

CO: Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Tuesday, May 8, 2018

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

MCI did not receive any questions of interest.

MSA Conservative MPP Walker asked about the government's investments to long-term care beds, the recent announcement of the allocation of 5000 beds, and requested a list of beds provided to each Ontario Local Health Integration Network. Similarly, MPP Martins asked Minister Damerla to speak on the services provided under the Aging With Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors and the investments for Ontario's seniors in the 2018 Budget. In her response to both questions, Min. Damerla mentioned the government's initiative to provide 30,000 new long-term care beds and 5000 over the next four years, including the 5,000 recently provided, as well as the licences given to a south Asian long-term care home. Minister Damerla also mentioned the expansions to OHIP + to cover pharmacare for seniors 65 and over and the provision of \$750 annually for seniors 75 years or older to support living independently in their own homes.

Official opposition questions were about the liberal record concerning Hydro One and funding for healthcare and education, the Kincardine redevelopment project, long-term care beds, and the need for more physicians in Chatham-Kent. NDP Questions also concerned the government's investments to healthcare, funding for disability services, the strike at Caesar's Casino, and gas prices.

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

Transcript of Provincial Question Period
41st Parliament, 3rd Session
Tuesday, May 8, 2018

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MPP Fedeli to Premier Wynne (Naqvi) Re: Liberal Record

>> MPP Vic Fedeli: Thank you and good morning Speaker. My question is for the Premier. In the -- this the last question period of the 41st parliament, we would be remiss not to summarize the last few years of Liberal rule. Premier Kathleen Wynne was -- will desperately try to change the channel, but this election campaign, the Liberals will have to defend 15 years of waste, scandal, and mismanagement. Obviously the skyrocketing hydro rates are first and foremost. Compared to 2003, the average family now pays over a thousand dollars more per year on their hydro bill. Ontario is now home to among the highest electricity rates in all of North America. Speaker, will the Premier remember that families across the province are being forced to choose whether to heat or eat while Liberal insiders have gotten rich at their expense.

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and just let me say to the member opposite, I want to congratulate him on the job that he's done as the leader in the House

and to wish him well in his next steps but he won't be in this job. And I just want to say you've done a great job. I don't always like your questions, but you have done a great job. And Mr. Speaker -- you know, Mr. Speaker, I want to just say that full day kindergarten, roads and bridges and transit being built all over the province, an unemployment level that is the lowest that it's been in nearly twenty years, Mr. Speaker, the fact that there are 235,000 young people in College, university, tuition free because of the changes made, Mr. Speaker, the fact is, Mr. Speaker, that Ontario is doing well. We want to make sure that Ontario continues to do well, continue to invest in the people of this province, investment in people means that the province is stronger and the economy flourishes, Mr. Speaker .

>>Vic Fedeli: Back to the Premier. Thank you for your comments, Premier, however, as I continue, Ontario will never forget the gas plant scandal. This cost Ontario taxpayers a whopping \$1.1 billion. and destroying evidence. Kathleen Wynne was the cochair of the 2011 Liberal election campaign when the decision to cancel these gas plants was made. Kathleen Wynne personally signed the Cabinet documents that gave up Ontario's legal defences, choosing instead to deal secretly with the companies, that was the key, Speaker, and one of Premier Kathleen Wynne's first decisions after the 2014 election was to cancel the committee that was so close to getting answers for Ontario families. Mr. Speaker, does the Premier acknowledge that the gas plant scandal will remain a big part of her legacy.

>>Minister Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, this Premier ran for office on a promise to ensure that there is secure retirement for hardworking Ontarians. She accomplished that. This Premier ran on the promise to fight climate change. She has accomplished that. This Premier, Speaker, ran on the promise of investing in infrastructure across this province building roads and bridges and public transit. In all four corners of the province, she has accomplished that. Speaker, this is a Premier who has put Ontarians first. This is a Premier who has invested in things to ensure that all Ontarians of all backgrounds have the equality of opportunity to succeed, whether they're indigenous, whether they come urban areas or rural areas. This Premier has made sure Ontarians come first and will continue to do that job for the people of Ontario.

>>Vic Fedeli: The Premier tells us she got into politics to fight for education, but her government has closed more schools than any other government in our province's history. The Premier sold off Hydro One in what families call --is warned. And there's plenty more trying. Finish, please. The Premier sold off Hydro One in a fire sale. The Premier put the interest of insider friends above the interests of the people of Ontario. The Premier has defended a \$6 million salary at Hydro One while families decide whether to heat or eat. The Premier has watched hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs leave our province. The Premier slashed healthcare, stood idly as hallway health crises developed. Mr. Speaker, when did the Premier lose her way?

