

FW: Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Wednesday, May 2, 2018

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Please see attached Cabinet Office's Transcript of Provincial Question Period for Wednesday, May 2, 2018.

MCI did not receive any questions of interest.

MSA: In a question concerning infrastructure and social housing funding for rural Ontarians, MPP McDonnell mentioned a recent incident where tenants in the senior citizen social housing development in his riding were told they were responsible for mopping and washing countertops, despite the majority of them having mobility and balance issues, because of funding cuts. In her response, the premier informed the member that the government is working with the federal government to offer more affordable and supportive housing, and that the provincial government has already increased funding to municipalities for housing.

Official opposition questions revisited the AG's pre-election report regarding the 2018 Budget, Hydro One executive salaries, horse racing, safety developments to Highway 401 between Timmins and Lambeth, and affordable housing. NDP Questions concerned funding for Guelph General Hospital, the Hydro-Rate Reduction Plan, University executives' salaries, firefighter training, and electric car charging units.

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

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Transcript of Provincial Question Period
41st Parliament, 3rd Session
Wednesday, May 2, 2018

The following is a partially edited transcript of Question Period.

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MPP Fedeli to Premier Wynne (Sousa) Re: 2018 Budget

>> MPP Vic Fedeli: Thank you and good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Well, another week, another damning report is out on the government's faulty fiscal record. This time we hear the truth from the financial accountability office. The F.A.O. Agrees with the auditor general. They, too, forecast a \$12 billion deficit for 2018-19, Speaker, twice what the government has said the deficit will be. The government did not slay the deficit as they claimed. Speaker, in fact the only thing they slayed is any credibility of trust or credibility. The government told us one thing when both legislative officers told us the truth, which happens to be a completely --Picture. Speaker, why does this government think it can get away with presenting inaccurate numbers to the people of Ontario?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I not Minister of finance is going to

want to speak to this issue in the supplementary. What I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is that we thank the financial accountability office for their annual economic and budget outlook and we're pleased Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to quote from the report that he notes that this year and I quote -- the Ontario economy recorded the strongest pace of growth since the early 2000s and that, and I quote, job growth surged last year with 128,400 net new jobs, Mr. Speaker. So the reality is our economic growth has outpaced that of most countries in Europe, Mr. Speaker, and in North America. Our unemployment rate is at a 17-year low, Mr. Speaker. Now we know that everyone has not benefitted from that, and we have made a deliberate decision to invest in the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. To invest in their care. And I thank the financial accountability office.

>> Vic Fedeli: Back to the Premier. Actually the financial accountability office was quite revealing. Their report provided evidence, Speaker, that the tale the Premier has told this House about why they're running a deficit is not accurate. The Premier said she chose to run a \$6.7 billion deficit this year, saying it was for infrastructure. But the F.A.O. Revealed, for the first time, that that is not true. The F.A.O. Revealed that the government already had a \$3 billion deficit for 2018. This government thought it could get away with that again and got caught. Speaker, now that the F.A.O. Has exposed this, isn't the Premier the least bit red-faced for being caught red-handed?

>>Minister Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we do thank the financial accountability officer for their report. He does highlight the fact that Ontario's economy is of course the strongest pace of growth since the early 2000s. He does cite the fact that our job growth surged last year with 128,400 net new jobs. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, we are leading North America, United States and Europe in terms of our G.D.P. Growth and the F.A.O. Acknowledges that some of the investments that we're making are tremendously significant to our economy and to our society, Mr. Speaker, including the benefits of supports for pharmacare and supports for skills and training. Furthermore, he has adopted the position of the auditor general, which is in dispute with independent world-renowned accounting firms, Mr. Speaker, including members of the Canadian accounting standards board. Who provided evidence and indication that the principles of accounting that are being adopted are accurate. We're proceeding as such, Mr. Speaker .

>>Vic Fedeli: Well, Speaker, the report also confirmed our job numbers to go down to 60,000 a year in the coming five years as well. That's something that was also presented in the budget. So the long-term outlook is quite different. But, Speaker, on page 15, on page 15 of the economic and budget outlook, this is where the truth is exposed, Speaker. The government told us that \$6.7 billion in deficits was for infrastructure. That is simply not true. In the F.A.O. Report they show that 3.7 billion is what the promises develop into a deficit and that \$3 billion was a hidden deficit for the year 2018-19. Speaker, 3 plus 3.7 is 6.7. They had a \$3 billion deficit. Why did they try to hide the \$3 billion deficit from the people of Ontario?

>>Minister Sousa: Be very clear, we have built lots of prudence. We have reserves. We have contingencies. The auditor general himself and the F.A.O. Has noted that we are very cautious in our assumptions that and that they're reasonable. They stated that. We are talking about two issues at dispute. One around pension assets and another around the degree of rate regulated accounting. Both of which are associated with independent auditors and experts who are saying it is absolutely fine to proceed as such. Those are policy decisions that we made, and in the case of pension assets, that is an issue that's ongoing for 20 years, even when the Conservatives were in power, Mr. Speaker. They assumed exactly the same accounting principles. We have not done anything other than provide full disclosure. They've had clean audits with the O.P.G.. The auditor general has agreed that it was accurate. We're going to proceed as such, Mr. Speaker. We have full disclosure. Full access. And we have a surplus, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Fedeli to Premier Wynne (Sousa) Re: 2018 Budget

