

CO Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Wednesday, May 10, 2017

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Please see attached Cabinet Office's Transcript of Provincial Question Period for Wednesday, May 5, 2017.

MCI did not receive a question of interest.

MIT did not receive a question of interest.

MSA received a question of interest.

NDP MPP Cindy Forster asked about hydro costs for Niagara region seniors' centre in the light of recent shares sales of Hydro One. Min. Thibeault mentioned that certain Hydro One customers would see significant rate reductions. As well, for seniors he mentioned that the government had enhanced the Ontario electricity support program.

Opposition topics were diverse. The Progressive Conservatives asked questions about the probation system, support for nurses and education about anti-Semitism, among others. The New Democrats asked about developmental disability supports, hospital wait times and hydro rates, as well as other topics.

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: Electronic Media
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Transcript of Provincial Question Period
41st Parliament, 2nd Session
Wednesday, May 10, 2017

The following is a partially edited transcript of Question Period.

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MPP Brown to Wynne Re: Probation System

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Part two of global TV's Carolyn Jarvis's exposé on Ontario's system was just as disturbing and shocking as the first part. I want to be very clear. The member from Ottawa Centre LED the ministry of community safety and correctional services for two years. He is currently the top legal officer in the province. He can pass the buck to someone who's been on the job less than five months or he can own up to the systemic failure in a system that he oversaw for two years failure that was outlined in the scathing auditor general's report and a follow-up report that showed he didn't solve the disaster in our probation system. This is his mess. He should take responsibility. So, Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Will you fire your Attorney General ?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: No, Mr. Speaker, I will not do that, and obviously there are situations that are of great concern to all of us, Mr. Speaker, and we -- we are working to deal with those, Mr. Speaker, but, you know, in partnership with our police services and justice partners, we've made Ontario one of the safest jurisdictions in north America, Mr. Speaker, and that is a testament to the work of our police services, Mr. Speaker. It is a testament to the work of our parole officers, our probation officers, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that we have people working in this province who have made this one of the safest jurisdictions in Canada, Mr. Speaker, and Ontario's also home to six of the ten safest census metropolitan areas in the country, Mr. Speaker. I am very proud of the work that is done by people who keep our communities safe, Mr. Speaker. Are there situations, are there disturbing situations that need to be dealt with? Absolutely.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier. I'm sorry. That's not good enough, Mr. Speaker. The reality is our probation officers are saying that our communities aren't safe because this government has not taken this seriously. Let me give another example. Look at the story from yesterday's report. Kyle MacLachlan was convicted of child luring in 2013. He was sentenced to 18 months in jail, three years of probation. But just two years later he committed the same crime. This is child luring. This is -- according to sources, not once did a probation or police officer check in on him in the community to make sure he was following the rules of his release. Our probation officers are saying it's a major risk to community safety here. Can you imagine that someone who's convicted of child luring and is out on probation and there's no one checking up on him? It's ridiculous. It's offensive. And yesterday this government asked why I asked this question. I want them to take it seriously. I want the Premier to -- And will the Premier do the right thing and fire her Attorney General?

>> Premier Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me just say off the top that our Attorney General is one of the strongest men with integrity in this province, Mr. Speaker. He works hard. He works tirelessly for his constituency and for the people of Ontario. Mr. Speaker, our Attorney General is in politics because he believes in social justice. He believes that we can make Ontario better and he also believes, Mr. Speaker, that the rule of law is what we need to follow. He also believes, Mr. Speaker, that government has a role to play in putting the protections in place for families across the province. He does not believe, Mr. Speaker, he does not believe that filling our jails, Mr. Speaker, that vilifying and criminalizing every action of young people, people in our province, Mr. Speaker, that that is the way to go. We need to transform our system. He is leading that transformation along with our Minister of community safety and correctional services, Mr. Speaker. And I understand, I understand that it is easier for the leader of the opposition --

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier. I just gave you an example, an example where someone was convicted of child luring and went out and committed the same offence, and your response was to praise your Attorney General for the great job he's doing. They have dropped the ball. They have failed the test of leadership. Our communities are not safe because they've neglected to make sure there are not loopholes. Let me give you an example of what they said yesterday. You know the Attorney General said it's not him. It's another Minister and that Minister said -- I wish there was never an area we need to improve but it does happen. Happens? Can you believe that's the response? It does happen? Our communities are at risk and it's ok. It does happen. I want him to clean up the mess. I want them to clean up the loopholes and I'm going to ask the Premier again. We have dangerous criminals who aren't being checked up on and someone's got to be accountable. This exposé was shocking. So, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. Knowing that our communities are at risk, will you hold someone accountable for this incredible negligence and incompetence?