>>Minister Naqvi: Speaker, this is coming from a party that has -- that is running on the platform of cuts, cuts, and cuts. They are going to cut minimum wage for hardworking people. Doug Ford is going to cut corporate taxes for the wealthy companies in our province. He's going to cut teachers and nurses for finding his so-called efficiencies. What this Premier has done, that she has raised minimum wage to \$15 starting January 1st, 2019, for hardworking Ontarians. She ensured drugs for children and youth up to the age of 25 and should be free for seniors. We have free childcare for our kids in preschool, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Fedeli to Minister Jaczek (Sousa) Re: Liberal Record

>>MPP Vic Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. For 15 years the Premier has ignored the mantra of cuts not care. Liberal cuts have created a hallway crisis in Ontario. We now have the longest wait times in Ontario's history. The Liberals have fired more than 1,600 nurses. The Liberals have cut physiotherapy services for seniors. The Liberals have frozen hospital budgets. The Liberals have slashed physician services and cut medical residency positions. Mr. Speaker, over the noise, why has the Premier left a hallway healthcare crisis in Ontario.

>>Minister Helena Jaczek: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And, of course, on this side of the House we are extremely proud of our record when it comes to healthcare because over the past decade Ontario's healthcare system has improved significantly. We have increased our investments in healthcare each and every year allowing us to treat more patients, provide better care and reduce wait times for some of the shortest in the country. More than a million more Ontarians and 94% of all Ontarians now have access to a primary care provider, one of our early initiatives in our mandate. Both the Fraser Institute, I would hope that the members opposite would appreciate their analysis, both the Fraser Institute and the wait time alliance have consistently ranked Ontario as having the best median wait times in Canada, a direct result of all the investments that we have made. And so through the successive years we have made considerable investments. I will have more to say in the supplementary.

>>Vic Fedeli: Back to the Premier, with crisis on top of crisis the Premier has left Ontario in a dangerous financial position. Over the last 15 years, Ontario's debt has more than tripled, all to help pay for Liberals' waste, mismanagement and scandals. Ontario taxpayers now pay a billion dollar a month on interest payments. This crowds out all the services families depend on like healthcare and education. Speaker, this is exactly what the auditor general warned us in 2015 and 2016 that would happen. So, Mr. Speaker, does the Premier realize her billions of dollars of waste, mismanagement, and scandal have crowded out frontline healthcare and hurt families?

>>Minister Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I take the question with some interest, and I think it's all part of the fidelity's newest fantasy book about finance. Okay. The member from North Bay's fantasy book talking about interest on debt just now. This member should know that here in Ontario we have the lowest interest on debt in 25 years at 8 cents of every dollar. They were in power. It was at 15 to 16 cents, Mr. Speaker, and talking about crowding out programs, their programs they're proposing now is up to 16 billion in cuts that will crowd out and cut those programs entirely, Mr. Speaker. We're investing in our economy. We're investing in our programs and services. We're leading Canada. We have the lowest unemployment in two decades. Mr. Speaker, we know we need to be done. It's not by making those cuts.

>>Vic Fedeli: Well, Mr. Speaker, for my final time to stand in this legislature, I will go back to the Premier. We have seen the harm the Liberals have inflicted on the people of Ontario over the last 15 years, but only Doug Ford and the Ontario PCs have a plan for the people of Ontario. We will put more money in the pockets of -- we will put more money in people's pockets. We will clean up the hydro mess. We will create good jobs. We will restore responsibility, accountability and trust and we will cut hospital wait times. Mr. Speaker, the people of Ontario need to know help is on the way. Here, here

>>Minister Sousa: So Mr. Speaker, here's what they're going to help us do, what he's going to do this to this province. He's going to cut revenues to the tune of \$3 billion. He's going to stop investing in infrastructure projects that make us competitive long-term. Mr. Speaker, he's going to cut those programs, those healthcare and education programs that matter to people's lives, Mr. Speaker. He's going to harm people, put us in harm's way, if he gets elected more importantly and, worse, Mr. Speaker, he's going to harm future generations by harming economic growth. We need to stay steady and continue to invest and lead. Diversify our economy is what we are doing, Mr. Speaker, enabling us to weather commodity shocks that may occur. We have to be prepared for that. Mr. Speaker, the member of his opposition and his leader are not taking the necessary steps to protect the people of this province. This Premier is doing it. Our members on this side of the House are fighting every day for the people of Ontario and will continue to do so going forward.