>> MPP Vic Fedeli: Thank you. Back to the Premier. Well, look. They have not disclosed the books. They have not been in balance. They have told the people of Ontario one thing when both legislative officers have told us the complete opposite, Speaker. So I will review again, why did they have a \$3

billion hidden deficit? That's not full disclosure. That's here. It took the financial accountability officer on page 15 to show us a \$3 billion hidden deficit. They were not in balance, Speaker. They have told the House one thing when the truth is completely opposite. Speaker, I want to know the truth from this finance Minister and from this Premier. Why is there a \$3 billion hole in the budget? Why?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I just want to say to the member opposite that, when I came into this office and when we brought our first budget forward, we made it clear that we were going to increase the deficit in order to invest in infrastructure. We did that, Mr. Speaker. We stayed on track to eliminate the deficit. We did that this year, Mr. Speaker. We have a \$600 million surplus, Mr. Speaker. And we have made a deliberate decision and openly, transparently we have made a decision to invest in people in child care, Mr. Speaker, in home care, investment in hospitals, investment in tuition, free tuition for students, Mr. Speaker, and in prescription medication for children and for seniors. We've been very clear, Mr. Speaker, about our intention -- And, Mr. Speaker, the reason that we can have this discussion about our finances is that we put in place a requirement to have a pre-election report. And that is what we are discussing openly and transparently, Mr. Speaker.

>> Vic Fedeli: Well, thank heavens we had a pre-election report from the auditor general, who exposed a \$12 billion deficit instead of the nonsense the government told us. And thank goodness that the financial accountability officer came out today and explained that yes, indeed, we do have a \$12 billion deficit, not the nonsense the government told us. And he further drilled down and showed us, in that deficit is a \$3 billion existing hole in the budget. The Premier just doubled down, saying that she made a deliberate choice to go into \$6.7 billion deficit. That is absolutely not true. It's a \$3.7 billion that she's saying she's investing there. 3 billion of it was a hidden, secret hidden hole in the budget. I want to know. We all want to know. The people want to know why did it take the financial accountability officer this morning to come out and tell us? You did not slay the deficit. You have.

>> Premier Wynne: You know, Mr. Speaker, I do understand why the member opposite would be so frantic as he holds the books, that the information he's saying is secret is printed in black and white, Mr. Speaker. He is reading the numbers because we are being transparent, Mr. Speaker. And what we are not, Mr. Speaker, he has the information because we have made it available and made it transparent. Mr. Speaker, I also understand that he would be additionally frantic because he's dealing with a leader who is behind closed doors making deals with big developers, Mr. Speaker. And all the way -- On preserving the greenbelt when he's caught in the light of day, Mr. Speaker. We have consistently been open about our finances. We have consistently supported the greenbelt, Mr. Speaker. We believe that our environment is precious and once that land is gone, it's gone forever. Mr. Speaker, I understand why he --

>> Vic Fedeli: Well thank you, Speaker. The only people hiding anything in this legislature is this government, Speaker. And thank heavens the F.A.O. showed us the \$3 billion hidden deficit that this government had. And he explained why, Speaker. He actually told us how this \$3 billion hole came, and quite frankly it's no surprise to anyone on this side of the House. He has told us it's because they ran out of things to sell. He said the government will see weaker revenue gain due to a loss of time-limited and onetime revenue. That money was onetime sale of assets. They sold Hydro One. They sold buildings. They sold shares. They ran out of things to sell, and now they have a hidden deficit. They told us that it was a \$6.7 billion deficit when 3 billion of that deficit was actually a structural deficit. Built in, Speaker.

>> Minister Charles Sousa: Speaker, very quickly, it was this government that actually passed the fiscal transparency and accountability act precisely because that party -- That party did in fact hide the deficit. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we brought in the F.A.O. As well, recognizing the need to look at projections going forward and this is what we're talking about is projections, Mr. Speaker. 40 years has passed. They've only balanced the budget three times. We've done more than that, Mr. Speaker, almost twice as more. Furthermore there are public accounts. There's the actual results that are achieved. Third-quarter results have shown that we have balanced the books and we have a surplus. Debts just again made the connection and said that we are double-a raise and stable, Mr. Speaker,

because of the fact that we have done so. Furthermore we are putting forward 230 billion over 14 years for those capital improvements and we've exceeded our targets year over year, Mr. Speaker.

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MPP Gelinas to Minister Jaczek Re: Hospital Overcrowding

>>MPP France Gelinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question is for the Premier. On April 1st, the funding for a hospital bed at Guelph general hospital ran out. The hospital says it still needs the bed. It is operating at 111% occupancy. It is seeing 64,000 patients per year in an emergency room built for 45,000. Why is the Premier forcing the patients to be treated and admitted in the hallways at Guelph general hospital?

>>Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course we're monitoring situations across the province at all times in terms of issues where there is a capacity challenge. And we are addressing this, Mr. Speaker. As you know, through our 2018 budget we are investing an additional \$822 million in Ontario's publicly funded hospitals. And overall, this is a very historic increase overall, 4.6%. High growth areas obviously are looked at with an eye to improving their situation. And we work with the OHNs on a very systematic basis. We look at the need in each particular area of the province, and we ensure that the funds are available in each particular hospital. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>MPP Gelinas: Thank you, Speaker. The government funded some temporary beds during the flu season. At the time Guelph general hospital needed an extra 16 beds. The government paid for eight of these beds. But on April 1st, the government took away the funding for these beds, even though the hospitals still need them now. Why won't the Minister provide enough funding to treat Guelph area patients with the dignity they deserve?

