

Summary of Question Period for Mon. Apr. 03/17

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MPP Brown (PC) to the Premier and Minister Sandals (TBS) – re: Sunshine List

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The C.E.O. Of the Ontario power generation earned nearly \$1.2 million last year. The C.E.O. Of Hydro One earned \$4.5 million last year. In total, the top five executives at Hydro One made a whopping \$11 million. Mr. Speaker, when people across Ontario can barely afford to keep the lights on, they can barely afford their hydro bills, how can the Premier allow these salaries that are completely out of control?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, you know the member -- or --E leader of the opposition makes a point that people across Ontario are struggling with their hydro bills. Mr. Speaker, that's why we're removing 25% from those hydro bills come this spring, Mr. Speaker. And that's why, for people in -- for people in more rural and remote communities, Mr. Speaker, they're going to see more like a 40 to 50% reduction, Mr. Speaker. We have a plan. We are implementing that plan, Mr. Speaker. We know that there are people who are burdened by their electricity bills across the province. That's why we have the fair hydro plan, Mr. Speaker, and that's exactly why it is going to reduce people's bills across the province by 25%, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. He's not just the million-dollar salaries and hydro that the Premier does not want to address. It is not just the energy sector. The government has backed up the Brinks truck for executives across all government agencies. Let's take a look at the president of union Pearson express or should -- should I say the former president Cathy Haley. She resigned March 21, 2016 but she still managed to earn \$230,000, not bad for three months' work. Mr. Speaker, how does this government manage that? How does this government allow salaries that are completely out of control? And try to justify that it's appropriate, whether it's \$4.5 million for the Hydro One C.E.O. Or \$230,000 for three months' work? Give me a break. The average Ontarian can't afford their hydro bill and they're allowing this --Not right. How does the Premier allow --

>>Minister Sandals: Yes. Thank you very much. And of course after everyone knows we

released on Friday the public sector salary disclosure, the sunshine list. And I think it's important to understand what's on the sunshine list. The sunshine list lists the salaries of Ontario's public service and broader public sector people who have been paid more than \$100,000. It's important to realize that that's not necessarily their annual salary. And in the case of people who have retired after serving in the public sector for a number of years, they may have vacation pay owing. They may have severance pay owing, and what you're seeing is not 25% or 50% or 100% of annual salary. It represents those adjustments -- On severance.

>> Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier. I appreciate why the Premier doesn't want to be on the record on what her government is paying executives. Hearing the talking points from the Minister that \$4.5 million salary's appropriate because there are things like vacation pay or \$230,000 for three months' work? Mr. Speaker, it doesn't wash. And the reality in Ontario is, you know, those nurses working twice as hard because of Liberal cuts, they're not part of this millionaires' club. Those main in a maintenance crews at schools that are falling apart. Aren't part of those raises. It's offensive. The reality is these salaries are out of control, Mr. Speaker, and I want this Premier to stand in this House and say that she supports this, that -- why she's allowed t.how can you pay \$4.5 million. Patrick Brown: To the hydro C.E.O. When nowhere else in Canada do they allow salaries like that?

>>Minister Sandals: Yes. Of course we recognize that \$100,000 is a lot of money. It's more than the average Ontarian makes, and what we have seen is that, when you look at the increase in salaries, the average salary in the last year is about \$116 more than the average salary the prior year. So not a huge shift. But what we do see each year is more and more people on the sunshine list, and of course that's because the legislation that created this in the first place, the public sector salary disclosure act in 1996, has the 100,000 threshold embedded right in the legislation. In fact where the threshold to having -- Speaker, the current threshold would be about \$150,000 and 84% of the people on the list would be dropped.

Second question on same subject

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Over 123,000 people were on the sunshine list. Mr. Speaker, there were untold thousands more missing and some would have been at the very top of that list. Mr. Speaker, why did this government choose to hide the salaries of Hydro One's highly paid executives? Are there any more members of this millionaires club? I'm sure there is. We've seen that in the top five salaries that were required to be released. How many more millionaires did this government hide from Hydro One?