MPP Horwath to Premier Wynne (Jaczek) Re: Healthcare

>>MPP Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, before I get to the first question which is to the Premier, I just want to recognize that we're all heading out into the campaign trail over the next number of weeks and I'm looking forward to a very spirited and dignified debate on the future of this province and the 14 million people that call this beautiful province home. Democracy truly is a great

thing when we debate each other with respect, so let's strive to deliver that kind of campaign to Ontarians because they deserve it and it's something that we'll all be very proud of. So now to my question, Speaker, after 15 years in office, why does Ontario have hallway medicine but we don't have pharmacare and we don't have dental care for everyone?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and I know the minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to want to comment in the supplementary. But I just want to thank the leader of the third party, thank her for the debate last night, Mr. Speaker and I agree with her completely. Having a dignified debate throughout the next 28, 29 days, Mr. Speaker, is good for the democratic process in Ontario. I too look forward to that. I wanted to say to all of the members in the House that I wish them luck on the campaign trail, you know, to different degrees, some more than others. But personally I wish you all a good month ahead. Mr. Speaker, we have invested in our healthcare system every single year. We have increased investment, Mr. Speaker. We have worked to transform the system so that people who need home care, have more home care in their homes they want it, Mr. Speaker. Let's face it. More people want to stay at home longer in Ontario. I think across the country we have made those investments. We will continue to invest in the healthcare that people need when and where they need it.

>>Andrea Horwath: Speaker, for 15 years, the Liberal government has had a choice. They could have continued with Conservative cuts to hospital and healthcare, or they could have made the investments needed to ensure that a growing and ageing population had the healthcare that we need. We know what this Premier chose. Hospital patients are being treated in hallways, in lounges, even in bathrooms, Speaker. Why did this Premier choose to cut and not to care?

>>Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, later this morning the members of the third party are going to have a choice. They're going to have a choice to vote on our 2018 budget. I would have thought that this budget, as Progressive as it is, is really very much what they have been saying in this House they want to achieve. So I would urge them, of course, to vote with us because we think that our plan for healthcare is particularly well-crafted. It's considering all the aspects, all the interconnecting links that relate to good healthcare and a good healthcare system. We, of course, have costed it out extremely carefully. We have looked at the requirements with the good advice of our local health integration networks with the Ontario hospital association, the home care Ontario group. We have an excellent plan for Ontario, and I urge the third party to support it.

>>Andrea Horwath: Well, don't hold your breath. No, Speaker, if the Liberals wanted to end hallway medicine, they could have done that. If the Liberals wanted to bring in pharmacare and dental care for all, they could have done that for 15 years, Speaker, 15 years ago, they could have started down that path. 15 years later, people are still going to an emergency room because they can't get the dental care that they needed. 15 years later people are still forced to choose between paying for meds or paying for rent. Why are Ontario families still waiting for the healthcare that they deserve after 15 long years with the Liberals at the helm?

>>Minister Jaczek: Well, as we said recently in the House, Mr. Speaker, of course, we have been investing each and every year, increased budgets for our hospital. For all the aspects that connect to the healthcare system. We did replicate our \$15 million investment in palliative care. We are supportive of what we did last fall. I think we can really disappointed when we look at the detail of that platform, that they have not extended that surge capacity cut into this particular coming year. We know there are capacity issues. We believe new issues are reactivation care centres such as the one at Humber, extremely important. Answer.

MPP Horwath to Premier Wynne Re: Healthcare

>> MPP Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is also for the Premier. 15 years ago, Ontario voters rejected a Conservative government whose cuts and privatization. 15 years later, Ontario voters are about to reject a Liberal government whose legacy is even more cuts and even more privatization. Why did the Liberals spend 15 years cutting and privatizing when they could

have delivered pharmacare and dental care for everyone.

>>Premier Kathleen Wynne: So, Mr. Speaker, let's just put the facts on the table, the fact that we have not been cutting healthcare. In fact, we have been investing every year, more money in healthcare, Mr. Speaker. I just need to make a comment. We are seeing an example today of where ideology gets in the way for the NDP. The NDP Doesn't believe in the private sector at all. Doesn't think business has a role to play, doesn't think the private sector was any use at all. Today we're seeing, Mr. Speaker, the ideology around labour relations is preventing the NDP From voting to have the kids at York back in their classrooms, Mr. Speaker. Ideology does not solve problems, Mr. Speaker. We solve problems practically on this side of the House. It gets in the way of the best interests of people in this province.

>>Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, ten long weeks later right before an election, it's no wonder this Premier once again is looking at her own political interests then she is ten weeks ago she should have been dealing with those kids. Look, I am very proud of my values, Mr. Speaker. What this Premier can be sure --This Premier and the people of Ontario can be sure of my values are the same before an election, during an election, and after an election, not like the Liberals, Speaker, not like the Liberals. A government can get a lot done in 15 years. If they wanted, the Liberals could have ended hallway medicine and delivered pharmacare and dental care if they wanted. For 15 years, that's not what Liberals wanted. They wanted to cut and they wanted to privatize. They wanted to help bay street friends and campaign donors while making life harder for everyone else. For 15 years, why didn't the Liberals want to end hallway medicine and deliver pharmacare and dental care for everyone?

>> Premier Wynne: It's interesting. My values have nothing to do with elections. My values actually have been in place my whole life, Mr. Speaker. And I would say to the member, I would say to the leader of the third party, if I look at her 2014 platform, her values seem to have changes because, Mr. Speaker, a request to the NDP To get the York students back into their classrooms, get the ideology.