>>Minister Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, I hope the member of the third party recalls that, last fall, we did create some 2,000 extra beds across the province. These are spaces that we did annualize in our funding to a tune of \$187 million. We're continuing to work with the OHNs, looking forward at the coming year, and we will ensure that people in this province get the care they need where they need it when they need it, and this is an ongoing evaluative process that we go through. We are listening to the needs across the province, and we will ensure patients get the care that they need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>>MPP Gelinas: Something is not right here, Speaker. On April 1st, the government took away the funding that you had given in the fall. Those eight beds are no longer funded at the Guelph general hospital. The C.E.O. of the hospital said funding for the hospital has not kept up with population growth. It is happening throughout our province. None of our hospitals. The Minister's hospital funding freezes has meant service cuts to patients. It meant that patients are treated and admitted in hallways and sometimes in bathrooms. The Premier likes to complain against the cuts from the Conservative government but when will she accept the responsibility for the cuts to the hospital funding that she alone is responsible for?

>>Minister Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the case of the Guelph general hospital, we are working with that hospital very closely. We've been in communication with the C.E.O., the chair of the board. I understand particularly pressures at this moment. We are committed to maintaining the surge beds that were announced last fall. We understand that growth pressures exist across the province. Obviously the last winter, there was an exacerbation with a very severe flu season but we are going to continue to monitor and work with our hospitals across the province to ensure patients get the care that they need when and where they need it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Tabuns to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro-Rate Reduction Plan

>>MPP Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, to the Premier. On April 19th, the Ontario energy board announced what at least seems to be good news. Hydro rates were not going up. But it turns out that this was just government propaganda, because if you dig just a little bit further, you find that actual hydro costs have jumped by roughly 10% from last year. The government is using borrowed cash to hide these true costs from the public before the election. Why won't the Premier just tell the truth, that her \$40 billion hydro borrowing scheme will send bills skyrocketing by 70% after the election?

>>Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fair hydro plan, as the member is well aware, is bringing forward and has brought forward, Mr. Speaker, a 25% reduction for all families across the province, and then that, Mr. Speaker, is being held to the rate of inflation for the next four years, Mr. Speaker. And then the long-term energy plan, Mr. Speaker, also shows costs are being pulled out of the system to keep our system reliable, clean and affordable for all people right across the province, Mr. Speaker. It is good news, Mr. Speaker, that the O.E.B. Brought forward no rate increases this year. And we'll continue, Mr. Speaker, to work with all our partners to ensure that we keep having a system that is reliable, a system that is clean and affordable, Mr. Speaker. For us on this side of the House, we made sure that we acted on it for the opposition party, Mr. Speaker. They voted against that.

>>MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Again to the Premier. The Premier is using borrowed cash to hide the true cost of hydro before the election. But background documents buried in the Ontario energy board's website show the truth. Actual hydro costs have jumped about 10% from last year. Those are the costs that Ontario families will still have to pay after the Premier's payday loan comes due. Leaked government documents show that hydro bills will rise 70% over ten years, starting after the election. Will the Premier tell Ontarians the truth that her hydro borrowing scheme drives bills up even further over the long term, not down?

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again there's a document called the long-term energy plan. I encourage the member to read it, where he will see that the actual rates are actually lower, Mr. Speaker, moving forward than they would have been even four years ago, Mr. Speaker, and where that projection would be. We invested, Mr. Speaker, in the fair hydro plan to make sure that we could reduce rates by 25% for everyone across the province, Mr. Speaker. They voted against that, Mr. Speaker. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? They have no plan when it comes to actually reducing rates. What they want to do is eliminate the fair hydro plan. They want to raise rates by 25%, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House, we brought forward a plan. We helped all families right across the province and 500,000 small businesses and farms, Mr. Speaker, and those that live in rural and northern parts of our province, they continue to see rates anywhere that have been reduced between 35. And 50% on average, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to act on behalf of the people of Ontario and helping them, Mr. Speaker, keeping a clean reliable and affordable system.

>>MPP Tabuns: Speaker, again to the Premier. Speaker, and again to the Premier. Minister of energy was positively gleeful last week after the Conservatives release add hydro plan that kept all of the worst Liberal hydro policies. The Conservative plan will keep the Liberal government's \$40 billion hydro borrowing scheme, which will drive bills up by more than 70% after the election. Conservative plan will keep private profits on our hydro bills and will keep Hydro One privatized. And the Minister of energy couldn't be happier. Why on Earth is this government celebrating the fact that the Premier's hydro policies have been endorsed by Doug Ford?

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the NDP Platform when it comes to electricity has them buying back billions of dollars in shares of Hydro One that will not take one cent off of electricity bills for Ontario families and businesses, Mr. Speaker. I don't know why they think that's a good idea. On this side of the House we brought forward a plan, Mr. Speaker, that reduced rates by 25% and they voted against it, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to first nations, when it comes to individuals living on first nations, Mr. Speaker, we eliminated the delivery credit, Mr. Speaker. They voted against that. When it comes to low-income individuals, Mr. Speaker, and their plan wasn't even mentioned until the last page, Mr. Speaker. We make -- So, Mr. Ser, let's think about this.