>> Premier Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I never said that there weren't disturbing situations. In fact I led my answer with saying that there are disturbing situations. Of course there's more that we can do, Mr. Speaker. I take this very seriously, as does the Attorney General, as does the Minister of community safety and correctional services. But, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we have one of the safest jurisdictions in North America. The fact is that we are hiring more officers, Mr. Speaker. We are putting more resources in place and, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work to keep our province one of the safest if not the safest in North America, Mr. Speaker. But what I will not do is buy into rhetoric that vilifies one person, Mr. Speaker, as though somehow that is the solution to systemic issues. And I would ask the leader of the opposition to look at his record as a member of the Harper government, Mr. Speaker. Talked about
MPP Brown to Premier (Flynn) Re: Nursing Support

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. I've had the privilege of meeting hundreds of nurses this week as we celebrate nurses week in Ontario. They shared with me stories, countless stories of how they want a government that supports and defends our province's nurses, not a government that attacks the health care system. Just look at the last two years. This government has fired 1,600 nurses. 1,600 nurses. Mr. Speaker, how does the Premier reconcile the fact, during this nurses week, that her government has fired 1,600 nurses?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, you know I want to just say to all of the nurses in the province that we value their work, Mr. Speaker. We understand how critical that work is to families across the province. Mr. Speaker, I'm about to have a nurse in my own family. My youngest daughter's going to graduate from nursing this June, Mr. Speaker. And I am more than proud. I am more than proud that she has chosen that career, Mr. Speaker. So we will continue to invest in the health care personnel in this province, Mr. Speaker. We've made a huge investment in our budget, a \$7 billion boost to the health care system, Mr. Speaker, that will mean that there will be more personnel, that hospitals will be able to deal with the challenges that they have, Mr. Speaker, including hiring more health care personnel front line. Mr. Speaker, we have hired more nurses. We will continue to hire more nurses. We've also listened to nurses when they've talked to us about their scope of practice. We've increased their scope of practice, and that makes the health care system much better, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier, not only did they fire 1,600 nurses in the last two years. They continue to fire nurses despite the fact the report -- and this is shocking -- a report, Mr. Speaker, from the Canadian institute for health information. The government will entrust cihi, confirmed a dangerous reality about health care services first identified by R.N.A.O.. And what this cihi report said Ontario's r.n.-to-population ratio is now the worst in Canada. So no matter what spin the Premier gives, because of the firing of nurses, we have the worst, the absolute worst r.n.-to-population ratio in Canada. And so, Mr. Speaker, can the Premier please tell us, can she please reconcile to us why here, during nurses week -- Here in Ontario she is proud of the fact that her government has overseen Ontario having the lowest r.n.-to-population ratio in Canada?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the opposition is assiduously only talking about R.N.S. He is not talking about nurse practitioners, Mr. Speaker. He is not talking about R.P. N.s, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that since 2003, more than 28,949 nurses -- Ontario, Mr. Speaker. In this province, Mr. Speaker. In 2016, the number of nurses employed in nursing in Ontario increased for the twelfth consecutive year. Every single year, Mr. Speaker, more nurses have been hired. And, Mr. Speaker, that was necessary because when this government came into office under my predecessor, there had been nurses slashed. There had been nurses demeaned across this province and there was a huge gap. That's why there are 28,900 more nurses working in Ontario than there were when we came into office and every year, Mr. Speaker, more nurses are hired. And we will continue on that track, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier. And since I can't get an answer on the nurse firings -- To nursing week. I was visiting the Vanier centre for women, the correctional institute, and I also visited oncology at sickkids. There was one common thing that was raised to me from the R.N.S. They said they couldn't believe the government's oversight they were not included in the PTSD legislation. Listen, these nurses have to see things we never want to see. They are affected. And the government's been saying they're going to look at it. Maybe. Maybe down the road. I'm telling you, Mr. Speaker, we need nurses to be included in the PTSD legislature. It's the right thing to do. No more delays. Can today, can we get a commitment and a promise from the Premier that no longer will there be this oversight? 8,000 nurses have signed the petition pleading with the government to include them in the PTSD legislation. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier give us that assurance today and do the right thing?

>> Minister Kevin Flynn: Speaker, thank you very much to the leader of the opposition for that question. I would ask where the leader of the opposition was a year ago when we were passing this legislature, Speaker. That was the time to bring it forward when we honoured our first responders, when we honoured our firefighters, our police officers, our corrections officers, our nurses in correction facilities. You sat on your hands. The third party -- Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, we are dealing with all the first responders. Nurses in correctional facilities are covered under PTSD legislation. So you should do your homework. You should do your homework before you ask questions like this.

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

>> MPP Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. To the Premier. Yesterday in a self-congratulatory press conference, Minister of energy touted the Liberal government's shortsighted decision to sell off yet another batch of Hydro One shares. What he neglected to mention, though, was that the further privatization of our hydro system will ensure that hydro bills for everyday Ontario families will continue to climb. Why are the Premier and her Minister of energy so excited that families, who are already struggling, will be left further behind?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the member of the third party understands that building infrastructure in this province is important. He lives in an urban riding, Mr. Speaker. He represents an urban riding that needs those investments, Mr. Speaker. And in fact we continue to make investments in transit, in -- Mr. Speaker, that the net proceeds will be reinvested in new infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. I know he supports investing in infrastructure. So, Mr. Speaker, we made a decision to maximize the value of our assets in order to make those critical new infrastructure investments. We are going to continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you. Again to the Premier. The loss of the province's majority stake in Hydro One will cost Ontarians dearly. People's hydro bills will keep going up. And they will lose out on the services that revenue from Hydro One used to pay for. Our hospitals, schools, long-term care homes are already at a tipping point because of Liberal cuts. The sell-off will make the situation even worse. How can the Premier justify this boondoggle for bay street investors at the expense of the people of Ontario?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again pleased to rise to talk about what we're doing to continue to make rates affordable for all Ontarians across the province, Mr. Speaker. The Ontario fair hydro plan has already reduced rates by 17%. They've seen that by -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'll repeat rates have dropped down as of May 1st down by 17% compared to last year and by July 1st of this year, Mr. Speaker, if passed through the legislation, we will see an additional 8%, bringing that total on average to 25%. But now, Mr. Speaker, the media know. I know the opposition know. The official opposition know rates are set by the O.E.B.. It's too bad that the third party doesn't understand that component.