>> Premier Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the leader of the opposition is asking how many and how much people are earning in the private sector, Mr. Speaker, in every publicly traded company and every corporation around the province. If that's what he's asking, Mr. Speaker, and he thinks there should be legislation that would go beyond what is already required in terms of disclosure, I think that he should say that, Mr. Speaker. I

think he knows that Hydro One is now -- has moved into being a publicly traded company. I know, I know that these salaries are high, Mr. Speaker. I know that they're much higher than the vast majority of Ontarians. I also know that people are struggling with their electricity bill. That's why we have a plan, Mr. Speaker. That's why we are going to reduce people's electricity bills by 25%, Mr. Speaker. We're actually taking action because we recognize that people are the challenged across the province.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, the **Premier** can't have it both ways. The government still has a majority of shares of Hydro One. And what they've allowed to happen with these out-of-control salaries is wrong. The **Premier** knows it's wrong. \$4.5 million for the C.E.O. \$2.9 million for the executive vice-president. \$1.7 million paid to the chief financial officer. \$1.4 million paid to the chief operating officers, and \$1.2 million to another executive vice-president. Mr. Speaker, this millionaires club at Hydro One that the **Premier** has created is wrong. Everyone in Ontario knows these pay cheques are too much and, Mr. Speaker, through you, I'm asking the **Premier** to do the right thing while they still have majority of the shares and rein in these offensive executive salaries.

>> **Premier Wynne**: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I really do understand why the leader of the opposition is taking this track, Mr. Speaker, because he has no plan and no idea how he would reduce electricity bills. So, Mr. Speaker, as I said I know these salaries are high, Mr. Speaker. We know that people are struggling with electricity bills. That's why we're going to reduce people's hydro bills, Mr. Speaker. And we remain committed to continued regulation of Hydro One. We made that quite clear, Mr. Speaker, from the outset. Hydro One is now transitioned into a publicly traded company. It's not a government agency. I would think that the leader of the opposition would understand that, Mr. Speaker. Hydro One has made changes, Mr. Speaker. In fact in the first year of their going public, Mr. Speaker, they've actually found \$60 million in savings, Mr. Speaker. So what's happening at Hydro One is becoming a better company. We knew that that was going to happen. They are publicly traded and they have to now -- they're regulated by the rules for publicly traded companies, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the **Premier**. In the entire sunshine list, with 123,000 names on it, only two people topped \$1 million. Hydro One has five senior executives making \$1 million. And that is only the ones we know about, the ones that the government hasn't hidden. There could be unfold others in this millionaires club. And we have the **Premier**, who still has a majority control, trying to have it both ways. She's allowed these salaries. The **Premier** knows that she could rein this in, but instead of actually taking responsibility she's blaming others. We heard one Minister blame G.O. Train riders understand. Now the **Premier** is trying to blame the opposition for salaries that she handed out, for salaries that she approved. They're the government. They've created this mess. Do the right thing and rein in these offensive salaries.

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Very pleased to rise and address this subject, Mr. Speaker. As the **Premier** mentioned and as the opposition doesn't seem to know, Mr. Speaker, Hydro One is now a publicly traded company and decisions over compensation are not made by But, Mr. Speaker, let's put some context into this, Mr. Speaker. The executive salaries at Hydro One Mr. Speaker -- Hydro One Mr. Speaker -- thank you, Mr. Speaker. So let's have some context here. The executive salaries -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The executive salaries at hydro(one make about 0.1% of their total budget, Mr. Speaker. So even if the member opposite cut the salaries in half, that wouldn't take one cent off a single customer's bill, Mr. Speaker. That just shows, Mr. Speaker, they have absolutely no plan and no idea on what to do in the electricity sector, Mr. Speaker. Our 25% reduction on average will make sure we help all business, family and --