They're going to spend billions buying back shares of Hydro One that actually will not do anything to lower anyone's electricity bills but those billions of dollars that they spend will mean that they will have to close schools, close hospitals. What are they going to cut, Mr. Speaker ? Make sure that they can buy back a plan and a company that won't save anybody anything, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Smith to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Executive Salaries

>>MPP Todd Smith: Good morning, Speaker. My question's to the Premier. Speaker, first the Premier gave mayo Schmidt millions of dollars when she made him the C.E.O. At Hydro One and now we know that he's become the \$6 million man. Then Hydro One board gave themselves millions of dollars in raises and tried to make it impossible to hold them to account. We don't know how big the millionaires' club is, but it's \$412 million large. Finally yesterday your government, Premier, voted against reviewing compensation at Hydro One. So, Speaker, to the Premier what we really want to know is when is the Premier going to start to stand up for electricity customers in the province of Ontario and not the millionaires' club at Hydro One?

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>>Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was this government and this Premier that actually stood for families last year when we brought forward the fair hydro plan and that party stood and voted against it, Mr. Speaker. It was this government and this Premier that actually brought forward the Ontario electricity support program to help low-income individuals, to help seniors, Mr. Speaker, and it's that party that voted against it, Mr. Speaker. We made sure that we brought forward our concerns to the board, and over the last weekend, Mr. Speaker, our government urged Hydro One's board to revisit its executive compensation model and it's exactly what they're doing as the largest shareholder we welcome the board's decision to re-examine the compensation model, Mr. Speaker, which will include independent advice as well. The board's decision to increase executive compensation was done without our involvement, so changes to compensation, Mr. Speaker, and severance. That were adopted by the board were released to us March 29. We acted and we are now making sure we can have that review through the board, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

>>MPP Smith: Speaker, it was this Premier and this government that handed out the multimillion-dollar salary to the C.E.O. Of Hydro One and then it sat idly by and watched it ever increase. Only we can't see all of it, Mr. Speaker. You know, yesterday in the legislature, members on the government side were trying to justify the salary of the \$6 million man. They're trying to defend the indefensible. This government's legacy on electricity is the same as its legacy on everything. Mountains of new debt. A select few based readers that are getting rich and everyone else in Ontario is getting stuck with the bill. On Monday the Premier will send out the energy Minister to say that the compensation is being Rd. Then on Tuesday every Liberal votes against reviewing it. That's what happened yesterday and they're trying to justify the \$6 million, Speaker. Speaker, when will the Premier. Show some leadership and finally deal with the millionaires' club at Hydro One?

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We brought forward over the weekend our role as largest shareholder asking the board to revisit their executive compensation model. They're doing just that, Mr. Speaker. Because we found out about this in March, at the end of March through the management information circular. The board now acknowledges that, as their largest shareholder which is this government, unshould be engaged on such material issues and that changes needed. So while Doug Ford and the P.C.S, Mr. Speaker, would take that erratic and reckless approach and fire the board and do absolutely nothing to reduce rates, Mr. Speaker, we believe in a stable solution that exercises our authority as the largest shareholder. So with this in mind, Mr. Ser, our government will abstain from voting on the say on pay shareholder resolution at the Hydro One annual general meeting which is may 15, Mr. Speaker. To give the board the necessary time to re-examine the matter. Our government continues to focus on fairness for all people in this province, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Sattler to Minister McMahon Re: University Executive Salaries

>>MPP Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Speaker, for 15 years, this Liberal government has known about excessive executive salaries in the broader public sector but has done almost nothing to rein in executive compensation. This week Londoners learned about proposed salary increases for western university senior administrators. The Liberals have allowed boards of governors the freedom to select their own comparators to determine salaries, without any oversight to ensure that the comparators are valid. This can lead to significant salary increases far beyond what is reasonable or appropriate. Similar concerns have already been raised about Nipissing university, and we expect to hear more as university compensation Speaker, why has this Liberal government refused to put meaningful controls in place to rein in executive compensation in the university sector? frame works are posted across the province.

>>Minister Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to the member opposite for her question. It gives me an opportunity, Speaker, to not only address this issue but to put some facts around it that are extraordinarily important. So, you know, Speaker, our government froze salaries across the broader public sector in 2012. And when we renegotiated them more recently, we put some really important pieces in place. So, for example, our framework enforces strict rules that prohibit executives from receiving unnecessary perks such as prerequisite signing bonuses, retention bonuses, unrestricted severance. Because we remain committed to ensuring that fairness and accountability, in the way that these broader public sector executive frame works and pay are structured, Speaker. We did away with task housing allowances. Required and so on. I'll speak more in the supplementary about what we're doing in terms of our framework for our broader public sector salaries, Speaker .

>>MPP Sattler: Speaker, what is even more troubling is that decisions about executive salary increases are being made after a decade of Liberal underfunding of the postsecondary sector. For years Ontario has had the highest university tuition and the lowest per-student funding of any province in Canada. This has undermined the quality of postsecondary education for students and led to an explosion of contract faculty. It has contributed to deep divisions between administration and academic workers at York university and jeopardized the career plans of thousands of young people at York, with the strike now in its ninth week. Speaker, does this Liberal government believe that increasing the salaries of senior university administrators is more important than the quality of education that Ontario postsecondary students receive?

