

CO Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Tuesday, September 26, 2017

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Please see attached Cabinet Office's Transcript of Provincial Question Period for Tuesday, September 26, 2017.

MCI did not receive any questions of interest.

MSA did not receive any questions of interest.

Official opposition questions included such topics as including air conditioning in classrooms, small business supports, and support for the agricultural sector. NDP Questions included questions on government advertisement of hydro cost reductions, air conditioning in classrooms, and the long-term care inquiry.

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

Subject: Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Tuesday, September 26, 2017

Transcript of Provincial Question Period

41st Parliament, 2nd Session

Tuesday, September 26, 2017

The following is a partially edited transcript of Question Period.

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MPP Brown to Premier Re: Air Conditioning in Schools

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier, humidex levels have been approaching the 40s this week. My mother and my aunt have been life-long educators in the city of Ontario. Our schools don't have the infrastructure or air conditioning. Students are seeing it so hot in classrooms, they're having trouble breathing. This is unacceptable in Ontario. Mr. Speaker rather than heckling will the Premier commit today that we'll have a mandate for maximum temperatures for Ontario schools in the event much extreme heat?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and I know the Minister of education is going to want to comment on the specifics and I know that when a classroom is hot it is uncomfortable for teach he is and for students, Mr. Speaker, I recognize that, and it has been very, very hot, Mr. Speaker. We understand that there have been concerns raised by students and parents and teachers, and Mr. Speaker, you know, we have worked to provide additional funds to schools because we recognize that the majority of schools in this province were built years ago, Mr. Speaker, when we actually didn't have on a regular basis the kind of peak hot periods that we have. We certainly didn't have them in September, Mr. Speaker, and so that's why there has been more money, \$1.4 billion, actually, Mr. Speaker, put into schoolboards, so that they could retrofit and they can provide supports to schools that were built in another day, Mr. Speaker, so that's exactly why we put those funds in place.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. Another sweltering day in September, yesterday temperatures hit as high as 31° with the humidex it made it feel in the 40s. Heat warnings have swept the area, yet classrooms don't have air conditioning, we have classrooms that don't have windows that can even open. Sam Hammond from the elementary teacher's federation of Ontario had this to say, and I will quote him. "Students and teachers in many classrooms are subject to unbearable conditions with temperatures over 30°. That takes an unacceptable toll on teaching and learning." Mr. Speaker how has

the Premier allowed this to happen? They've been in government for 14 years, and here we are, with schools without air conditioning, with windows that can't open. I don't want political spin. Will it be dealt with?

>> Premier Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am as concerned as the leader of the opposition about the well being of students, Mr. Speaker, in our schools, the well being of teachers, and I know, you know, the -- one of the schools where the leader of the opposition's mother was the principal was in my riding, Mr. Speaker. It is a school that that has had a huge new addition built onto it Mr. Speaker, the too I am we've been in government, St. Bonaventure school in don valley west. Mr. Speaker, we have put billions of dollars into the hands of the school boards. They have the knowledge of their schools, they need to have the flexibility to make the changes that are necessary, Mr. Speaker. I understand that it is very hot right now but I do believe that at the local level schools need to have the flexibility to make decisions and Mr. Speaker, I have utmost faith in teachers, if there's a situation that is dangerous for kids, they're going to move those kids into the gym, they're going to put fans in place, they're going to do what's necessary to make it work. I have great faith in our teachers.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier, who quotes the great venerations in the Liberal caucus classes, here are the stats, there are 584 schools in the Toronto District School Board. Only 125 of those schools have air conditioning. 584 schools, 125 with air conditioning. Others have partial air conditioning or none at all. Christa Wiley from the parent group fix our schools said this, I will quote "If the prepare mere, who I bet is sitting in an air conditioned office right now, prioritizes our children as the future then her government will prioritize our kids and start to look at our schools as the important infrastructure they really are. In the meantime, how can the Premier expect students to learn while they're sitting, trying to learn in unbearable classrooms?" Mr. Speaker, again, rather than attacking others, rather than saying everything is fine, I asked Premier, will she mandate maximum temperatures for Ontario schools in the event of extreme heat, yes or no?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, you know, I had to move a meeting yesterday from my office to another room because actually I don't have air conditioning.

Nor, Mr. Speaker nor Mr. Speaker, as it happens, do I have air conditioning in my House. Mr. Speaker -- Mr. Speaker, I recognize that it is very hot in schools that were built in a time when there weren't the kind of heat events that we have. There wasn't the peak heat that we have now, Mr. Speaker. That is exactly why we have put billions of dollars in the hands of school boards, Mr. Speaker, to make changes, to make sure that they do the retrofits, which are happening, Mr. Speaker, across the province. And I'm not in any way saying that that work is completely done, Mr. Speaker, but again, I have a lot of faith in the educators in our schools, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that children and teachers are kept safe.

