

Summary of Question Period for Monday May 15/17

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MPP Fedeli (PC) to the Premier, Minister Naqvi and Minister Sousa re: rushing the budget bill

>> MPP Fedeli: Thank you and good morning, Speaker. My question is for the **Premier**. Just before noon today, the government will call for a vote on the budget bill. Even though most of the members on our side haven't spoken to this bill yet. In fact only three of us have given a speech on it. If this bill passes, it will be sent to committee at 1:00 today. There will be less than one hour notice to the public to scramble here to queen's park and make a presentation on this budget. They can't come tomorrow, Speaker. It's all over at 7:00 tonight. That's what this government calls being open and transparent: One hour notice, in and out in the same day. I ask the **Premier** why, why is this debate about your budget 24 days shorter than Normal budgets?

>> Minister Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. And I -- you know, I appreciate the question the member is asking, given the fact that it's his party and his caucus who have been delaying the work of this assembly in dealing with a very important bill, Speaker. Speaker, this is -- this is a piece of legislation that will, if passed, will provide historic investment, Speaker, in our health care system and create the OHIP plus pharmacare program -- Speaker, this bill if passed will create the OHIP plus pharmacare program providing children and youth with free access to over 4,400 prescription medications, Speaker. I have not yet once heard from members opposite as to what their plan is going to be when it comes to providing for universal pharmacare for our children and youth. Speaker, the party opposite is only interested in one thing and one thing only and that is to delay the passage --

>> MPP Fedeli: Back to the **Premier**. The government doesn't want the people of Ontario to have a chance to discuss this budget. This fits right in with what the financial accountability officer said. He told us there's, quote, a broader pattern of secrecy and it's all because of political direction. He went so far as to say, quote, it is highly disappointing that instead of looking to maximize the information provided, the government is focusing on how it can restrict disclosure of information. He finishes with, quote, they are impeding the ability of MPP S to perform their constitutional duties of holding the government to account. So, Speaker, I ask the **Premier** why the rush? Why don't you want us to see what's in this budget? What are you hiding?

>> Minister Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be really, really clear as to what's going on here. We are -- the financial accountability officer. He's been given much more powers to initiate his recommendations. We work closely with him contrary to what the member's saying. And contrary to what the member's saying, they are now providing delay tactics to provide one of the most Progressive balanced budgets in history, one that provides for the people of Ontario -- One that provides support for our young

people, Mr. Speaker. Free did you wigs coming this fall and enabling our economy to grow. They're opposing the people of Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Horwath (NDP) to the Premier and Minister Thibeault (Energy) re: FAO mentioned

>> Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. My next question's also for the Premier. The leaked documents show that hydro bills in Ontario will rise by over 50%. If the Premier's borrowing scheme is passed into law. Given that this plan will actually increase people's hydro bills, Speaker, and given that the Premier is not disclosing all the facts, we have called on an independent review of the legislation by the Financial Accountability Officer for the province of Ontario. So will this Premier co-operate with the F.A.O. So that the public has the full truth, the unbiased facts about her \$40 billion borrowing scheme?

>> Premier Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have and we always will work with the financial accountability officer, Mr. Speaker. And in fact we have a very good working relationship and expanded his authority recently, Mr. Speaker. So we will of course work with the financial accountability officer. But, Mr. Speaker, the plan that we brought forward, which is not based on the document that the leader of the third party is talking about. That document was part of the development of the plan, Mr. Speaker, but it was not used in the final analysis of the plan that we brought forward, Mr. Speaker. Our plan is designed to reduce people's electricity bills because, Mr. Speaker, we had to make investments in the electricity system in this province. The fact is that the shutting down of the coal-fired plants, the rebuilding of lines across the province -- The development of clean renewable - - Electricity in this province, Mr. Speaker, has meant that there was a cost associated with that. We are spreading that cost over a longer period of time. Making structural changes to reduce people's electricity.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, we asked the Premier months ago, in fact two months ago today we asked the Premier not to ram this bill through the House. Bringing this bill in at the last minute, Speaker, especially now that we know how much damage it's going to do to Ontario families, is absolutely undemocratic. Shutting down the public's right to review this bill is not -- How a government with integrity would work. Will this Premier at least, at least allow the F.A.O. To conduct its assessment on the long-term impact of this borrowing scheme and direct her Minister to release all documents, r sing -- every single document that they relied on to put this scheme together to the F.A.O. And do it immediately?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And as the Premier said, we welcome and encourage the F.A.O. To review our fair hydro plan, Mr. Speaker. You know the F.A.O. Has already received a full technical briefing last month and we've responded to all follow-up requests for information, Mr. Speaker. So remember, though, Mr. Speaker, that it was this government that created the F.A.O. And we expanded its authority and oversight again last fall. But what's disappointing, Mr. Speaker, is that the NDP Know all this and yet they try to distract from the legislation we have tabled. We've been clear all along. Our plan is spreading out the costs over time, Mr. Speaker, and over our system. But it will reduce the burden on ratepayers today and it will share costs more evenly with future generations who will also benefit from our investment. But the NDP, Mr. Speaker, they don't want to seem to want to provide relief to ratepayers or reduce