>>Minister McMahon" Thank you, Speaker. The member opposite, Speaker, in her question talked about what's more important. Ant juxtaposition. I want to say, Speaker, that as a government it's important to strike a balance between attracting really great talent, which is what we've done, and setting fair and reasonable compensation packages for the broader public sector. We remain committed to ensuring fairness and accountability in terms of how that compensation is managed, but overall, Speaker, we believe the people of Ontario have the right to know how their dollars are being spent and they deserve a clear rationale for why executives are paid what they are. That's why we implemented the broader public sector executive framework in 2016. This framework requires enhanced transparency through the public posting of executive compensation and framework so that the public can understand and appreciate and it's an important exercise in democracy and accountability, Speaker. Now have the opportunity to provide feedback as well, Speaker. We're proud of our public servants in this province. We have taken these important accountability measures --

MPP Dong to Minister Vernile Re: Ontario Place Changes

>>MPP Han Dong: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of tourism, culture and sport. For decades people have come to Ontario place to enjoy family fun, live music and build happy memories and take in the beautiful waterfront. We have been moving forward with our ambitious vision to transform Ontario place into modern, vibrant year-round waterfront destination that engage residents and visitors of all ages. Yesterday the Minister made an exciting announcement at Ontario place, gave us a sneak peek of what's to come. As a local member I feel very lucky to live so close to this beautiful space. Speaker, through you to the Minister, can she tell us what Ontarians are looking forward to this summer?

>>Minister Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Speaker, and thanks to the fantastic member from Trinity-Spadina for that question. So, Speaker, last year we made very significant progress in transforming our vision into reality. We opened the trillium park in William G. Davis trail and added 7.5 acres of green space to the waterfront. We hosted free family fun with winter at Ontario place that featured a skating rink and light installations, and I'm happy to share with you all today that we're going to keep the momentum going. This summer Ontario place is going to be hosting a music s Eries every Thursday featuring emerging artists from every genre, including indie rock, folk, hip hop and jazz. There's going to be family dance and music performances on Sunday afternoons. Speaker, we're also going to have outdoor activities such as beach volleyball and free skating on the outdoor synthetic rink. Speaker, stay tuned. I look forward to unveiling some exciting new details in the supplementary.

>>MPP Dong: Thank you, Speaker. And it's fantastic to hear that a vision in the proposed mixed outdoor and indoor features, including more green space, recreation activities like beach volleyball and a waterfront trail around the entire site. The urban park in the trail is dramatically transforming the Toronto waterfront with a new green space that celebrates the nature and cultural legacy of Ontario place. As a local member I know how important it is to gather feedback from the public, including the residents from Fort York, Liberty Village, CityPlace, Bathurst Street and surrounding neighbourhoods. Speaker, through you to the Minister. Can she tell member of this House about the next steps of Ontario place revitalization?

>>Minister Vernile: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the member from Trinity-Spadina who by the way joined me yesterday at our beautiful waterfront to announce our next milestone in the rebooting of Ontario place. So, Speaker, just a few months ago I announced our plan to design a new green space. It's going to be known as Celebration Common. It will be Toronto's newest waterfront park coming in at a size about 14 football fields. The park is going to include a children's outdoor play area, walking paths and trails, a beach area for outdoor recreation and water sports, and lots of room to host large-scale festivals. And most importantly, Speaker, there's going to be plenty of green space. Speaker, on this side of the House we believe in protecting our environment, not paving over paradise. I'm confident that Celebration Common is going to become Ontario's -- New urban backyard where people can kick back and enjoy Toronto's beautiful waterfront.

MPP Pettapiece to Minister Sousa (Leal) Re: Horse Racing

>>MPP Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Speaker, the Liberal government is trying to strong arm the horse racing industry into accepting a deal that might hurt them in the long run. Just two weeks ago, the government's sprang a massive long-term funding agreement on horse people. It's nearly 200 pages and written in complex legal language. And here's the kicker. They gave the racetracks, breeders and horse people until May the 1st to sign the agreement or else. Why is this government playing politics with horse people's livelihood and pressuring them to sign on to a 19-year agreement in the final weeks before an election?

>>Minister Charles Sousa: So, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite makes reference to the fact that we have now strengthened horse racing and breeding by putting \$105 million 19-year agreement, Mr. Speaker. We've also provided enhanced horse improvement program extended year over year by omafra. We have a new sustainability and innovation fund, \$6 million over three years to support

regional racetracks to innovate, diversify and expand the revenue sources. And, Mr. Speaker, O.L.G. is also providing additional funding to supplement those racetracks that may be experiencing shortfalls and enable long-term decisions about horse breeding. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, we've established a new board, the Ontario racing board will now be responsible for all the strategic plans and which also providing the service provider to ensure that those funds are transparent and accountable. And, Mr. Speaker. We're making it that there's going to have to be horse breeders on that board and small tracks on that board. Five seats for racetracks, five seats for breeders. And independent chair –

>>MPP Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker. Back to the Premier. The Minister of finance claims his long-term agreement, quote, will provide the stability needed to strengthen and sustain horse racing and breeding in Ontario. And yet that same Minister has approved plans to rip the slots machines out of Kawartha Downs, Ajax Downs and other community racetracks threatening their future viability. Now on the cusp of an election campaign, his officials are threatening to freeze out H people if they don't sign on to a 19-year deal. Sign it or else. The deal that they haven't had time to read. What happens if one or more racetracks refuse to sign? Will the government cut off their funding? Or will they set aside politics and let horse people have meaningful input after the election?