MPP Brown (Romano/Fedeli) to Premier (Mauro/Thibeault) Re: Northern Ontario

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Northern Ontario is an absolute gem, and while I'm disappointed that the Liberal member from Northumberland-quinte west has neglected to apologize for his hurtful comments referring to northern Ontario as no-man's-land, it's time we turned this negative story into a positive. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I've been to northern Ontario 27 times since being elected leader of the Ontario P.C.S and the north has so much to offer, from beautiful landscapes to a dynamic population, the north truly has limitless potential and fields ranging from tourism to resource development. I always see the greatness of northern Ontario and I understand just how important it is for Ontario, for the north, to prosper, because when the north prospers, Ontario prospers. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier and the member from Northumberland-quinte west give me the pleasure of joining me on one of my northern tours this fall?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that it's -- I think we all recognize that the member for Northumberland-quinte west is one of the best-respected members in this -- He's a fine man, he has travelled this province, Mr. Speaker, he's been in every corner of this province. He has worked hard, Mr. Speaker, particularly, particularly to represent even when he wasn't a member, in the Ontario legislature, when he wasn't a member, Mr. Speaker, he was traveling this province, gathering information from rural and northern communities, Mr. Speaker, to inform the policies that we have put in place, and then, Mr. Speaker, unlike the members opposite, he actually voted to increase the northern Ontario heritage fund to an unspecified \$100 million a year. He voted to invest \$1 billion in the ring of fire. He voted to increase the northern highways programme by \$90 million, bringing it to \$648 million annually, Mr. Speaker. He voted to give Ontarians in rural and northern communities up 50% off their electricity bill, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Ross Romano: To the Premier, my home in Sault Ste. Marie -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My home of Sault Ste. Marie has year come its fair share of challenges. We're a city filled with breathtaking tourist attractions that embody our natural beauty made famous by the group of seven. We're a city that produced incredible people that have had a significant impact on our Canadian culture and our identity. People such as Roberta Bondar, the first woman ever to through in space, Canada's governor-general David Johnston, NHL hall of famers Ron Francis and Tony and Phil Esposito, gold medalist Brad Jacobs Brian and e.j.hardon, even sir William Howard Hurst, the seventh Premier of Ontario began in Sault Ste. Marie, Wayne Gretzky's number 99 was born in Sault Ste. Marie. So, would you permit the member from Northumberland-quinte west to celebrate our beauty and natural beauty and history in Sault Ste. Marie and see what a great contribution we provide to Ontario!

>> Minister Bill Mauro: Thank you for the question. I guess some congratulations are in order. First, perhaps the leader of the official opposition who actually almost made it through that question without smiling. He just about got there. I don't think he quite made it. Also, congratulations to the member from North Bay who I think are doing their best to create a headline, try and grab a headline. I understand you've actually been successful in getting a headline or two on this issue, so I absolutely congratulate you for this ridiculous nature ten. Anybody who's been paying attention to what's going on here since 2003 understands very completely the distinction and the difference that has come from this party since we've been in government relative to what happened between 1995 and 2003. Nobody else is buying your nonsense. That's all I have to say. And perhaps if I put a little bit of advice for the member from Sault Ste. Marie, just because they ask you to ask questions like this, you don't have to do. You don't have to. You don't have to. It's not, it's not --

>> MPP Vic Fedeli: The north is home tomorrow a vibrant aerospace industry, health and education sector and a marriage of tourism and resource development. I'm we were until ally inviting the Minister from Northumberland to visit us. Join me as we paddle the historic lave advantage river today, start in trout lake and paddle by folks, Speaker who are catching their dinner. Then we're going to have to portage a fair bit. We'll pass the region's largest globalex sporters and manufacturers. We'll pull in at Billy BOB's bait for one of the best -- Instead we'll pull in at Billy BOB's for one of the best burgers you'll ever have. We'll end up in Nipissing in the same spot discovered by the first nations several years ago. I ask the Premier, Speaker, will she encourage her members to end their arrogance, to come to Nipissing, and change their view of the north?!

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, it's great to have two northern Ontarioinisters talking about how great northern Ontario is, Mr. Speaker. And also I would like, too, Mr. Speaker to take you on a stroll through fantastic northern Ontario. And as the opposition party members should know we have 100,000 more people with expanded broadband throughout the north, a \$3 million investment made by this government, Mr. Speaker and as you continue to stroll between North Bay and sturgeon fall, you'll see road construction, Mr. Speaker, where a build on sign that shows that this government is continuing to invest in northern Ontario. And as you work your way to, you know, Sault Ste. Marie and see the nearly \$6 billion that we've invested since 2003 in the northern highways programme, health care, seven new hospitals Mr. Speaker, and I was just in Sault Ste. Marie, Mr. Speaker, making an announcement about more funding coming to the Sault, Mr. Speaker, from this government. We have, Mr. Speaker, continued to invest in beautiful northern Ontario. We will continue to do so every single time they vote against it, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Horwath to Premier Re: Hydro Advertising

>> Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. Mr. Speaker my question is for the Premier. Yesterday the Premier defended the hydro ad campaign by saying "It's important for the government to inform the public of government programmes and help them to budget. How much money did the Liberal government spend in the last decade or so, people -- or Speaker, to help people budget for the 300% increase in hydro rates?"