MPP Horwath (NDP) to the Premier - re: Sunshine List

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question's to the Premier. The sunshine list was released on Friday and there was one very notable company name that was not on it and that was Hydro One. We know that the Hydro One c.e.o.'s salary -- the Hydro One C.E.O., rather, raked in a salary of \$4.5 million in 500% increase from the last time the C.E.O. Salary appeared on the sunshine list. Can the Premier tell Ontarians why her priority seems to be protecting the salaries and anonymity of the people at the top instead of regular Ontario families and businesses that are struggling just to get by?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, my priority is to make sure that everyone in this province gets relief on their hydro bills, Mr. Speaker. 25% reduction for every family in this province, Mr. Speaker. Electricity bill it is their homes. Relief for those small mom and pop shops on main streets in communities, Mr. Speaker. Relief for farmers. We recognize --: We recognize there are people across the province who need that relief, Mr. Speaker, which is exactly why we're put ago plan in place that the actually will reduce people's electricity bills, Mr. Speaker. People will see those reductions come the summer and that is in direct response to people's concerns about their ability to pay their electricity bills.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, by privatizing Hydro One Premier Wynne ensured three things -- that those at the top can make massive salaries, that the rest of us will pay massive electricity bills, and that she could throw a blanket of secrecy over the whole mess, Speaker. What does the Premier have to say to Ontarians who are struggling to keep up with their hydro bills and are outraged by her continued insistence -- While hiding how much top executives are being paid?

>> Premier Wynne: So, Mr. Speaker, let me once again be very, very clear. And I know the leader of the third party loves to conflate these issues. But changing the direction on the broadening the ownership of Hydro One would not take one cent off one electricity bill anywhere in this province, Mr. Speaker.

[Applause] As much as the leader of the third party would like to pretend that that was the case, Mr. Speaker. Not one cent. Not off one electricity bill. So, Mr. Speaker, we have brought forward a strategy, a plan that is going to take people's bills down, Mr. Speaker. 25% reduction across the province, Mr. Speaker, because we recognize that people need that support. The investments that we have made in the electricity system to make it clean, to make it reliable, have a cost associated with them, Mr. Speaker. We are going to reduce people's bills on top of the 8% that people have already seen. Another 17%, Mr. Speaker, because we know that they need that support.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it is disgusting that when people are suffering and some can't pay their hydro bills that we have executives at public utilities raking in millions. The C.E.O. of O.P.G. Was the highest paid public employee last year and the C.E.O. of Hydro One made over \$4 million. In Montreal, bombardier, a private company, listed to public pressure and is holding off on massive pay increases for the company's top staff after hundreds of Québécois rallied outside the company's headquarters. Here in

Ontario, people are equally outraged by the planned pay hikes for Hydro One C.E.O., especially amid soaring hydro bills. Why won't the Premier do the right thing and rein in the salaries of the executives at Hydro One?

>> Premier Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me just say again that I recognize that people across the province are struggling with their electricity bills, which is exactly why the fair hydro plan will reduce people's electricity bills by 25%, Mr. Speaker. That is the context within which we're having this conversation. We have a plan that we have brought forward that will reduce people's bills substantially. In more rural and remote communities, Mr. Speaker, people will see a reduction of 40 to 50%. So we know that people need that support. We know that they need those reductions, Mr. Speaker. At the same time the broadening the ownership of Hydro One is directly related to our ability to invest in infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, transit and transportation infrastructure that the leader of the third party does not support but which is necessary to the well-being of this province, Mr. Speaker. We are going to continue on that path. Hydro One has found \$60 million in efficiencies, Mr. Speaker. They a better run company and people will see reductions on their electricity bill this is summer.