>>Minister Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the supplementary from the member for Perth-Wellington. The reason that we chose 19 years, Mr. Speaker, \$2 billion over those 20 years, because when you have insight in the horse racing industry in Ontario works on a cycle. It usually is three or four -- usually works three to four years before a horse, whether it's standardbred horse or thoroughbred horse -- Speaker, as we consulted widely with the industry, a thoroughbred horse or standardbred horse usually takes three or four years from the time it's born to the time it gets trained and eventually gets to the track. So anything shorter than 19 years, you don't have the confidence in the industry. What does this government want to do to make sure there's a future path for all 15 tracks in the province of Ontario?

MPP French to Minister LaLonde Re: Firefighter Training

>> MPP Jennifer French: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Volunteer firefighter Gary Kendall died in 2010 in a dangerous winter river being trained by an unregulated private trainer. The family called for a coroner's inquest. They didn't get one. No one did anything to prevent another tragedy. Five years later, firefighter hopeful Ryan Brunt died while taking a course with the same unregulated private trainer. Adam died while 11 other students helplessly tried to save him. Two unnecessary deaths. No one held responsible. Finally, after two men died the families got a coroner's inquest. I've been pushing to protect firefighter trainees for the past three years. My motion to immediately adopt all inquest jury recommendations to keep future trainees safe was passed unanimously. You said it was urgent. You said you'd take action. Premier, what's the status of the changes and actions needed to ensure no one is ever put at risk like this again. Have all of the coroner's inquest recommendations been doctored yet?

>>Minister Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, what happened in this incident is a tragedy, Mr. Speaker. My thoughts are with the families and colleagues of those two trainees who passed away. I really commend the member opposite in her advocacy on this matter and I know this is something she's worked very, very hard over the past years. Our government has carefully -- is carefully addressing, Mr. Speaker, the findings in the recommendation of the coroner's inquest into these deaths. The office of the fire marshal and emergency management took immediate action and suspended the water rescue program at the Ontario Fire College after this inquest, Mr. Speaker. Our government continues to work with the fire safety technical table where our fire safety partners. And experts meet discuss the fire safety challenges. And that table are looking at the recommendation, Mr. Speaker, and certainly -- We hope to have solutions.

>>MPP French: Thank you, Speaker. Again to the Premier. You can't suspend a training program that

didn't exist in the first place but it's been eight years since Gary died. It's been over three years since Adam died. Since this government hasn't chosen how to protect firefighter trainees I have worked for three years on this and I have figured it out for you. My bill 58, the Brunt and Kendall Act, lays out a comprehensive regulatory and safety framework to hold private training companies accountable and keep firefighter trainees safe. Alongside the families of Adam Brunt and Gary Kendall, the Ontario Professional Firefighters Association safety advocates across the province and legal experts, we have finally completed this necessary legislation to ensure deaths like this cannot happen again in the province of Ontario. It has been a long and emotional journey to get here, but here we are, with my legislation in front of us and still with time on the clock. Premier, will you promise to keep our firefighter trainees safe and ensure bill 58 passes through this House and into law before the end of the session?

>>Minister Lalonde: Thank you very much. Certainly the safety of the firefighter is very important and I want to commend them for all the work they do all across our province. We are taking action to modernize the fire safety delivery in Ontario, Mr. Speaker. Part of this modernization is to ensure our world-class firefighters have the support they need. Ensuring firefighters are fully trained and certified in their role is critical for their safety and the safety of the public. This is why we are proposing that firefighters be certified to the national fire protection association standards and this aligned with the occupational health and safety act, Mr. Speaker, which requires that employees receive sufficient training. My ministry will continue to work and I, as a government and the Minister, will work to make this proposed requirement -- As soon as possible. We will continue to engage to ensure that every single firefighter in this province are safe., Mr. Speaker .

MPP Martins to Minister Naidoo-Harris Re: Childcare Spaces

>>MPP Cristina Martins: Thank you, Speaker. My question this morning is for the Minister responsible for early years and child care. Minister, our government is committed to making sure families have access to high-quality, inclusive and affordable child care. This is what my constituents in Davenport want and expect. The underdog Ford's plan, families will receive a rebate of just \$34 a month. This proves just out of touch is he with the needs of families on the ground. Our government's recent announcement of free child care for preschool aged children from age 2-and-a-half to when they are eligible to start full-day kindergarten will help ease the financial burden on tens of thousands of families. Families will save an estimated \$17,000 per child, allow parents to go back to work when they choose and help give children the best start in life. Can the Minister expand on her announcement last week -- And what this means for parents in my riding and across Ontario and what are they looking for to access child care?

>>Minister Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hardworking member from Davenport for that important question. Speaker, the reality is that we know that parents and children are benefitting from Ontario's high-quality child care programs. But we also know there's more work to do. That's why we continue to build on our commitment to help 100,000 more children get access to quality, affordable licensed child care. Because we are building a solid foundation for child care in our province. So last week we announced that our government is investing \$78.6 million in capital funding to build more than 3,100 licensed community-based child care spaces. Think about that. We're building spaces right where families need them. Speaker, our investments are less a \$1.3 billion annual cut to child care. They promised to cut programs that ease the financial challenges families face, giving thousands of Ontario families support while Doug Ford's child care scheme.

>>MPP Martins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Minister for that answer. Last week's announcement is indeed another step forward to creating affordable and accessible child care across our province. It's clear that our government is truly transforming the way child care is delivered in Ontario. There's no question that more access to child care is critical for Ontario families. However, could the Minister please explain what makes last week's announcement so important and how this will help families in my riding of Davenport and across Ontario in diverse situations access child care?

