister Bill Mauro: Thank you very much. I want to thank the member for the question. I found out this morning about this particular amendment that was proposed by the P.C.S in discussions

with my staff about how yesterday's committee hearing went. It was interesting to me that on an issue that for decades I would say it's fair to say, has been dogging Toronto and larger municipalities in southern Ontario, an issue that at second reading, O.M.B. Reform that was supported by the provincial Conservatives that at committee over the course of a number of days the single strongest amendment and suggestion they could come forward with on this particular legislation was to see if they could get a northern member put on to the O.M.B. Board. I'm not saying it's good or bad or indifferent. I know if that's all they've got to come up with after that length of time on legislation that's this important to the planning needs and long-term horizon under which our growth plan is focused, I think, Speaker, we've got this plan in a pretty good place.

>> MPP Norm Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and back to the Premier. I was in the committee hearing yesterday and I told the committee hearing the biggest complaint you hear when you travel around northern Ontario is about Toronto-based decision making. Northerners are frustrated by decisions made at queen's park that just don't work in northern Ontario. Northern Ontario is tired of being ignored by this government. Northerners want a voice at the table. This government continues to deny them the opportunity. The O.M.B. Doesn't just impact the G.T.A. And the suburbs and the big cities. It impacts every single community large and small in Ontario. Speaker, why did the Liberal committee vote down this inclusive amendment? Why does this government think that insiders at queen's park are better able to deal with northern issues than the people from northern Ontario?

>> Minister Yasir Naqvi: I'm sure the members opposite know that the members of the Ontario municipal board are if legislation passes the new local planning tribunal, those tribunal are quasi-judicial in nature and they're adjudicators. They have a judge-like function. They go through a process through the public appointment secretariat to get appointed based on thqualifications. These individuals are not hand picked upon. It's not just a board. These are actually Speaker our adjudicators who would fair bit of training, Speaker, insure that based on evidence that is presented before them they make a decision. Surely the members opposite want the best. Every part of the province because these are important to educational institutions.

MPP Tabuns to Minister Ballard Re: Pollution and First Nations Communities

>> MPP Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In her report the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario said quote the Ontario government has long turned a blind eye to pollution that adversely affects many indigenous communities, end quote. Whether it's decades of ongoing Mercury poisoning at grassy narrows or pollution, it says the conditions faced by these indigenous communities would not be tolerated elsewhere in Ontario but have been long deemed unworthy of expense. The government has been in power for 14 years. Why have they ignored the first nations issues?

>> Minister Chris Ballard: Thank you for a very important and serious question. But it's one that I can say the question is -- the premise of the question is not accurate, Mr. Speaker. We have, and I will have -- I have a long list of initiatives that this government has undertaken and my mandate to make sure they take care of when it comes to working with indigenous and first nations communities within Ontario. You know, Speaker, first and foremost, I want to thank the commissioner and her office for her thoughtful report on actions. We can take to better protect Ontario's environment -- better protect indigenous communities. We certainly appreciate her supportive comments. To the degree there's always more that needs to be done. I'll get into some of the things we're doing, Mr. Speaker, in the supplementary.

>> MPP Tabuns: Again to the Premier, while the Premier's rhetoric around environmental protection and reconciliation has changed, the Environmental Commissioner says the government must do much more to protect first nations communities that are disproportionately affected by pollution. We recently learned the government has failed to take meaningful action after repeated violations of the environmental protection act. This government has missed its own deadline to update sulfur dioxide standards and has muzzled its own engineers preferring to listen to industry lobbyists.

>> Minister Ballard: Thank you, Speaker. Let's talk about some of the things this government is doing that my ministry is doing when it comes to improving the lives of folks who are on indigenous communities. Recently, Speaker, we committed \$85 million in dedicated funding to remediate the English swabba gun water system through collaboration with first nations communities there. \$85 million, additionally, Ontario is working with first nations and the federal government to resolve all long-term drinking water advisories in first nation communities in the next five years. But Speaker, we recognize that more needs to be done. Let's talk about Sarnia for a second. I was down to visit chief Rogers and meet with the community, and to hear firsthand what concerns they have there. We have agreed to a health study. That's important, and we will continue to drive down emissions in that community.