>> MPP Tabuns: Clearly the Minister doesn't know how energy works in this province. Speaker, the Premier has no mandate to sell off Hydro One. It will hurt everyday families. It will put further strain on our public services. She knows that 80% of Ontarians oppose the sell-off and yet she insists on moving forward. Why is the Premier allowing already wealthy bay street investors to get filthy rich off the backs of ordinary Ontario families?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not just this party that, you know, understands how the electricity system works, Mr. Speaker. We've been working hard with stakeholders throughout the province to come forward with a fair hydro plan that's going to reduce rates by 25%. And I know the opposition the third party, Mr. Speaker, can't understand how the O.E.B. applies the rates. They can go to their website. It's explained there very clearly, Mr. Speaker. But the criticism what's interesting, Mr. Speaker, with their obsession with Hydro One, Mr. Speaker, is even more harsh from Tim Killdack of the "Globe and Mail" calls the belief that ownership of utilities in Ontario affecting rates one of the biggest misconceptions about electricity. Even Brady Yanch, economist of the consumer policy institute and frequent government critic calls the idea of privatization increases rates as a straw man, Mr. Speaker. You know what? When it comes to doing right for the people of Ontario. We're building infrastructure. We're building the hospitals. We're building the schools because we have a plan to build Ontario up. Unlike the opposition parties, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Gelinas to Premier Re: Hospital Wait Times

>> MPP France Gelinas: Monsieur monsieur president. My question is for the Premier. Yesterday Ontarians learned about 87-year-old Rossina Delross. Admitted to the Brampton St. Joseph's hospital, but before she was moved into a hospital room, she spent five long days in the hallway of the E.R. Does the Premier think that a sick elderly woman, like Rossina, should be seen by her doctor in a public hallway of the busiest emergency room in Ontario?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I believe that -- that she and every other patient in

Ontario deserves the very best care, Mr. Speaker. And I -- and I believe that physicians should have the opportunity to see their patients in the best circumstances, Mr. Speaker. We recognize that hospitals need support, that they need an increase of funding, Mr. Speaker, which is exactly why \$500 million in funding was included in our budget, to go directly to hospitals. That means a minimum 2% increase across the board, Mr. Speaker, for every hospital. But across the board it's more than a 3% increase to hospitals' budgets, Mr. Speaker, and that's on top of the \$495 million that was already put on their base last year. Mr. Speaker, so we recognize that there is a need. That's why our budget addresses it.

>> MPP Gelinas: By the time Rossina finally got her hospital room, her doctor told her family that she was severely dehydrated and that her stay in the hallway of the E.R. had made her respiratory condition worse. Rossina never got better. She died at Brampton Civic Hospital. Does the Premier see the connection between her years of frozen hospital budgets, her years of cuts to frontline health care workers, and the heartbreaking story like Rossina's.

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, this is a tragic situation and I'm very sorry to hear about it, Mr. Speaker. What I recognize and what our government and our budget recognizes is that there is a need to put a direct investment in hospital funding, Mr. Speaker, to increase that base, particularly, Mr. Speaker, in high growth areas. And I believe the member of the third party said that this is the Brampton hospital, Mr. Speaker. This is one of the highest growth areas in the province, and so we have recognized, on top of the general injection of funding into hospitals, we recognize that those high growth areas, Mr. Speaker, need an additional amount of support. So, Mr. Speaker, of course there should be support for every patient across the province. That is what we strive for, Mr. Speaker. That's why our budget addresses the challenges that hospitals are facing right now, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Gelinas: Brampton Civic Hospital said it point blank. They are overburdened by the large number of patients coming into their emergency department. Their E.R. sees on average 400 people per day. This is 160% more than what they were built to care for. The vice-president of medical affairs is even blunter. He says they need at least 200 more beds in the short term and 600 in the long term just to keep up with what they have right now. Does the Premier plan to address this crisis in Toronto in the G.T.A. By what's happening at Brampton Civic?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, again I say to the member opposite that we understand that not only does there need to be an increase to the base funding of hospitals, which we have put in place \$500 million on top of the \$495 million that was put in place last year, Mr. Speaker, and we recognize in high growth areas there is a need for building. I was at Trillium Health Centre, Mr. Speaker, announcing that we would be investing in an increase in beds, Mr. Speaker, because we recognize, particularly in the community and the member of the third party acknowledges the G.T.A., where there is high population growth, Mr. Speaker, that we need to make capital investments as well. We are doing that. We recognize the challenge, Mr. Speaker. Exactly why our budget has addressed those issues.

MPP Hillier to MacCharles Re: Car Liens

>> MPP Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Premier, after ten years I thought I'd seen every imaginable government incompetence but that all changed last week. Speaker Maureen, who's a constituent, tried to trade in her car but it turns out that Fred and Pebbles Flintstone have a lien registry against it. Maureen received her used vehicle information package from Service Ontario which showed no liens on the car. However the car dealer would not pay her because the ministry of government and consumer services had registered a lien against her valid VIN number in the names of Fred and Pebbles Flintstone. The documents prove that there are other false liens in place on more vehicles. Speaker, why did the ministry register liens on valid VINs in the names of Fred and Pebbles Flintstone, who live on the yellow brick road. But why did it take nine months to get it fixed?