>>Minister Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to answer the member's question. Mr. Speaker, we are taking a number of important steps to insure that every child and family in Ontario has access to a high range of quality and affordable care. Public spaces like places of worship, community centres and indigenous friendship centres strengthen our communities, and creating child care spaces in these community hubs will make them even stronger and give families access to child care right in their neighbourhoods. Just think about that. Child care spaces for families where their child will be safe and well cared for close to home. This is an important part of our commitment to invest in families and bring free child care to preschoolers across the province. The parties opposite will do nothing, Mr. Speaker, to build more capacity for child care or the workforce.

MPP Nicholls to Minister McGarry Re: Carnage Alley

>>MPP Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker. My question's to the Premier. Carnage alley got its name because of the appalling fatalities that have occurred there. In 1999 the largest vehicle pileup in Canadian history occurred in Carnage Alley. I know because I was there, but thankfully unhurt. The government of the day responded by widening the highway from Tilbury to Windsor by adding a concrete Barrier there. In 2009, this government's election had promised to widen 401 from four lanes to six lanes between Tilbury and Lambeth with the addition of a concrete median Barrier. That stretch of 120 kilometres remains untouched and with the scheduled building of the Gordie Howe Bridge in Windsor, transport traffic is only going to worsen in the coming years. Premier, you know I've advocated for this for many years and you told me and this legislature that a Barrier would be built. We need a concrete Barrier. So, Premier, what do you actually plan to do and when do you plan to do it?

>>Minister Kathryn McGarry: Thank you very much. And I want to thank the member for this question, and I know that we were together just shortly after I took over this portfolio with people for along that stretch of 401 in order to look at the issue. We will be building a concrete Barrier. And in the meantime, why we are doing the environmental assessment and continuing to do the necessary work to widen the stretch of 401, to add the concrete Barrier, we are going further than that, because I don't want to wait for the length of time it's going to take to make that Barrier. This year, we will be starting to install high-tension cable Barriers in almost half the stretch between Tilbury and London, to make sure that there's protection right away. It's going to take us time to continue the necessary work. We committed that at the time and we are continuing to move forward. The request for proposals are going out to build this immediately. Thank you.

>>.MPP Nicholls: Thank you. Back to the Premier. Carnage Alley's narrow lanes and dangerous curvatures are extremely hazardous, especially in winter. I travel this road frequently from Chatham to Toronto. As a matter of fact in 2017, there were five fatalities on that stretch. Three were from crossovers, including the fatality of a 5-year-old girl and her mother. This year on April 25th, a double crossover transport and minivan occurred. Thankfully not fatal. But accidents continue to happen on a more frequent basis. I've raised this issue several times before, while the construction on 401 between Tilbury and Highway 40 was finishing up last year. Your ministry officials stated in a meeting with the Build the Barrier group from Chatham that the contract could be opened up to include building a concrete Barrier at that time. But sadly it wasn't. My petition quickly gained more than 4,000 signatures. Premier, we need a concrete Barrier, not a cable Barrier. Why won't you build a concrete Barrier now?

>>Minister McGarry: Thank you very much, Speaker. And again this is not a partisan issue. We are moving forward in the short term to protect that length of highway as soon as we can. The member was there with the technical expert. He knows that it takes time to do the environmental assessment, up to a year or two. Then we have to do the design to widen the highway. You cannot put a concrete Barrier on a four-lane highway. It has to be expanded. Barrier on a four-lane highway. It has to be expanded. While we're doing that necessary work, we are going forward this year to make sure that that stretch of highway is protected. We've found a way to expedite the process. We will be installing those high-tension cable Barriers that are 97% effective in other jurisdictions to

stop the crossovers. Krairly, I would like to know what -- contrarily I would like to know where the P.C.S stand on this issue. We know there's no dollars for infrastructure along that area. I don't know how they're going to pay for it. Unlike Doug Ford, we're moving forward to make sure --

MPP Bisson to Minister McGarry Re: Electric Car Charging Units

>>MPP Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question's to the Premier. A number of people across Ontario, like in Timmins, are trying to buy these electric cars because they want to do the right thing. And in Timmins we have a number of people that have actually bought them. But here's the problem. Unless you charge it at home you can't go anywhere because the company K.S.I., to which your government gave the contract to to build the charging stations, is not servicing and fixing their charging units that break down. So I've got a guy who calls me the other dayeaves Timmins because wants to drive towards North Bay for something. Leaves Timmins. Can't get a charge out of the station in Timmins because it's been broke for a while and not fixed. Drives down to erlton. Gets to the earlton and finds out that one hasn't worked since last August. So he had to go back to his dad's place, plug his car in overnight so that he's able to drive back to Timmins, get his gas car then drive back down the highway to go do what he has to do. When are you going to fix these K.S.I. Units?

>>Minister Kathryn McGarry: Thank you very much. And I appreciate the question along the way because it allows us on this side of the House to talk about the great investments that we've been doing in electric vehicles in the province. We're up 120% of the strongest jurisdiction for people to continue to purchase electric vehicles, saving our environment. But we are continuing through our electric vehicle chargers Ontario program to continue to expand the number of chargers available throughout Ontario. We understand that we have had some issues along the way to make sure that the chargers are in and working. But some of the vehicles on the road now take less time to charge altogether. We are very happy to be changing over from a vehicle system that is causing. More carbon to be put in the air to making sure that we have clean vehicles moving forward.