>> Andrea Horwath: 15 years is enough time to fund universities and Colleges properly. 15 years is enough time for a government to make that Ontarian Kids get the take-home cancer drugs that they need or a child's toothache treated without worrying about how to pay for it, Speaker. After 15 years, have Ontario families waited long enough for pharmacare and dental care for all?

>>Minister Jaczek: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we need to be a little bit objective here for a moment. Ontarians are living longer healthier lives than almost anywhere else in the world, and any opposition party to suggest our system is in crisis is fear mongering for political gain. Healthcare professionals and -- to suggest they're not meeting that challenge in outcomes is a disservice to all people who work in our healthcare system each and every day. This mandate that we have had has recognized that we need to go beyond keeping people alive to experience a healthcare system that puts patients first. This is what we have done. We cannot afford to lambaste a healthcare system in the way the NDP Are doing. It is inaccurate. It does a great disservice to all the hardworking healthcare workers.

MPP Munro to Premier Wynne Re: Liberal Record

>> MPP Julia Munro: Today, I rise for my last question of this government. Premier, as I rise today, I can't help but think about legacy. What will be the -- what will be the legacy that I leave behind in my riding of York Simcoe? What will the legacy be of this government, I hope my legacy will be one of representing my riding to the best of my abilities and of standing up to -- for our local environment. When I think of this government and its legacy, I think of skyrocketing hydro rates, cancelled gas plants, cuts to frontline workers, school closures and broken promise after broken promise. I think about the financial policies that care more about photo-ops than they really change. Premier, my question today is simple, given your track record, can people believe any promise that you will make once the writ drops? Glnchts thank you.

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say to the Honourable member, she has served her constituency well. She is a fine woman. I know -- I know that she has worked hard for a stronger Ontario. I don't actually believe the member opposite really wants to say this province cut, education and healthcare cut. She lived through that in another government. She knew that there was damage done in her community, Mr. Speaker. And I believe she has the best interest of the people at heart. I wish her well. I thank for for they are service. She will continue to see the benefits in her riding.

>>MPP Munro: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Premier, under your leadership, taxes and fees have only increased. Billions of dollars have been wasted and Liberal insiders have become rich all at the expense of hardworking Ontarians. In my 23 years. I have never seen beds assigned. You are trying to hoodwink voters with their own money. Photo-op finance is not the answer. Responsible government is. I would begin to list the election promises that you have failed to keep. I'm afraid the Speaker would cut me off. Premier, I will ask again. How can voters trust any promise that you will make?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know those are the party lines that the member opposite is reading, Mr. Speaker, and I also know because I have a sister and a brother-in-law and three nieces and a nephew who live in the member's riding, Mr. Speaker, in Bradford, and, Mr. Speaker, I have seen the great schools that they have gone to, Mr. Speaker. I have seen how it's changed enormously over the last ten years, Mr. Speaker. The green belt is part of the environment there, Mr. Speaker. Really Bradford and the riding that the member represented, part of the success story that is Ontario, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing people moving to Ontario. We're seeing people come to Ontario, which is why our unemployment is the lowest it's been in nearly twenty years, Mr. Speaker. Again, I thank the member opposite for all the work done in her community and we know the work will continue.

MPP Tabuns to Minister Coteau Re: Disability Services

>>MPP Peter Tabuns: Carol and her husband have a son Sam with a substantial developmental disability. This family applied for passport funding over three years ago as recommended by ministry staff to ensure it would be available once Sam graduated from school. He will graduate in June. 18 months ago they made contact with a local church to secure a part-time job for Sam so he would have structured activities during the day. What they received were vague answers and no guarantee that the funding would be in place. To the Minister, why are families like this being abandoned by the ministry.

>>Minister Michael Coteau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, a little advice for the member opposite, when you have specific issues like this that relate to people in his community. He knows that I cannot speak to that specific issue in this forum. I would be happy to speak to you about this at any time. Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that everyone in the province of Ontario can move forward with success and, of course, that includes people that have developmental disabilities. That's why, Mr. Speaker, in our 2018 budget which we will vote on today, it includes making sure every person in Ontario that qualifies will receive passport funding. I hope the member supports the project.

>>MPP Tabuns: Well, that's not what the ministry staff told the family. My office contacted the Minister staff about this family. We got this response. The parents were encouraged to continue to work with developmental services Ontario and the program supervisor also explained that their fee for service options available for the parents. The parents planned ahead of time. Why is it the families in crisis that follow your instructions are directed to private services?

>>Minister Coteau: Mr. Speaker, in our budget we're going to invest 1.8 billion over the next three years for developmental services. Mr. Speaker, this is the first time in the history of this province they will get at least \$5,000 per year of direct funding through the passport system. That means that,

Mr. Speaker, over 42,000 more people will be brought into the system by 2020 and 2021. We want to make sure that regardless of where you live in the province and regardless of your ability that you have support services in place where you can actually receive some type of funding so you can use it for services that you need.