>> Minister Tracy MacCharles: I thank the member opposite for the question. As he knows, when I -- Heard about this issue yesterday, I said I'd get tot the bottom of it and that's what I've done. So what's happened, Speaker, is that service Ontario was contacted by this individual in March, and the ministry did discharge a lien at that time. I understand she has since successfully sold her car. It appears what happened in this case, Speaker, that testing was done and test liens were entered into the system by a technician, so the human error in relation to these V.I.N.S. They were not in testing performance or not removed immediately and service Ontario of course is reviewing what happened. To my knowledge, there's been no other similar cases. I am committed to making sure that the right protocols are in place going forward.

>> MPP Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. Again to the Premier. Clearly we all knew that this was an act of gross incompetence. As everyone knows it, the flintstones live on rocky road in bed rock, USA. And Fred drive as footmobile not a 2006 Sheff uplander. I had contacted carproof who carries the P.P. S.R. Database. They were informed by this government that Maureen would have to hire a lawyer to expunge these liens. Speaker, how many more mystery machines have had liens placed on them in the names of scooby-doo and the gang and other Saturday morning cartoon personalities? Speaker, I'm glad that the Minister has worked on this and guaranteed to expunge this false inanimated lien against Maureen. But will she guarantee that others affected by these looney tunes shenanigans won't take nine months to get fixed?

>> Minister MacCharles: Well, Speaker, I -- I appreciate the member opposite's sense of humour. I do take the issue very seriously as the Minister of government and consumer services. As I said before, to my knowledge this has not happened before. And I'm making sure that it doesn't happen again. And I understand -- I heard this morning that his constituents -- constituent is very pleased with the information she received from service Ontario. And just for information as well, when a lien is removed, it(generally displays on the system for 60 days and showing it's in discharge. What that means discharge, I want to emphasize, too, does not affect an individual's ability to sell their vehicle. So I thank the member for bringing this to my attention yesterday, and service Ontario will continue to provide information he may need to respond to his constituent. Thank you.

MPP Mantha to Premier Re: Ring of Fire

>> MPP Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Premier this morning. Yesterday the Premier was in Sault Ste. Marie after conveniently forgetting to mention her lack of action on the ring of fire. She was asked by a reporter what was goiúg on with the 1 billion she promised for development. The Premier said -- that billion is available. It's there. Can the Premier tell us exactly where the money is since it didn't appear in her budget this year?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we have committed \$1 billion to building infrastructure in order to open up the ring of fire. What I also said yesterday, because the member of the third party has not taken the whole transcript. What I also said was that we are working with the mittal first nations, Mr. Speaker, . We are determined that this development will be done in conjunction with first nations. I also said that our history in this province and in this country is riddled, it is riddled with bad examples of not working with first nations, Mr. Speaker, of not stewarding the land, of not being a partner, of not sharing the resources and the wealth of this land with first nations, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to do that again. We are going to work in conjunction with first nations. We are going to work to open up those communities, because of course this is about the wealth that's in the ground in the ring of fire. But it's also about the economic development of those communities that circle that very, very treasure that's in the land.

>> MPP Mantha: Still looking for that money in the budget. This is just another example of the Premier making big promises and not following through. She was bragging about her budget would help the north while at the same time there is no money at all for the ring of fire. When will this Premier learn that the people of Ontario see her through her desperate political tactics and start

walking the walk in addition to talking the talk?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I was very clear yesterday and I'm clear today and I know that all of our members have been very clear. That billion dollars has been allocated. It is there, Mr. Speaker. It is there to build the infrastructure, to get -- on that road. Mr. Speaker, on page 73 there's a reference to that money, Mr. Speaker. We have been working with the first nations. We will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker, and when I was in Sault Ste. Marie yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I was actually correcting what had been said by members of the opposition that were information that was in fact not accurate, Mr. Speaker, because that money has not been removed. We are committed to investing in the ring of fire. We're working with the first nations, and I'm sorry if the third party and the opposition don't think that that's a worthwhile endeavour. We know, Mr. Speaker, that if we are actually going to live up to truth and reconciliation in this T country. That province by province, territory by territory, we have to change the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous people.

MPP Hoggarth to Flynn Re: Changing Workplaces Review

>> MPP Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of labour. Speaker, yesterday in the House we heard the Minister respond to the leader of the opposition and refer to the P.C.S' bill 83. Upon reading this bill, I find myself wondering how the opposition can speak about protecting Ontario's workers while bill 83 -- Ok. This -- this seems incredibly -- how could a bill that would abolish card-based certification and disrupt labour relations in the construction industry be supported by others now -- and it now pretends to care about labour issues? This bill comes -- this bill refers to union members as predators and implies that unions are undemocratic. Could the Minister speak to clarify the implications of bill 83?

>> Minister Kevin Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. And thank you to the member for that important question, Speaker. I agree with the member. It was puzzling to me as the Minister of labour. I tried to work with the opposition parties, but some days it's hard to figure them out, Speaker. We've got private member's bill 83 coming forward, Speaker. The policy of this government, Speaker, and the policy of this government for a number of years has been card-based certification and construction. We have that policy, Speaker, because it makes sense. It's an industry that's mobile. Thank you, Speaker. It's an industry that is mobile. It's got projects that are often limited in duration. Our building trades unions, our construction unions work in partnership with incredibly successful Ontario companies. They fought long and hard for this process, and I don't agree with any member of this House that think it is should be taken away. Bill 83 simply is not government policy and it doesn't benefit workers in this province.