>> Premier Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me just say that it is important for people in this province to know about the programmes that are in place, and on electricity pricing, Mr. Speaker, for example the oeefc programme that is in place to support low income Ontarians, on top of the 25% reduction they've seen over the summer, Mr. Speaker, it's important that people know about those programmes. I have met, I've met people who are no longer students, Mr. Speaker, but who want to go back to school, and they didn't know, Mr. Speaker, that they were eligible for free cue television. So whether it's advertising about the fair hydro plan or changes to osap, Mr. Speaker, it is important that each in Ontario knows what's available to them so that they can access programmes that will help them in their lives, Mr. Speaker. That's what advertising is about. Whether it's about tuition or lower electricity prices.

>> Andrea Horwath: Mr. Speaker, we have our desperate attempts by the Liberal government to put out ads that are very similar to campaign ads and they are trying to convince the people of Ontario that they are doing something to reduce their bills when we know that that's not the case. They do not inform Ontarians of any actions or programmes that they can actually sign up for as a result of this particular ad, Speaker. In fact the advertisements about the low income support programmes that the Premier references are a separate package of ads, Speaker, and they sure as heck weren't funded at the \$5.5 million price tag that the more partisan ads that the Liberals have put forward are. So why is this Premier putting the interests of herself and her Liberal party once again ahead of Ontario families who are struggling just to keep the lights on and put food on the table?

>> Premier Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of energy will want to comment on the specifics of the ads except to say, Mr. Speaker, let me just be clear, that those ads point people to a website, Mr. Speaker. They all point people to a website that gives the information and I know the leader of the third party understands that you can't put all the information in one ad, but Mr. Speaker, every one of those ads either gives some explicit information or points people to a website where they can get the information they need, whether it's about a support programme on lower electricity prices or whether it's about how to access free tuition, Mr. Speaker, or in the case of the ohip plus, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that people know that starting in January children from 0 to their 25th birthday will have access to pre free description medication. If they don't know that, Mr. Speaker, they won't know all they need is to go through a pharmacy with their health card and get their prescription filled.

>> Andrea Horwath: Internal documents confirm that the reason the Premier wanted this ad campaign was to "Combat negative media coverage of rising electricity bills." That was the purpose of the ads. That was the reason for the particular ad, Speaker. So can the Premier tell us how combating negative media coverage for the Liberal party will help Ontario families pay their soaring hydro bills?

>> Premier Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have been very clear that we recognize that electricity rises were going up too fast and too far. We have made billions of dollars of investments in the electricity system, Mr. Speaker, and we recognize that what we were already doing, we had made changes, we had renegotiated the Samsung agreement, Mr. Speaker, taken billions of dollars out of the the system, but still there was more than needed to be done, and so, Mr. Speaker, we made changes, we put new programmes in place

like the O.E.S.C. Mr. Speaker, 25% reduction off people's bills, we put programmes in place for businesses, Mr. Speaker, changed the parameters around the I.C.I. Programme, which was originally Mr. Larger businesses and was then redesigned to accommodate smaller businesses, so Mr. Speaker, those pieces of information are available. People need to know what their government's doing, Mr. Speaker, though need to know how they can benefit. That's what the tying is about.

MPP Horwath to Premier (Thibeault) Re: Hydro Advertising

>> Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker, my next question is also for the Premier. Yesterday the president of treasury board had a different explanation for why you the Liberal government thought it was these to spend \$5.5 million on these partisan ads. She said it was because people find their hydro bills quite confusing. Maybe the Minister should spend more time actually speaking to Ontarians, because no one that I've talked to is having any trouble understanding their bill. People are worried because their bills are too high, Speaker. That's the problem people have with their electricity bill. When will this Premier stop spending money on partisan ads and actually do something -- Keep up with their sky-high hydro bills.

>> Premier Wynne: So Mr. Speaker, I don't know if this will come as a surprise to the leader of the third party but there are a number of things that government has to do at the same time. So Mr. Speaker, yes, we have reduced electricity bills by an average of 25%, Mr. Speaker, for all the reasons that I outlined earlier. We know that there were concerns, we knew that people were struggling with their bills, and Mr. Speaker, we have made changes but it wasn't enough, and we have made further changes. Mr. Speaker, on top of that, I believe, and I have looked at many electricity bills from around the province as has the Minister of energy and a number of our Colleague, Mr. Speaker, and they're all different. They are could be fusing, some of them are less confusing than other, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Speaker, I think that it is responsible that we would look at a way of simplifying those bills. But that's not the only thing that we're doing -- Lower people's electricity bills so they can cope with those on a monthly basis Mr. Speaker.

>> Andrea Horwath: Mr. Speaker, the people of Ontario want a government that will actually lower their electricity bills. Not spend millions and millions of public dollars on partisan ads talking about their \$40 million boiling scheme that the financial accountability officer says is going to cause the electricity rates in this province to jump even higher! When will this government unveil the ad campaign to help Ontarians budget for the huge rate hikes that are coming down the road pretty quickly as the F.A.O. Has warned about?