MPP Martins to Minister Damerla Re: Seniors Investments

>>MPP Cristina Martins: Thank you, Speaker. My question this morning is for the Minister of senior affairs. Speaker my riding in Davenport is home to a large number of seniors. Seniors make up the fastest growing segment of Ontario's population. Today there are more than 2 million seniors in our province and that number is expected to double. That is why it is especially important. I'm so proud our government has continued to make historic investments that will support seniors at all stages of their life to ensure they are living active, engaged and socially connected lives. Mr. Speaker, last November, our government reaffirmed its commitment to Ontario seniors. This wide ranging contained \$155 million in programs. Speaker, would the Minister of senior affairs explain to this House about crucial investments. Minister .

>>Minister Dipika Dalmata: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank you for that member from Davenport for that excellent question. She mentioned our government announced ageing with confidence. Part of that plan, Mr. Speaker, was 30,000 new long-term care beds including 5,000 over the next four years. I just wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, we have made good on that first phase of 5,000 licences have been issued including two in my own riding in my own city of Mississauga and something really historic, Mr. Speaker, for the very first time licences have been given for a south Asian long-term care home that's really important for us. Mr. Speaker, we know that, you know, our today's seniors want us to look at them not just through the lens of healthcare. I will have more to say on that in the supplementary.

>>MPP Martins: Thank you. Second supplementary. Thank you for reiterating this to this House. I too am pleased to announce to our Minister of finance that for the first time 256 licences were given to the Portuguese speaking community. We are all pleased to know that this side of the House recognize seniors as far more than just a healthcare expense. Some seniors require the constant care and support of a long-term care home, others want to remain living independent and in their own homes for as long as possible. That is why it is critical for the government to make current investments in care to provide seniors the support they need to remain in their homes for ever. Can the Minister of senior affairs, continued investment in care will impact the seniors in my riding of Davenport and across this province

>> Thank you, Mr. Speaker, as you know today, we are going to be voting on our budget and everybody in this legislature has the opportunity to support Ontario seniors today because in our budget, Mr. Speaker, we have a number of initiatives that support seniors, including the \$750 annually for seniors 75 years or older which will help seniors live independently in their own homes. Mr. Speaker, we are expanding ohip plus to those over the age of 65. I urge everybody in this House. If you want to support Ontario seniors, today's the day, vote for the budget.

MPP Gelinas to Minister Jaczek Re: Long-Term Care

>>MPP France Gelinas: My question is for the Minister of health. For a very long time, long-term care homes in northeastern Ontario have been facing a severe shortage of personal support workers better known as psws. The situation created hardship. Northerners are resilient Speaker. The leadership at St. Joseph's health centre found a possible way forward in collaboration with College Boreal. They are offering free tuition and a free education and prepaid hours to people who hold diploma in non-registered psns, developmental support workers, rehab, physio and occupational therapy assistants as well as paramedics to become qualified psw. Minister, will you support this file

project?

>>Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, certainly we do value our psws as an integral part of the healthcare team. This is precisely why we're over the next three years investing \$23 million to add 5,500 psws to the workforce in underserved communities and also providing 38 million for training and education for new and existing psws to ensure that they have the tools they require to support our loved ones. And so we have invested committed to 65 million over 3 years as a retirement security in psws as well. And specifically, we are working in the north with St. Joseph's to support them. This is an interesting initiative. And I look forward to hearing more from the member opposite.

>>MPP Gelinas: Mr. Speaker, the shortage of psws in the northeast line is not new. It is severe. St. Joseph's hospital told you about their struggles and requested support from your government. How did your government respond? Well, the government gave the home a compliance order for being short psw. Really, Speaker? How does that help the residents of the long-term care home in eastern Ontario? St. Joseph's health centre has a possible solution, a creative pilot project developed in the north. That could help the shortage of psws throughout our province. This proposal is sitting on your desk, Minister, will you sign it today.

MPP Harris to Minister Flynn (Jaczek) Re: Liberal Record

>>MPP Michael Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been an honour to represent my constituents of Kitchener-congo and, of course, to work with all of you for the last six and a half years. Speaker, my question is to the Premier, of course, on a topic I have raised many times in this House, fair and open tendering for construction projects. In the region of Waterloo nearly 84% of construction firms and the skilled people they employ have been prevented from working on local infrastructure projects because of a loophole in Ontario labour relations act. Speaker, this isn't fair for taxpayers or local construction workers who should have the right to work on publicly funded infrastructure in the community where they live, work, and pay taxes. Premier in the spirit of fairness, will you commit today to close this legislative loophole. Minister of labour.