MPP Horwath (NDP) to the Premier – Ministers Hoskins and Thibeault – re: Sunshine List

>> Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. The problem the Premier has is that nobody believes her anymore. Nobody believes anything this Premier says anymore. The Wynne government's priorities are backwards, Speaker. It's not just in the energy sector. It's health care, too. Six of the top ten highest paid public employees in 2016 were hospital C.E.O.s. Health care dollars should make it to bedsides, Speaker, not stops at the corner offices. Ontarians need health care that they can count on and they will get it if the Premier continues to allow these exorbitant salaries while also allowing hospital hydro bills to soar. When will she finally put patients' needs first, stop her ridiculous, unwanted sell-off of Hydro One and cap hospital C.E.O. Salaries so public money actually Goss patient care?

>> Minister Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I think all of us appreciate in the first instance that hospitals are independent corporations. But we expect them, as we do across governments that, when they make decisions with regards to allocation of public funds they take into consideration the opportunity and responsibility to allocate as much as possible towards frontline care. That high quality of care that they provide. It's no different than in our hospitals, Mr. Speaker. So that's why I'm particularly proud that we also, as a government, passed the public sector and MPP Accountability and transparency act. It sets out certain parameters millimetre and expectations that we do have. But we need to recognize that we need to provide our hospitals with the ability, as independent corporations, to be able to manage their affairs so that they are able to truly provide the highest quality of care and allocate resources responsibly to that effect.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the sunshine list also brilliant again this year but because of -- grew, but because of her wrong-headed decision to sell off Hydro One the salaries every executives are hidden from the public. Thanks to the Premier's meddling we don't have any idea how much public money was spent on salaries at Hydro One. How can the Premier claim to care about the mess that she's created in our public hydro system if she wolt -- won't even open the books at Hydro One? What is this Premier afraid of, Speaker ?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know, as the Premier said, our government strongly believes in ensuring public salaries are fair to employees but also reasonable, Mr. Speaker, to the public purse. When it comes to Hydro One, Mr. Speaker, and O.P.G., following the process laid out in our government's framework O.P.G. Sought appropriate comparators set for compensation at a level that is restrained but competitive for that industry. I understand the salaries at O.P.G. Can seem surprising, it is important to remember key facts, Mr. Speaker, that these are experts, technical, nuclear experts and we want these operators in our plants to be the best in the world, Mr. Speaker. So the most recent frame works for o.p.g.'s leadership team reflect performance leadership only paid out, Mr. Speaker, if the company attains certain goals during refurbishment which, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say right now is ahead of schedule and under budget, Mr. Speaker, because of the dynamic team that we have at O.P.G.. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

>> Andrea Horwath: Only a Liberal Cabinet Minister would say million-dollar salaries are restrained. Only a lib ral Cabinet Minister would have the gall to say that. The sunshine list this year reminds Ontarians that this Premier and her government are only out for themselves and those at the top. She's refused to disclose salaries at Hydro One, even though the government has yet to finish its sell-off. She's allowing millions to be fund to top hospital executives while Ontarians get less and less frontline health care -- funnelled. The people of Ontario need a leader who will fight for them, not just allow those at the top to rake in millions while protected by a veil of secrecy she has thrown over her on popular decisions.

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again we recognize that we brought forward a framework, Mr. Speaker, to help keep salaries restrained, Mr. Speaker. Talking about Hydro One, Mr. Speaker, in that time, since we've broadened the ownership of Hydro One, Mr. Speaker, they have become a better-run company, Mr. Speaker. They sure have. It's providing better service and better value both to its customers and to the province, Mr. Speaker. Just a few of the customer initiatives they've taken out in the last few months, Mr. Speaker, introduced a more active customer communication, calling customers directly with issues. Of course introducing Of course introducing a voluntary ban on winter disconnections, giving customers choice with their billing cycles, Mr. Speaker, helping them to manage their bills better. Introducing ebilling, Mr. Speaker. Working towards mobile billing. Ending the practice of secure deposits for new customers, Mr. Speaker. And last year, Mr. Speaker, that executive group. Saved \$60 million.