>> MPP Hoggarth: Thank you, Minister, for your answer and your passion on this topic. It is clear that this bill would be a step in the wrong direction. Under our labour law it would take us backwards in labour relations in this province in a time when it is imperative to modernize and innovate. Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear more and more about how the world of work is changing. In today's workplace, people are no longer keeping traditional nine-to-five business days or taking weekends off. It is common for Ontarians to be self-employed or have part-time or temporary employment. We need to ensure that we do all that we can to provide support for these changing workplaces. Minister, can you please elaborate on what you are doing to address these changes and challenges that they present?

>> Minister Flynn: Thank you for the supplementary. I'm happy to stand in the House this morning to speak on this very, very important issue. Speaker, we all in this House know that the world of work is changing. We're facing challenges that, you know, they're presenting themselves head-on, Speaker, as those changes take place. We started this very important conversation with the people of Ontario about two years ago. We talked to advocates. We talked to organized labour, businesses, workers about what we wanted our labour and employment laws to look like. And we know that fundamental changes are needed to create that sustainable framework where everybody in Ontario gets to share in the economic success of this province. Because we've got to stay competitive in this

fast-paced global economy but we need to protect workers while we do that, Speaker. We need to give them the protection they need and the protection they deserve. And we want to reward those employers, those excellent employers in the province. They need a level playing field, Speaker. The ones that obey the law, Speaker. I have the final report. I look forward to bring it to the House.

MPP Brown to Premier Re: Anti-Semitism Education

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, -- My question's for the Premier. In the recently launched anti-racism directorate, the Minister addressed the need to stop systemic racism and discrimination against a number of communities -- communities. Yet there is no mention in this plan to combat anti-semitism to help the jewish community. A community that is still one of the most targeted in Canada. Many jewish community groups have come and raised this concern not only to government but with the opposition. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier ensure the jewish community in Ontario will be included in the ongoing work of the anti-racism directorate? And will the Premier ensure that the education on anti-semitism is offered in all educational programs the director will aim to implement?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. It is -- I think it is a solid assumption of I would say everyone in this House, Mr. Speaker, that, as we fight systemic racism, that anti-semitism is absolutely central to that struggle, Mr. Speaker, and we would never step away from that. We will continue to work to make sure that wherever, wherever there is racism, whether it's -- whether it is anti-semitism or whether it is islamophobia or whether it's antiblack racism, Mr. Speaker, that we root that out and that we make sure that our young people, as they go through school. You know, Mr. Speaker, we put in place an equity and inclusive education strategy many years ago to restore equity and anti-racism education within the education system, Mr. Speaker, because it had been removed and we are absolutely committed to doing that across society, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier. And I think it is straightforward that we would all make that assumption. That's why it was surprising that there was this oversight initially. I'm encouraged the Premier is saying they will correct this oversight. The reality is the jewish community continues to be one of the most targeted groups when it comes to hate crimes in Ontario. In the latest Toronto police services report alone, the jewish -- Was the target of 43 of 145 hate crime offences in 2016. Meaning that 30% of the offences were directed towards the jewish community. Similarly, in Hamilton, 21 out of 115 reported hate crimes in the year of 2016 were directed towards the jewish community. These are not isolated incidences and certainly the jewish community is the target of hate. Mr. Speaker, that's why I'm asking the Premier to guarantee, to ensure this legislature the jewish community will -- and to get a commitment. Will make an amendment this oversight will be corrected. Can we get a commitment to an amendment on their legislation --

>> Premier Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, there is a pattern developing. It is very important that every time there is something said that actually is not accurate, Mr. Speaker, that we tender that because I do believe that the truth and facts really matter in Ontario. And so, Mr. Speaker, let me read from the anti-racism strategy, Mr. Speaker, on page -- Let me just read from the anti-racism strategy page 171 in the budget document, Mr. Speaker. There are four points and then the fifth point that outlines what part of the strategy says -- public education and awareness initiatives to targeting racism including Islam phobia and anti-semitism, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Taylor (Gretzky) to Jacek Re: Developmental Disabilities Support

>> MPP Monique Taylor: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Children needing developmental services are made to jump through hoops to get the supports they need. Families go into debt and are threatened with losing treatment because their money that they've been promised doesn't come. Cuts to special education means schools are understaffed and unable to provide the supports they need. As families struggle through teenage years, they are burdened with the thought of what's to come as their child becomes an adult and their services are lost. Speaker, in 2014, the select committee on developmental services recommended that recipients of special services at home funding not lose that funding before passport funding is in place. When will the

Premier act to ensure that essential services continue for vulnerable young adults?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And at first I would like to acknowledge the great respect that I, my ministry and this government has for those families who do care for their loved ones with developmental disabilities. And that's precisely why we have doubled, more than doubled our budget since we took office, to provide those supports and services for those with developmental disabilities. The member did refer to the passport program. This was a program that our government initiated in 2005/2006. Initially those most in need were accommodated. Some 800 people. Through the years, we have grown that program considerably and with the \$810 million in the 2014 budget, we were able to -- Increase some 13,000 individuals receiving passport for a grand total now of 24,000 people receiving that.