>> Premier Wynne: Speak, the people of Ontario have a government that has actually lowered their electricity price, Speaker. People are now. -- Seeing a 25% reduction, Mr. Speaker, and in those rural and northern communities that we were just talking about in the House, Mr. Speaker, people have seen up to a 40% to 50% reduction, because on top of the electricity bill, the distribution cost was very, very high in many of those more remote communities, Mr. Speaker. And that has been reduced. That is the work that we have done, we have talked about consumer, and experts all over this province, Mr. Speaker. We have made knows reductions and well--made those reductions and we will continue to work to find ways to support people -- Businesses can pay their electricity bills but people across this proves have seen an average of 25% reduction this summer, Mr. Speaker.

>> Andrea Horwath: Do the people of Ontario have a government that increased hydro rates by 300% and sold off Hydro One to their friends?! The Minister of energy, Speaker, the Minister of energy, he said he thinks these ads are necessary because they promote a programme to help people pay for their soaring bills. That's incorrect, Speaker. The Minister thinks these ads are necessary because the people of Ontario don't understand their hydro bills. That's incorrect, Speaker. These ads were designed with the express purpose of countering bad media coverage for the Liberal party. Will the Premier admit that this ad campaign is designed to benefit her party and commit right now to stop spending money from the public purse on partisan ads that help the Liberal party!

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The leader of the third party has it completely wrong, Mr. Speaker. The only people that are benefitting from these ads, Mr. Speaker, are the people of Ontario, learning about the 25% reduction that each and every one of them are getting, Mr. Speaker, along with the website. If they actually watch the ads, Mr. Speaker, rather than just complain about them, but if they watch the ads and look what's in the ads, Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the programmes and we are talking about how to find out more information about how reducing rates even more, if you need more help, Mr. Speaker. And that help is included with the O.E.S.P. Programme. And just this month, Mr. Speaker, another 51,100 people have signed up that. Is important, Mr. Speaker, now we have over 232,000 people receiving the benefits they need. And you know what, Mr. Speaker ? They're getting this benefit, despite the opposition, despite the rhetoric that's coming, Mr. Speaker, they're actually receiving help. This government will continue to put programmes in place and let the people of Ontario know that these programmes are there to help them, Mr. Speaker.

MPP McNaughton to Minister Duguid (Leal) Re: Small Businesses

>> MPP Monte McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Premier. Small businesses are the back bones of our communities, and yet Liberals do as they always do, attack them. Right now the federal Liberals are pushing forward tax changes that would leave some in Ontario paying a tax rate of 73%. This push is despite 94% of small business owners saying the Trudeau government's tax changes will hurt Canadian businesses and their families. These tax changes could shutter stores along main streets across the province of Ontario. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier help put an end to these dangerous Liberal tax hikes?

>> Minister Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, the last time I checked we're at queens park and we're not in the parliament buildings in Ottawa. But that's a question certainly he can ask his Conservative Colleagues in Ottawa to ask. What I'll respond is to say this government is working tirelessly on behalf of small business people across this province. Just yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we tabled a bill that entirely targets cutting back on red tape for small businesses. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it's not just the bill it comes with a package that's the most ambitious package the province has embarked on in en whyrations Mr. Speaker to, help reduce the costs of doing business in in the province of Ontario and open up our province to working better and helping to make it easier for small businesses to function. Mr. Speaker, I will in all likelihood -- Refer to the champion for small business to the Minister responsible for small buzz but I look forward the member's supplementary.

>> MPP McNaughton: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. Chief executive and general manager of the chamber of commerce summed it up nicely "Dear Canadian businesses, thanks, but we no longer need you." Speaker, Liberals are painting hard working small businesses as tax cheats and told them they're sitting in their dated communities eating cake. It's simply not the case. These changes will hurt our Neighbours, friends, family farms, the stores we visit every day in our communities. We must fight for Ontario small business. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier denounce these tax ibes and will she stand up for Ontario small businesses?

>> Minister Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his supplementary question. Certainly I've been on the road. I've had the opportunity to meet with Chambers of commerce right across the province. I've had the opportunity to do mutiple small business tours across the province and had an opportunity to hear their comments and concerns can. But let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, our government has one goal in common. We're going to grow small business in the province of Ontario to make them prosperous to make the jobs that Ontarians want.

MPP Sattler to Minister Hunter Re: Air Conditioning in Schools

>> MPP Peggy Sattler: Thank thank you, Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Today for the fifth straight day in a row, a heat warning was issued for southern Ontario which means an elevated risk of heat illness especially for children. In schools without air conditioning, students and education workers have been sweltering in classrooms hotter than 30°, close to 40° with the humidex. Students are developing heat rashes and parents are keeping their kids home, not just to keep them comfortable but to keep them safe. Teachers report that children are unable to concentrate. They're learning -- their learning compromised. Education workers struggle in the face of these unbearable conditions much does the Premier think that 30° classrooms are acceptable teaching and learning environments for Ontario's students and education workers?

>> Minister Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker, and I want to thank the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, I know that when there is an unusually hot day like yesterday and today that it is, it's uncomfortable in some classrooms. And Mr. Speaker, that's exactly why we are investing in our schools. We have put \$1.4 billion for repairs and renewal of our schools to improve the learning environment for all students. And these investments, Mr. Speaker, are really left up to our local school boards who have the flexibility to prioritize their needs. So they have the flexibility, Mr. Speaker, to add air conditioning. I know that there are some school boards that are making that a priority, adding areas in the school that can be commonly used as cooling areas, like the gym or the library, Mr. Speaker. But these decisions are being made by our local schools -- For the best interests of our students.