bills by 25% if passed and they have no credible ideas to replace it, Mr. Speaker.

>> Andrea Horwath: This is nothing more, Speaker, than a new gas plant scandal. Except that this time, this time it's going to cost families 40 times more than the \$1 billion it cost them for the Liberals to buy that election. Everything seems to go up under the Liberals, Speaker. Withdraw, Speaker. **Everything seems to go up under this Liberal government, including the cost of an election. How can the Premier ram this legislation through this House without sufficient time for debate, public input and without an assessment from the F.A.O.?**

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So let's talk about what's been going up. Highways and bridges have been being built and being created. Creating jobs thanks to the Minister of economic development and work by this Premier, going up, Mr. Speaker. We're making sure that schools are going up, Mr. Speaker, hospitals, programs that go in those hospitals going up. Thanks to the leadership of this Premier and this government, Mr. Speaker, our province is being built up right across this province. You know what's going down, Mr. Speaker? If we get this legislation passed? 25% of everyone's hydro bills across this province. 800,000 families will see a 40 to 50% reduction in their hydro bills and for our low-income individuals, 50% reduction when they actually get on to the oesp program, Mr. Speaker. And let's not forget. That our first nations individuals, they're going to see their delivery charge eliminated, Mr. Speaker, but it's quite upsetting that either opposition party don't think it's important enough to vote on, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Yurek (PC) to Minister MacCharles (Government Services) re: breaches of confidential health information

>> MPP Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Speaker, I received information about additional breaches of confidential health information this time from the Markham region. Concerned father reached out to my office to inform me that, upon receiving his children's health care renewal forms, noticed something terribly wrong. The father of twins, a boy and a girl, received a health card renewals. The girl's information was right but the boy's information contained the wrong name, address, date of birth and health card number obviously from another child in this province. Speaker, this problem is widespread and serious. When frontline workers break confidentiality of private records, they'll face either fines or loss of employment. Would the Minister tell the House how many people have lost their jobs over this confidentiality breach?

>> Minister MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I was deeply concerned to learn about this privacy breach because I take privacy of Ontarians' information very, very seriously. And unfortunately some Ontario residents may have received notices containing information about another person's privacy information. It is very important to note, Speaker, though that the health card version code was not provided on the form that was sent out, and that information, the health card version code is essential to accessing ohip services. So I've been working very actively with service Ontario to get to the bottom of this, and actions are being taken to fix this issue and resume mailing of renewal notices as soon as possible. Of course the privacy commissioner was informed. Letters have been sent out to -- Families and many corrected forms have since been returned, and I will add more in the supplementary.

>> MPP Yurek: Mr. Speaker, back to the Minister. This breach of confidential health information seems to not be a priority for this government. Obviously when the Minister of health won't even respond to the question. This government has brought forth Bill 119, Bill 41 and now Bill 89 87, to give this government more access to Ontarians' personal health information. How can Ontarians trust this government to keep this information confidential when it can't even get the basics right? Speaker, Ontarians have lost confidence that this government has the ability to protect private information. Will the Minister himself take personal responsibility for this breach of privacy?

>> Minister MacCharles: Speaker, I want to assure the member opposite that both the Minister of health and I take this very seriously. It's important to note this is a printing error that occurred. A printing error in a batch of 50,000 renewal notices at that go out every week in the context of over 51 million transactions that go out from service Ontario every year. I do take it seriously. We have set up a 1-800 line for families who wish to get more information, and it's important to note again that the health card version code was not included in these mail-outs the member's asking about. And that is critical to getting health care services. And we've had some inquiries back, and I shared information with members opposite. Who have had queries from constituents and we're here to provide information to any MPP That requires further information in this regard. Thank you.