>> MPP Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. Back to the Premier. These people need action, not platitudes from this government. Families have come here today to rally and fight for their children. They're here because their adult children are waiting years for the developmental services they need. Parents and other family caregivers are scrambling for support. Some have had to quit their jobs to pick up the slack created by your government. Right now there are 11,000 waiting for passport funding, with no guarantee it will ever come. 14,000 are waiting for supportive housing. Some can wait 22 years or more. Your government brags about eliminating the wait list from three years ago. But the crisis in developmental services is still here and it's growing. When will your government eliminate the wait list -- For developmental services and actually support these families?

>> Minister Jaczek: Well, Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the member opposite will be supporting our budget this year, because we are proposing some \$677 million in addition to the 2.1 billion we already provide. And of course we are taking action. In fact, again, in terms of the passport waiting list, what we do is we ensure that priority cases receive passport funding first. They're prioritized very carefully according to their unique needs and their risk factors. Individuals with the highest needs receive funding in as little as seven days, with about 75% receiving funding within six months. We're working very hard on the residential support side, and this year's budget does include a component to particularly serve those who may be inappropriately housed in long-term care or hospitals. Or even in correctional facilities. Our government is full of --

MPP Potts to Mauro Re: Northern Mining Development

>> MPP Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of northern development and mines. We are fortunate of course, Speaker, that in Ontario we have an abundance every natural resources, including rich mineral deposits that support our province's mining industry and our manufacturing sector. And according to the Ontario mining association, Ontario was number one in mineral production in Canada in 2015, producing far more than a quarter of the national total. And the value of this mineral production has gone up from -- Thank you, Speaker. I was saying the value of the mineral production has gone up from \$5.7 billion in 2003 to 10.8 billion in 2015. And our government is continuously working to support the mining industry in all areas across the province. There are a number of programs in place that support our developing and modernizing industry, and Ontarians want to know how the government is taking steps to ensure that our industry will continue to be a national leader.

>> Minister Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you very much for the question. I want to thank the member for that. Northern municipalities, Speaker, dozens of them understand the importance of the mining industry and the forest industry to their economies and the regional economies. That's why for a very long time, a number of years now, we have had a flagship program in place to support not only mining but the large industrials across northern Ontario. Speaker, we call it the northern industrial electricity rate program or Nier. Speaker, that program is permanent. It provides on an annual basis a guaranteed \$120 million to help large industrials in northern Ontario deal with their energy costs. That can represent as much as a 25% reduction for these large industrials in northern Ontario. Speaker, the near program alone, since its inception, has supported large industrials in northern

Ontario to the tune of \$730 million. Speaker, that is a massive investment in large industrials in northern Ontario. Specifically today dealing with the mining sector. Lots of other programs in place as well that perhaps will have an opportunity in the supplementary to reference.

>> MPP Potts: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you, Speaker. Through you to the Minister for the great work he is doing to advance the mining industry in northern Ontario and explaining how the program, the northern industrial electricity rate program is working in helping my constituents in Beaches- East York and their investments in the mining industry and helping create the manufacturing we need. So I understand that the government of Ontario's investing 100 million annually to strengthen communities across the north through the northern Ontario heritage fund corporation. This corporation is working to build strong and prosperous northern communities. It offers unique programs to help foster hope and opportunity across the north and the corporation does this by investing in northern businesses and municipalities and a vast majority of these projects have been extremely successful. However, Speaker, and these investments come with conditions that recipients are expected to adhere to. So would the Minister please elaborate on the northern Ontario heritage fund corporation and how our government ensures these funds are used to support job growth in the north?

>> Minister Mauro: Speaker, again I thank the member for the question and I want to clarify an issue that came up earlier this week in the House in relation to ohnc. And a company great Lakes graphite. We as a government have taken the northern Ontario heritage fund from \$60 million to \$100 million annually and we did that at that time of recession in the province of Ontario, a renewed and embellished commitment to the people of northern Ontario. Speaker, loans and grants provided by the nohfc are attached with strict terms and conditions which clearly outline that all funds, both loans and grants, as I referenced earlier this week, are required to be repaid in the event of a default. Speaker, the implication or the narrative that was attempted to be created the other day, I want to address that and make sure that people understand that there is significant third-party due diligence that is attached to all of the private-sector applications that flow through the northern Ontario heritage fund. So this board and its operator. Great job of representing northern Ontario. This fund is a great fund for northern Ontario, Speaker. And it's important people know there are terms and conditions attached, third-party due diligence is done before the money goes out the door. Thank you, Speaker.

MPP Scott to Mauro Re: Flood Support for Municipalities

>> MPP Laurie Scott: To the Minister of municipal affairs. As the Minister knows in my riding of Minden, the township of Minden hills has been hit hard by the recent flooding. With water levels expected to continue to rise, businesses are being washed away and people are exasperated. I was in touch with the local funeral home in Minden, and despite placing ten thousand bags and deploying 23 sump pumps, unfortunately overnight they lost their battle. The owners felt helpless and -- that their livelihood literally went under water. The situation is desperate. The people feel that their government isn't acting to help them in their hour of need. Currently the government's own website only shows the Ottawa river flood areas as being under assessment. As the Minister responsible for the Ontario disaster recovery assistance, what is -- Doing to help Ontarians in Minden hills in this emergency?