>> MPP Sattler: Thank you, Speaker. The Premier knows that school facility budget are barely enough to maintain the current state of disrepair in Ontario's schools, much less fix the accumulated \$15 billion backlog. This is not just an issue during heat alert, the repair backlog increases the likelihood of broken boilers in the dead of winter, forcing children to wear winter coats in the classroom just to stay warm. Speaker, years of neglect under both the Liberals and the Conservatives have brought our schools to a tipping point. Heatwaves are becoming hotter and more frequent. We need a concrete plan to address extreme classroom temperatures and create safe working and learning environments for students and education workers. Will the Premier commit today to implementing such a plan?

>> Minister Hunter: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are prioritizing and implementing a plan to continue to invest in our schools, and that includes building brand new schools, Mr. Speaker. We've actually built 760 new schools across this province, done extensive renovations, and additions to over 860 schools, Mr. Speaker, and we are continuing to do so. And for the understanding that we have to continue to have upgrades and renewals to our schools is absolutely there. But Mr. Speaker, when it comes to our local decision-making and flexibility, we know that our school principals, our teachers, have that understanding of the needs within their classrooms and they are able to change where the classroom is happening. They can move students outside. I've visited schools Mr. Speaker where they have done so? And we want to have our local school boards making these local decisions, Mr. Speaker, and the educators as well.

MPP Hoggarth to Minister Naidoo-Harris Re: Child Care Options

>> MPP Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for early years and child care. Minister, I'm proud that our government self-committing to ensuring families have access to quality and afford. In my riding of Barrie, I have a lot of working families who are looking for care when they need it the most, before and after work. I have heard from families that there just aren't enough child care options that fit their schedules. I know that the families of my students at Terry Fox school in Barrie are very

appreciative for the great care their children receive before and after school, but more and more families need the peace of mind that this kind of care gives. I want to ensure we're providing child care options for the other families. Can the Minister responsible for early years and child care tell us what the government is doing to make sure families' needs are properly met.

>> Minister Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank you to the member from Barrie for this important question. I know the member has worked hard to address this issue for local families, and Mr. Speaker, we know the work day doesn't begin and end for many families with the ring of a school bell. Families today lead fast-paced, demanding lives and we understand the vital role that before and after school plays in life with parents and children. That is why our government committed to ensuring school boards now offer before and after school care for six to 12-year-olds, a commitment we made to families in 2014. So as of September this year, whether it's sufficient demand, families can now expect before and after school programmes in their local schools. I think it's fantastic. We're making it easier for families to head off to work and not worry about where their kids are before and after school. It's a key step that we're giving families the flexibility they're looking for and the support they need.

>> MPP Hoggarth: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for that answer. It is encouraging to know in the government is working to address the needs of Ontario families. Can the Minister tell us more about how families can access these programmes and where they can find them?

>> Minister Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker I'm pleased to answer the member's question. Just last week I was at our lady of lord's catholic school in Toronto. It is one of the many great schools in Ontario that is offering before and after school care for families and I was able to share the programme we've made in our commitment to programmes, Speaker I am pleased to tell the House today, 83% of schools in Ontario are now offering before and after school programmes for four to 12-year-olds. Just think about that. This step is making life easier for thousands of families across the province and since the last full year we have seen an increase of 16,000 more licensed spaces for four to 12-year-olds. 16,000 more children now have access to the quality care they need when they need it. And parents can feel at ease heading to work, knowing they have child care options, because when our children succeed, Speaker, we all succeed.

MPP Barrett (Thompson) to Premier (Leah) Re: Agricultural Sector Support

>> MPP Toby Barrett: Premier, for many years farm families have been encouraged by the Ontario government to sharpen their pencil, run their operation more like a business, and if warranted, incorporate. As farmers, we were told think about the next generation, plan for the continuity of the farm, within the family. Farmers were told to do succession planning and pack planning by incorporating. Many farmers took the advice of your government, and will now be punished by a punitive pack measure from your federal president. Premier, have you challenged this tax grab on farm corporations with the Prime Minister? Why will you not join us in fighting these tax hikes so the coming generation of young farmers can afford to buy their parents' farms.