>>Minister Kevin Flynn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question, Speaker. The province of Ontario as you know has a very organized system and an organized system that works when it comes to labour relations in the province of Ontario, Speaker. And what the member refers to is provisions that typically prohibit lawyers in the province from contracting out work that's subject to their Collective agreement to non-union contractors. It's been around, Speaker, for a long time. In fact, I believe it was brought in by the Conservative party if the member remembers. Ontario's labour relations act that we have in place right now, it doesn't require such provisions. It doesn't prohibit such provisions either. Each time a case comes forward, Speaker, the labour relations board decides specifically on the merits of that case. If a municipality, any organization, there's a way to apply for exclusion.

>>MPP Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and back to the Premier. Premier, I know that members of your government have had the opportunity to tour St. Mary's hospital in Kitchener, which is also home to our leading regional cardiac care program. In fact, St. Mary's was one of three cardiac centres in Canada that recently performed better than the national average on all six quality indicators. Over the last few years, there have been a number of cardiac procedures which have put stress on the hospital. The hospital has long waited for the promised EP lab and now requires additional investments to meet our community's healthcare needs. Will the Premier commit today to provide the needed investment to expand the world-class cardiac program at St. Mary's hospital in Kitchener.

>>Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to the member opposite. He recently had a coronary transplant surgery. I wish you very well with your recovery in the future. I wanted to ensure the government it's clear that we have approved this particular project. I know the member has been an advocate for this particular project as has our member from

Kitchener centre. Back in 2016 we put this project as part of our budget. It was approved at that particular time. I can understand why the member opposite is anxious about this project. Should his leader potentially become the Premier, we know that there are going to have to be cuts. I suspect this might very well be one of those cuts that the leader of the official opposition might put in place. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Potts to Minister Del Duca Re: Automobile Investments

>>MPP Arthur Potts: Mr. Speaker, our government has a long track record for standing up to the auto sector and its workers. We all know during the recession the sector was hit hard. Do we stand up for the auto sector and make strategic business investments or stand back and do nothing? Unlike the Conservatives, Speaker, who would have allowed the industry to collapse, we stood up for the auto sector. The Ontario government invested \$1.56 billion in the auto sector leveraging 12.2 billion in private investment creating and retaining over 90,000 jobs. These investments secured auto transplants general motors and Chrysler in Windsor, Brampton and Oakville, remained our supply chain remained strong and in Brant in Ontario. The opposition regularly made it clear, they do not stand up for the auto sector. They call it corporate welfare. Doug Ford says he's getting rid of it.

>>Minister Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I want to begin, of course, by thanking the member for his question, advocacy for his community. Mr. Speaker, the member is a hundred percent right. We have just made as a government a further investment in the auto sector securing our auto footprint for years to come. Last Friday in Cambridge, the Premier and the Minister of transportation announced our renewed partnership with Toyota to ensure the long-term competitiveness of the Cambridge and Woodstock plants. Our government invested in \$110 million through the jobs and prosperity fund which will help to secure 850 direct jobs. This landmark investment coming at a time of uncertainty in the North American auto industry makes the Cambridge and Woodstock plants highly competitive among Toyota's global operations. This investment will make Cambridge and Woodstock the only plant in North America creating the RAV4 crossover creating a RAV4 hub here in Ontario.

>>MPP Potts: This kind of an investment is exactly what our Conservative opposition are cutting. And I want to thank the Minister's answer. What a great announcement for the people of Ontario, specifically Cambridge and Woodstock. It's important to hear about our investments in our workers and the businesses in these sectors. That's a lot of people, Speaker, over a hundred thousand now are being employed in the auto sector in the communities across the province who depend on these jobs to feed their families, to pay for little league hockey, to pay their mortgages and put away money for retirement. These are the jobs and the workers that the Conservatives were fine to turn their back on them. These are the jobs that Doug Ford Conservatives who would have no problem cutting when they eliminate the jobs and prosperity fund and look for efficiencies.. We all know what that means. Will the Minister tell us how this new Toyota investment fits into our broader job strategy.

>>Minister Del Duca: Thank you very much, Speaker. I thank member for the followup question. Our government has made strategic investments and decisions to invest in our business and is our people and the result Speaker is that Ontario's economy is the strongest in the nation. Together working closely with the hardworking people and business owners of Ontario, our government has helped to create more than 800,000 net new jobs since the recession. In particular we have created 40,000 manufacturing jobs and last year alone created more than our competitors in the United States. Our unemployment rate is the lowest in 17 years and has been below the national average for 35 months straight. Our GDP growth continues to outpace Canada, the United States and Europe, and our business prosperity index is at a 20-year high. We're leading Canada in foreign, direct investment and our strategic jobs plan is to continue the success, continue to invest in the things that matter like the auto sector, securing investments like the one that we just announced last week from Toyota. And I want to pay tribute to the Premier, the member from Cambridge and everybody in our government for this decision, for this investment and for the success that Cambridge and Woodstock.