>> Minister Bill Mauro: Thank you for the question. Let me first commend and thank all of the volunteers and first responders in a number of communities, right across Ontario who are dealing with what is, by their own estimation in their own calculations, a massive historic -- Flooding situation. And people will know that it's not only Ontario. Québec has been massively and significantly affected as well. Before I go to some detail in supplementary, I would tell the member that Ottawa is being considered, but we have already activated the program when it comes to Renfrew county. They were the first, as I understand it, piece of geography in Ontario that was significantly affected. The team from the ministry was on the ground. They went in. They did their work. The water was so significant in the Renfrew county example that they were unable to even to do an assessment. They made a recommendation to me and we activated the program in Renfrew county. That one is done and behind us. The work now continues for people to see if they're able to

get support through the program. Ottawa is being considered. I'll speak more directly to Minden in a second, Speaker.

>> MPP Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And of course the community has been incredible in its assistance. But I join the mayor of Minden yesterday, I joined the mayor of Minden yesterday in calling on the Minister to urgently deploy the Ontario disaster assessment team to Minden and the surrounding areas. I was told that the government doesn't deploy assessment teams until after water levels have receded. Not only is this absolutely unacceptable. It is not accurate. People can't wait. They need assistance right now. Will the Minister activate the disaster recovery assistance program immediately to Minden hills so the people will know that the government will provide assistance for those affected? You need to do it now, Minister.

>> Minister Mauro: Well, Speaker, the answer is simply no, I won't. I won't activate the program right now, and the member should clearly understand this and we've had an opportunity to talk about it. The assessment team needs to have an ability to get on the ground and create an assessment and define an area of geography and delineate the range and where who might be eligible. Now as I said to you as well, it's not necessary in certain circumstances for them to do an assessment if the water has not receded, if the rain continues. Possibly an assessment can come back to me without them actually being able to see it because the rain has persisted. Speaker, there is work that has to be done but I caution people -- Not to overestimate or raise expectations on what may be eligible through our program. There's a municipal side and there's a private side. The private side deals simply with the essentials if in fact they're eligible. The program is not a replacement for insurance. We understand how traumatic this is for communities and for people in those communities, Speaker. We have a program that helps but I'm really concerned with people trying to expedite a process and raising expectations for their community members. I have reached out to a number of mayors and talked to them directly on this file. We're doing what we can. The program's in place. We'll let the process unfold.

MPP Forster to Thibeault Re: Seniors and Hydro Rates

>> MPP Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker. My question's to the Premier. Jack o'Neill is a friend, a longtime community senior activist and president of friend over 55 seniors centre in port colborne. It is the oldest in -- independent nonprofit seniors recreation centre in the niagara region and the services are dependent on membership fees and donations. Last year the centre's hydro bill was just over \$150 for the month of April. This year their hydro bill, I have it here, is almost \$600. If this government doesn't put a stop to the sell-off of Hydro One, it's going to be impossible for Jack to afford to pay these bills while still keeping his centre open. What is the Premier going to do today for Jack and for seniors in my community who risk losing programming and svices because of skyrocketing hydro bills?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I not Minister of seniors will want to answer in the supplementary as well. But when it comes to hydro bills, Mr. Speaker, cost for electricity, all of those bills in this province will be going down by summer on average 25%, Mr. Speaker. And I know the Honourable member mentioned Hydro One. Hydro One customers with designations of r1 and r2, Mr. Speaker, will see a 40 to 50% reduction on their bills as well. So, Mr. Speaker, we are addressing many of the concerns that people have when it comes to hydro bills. When it comes to seniors, Mr. Speaker, we are ensuring that the Ontario electricity support program is being enhanced by an additional 50%. So on top of the 25% and the 40 to 50%. When you add in another \$540 a year, Mr. Speaker, rates for seniors in this province are coming down significantly and long lasting, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Forster: Speaker, we've seen the commercials but we haven't seen the legislation. So we heard yesterday that the Premier's going to sell off more shares of Hydro One. This comes days after the Premier actually defended Hydro One's executive pay increases of 500%. Meanwhile seniors in my community could lose programming and services, and Jack and the seniors at the seniors centre are seeing these skyrocketing hydro bills that are going through the roof. Speaker, will the government put a stop today for further sell-off of Hydro One and put vulnerable seniors ahead of shareholders?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to vulnerable seniors, we've acted with a fair hydro plan where they're going to see a 25% reduction on their bills. There's also the Ontario electricity support program where they're going to see a 50% increase to that rebate so they can see another \$540 off their bills. So when it comes to vulnerable seniors, when it comes to vulnerable people in this province, it makes you wonder why that they would put them on the last page of their plan, Mr. Speaker. We have made sure that we are acting. We are acting as quickly as we can to bring forward a comprehensive piece of legislation that will ensure 25% reduction by summer. So much so, Mr. Speaker, that the O.E.B. And -- in anticipation of our plan, have brought forward an additional 9%. Bringing the reduction right now to 17%. Whether it comes to the sale of Hydro One, we will make sure we invest that money in infrastructure across this province.

MPP Vernile to Matthews Re: Youth Employment and Education Support

>> MPP Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of advanced education and skills development. We have a lot to celebrate on job growth in this province. In fact the unemployment rate is the lowest that it's been since 2001. It's at 5.8%. And that news was very well received in my community of Kitchener Centre at a post budget luncheon that I held. While that figure is very noteworthy, we know there are Barriers to employment for many people. For example, youth face particular challenges in entering the labour market. Finding a job that is full time or in their community or relates to what they studied in school. So, Speaker, could the Minister please tell us what our province is doing to help young people get ready for the labour market?