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, this is again perhaps a question Andrew Scheer would like to be asking in the House of commons, Mr. Speaker. You know, I think an effective opposition in Ottawa might actually be asking questions and wouldn't be -- If the opposition in Ottawa might want to be asking this question as opposed to asking a member in a provincial legislature to ask the question, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Minister of agriculture food and Royal affairs is going to want to talk about all the things that we are doing support farmers, Mr. Speaker but I would just make one comment that in the recent conversations about NAFTA, Mr. Speaker, we have been extremely clear, extremely clear that in Ontario we are supportive of our agriculture sector, we will continue to support supply and management, Mr. Speaker and we will do in in the face of any incursions that the Americans might want to make on that, Mr. Speaker. We believe in our

farm sector –

>> MPP Lisa Thompson: Thank you very much, Speaker. Again, back to the Premier, last week at the international pine match the Premier praised Ontario's agri-food sector saying "Farming in Ontario is a critical part of our economy. It's a \$37 billion industry that translates into more than 700,000 jobs and that number is growing. It's understandmental to who we are as Ontarians. Speaker, I couldn't agree more. But I have to ask, Speaker, so why then is the Premier choosing to do nothing for this sector? The Liberal Premier nova Scotia is standing up for farmers so why down the the Premier of Ontario stand up to the federal government on behalf of Ontario farmers?! This Premier has imposed a flood of new costs on farmers and now the federal government is about to attack their farmers -- With even more taxes. Speaker will the Premier stand up for Ontario farmers, a group she calls critical to our economy and demands, just like the –

>> Minister Jeff Leal: Thank you, Minister, appreciate the question, the supplementary from the member from Huron Bruins I can say we have been in contact with Lawrence mccally, the federal Minister of agriculture and agri-food to express our concerns, particularly when it comes to sucks session family farms for the province of Ontario but Mr. Speaker is, I would to remind everybody when this government brought forward an initiative to fund a \$100 million risk mcment programme, the government of Ontario were funding 40% of the programme, they -- To bring in the federal programme, and they're all supporting maxime Bernier who wanted to get rid of supply management for Ontario farmers!

MPP Gates to Minister Duguid (Leal) Re: Fort Erie Racetrack

>> MPP Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Premier, months ago I explained to you in this House that woodbine entertainment had implemented a stabling policy that was designed to kill the fort Erie racetrack and the thousands of jobs that go with it. The attack on the racetrack began with 300 jobs. Being saluted from the racing alliance, woodbine entertainment expanded to run B class forces in a direct assault on fort Erie to fold the off track betting revenue in fort Erie. Premier you committed to keeping racetracks open in Ontario, including rural Ontario tracks like fort Erie, it's been four months since you made that commitment. Time has run out. Will you intervene to save the fort Erie racetrack and the thousands much jobs that depend on it?

>> Minister Brad Duguid: Well, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. We're absolutely committed to the long-term sustainability of the horse racing industry in this province. That's why our horse racing partnership planned to invest \$100 million a year in they very important industry but it's also why even though government doesn't dictate to businesses with regards to their business decision, we did intervene, Mr. Speaker, on that particular matter and improve the constructive discussions with both fort early, woodbine, woodbine increased their stabling policy. Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister for agriculture and foods probably have more to say about that, but Mr. Speaker, this Minister is an unbridled champion of the horse racing industry, and I know, Mr. Speaker, that he's absolutely covering at the bit to get into this on the supplementary so I'll probably pass the supplementary to him, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Gates: My question is down to the Premier. You're right when you talk about businesses, but when you're giving woodbine \$6 million in purse money -- \$62 million in purse money you have a say, when they're attacking the fort Erie racetrack you have an obligation to fix it you sat there and told me you were committed to the survive valve the racetracks. Our racetrack has been operating for 10 years with. Your inaction to stop woodbine entertainment to create a monopoly in terms of racing in Ontario will lead to thuses of job losses in niagara. Over the course confident the last months, myself, numerous

stakeholders have met with the Minister of finance, have met with the Minister of agriculture, fort Erie racing, the mayor, S.E.I.U. And the community have done all the right things. Premier, you need to protect the fort Erie racetrack and we need to be a permanent member of the racing alliance. Will you act on your commitment and ensure that the fort Erie racetrack remains open and the thousands of jobs are protected? Thank you.

>> Minister Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Niagara Falls for his supplementary. We did take action. When we became aware that woodbine had changed its statement policy, we convened at meetings. The member from Niagara Falls was part of it the member from St. Catharines was part of, the Minister of finance was part of it, I was part of it, Ontario racing was part of, the Ontario Lottery Corporation. We did make a shake to assist fort Erie. We do know that this government's committed to 15 tracks, stains ability long-term here in the province of Ontario. Two thoroughbred tracks a quarter horse track and 124 standardbred tracks. We brought in a change. We understand that the change needs to be looked at again, and it's going to be our opportunity when the season finishes at fort Erie on October the 17th. We're asking Ontario racing -- To take a look at this to make sure new policy is put in place for 2018.

MPP Martins to Minister Del Duca Re: Transit Investments

>> MPP Cristina Martins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of transportation. Speaker when I'm talking to members of my community much Davenport, matters regarding transit and transportation always end up being some of the most pressing topics of conversation, and whether that conversation is about creating more bike-friendly communities or improved access to the go network, residents in Davenport expect government to listen, and to make critical investments that will improve their daily lives. However I'm aware that last week the member interest Kitchener-conestoga, also the Conservative transportation critic spoke to some members of my committee about the party opposite's plan or lack thereof. Speaker would the Minister please provide more information on our government's plan to build transit while also listening to the needs of local communities, and more importantly, my community of Davenport?