MPP Vernile to Minister Chan Re: Global Trade Strategy

>> MPP Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of international trade. On Thursday, October 19, the Minister released a new global trade strategy called seizing global opportunities. I want to commend the Minister for driving this agenda. As our economy becomes more globalized, we have more opportunities to make connections over borders and overseas. Ontario has the ability to expand our trade horizons thereby increasing our global presence. Trade plays such a critical role creating growth that boosts our overall G.D.P. Bringing jobs to the province and enriching lives. They have much to offer the world and it's encouraging to hear the ministry of international trade has identified diversification as a top priority. Would the Minister offer details on the new global trade strategy?

>> Minister Michael Chan: I want to thank the Honourable member from Kitchener Centre for speaking this important question. One of my ministry's main objectives is to help Ontario diversify its trade, both in partners and in goods and services. Diversification is especially important now because as we broaden our global footprint, we reduce economic risks and grow our economy. It's aimed at connecting regional and local businesses to global partners in order to create relationships across borders. For instance, Speaker, in the member's riding of Kitchener centre, we have a seminar taking place on November 1 which will help new and potential exporters develop a global mind-set and access resources and partners which will help in taking their business globally. With CETA in place, we already make great strides in increasing our diversification.

>> MPP Vernile: Thank you Speaker, and thank to the Minister to his answer. It's encouraging to hear these new developments and especially great to hear about progress in my community. I know that local businesses in my riding of Kitchener Centre are going to be very pleased to hear of the seminar next week on developing a global mind-set. It's of great significance to those in the high-tech sector as well as advanced manufacturing that supports 20% of all jobs in my region. I encourage anyone who is interested across the province to register for the seminar on the ministry's website. Speaker, it is well known that small and medium-sized businesses are the core of the Canadian economy. That's why our government has made it a top priority to assist smaller businesses in expanding and growing. Speaker, could we hear more on how the Minister's global trade strategy is targeting small businesses to help them go global and increase Ontario's presence across borders.

>> Minister Chan: Thank you, Speaker. My ministry's new global trade strategy sets of four pillars that will change how they conduct business globally. Our first objective is to our trade and efforts through diversifying and strengthening our trade relationship while creating a more inclusive environment. Secondly, my ministry will become a central hub for Ontario trade. That's simplifying exporter services and programmes. First, we'll develop better research and intelligence to drive trade by sectors and markets. This strategy will modernize our current networks to accurately reflect the current trade landscape. Thank you, Speaker.

MPP Martow to Minister Coteau Re: Youth Homelessness

>> MPP Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of child and youth services. Recently a report rereleased detailing the rates of homelessness for youths raised boot I child protection system. A coalition of organizations found 60% of homeless youth have been involved in child protection. Of those, two of every five respondent his aged out of provincial care losing access to the sort of support that would have kept them from becoming homeless. We seem to be leaving the most vulnerable children's behind after the traumatic abuse and neglect they received at home. Today I'm wearing purple to raise awareness. For 40 years youth outcomes after care have been disappointing including homelessness, jail, poverty, homelessness and loneliness. Why is this Minister allowing his policies to increase homelessness?

>> Minister Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome the newly formed organization the child welfare action committee to queen's park today and thank them for the work they're doing for the young people in the province of Ontario. I'm a bit perplexed with the question coming from the member opposite. I'll tell you judge. On June 1 of this year, we put forward a proposal to this House to bring forward the most comprehensive piece of legislation probably in the history of this House, and it was a 300-page document, very comprehensive and raised the age of protection and we worked with the NDP And Conservatives with over a hundred amendments to get it right. I have to thank the N. For supporting that bill. It raises the age of protection here in the province of Ontario and that partoted against it. And protect the children here in the province of Ontario.