>> Minister Deb Matthews: Thank you to the member for Kitchener centre. Speaker, we know that our young people have so much to offer this province. And when they can't find good jobs, we all lose out on their endless potential. So building on what we have accomplished through our youth jobs strategy, we're now launching Ontario's career kick start strategy. It invests \$190 million over the next three years, Speaker, and creates 40,000 more opportunity for our young people. It will open the doors to real-world hands-on experiences as they transition from the classroom into the workforce. And it gives employers the opportunity to have train -- help train and equip the next generation of Ontario's highly skilled work force with the skills they need to succeed. Speaker, this is something that educators are asking for. Certainly employers have been asking for. But most importantly it's what young people want, and they deserve to kick start their career, Speaker.

>> MPP Vernile: Thank you, Speaker. And I'd like to thank the Minister for her answer. After the budget was introduced, the leader of the third party was on the radio in my community talking about how life is hard for young people in the province these days. The young people are anxious about their cause as they move from postsecondary education to their first job. And one would hope that they would appreciate the many initiatives that are in the budget. Things like pharmacare for those who are under 25. Rent controls and the career kick start you heard the Minister talking about. That's certainly going to make life easier for young adults. But we do know that dealing with student loans can be very daunting for many. So, Speaker, could the Minister please tell us what her ministry is doing to help young people manage the costs of their education?

>> Minister Matthews: Thanks, Speaker. Well, we're definitely pleased the NDP Recognizes the challenge that young people face and the importance of helping young people navigate this changing, Speaker, and this uncertain economy. Something we are very much focused on, and that's why we brought forth initiatives in this budget to help young people manage their pocketbooks and maximize their prospects. So as we know, we're making tuition in College and university free for or better than free for over 200,000 students, Speaker. I encourage people to visit Ontario.ca/osap to see the calculator to find out how much they might be eligible for, Speaker. But that's not all. In this budget. We're making changes so that people who have resps will not be penalized for saving for their education. They will be exempt from osap, Speaker. And --

MPP MacLeod to Mauro (LaLonde) Re: Flood Support for Municipalities

>> MPP Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Premier, I appreciated your visit to Ottawa Monday to assess the damage from the severe flooding in our region. My hope is the province will act immediately to help the 346 people who witnessed their homes flood and the 155 who had to be evacuated. This morning the general manager of the city of Ottawa's emergency and protective services department, Anthony Demonte, said that the city has made a formal request for

the disaster relief assistance program, even though the team is already on-site it has yet to be activated. We have been dealing with the flooding on the Ottawa for over a week now and the disaster assistance from the Ontario has been slow to respond. With more flooding on the way, can the Premier tell me and the Ottawa residents that are affected how quickly they can expect the disaster relief assistance program to kick in?

>> Minister Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you. I thank the member for her question. An opportunity to give some details for people. If the program is recommended for activation and if the program is activated, there is still a fair bit of work to be done. The money or supports that may, that may flow to individual homeowners, remembering the program is not a replacement for insurance on the private side. It deals with essentials only. If it's activated and if they're eligible and if money flows, there's still a time lag there before any money might flow at all. I would make sure you're communicating to your constituents that they're required to have receipts and details, that they can submit if the program gets activated. There is a time lag around that. Obviously. That can't be turned around. So if the question is about whether financial assistance will be coming, they need to understand that even if I activated the program five minutes ago, a cheque doesn't show up in the mail tomorrow. There's still work to be done by the constituents. I would recommend perhaps calling into our ministry. Giving a bit more detail and we would be happy to fill some of the gaps for you.

>> MPP MacLeod: I thank the Minister very much. We are expecting more rain this weekend. Residents have been told to keep their sandbags in place as a result. The city's responded very compassionately just this morning pass ago tax relief package for those who are affected by the flood. Over 200 -- or 2,000 residents have volunteered to help in various ways such as bagging sand, loading trucks and packing sandbags around homes. Again, while I appreciated the visit, and the fact that the disaster relief has not yet been activated, there's other questions abounding about how Hydro One for example will be responding to flood victims whose electricity has been disconnected and compared to the flooding response across the Ottawa river in Gatineau, the province of Ontario hasn't been quite as visible. To the Minister's point it's important that my constituents are aware of some of the challenges. I'm wondering if the Minister can lay out concrete steps the province of Ontario is taking to deal with this massive flooding and the time line constituents in my city with expect.

>> Minister Marie-France Lalonde: Well, first of all, I'm very -- I thank you for the question, because -- and, you know, as we were there, the Premier, the member from Glengarry- Prescott-russell, the member from Ottawa South and I on Monday. We talked to individuals. We praised the good work of our volunteers, of our first responders. The amazing work that's being done to protect the House of everyone is to be commended, Mr. Speaker, and certainly for us, it's to stay engaged with our municipality. And I not Minister of municipal affairs, his officials and ours in the emergency of Ontario preparedness, we have engaged with our municipality every single day, Mr. Speaker. We are, I would say, almost every hour receiving reports. They need anything, we're responding. When they needed sandbags, we made the call right away. And expedite those decisions, Mr. Speaker. Certainly our goal is to be. Part and with them.