>> Minister Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Speaker. First I want to begin by thanking the MPP from catch for the for her question, also for her unparalleled am work for her community. Speaker, this August we issued a request for qualifications for grade separation at the Davenport diamond which will allow us to deliver enhanced go service to more communities around the region, and because of the member from Davenport's advocacy on behalf of her community, this project also includes enhancements to the public realm, including artwork and new pedestrian and cyclist routes. Speak, let me be clearer. Metrolinx has committed to fully funding the public realm enhancements that were depicted in the initial design for both the overpass and the sparks, Speaker and I want to say specificalily here in this legislature, that's happening because the MPP from Davenport fought long and hard and successfully to make sure that we got it right, Speaker. We also know that noise I another key concern -- For the community, that's why prior to electrification of the Barrie corridor metrolinx is committed to capping the number of trains at 36 per day, Speaker and post electrification we're looking at additional further measures to reduce disruption in the community.

>> MPP Martins: Thank you, Speaker and I want to thank the Minister foris his answer. I know that members of my community are paying close attention, very close attention how this plan moves forward and how we continue to engage with the community. I'm very proud of the work of the countless advocates in Davenport, including those part the community advisory committee and those who have attended consultations over the last number of years. Commute consultations and feed back have made and continue to make this project stronger. They made these public realm enhancements possible and these enhancements are in addition to the proposed new Bloor Davenport go station. Speaker, last week when

the member from Kitchener-conestoga was in my riding, he spoke about a number of projects beyond the Davenport diamond, yet he didn't commit moving forward on anything. Unlike the party opposite, I know our government is making progress -- Would the Minister please update on what else our government is doing to improve connections and making commuting more convenient for residents in Davenport?

>> Minister Del Duca: Sakers thanks very much and thank the member for her follow-up question. There is a lot of exciting progress taking place around transit and transportation in Davenport. For example, Speaker, we are moving forward with the Eglinton crosstown lrt, a \$5.3 billion investment that is being made by our government and Speaker, on that project, this summer we officially installed the first piece of track on the line, bringing us one step closer to its completion by 2021. Also this summer, Speaker, we announced the completion of the widening of the Dufferin street bridge. As part of this project, we are partnering with Toronto to extend the west Toronto rail pass multi-use trail for pedestrians and cyclist, and most recently, week lser, metrolinx announced we are moving forward on a critical pedestrian link to connect the Bloor, union, Pearson and go stations with the Dundas west subway station which is critically important for commuters in the west end of Toronto, Speaker. Our government is absolutely committed to making the necessary investments in communities across the province, including, of course, in Davenport, and again, Speaker, I want to thank the member from Davenport for her exceptional work.

MPP Wilson to Minister Hoskins Re: Hospital Funding

>> MPP Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker my question is for the Minister of health. As you know on June 1st my private members resolution was debated and received support from all three parties in this legislature. The resolution asks the government to immediately approve the planning grants requested by both the Collingwood general marine hospital and Stevenson memorial hospital in Alliston, thereby allowing both hospitals to proceed with stage two of-needed redevelopment. Well, Minister, that was almost four months ago, and we've heard nothing since. The only thing the hospitals need is your approval and that of your government. Minister, will your government support my resolution? Will you follow through with this commitment and approve planning grants for these projects?

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I do appreciate the question from the member opposite. The member, of course, knows that for some time my ministry the Linh, local hospital and the community have been working together on their planned investment, the efforts that they're making to improve the quality of health services even further in Collingwood and the surrounding area, but the member also knows that there's a -- there's a very deliberate and specific process that we work with, whether it's a hospital in Collingwood or anywhere in this province when we look at new investments, and we do that very enthusiastically and closely with local communities to ensure that we get it right. It's part of an investment, an unprecedented investment in hospital infrastructure which now, over the next ten years amounts to \$20 billion that we're investing -- In hospital expansion and improvements but this is a project we've been looking at together and we'll continue to make sure that we're making the right steps forward.

>> MPP Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the Minister. Minister, you know that both hospital, Alliston and Collingwood are spending experts' front line -- patients front is line money. Both have spent over \$1.2 million of their operating budget to do the planning so far. We've been encouraged by the lhin in both case, by the ministry and by yourself, and we appreciate that, but we're in a catch-22 now. If you don't want to approve these projects, just tell us and we'll stop planning for a while but we'd like the opportunity to move forward, pay the hospitals back for the patient money they've spent, allow them to move forward. You don't have to approve the hundreds of millions of these things will eventually cost over 25 or 30 years, just let them move to the next couple of stages. We'll have an election by the time they get to the next stage, they'll have paid back their money, you'll have done your part and we'll see where we go from there but they need the opportunity to prove -- To you and the Premier and your Colleagues in the government that they deserve to have these hospitals. All the other hospitals in Simcoe county, Grey and Dufferin have been done in our time. These two have had nothing done to them?

>> Minister Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And we have, I think it's now 35 infrastructure projects involving hospitals that are either underway in the construction phase or in various phases of planning, Mr. Speaker, that is part of that capital investment that I referenced earlier. 35 or even more hospital infrastructure projects, and we announced of course in the recent budget further expansions and new builds, like trillium hospital in mississauga, Windsor and niagara, Mr. Speaker, that these are critically important investments, and they're no more important, Mr. Speaker, than the hospitals such as the ones in Alliston and Collingwood, but we are following that process, and I have a very capable, hard working division within my ministry that does solely that, working with the Ihin, working with the local community. But I want to end Mr. Speaker -- By saying I deeply appreciate the member's advocacy for these two hospitals and I hope we'll continue to work together to advance those.