>> MPP Martow: Again to the Minister. Youth homelessness is at a crisis level and recent studies suggest this Minister 's policies may be to blame. Minister is not measuring the outcomes of youth leaving care. It's impossible to understand which policies are improving life outcome for youth or which ones have no effect. There's no excuse for this. Other province are measuring youth outcomes after care. This Minister seems late to the game. We need something measuring its own success as a parent would. It's not unreasonable for Ontarians to expect that the ministry helps the children they serve and helping involves more than warehousing vulnerable children in a system that seems disinterested in their futures. Mr. Speaker, why does this Minister spend millions on policies, programmes and system changes without checking to see if they are having a positive impact on the youth they're trying to serve.

>> Minister Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a very serious issue we're talking about here today. This piece of legislation bill 89 was supported in the first and second reading. We had all indications by the Progressive Conservatives they were going to support this bill. When it came up to a vote, there was a divide that took place and we still don't know why the Progressive Conservative party did not support bill 89. So Mr. Speaker, was it because it was providing culturally appropriate services for first nation inuit and metis children. Was it Caitlin's principle? Was it putting children at the centre of division make. Was it recognizing the importance of diversity. Was it acknowledgement of systemic racism and delivering culturally appropriate services to Canadian and black children here in the city of Toronto that are overly represented and Collectingidate-based or was it gender identity. I want to know.

MPP Forster to Premier Wynne (Sandals) Re: College Strike

>> MPP Cindy Forster: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Speaker, chronic underfunding byes this government has Colleges operating as though -- it's ballooned to a shocking 81% at Colleges across Ontario and instructors are forced to string together multiple contracts across multiple Colleges, and many are required to find additional employment just to make ends meet. The government has created and embraced the culture of part-time precarious work in our Colleges and the government doesn't seem to get it. In Ontario we need good full-time jobs to have a strong economy in the 21st century. What is this Liberal government to do the stop the decline of full-time

jobs in our provinces.

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: I know the president of the treasury board will want to comment. We want to see students as soon as humanly possible. I had the opportunity to speak to some instructors who were outside of the city hall in Kitchener yesterday, Mr. Speaker. And we talked about the challenges, and they had the opportunity to give me some of their perspectives. I have committed to them and to all -- we'll do everything to encourage both sides to get back to the table. I would think, Mr. Speaker, that this member, especially, would understand that it's important that the bargaining happen at table, that that's where the agreement should be reached and we want everyone to get back to the table to come to an agreement there.

>> MPP Forster: Well, Speaker, yesterday in the cbc article College employer counsel said he just doesn't see the strike being resolved any time soon. Faculty want to go back to work and the student want to go back to school. The reality is without equal pay for equal work, there will be no fast, fair, quick resolution. Yet this government continues to drag the strike out by refusing to commit to provide the resources needed for workers in Ontario to have equal pay for equal work. Legislating equal pay for equal work means nothing if the government refuses to support more full-time faculty positions. Speaker, will this government commit today to properly funding equal pay for equal work in Ontario Colleges?

>> Minister Liz Sandals: Yes thank you. And obviously we'll do everything we can to encourage the parties to get back to the table. But I fundamentally disagree with the premise of your question. If you look at the 50-year history of Ontario's Colleges, they're doing a fantastic job of delivering skills-based training and education. 83% of the students are employed six months after graduation. 79% of graduates are satisfied or very satisfied with their College programme, and here's a very important fact. 91% of employers are satisfied or very satisfied with College. So this -- This very impressive College system has received a lot of funding. In 2016-17, the government allocated \$1.74 billion in total offering grants to Colleges. That's an 82% increase since 20 --

MPP Dong to Minister McMahon Re: Celebrate Ontario Programme

>> MPP Han Dong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of tourism, cultural and sports. As Canada celebrates its 150th anniversary, Ontario has been able to support festival events have. They're known to attract tourists and support tens of thousands of jobs and generate new ones. They're part of the government and \$19 million to support over 300 festivals in events. That's a record number, Speaker. We've seen the province-wide impact of these festivals in both large and small communities. In my riding and across Ontario, the government support for festivals and events has played a fundamental role in our cultural and economic vitality. Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister, can she tell us more about the success of the celebrate recipients.