>>MPP Bisson: Minister, the car can't move forward. It's got no charging system. The system has been broken since last August in erlton apparently from what this individual was telling me. How can you have a system in place that people can't use and boast about how your program is working is beyond me. So I ask you again, could you please get on to the people that you contracted these chargers to, such as K.S.I., to ensure that if they itall these things that they keep them operational and people don't get stranded, as my constituent did?

>>Minister McGarry: Thank you very much. And I wanted to again thank the member for the supplementary. But our pgram has provided Ontarians with incentives to help purchase over 16,000 E.V.S and over 3,000 home and workplace chargers. We expect to see the numbers grow. We understand it's frustrating those who are unable to get into use -- in to use chargers that may be broken. We're continuing to work with our contractor to get in there and expedite the process to not only install them but to actually repair them and keep them going. Because of our commitment to charging infrastructure, drivers know that they can still travel the distances they otherwise would have with a traditional vehicle. We're continuing to work with those areas. I'd like to know this from the NDP Are they going to vote for the budget -- That contains the investments that we've made in the past to continue to make sure that we have more electric charging vehicles. Around Ontario

MPP Fraser to Minister Ballard Re: Nuclear Waste

>>MPP John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of environment and climate change. There's a great deal of concern in my community of Ottawa and in the Ottawa valley about chalk river laboratories. Canadian nuclear laboratories to build a disposal

facility for radioactive waste near the Chalk River laboratories. The site would hold approximately 1 million cubic metres of low and mid-level nuclear waste and it is less than 1 kilometre away from the Ottawa river. Speaker, I've heard these concerns and I too am concerned. I worry about the risk that nuclear waste will contaminate the Ottawa river. So, Speaker, my question to the Minister is this. What is our government doing to ensure the protection of the environment and human health in regards to this proposed project?

>>Minister Chris Ballard: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the member from Ottawa South for that important question and for his continued advocacy on behalf of his constituents, because it is, Speaker, a very important issue. You know, we understand why it is such an important issue, too. And that's why experts from my ministry have been actively participating in the public commenting process as the federal government moves ahead. In fact last August my ministry submitted comments to the Canadian nuclear safety commission for the draft environmental impact statement, Speaker. The comments and concerns provided by my ministry included concerns around storm water management, the limits for contaminants and the sharing of public information around monitoring locations. Speaker, we know how important it is to get this right. That's why we're engaged with our federal partners and will continue to work on behalf of the member's constituents. Thank you.

>>MPP Fraser: Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Speaker, this is an ongoing process and it's important to ensure that our natural environment remains protected. The Ottawa river is an important source of drinking water. A natural home to many animals and species. As well as a resource -- or a resource of recreation for many. The Ottawa riverkeeper, ecology Ottawa, local first nations and individuals have expressed their concern that the proposed near surface disposal facility being built is being built because of the potential impacts nuclear waste could have on the river. Early this year my constituent Olli Henderson wrote to me expressing his concerns non-radioactive contaminants like PCBs and oxidants could fall between the cracks. How do we protect the Ottawa river in regards to the Chalk River waste disposal site?

>>Minister Ballard: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you again to the member from Ottawa South for that very important question. You know I just want to reiterate, Speaker, these are very real concerns and we need to be vigilant. I understand the jurisdictional issues with this facility, but it's still important for us to protect our communities here in Ontario. So that's why my ministry submitted comments to the federal government's proposal to ensure all precautions are being taken around this project. You know, as a result, Speaker, the province -- of our comment, the federal government changed the project to include only low level types of nuclear waste. Speaker, the federal government has also ensured -- assured us that the waste intended for disposal in the proposed project will meet all of the required international guidelines as well. Again I want to thank the member for Ottawa South for his advocacy and we will continue to monitor this project.

MPP McDonnell to Premier Wynne Re: Affordable Housing

>>MPP Jim McDonnell: Thank you, Speaker, to the Premier. Recently tenants in the senior citizen social housing development in my riding were told some shocking news. They were informed that due to necessary cuts, they would now be responsible for mopping the floor and washing the countertops. They were just handed industrial equipment and told folks get her done. Over 90% of the tenants have balance or mobility issues. Many use walkers and most are in their 80s and 90s. They deserve a safe living environment. The government has consistently short-changed municipalities with infrastructure funding cutting the Ontario municipal partnership funding neglecting the needs of rural Ontario residents. Cutting municipal transfers to such low levels that it results in making seniors an affordable housing mope. Mopping the floors really is the right way to treat the people who built this province putting them at risk and injury as. Government's spending and debt problems?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I do, I really do commend the member

opposite for his concern about infrastructure funding for municipalities in general, Mr. Speaker. We certainly have a housing plan. We're working with the federal government to put in place more affordable housing, more supportive housing. We have increased funding to municipalities for housing, Mr. Speaker, and change the flexibility that allows them to make investments. But, Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting to me that this member is standing in his place and asking a question about this when his leader, Doug Ford, informs Cornwall and said that municipalities were going to have to make cuts in order to be able to continue to infrastructure spending at all if he were the Premier, Mr. Speaker. So I really -- I encourage the member to have a conversation with his leader. Because infrastructure funding for municipalities is dependent on cuts, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't bode well for the future of --

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