MPP Horwath to Minister Hoskins Re: Wettlauffer Inquiry

>> Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Last summer a senior in Ottawa was associated in his long ter care home. Last week city officials responsible for long-term care in Ottawa went before the city council to talk about what they need to make homes in the region safer. The overwhelming opinion from city staff and councillors was that long-term care staff are doing the best they can with what they're given, but they're not given enough. When will the Premier start taking the crisis in long-term care seriously, and expand the Wettlaufer inquiry to look at systemic issues like funding levels?

>> Minister Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, we, I and this government and the Premier, we take very, very seriously the safety and security and well being of anyone, freedom fantly but not exclusively, anyone residing in our long-term care homes in this province. And Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say as a result of the infection regime that this government brought in in 2014, we're seeing the effect of those annual inspections. 100% of long-term care homes are inspected and what we've seen is since 2004, the average number of compliance orders issued during an annual down by more than 50%. So as a result of this increased scrutiny, we're seeing the impact in our homes and I want to reassure -- It's not a perfect system, there are many examples where we need to improve and I agree with the member opposite on that but we have to be cognizant improvements are taking place.

[Transcription did not pick up the rest of the question]

MPP Vernile to Minister Chiarelli Re: Infrastructure Projects

>>MPP Daiene Vernile: [Transcription did not pick up beginning of MPP Vernile's question] Against the opposition's dismal track record?

>> Minister Bob Chiarelli: Thank you, Speaker. Thanks for the member in question. Last week the member for Calgary was questioning the infrastructure, Speaker, but neither the NDP nor PCs took infrastructure seriously when they were in office. In 2001 and 2002, the PC's spent only 1.9 billion for Ontario's infrastructure needs governments have been averaging over \$11 billion per year and their plan is building better lives for the people in Ontario by delivering \$300 million annually to smaller communities including over \$53 million to P.C. Ridings, Speaker. We are unvesting over \$23 billion in transit, contributing \$270 million to nearly 1400 water andd wastewater projects. We committed \$100 million to natural gas, \$200 million to broadband expansion. Speaker, the opposition needs to a fact check.

>> MPP Vernile: Thank you, Speaker and my thanks to the Minister for his answer. It's important for every member of House and every constituent that we represent to have the facts as we move forward with our \$19.0 billion plan to build better lives in Ontario. That's because infrastructure is about much more than just buildings and construction. It's about growing the economy and enhancing quality of life, and the evidence tells a very compelling story about our investments and how they're paying off. Just yesterday, the construction industry representatives that I met with from my region told me that this past year has been the best year ever for them their 30 years of being in this and they thanked me. Ontarians unemployment rate is the lowest it's been in 16 years and we've added over 750,000 new jobs since the height of the recent recession. WOU the Minister please address concerns about so-called underspending and sharing the facts?

>> Minister Chiarelli: Thank you again for the question, Speaker. A number of projects were awaiting approval, federal authorities, but Mr. Speaker, any suggestion we're investing in infrastructure is simply of not accurate. Here are some facts for the members. Facts, we are making the largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history, an unprecedented \$109 billion over three years. In fact, communities in Dufferin-Caledon are receiving nearly \$8 million in funding to the Ontario community infrastructure fund and \$2.7 million -- Over \$10 million. Fact, the leader of the opposition was in this House last week to criticize us for underfunding but he failed to mention that he and his entire caucus voted against their budget, which included an additional \$30 billion -- For critical infrastructure. Speaker, it is absurd that the opposition is criticizing us for supposedly not spending enough. When they voted against spending it?

MPP Yurek to Minister Leal Re: Small Businesses

>> MPP Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker, my question is for the Premier. After hearing from small business owners from around the province, it's clear that the Liberals' tax hikes will hurt them and our economy over all. Despite hearing from Premier Brian Pallister, Premier Stephen McNeil and B.C.'s Minister of Finance, Carole James, all expressing their concerns that these changes will hurt their communities, Ontarians have yet to hear a word from our Premiers for this government. As the Premier knows, Mr. Speaker, over a decade ago the government of Ontario allowed doctors incorporate in lieu of fee increases. Today 70% of doctors have done just that and incorporated and operate small businesses in our province. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier stand with the provincial counterpart in Manitoba, Nova Scotia and British Columbia? Will she help stop these Liberal tax hikes and stand up for small business owners? Just say no. Just say no!

>> Minister Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for the question. All Ontarians can rest assured that the Premier of Ontario stands for the Premier of Ontario and we do note that she's been engaged with the federal finance Minister, the Prime Minister and others with regard to those tax changes. I think the member should be writing some questions for the leader of the opposition in Ottawa, Mr. Scheer, doubts that his talent's so bad in Ottawa he can't get anybody write the question. I suggest the many ask the question in Ottawa and have them answer it.