>> Minister Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the member for his question and firm support of the tourism sector. We understand the important role that festival events play in terms of economic development. In short, Speaker, we believe that fun and financial well-being go hand in hand. So thanks to the investments we've made we're able to support successful events giving them the tools they need to attract people and investments to Toronto and yes, Speaker, they chose a duck with a record of success around the world and do you know what, Speaker, the opposition maintained. It was all it was cracked up to be. It attracted 650,000 visitors and supported 124 jobs, Speaker, giving a much-needed boost to the water taxi industry in Toronto, Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker .

>> MPP Dong: Speaker, I want to thank the Minister for her answer. Many festivals and events and the red pass waterfront festival are having a positive impact in tourism, Ontario. The crowds were lining up to see the ducks, and I hope the leader of the opposition had a chance to take a selfie with the duck as well. Speaker, the economic boost of our local economy in the case of the investments are expected and critically important to follow tourism sector. Across the province, support for

Sudbury, Ontario 2017 means organizers can enhance their programming activities and services. They can offer new and enhanced experience that tracks even more tourists and increase visitors' spending. I know Sudbury, Ontario will have a positive economic impact in every corner of the province in 2017. Through you to the Minister. Can she update the members of this House on celebrate 2018.

>> Minister McMahon: Thank you, Speaker. Our celebrate Ontario programme triggers nearly \$20 for every dollar we invest. This summer it's supported festivals and events like the Ontario 150 tour that brought the world's largest rubber duck and other entertainment to five ports and 300,000 visitors as well, Speaker. Here's the breakdown. In Owen Sound, 40,000 visitors and Sault Ste. Marie, 30,000. 85,000 to Midland, 80,000 to Emmisburg and 55,000 to Brockville with a total economic impact of \$11.2 million, Speaker. With these kinds of rates and the thriving tourism sector, we fully expect our 2018 funding with a deadline of November 9 will be enthusiastically properly. The tax on the ducks were misinformed and in short they were a total canard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Wilson to Minister McMahon (Sousa) Re: Local Newspapers

>> MPP Jim Wilson: Speaker, across Ontario, small and rural towns residents rely on their local community newspapers for information about their communities. For many of these local newspapers, their businesses moving into the marketplace. The Ontario digital tax credit once provided small local media companies with funds to help during this transition to the digital world. This government has cut that funding. Small local newspaper companies don't have large staff resources and could use the extra funds to assist with their digital transformations. Speaker, will the government review the decision to cut this credit and help small local media companies.

>> Minister Eleanor McMahon: Thank you very much for the question. I think he knows as well as we do that we care a great deal about facts, Speaker and the local media markets that support them. We consider the local newspaper sector, which we need to thrive, Speaker, as incredibly important. I'm glad the member opposite has brought this to my attention. I look forward to speaking to him about it and having a conversation about working together, Speaker, we can insure these local media markets thrive. In this today's age, it's important that public life and pop politicians have access so people stay close to their government and understand how to unpack it, Speaker and how to make a difference in their everyday lives. I thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Wilson: Back to the Premier. Small newspapers are lifeblood of communities. They deliver sports news and others to the you want members of the community. The rapid arrival of the digital age has left the long-term companies struggling to keep up. Ontario interactive tax credit helps these companies deal with the new digital frontier. Again, will this government reconsider the cut to this programme and extend local newspapers an important life line?

>> Minister Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question, Mr. Speaker. And the member opposite is making reference to tax credits that were something they asked us to cut when they told us to support Don Drummond and all his recommendations. We recognize the importance of providing tax credits on the digital media side for those very purposes they're intended. That's what they're doing. I appreciate the concern. We all share the same concern about the effects it has on local media outlets. We want to encourage them to take advantage of the operations that are available to them, but it is going digital. There is more and more news items going through alternate sources. But the member opposite sat in this House and asked us to make those cuts, and we took the precautions to insure other services are available to those same media outlets. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.