MPP Thompson to Minister Jaczek Re: Healthcare

>>MPP Lisa Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In 2011, the health centre was promised \$53 million in terms of redeveloping and emergency rooms. When the Liberal MPP at the time that project was scrapped by this Liberal government. Now we are seeing the kincardine redevelopment project in this year's budget again. Minister, can you explain why the government used this year's budget. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Huron Bruce is an advocate for a hospital. I have visited kincardine as Minister of community and social services and made a major announcement for shelter in kincards, just a part of what our government does. I can understand her anxiety. She has an opportunity here this morning to vote for our budget which will include the investment that we feel is needed in kincardine. Of course, we spend a considerable amount of time looking at projects ensuring that they are a priority for us. We have made a number of investments across this province. We intend to do the same.

>>.Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Speaker. Everybody in the kincardine community knows why they're in the budget this year. It's a poison pill and proof point that this Liberal Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Huron Bruce is an advocate for a hospital. I have visited kincardine as Minister of community and social services and made a major announcement for shelter in kincards, just a part of what our government does. I can understand her anxiety. She has an opportunity here this morning to vote for our budget which will include the investment that we feel is needed in kincardine. Of course, we spend a considerable amount of time looking at projects ensuring that they are a priority for us. We have made a number of investments across this province. We intend to do the same.

>>MPP Thompson: Thank you very much, Speaker. Everybody in the kincardine community knows why they're in the budget this year. It's a poison pill and proof point that this Liberal government doesn't care about rural Ontario frontline healthcare. This Minister did come to visit the women's shelter. She saw firsthand how much the community is growing and how badly we need that redevelopment project. So I ask the Minister, don't play games with this community anymore. Don't play games with headlines and will the Minister stand together with me today and ensure no Matt what the outcome of the budget vote is today, no matter what the outcome is on June 7th, can we stand together and ensure that communities will get the project they have been promised.

>>Minister Jaczek: I think we understand why the member opposite is so concerned about this project. What would happen under a Doug Ford government. The cuts are coming. He has made it very, very clear. Certainly this would be a very easy project to cancel. This project is definitely under way. Vote for the project.

MPP Hatfield to Minister Flynn Re: Casino Strike

>>MPP Percy Hatfield: For more than a month there's an a strike at Caesar's downtown hotel and casino in Windsor. Millions and millions of dollars have been lost. Money the Liberals have been using on the promises in their budget. The auditor general already served notice. That's without the lost of the cash from cae SARS. Speaker, how can we have any faith in the promises made in the Liberals' aspirational budgets.

>>Minister Kevin Flynn: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member for ask a question, a veryimportant question about his community, Speaker. He will know the members have been on strike from April 6th. At the time of the deadline, they did reach an agreement. It wasn't ratified by the membership. We have got one of the best labour relations records, I think, in the western world Speaker. 98% of agreements are reached without a strike. We have got some of the best mediators that are working on this, Speaker. I would urge both sides to come back to the table. We know that

the best agreements are those that are reached by the parties at the table, Speaker. We do everything we possibly can to assist in this regard. And, Speaker, by and large, we're very, very successful in this province. I think we can achieve a settlement here if both parties come back to the table.

>>MPP Hatfield: Speaker, for more than a month, 23 hotel and casino workers have been walking the picket line. Cae SARS is the contractor. We're losing millions of dollars. Cae SARS just cancelled all of its sunshine coast for the entire month of may. That's intimidation, Speaker. This government has an obligation to the taxpayers, as well as the men and women on the picket line to do more, to work harder, to apply pressure on cae SARS to return to the bargaining table and hammer out a settlement. When will this Liberal government show some leadership and make an effort to settle the month long strike at Caesar's?

>>Minister Flynn: Mr. Speaker, thank you again to the member for asking the questions. As the other side would like, Speaker, we would like to see a settlement in this and really all cases around the province, Speaker. When the sides drift apart, Speaker, they needbe brought back. Especially in this case of Windsor, Speaker. People are often drawn into a Collective bargaining process, Speaker, outside of the agreement themselves and certainly around the Windsor site. There's a lot of small businesses that we know are being impacted by this striker, Speaker. But, you know, Speaker, there's a lot of people who go to York university, a lot of students at York university, Speaker, that are being impacted by a strike. The member and that party over there Speaker has had four or five opportunities now to bring that strike to an end. They turned their back on the student, Speaker. We have a way forward. They should be supporting the students.

MPP Kiwala to Minister Jaczek Re: OHIP Plus

>>MPP Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. It is crucial young and old can access prescription drugs without having to bare the financial burden. To do just that, our biggest expansion to medicare in Ontario in a generation. I know how important this program has been to my constituents of Kingston and the island as they no longer have to worry about how they will pay for their children's prescriptions. 4,400 drugs including antibiotics to treat infections, asthma, inhalers, seizure Medi contraceptives. Much more worthwhile than things like paying actors at a rally.

>>Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member from Kingston and the Islands for this very important question. As a physician and a mother and unfortunately not yet a grandmother, I strongly believe that children in Ontario deserve access to the medications they need to live bright and healthy lives. Since January 1st, over 1.3 million young people aged 24 and under have had their prescriptions filled at no costs under ohip plus. More than 4.1 million prescriptions have been filled to date under ohip plus. The numbers continue to grow. O hip plus is continuing to benefit families across the province. It's helping organizations to support on this vulnerable population such as the Massey centre which provides crucial parenting. Covered the medication costs for clients and their young ones who could not afford them. Now with ohip plus they are able to get that money to services that help hundreds of young moms that help children and young moms in our community.

>>.MPP Kiwala: Thank you for providing this important update and continued efforts to improve healthcare for everyone in this province. Including the actors, of course. Ohip plus is a historic stat taken by our Premier and our government that has not improved the health and being of young people. It has also helped lift the financial burden off families and is soon to benefit our seniors. In my region alone over 96,000 children and youth have had their prescriptions filled for free at their local pharmacy. Queen's university, reddendale pharmacy and, of course, shoppers in rexall and all of the other small I understood. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that fights for our most vulnerable population. Can the Minister of health please tell this House the impact that a monumental program such as this will have on the people of Ontario and how it will help them?

>>Minister Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we're not just stopping at young people. We know

the cost of some prescription drugs can cause anxiety and stress especially for people 65 and over living on fixed incomes and often required to take multiple medications. We all want the best for our parents and grandparents, which is why by August 1st, 2019, we are expanding ohip plus to offer free prescription drugs to everyone 65 and over, no copayment, this expansion will make life more affordable for 2.6 million seniors and their families and will result in prescription drugs being free for 2 in 1 Ontarians bringing us closer to the goal for all people in Ontario. Our government is helping to ensure a fair and healthy province. We will continue to fight for universal pharmacare that will help bring free drug coverage to everyone.

MPP Walker (Nicholls) to Minister Damerla (Jaczek) Re: Long-Term Care

>>MPP Bill Walker: My question is for the Premier. Your record on seniors and especially long-term care is a source of national shame. After making zero investments in long-term care beds, you shamelessly announce 5,000 new beds on the eve of provincial election. Considering your government had 15 years to build the needed beds but didn't get it done, I want to know, why should seniors trust you're going to build any new beds after 15 years of inaction and will you provide a list to me today for how many beds have been allocated for each of the 14lins cross our province. Thank you.

>>Minister Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin by correcting the member opposite. That's not true at all. We actually announced them back in November when we annoced 30,000 beds. We moved past -- yes, we have moved past on this file. That's exactly what you have been asking us to do. So you can't have it both ways. Speaker, they can't have itboth ways and then say you're building too fast. Pick a lane.

>>MPP Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker. Well, back to the Premier, Chatham-kent- Essex is in dire straits. It was built on a complement of 27 physicians. We're down to 22. 3,300 orphaned patients. Chatham- Kent has been identified as underserved by your ministry in terms of family physicians. Sustainability of the corporation is in doubt. Fixed costs of running the organization do not change. So fewer positions means higher costs for those doctors who remain. Minister, will you help us in the Chatham- Kent catchment area and assign additional funding for new doctors and nurse practitioners so that the people in my riding of Chatham-kent- Essex can get the primary health they need.

>>Minister Helena Jaczek: Our government is committed to ensuring we have an adequate supply of physicians. Since 2003, the number of physicians in Ontario has increased by over 30%, which is more than 6,000 additional doctors practicing in our health system today. During that same time, the population grew by 11.7, the ratio of physicians for every 10,000 physicians. This includes over 2,800 family physicians and an increase of 27.6%. Over 3,700 specialists, an increase of 33.7%. We have moved forward on a number of initiatives that ensure a stable physician supply, improved retention and to enhance the distribution of physicians across Ontario.

MPP Bisson to Minister Thibeault Re: Gas Prices

>>MPP Gilles Bisson: Wow. I get the last question of the session. This is cool. Listen, my question is for the Premier. Premier, you will know as well as I do, all of this in the legislature know we drive up to the pumps and we're being gouged. The price of gas is \$1.40 a litre at a time where the barrel is \$70. It used to be as high as \$120. We're paying as much as back then. Clearly the gas companies are gouging the market. There's no way they can defend \$1.40 a litre on the price of the barrel as we see it today. Premier will you do the right thing and will you adopt our policy at least into your platform of regulating the price of gas as around Hore and the NDP Has promised in its last forum.

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, please to rise and provide the last answer in this session, Mr. Speaker. First off, I want to congratulate you on a fantastic career as Speaker, Mr. Speaker. Thank

you so much for all you do. You have been warned Mr. Speaker. With that, Mr. Speaker, I looked forward to talking about this issue on the campaign trail, Mr. Speaker, because as he knows, regulation will only make costs go up. On this side of the House, we have a record of bringing things down, Mr. Speaker, just like we did with the fair hydro plan. They have no credibility on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to move forward and talk about issues that matter to people. Thank you.