

Summary of Question Period for Thurs. Mar. 09, 2017

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Please see the select and full summaries of today's legislative question period.

MPP Oosterhoff (PC) to Minister Matthews (Digital Government) re: digital government

>> MPP Oosterhoff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, in June of 2016, your government opened up applications for a chief digital officer, a government executive whose job it would be to make life easier for people through easy-to-use online services and programs. However, it seems that this government doesn't want to actually make life easier for people, Speaker, because eight months have gone by and this chief digital officer is nowhere to be seen. Once again, the Liberals talk the talk but won't walk the walk. When will the Deputy Premier, S Minister responsible for digital government, get back to work and find a chief digital officer so Ontarians can access the services and programs they deserve?

>> Minister Matthews: Digital government. Thank you, Speaker. I want to say thank you to the member. This is the first question I have ever received as Minister responsible for digital government. So thank you. Digital government is all about providing services for the public that are faster, that are easier, that are simpler and that cost government less money. We are absolutely committed to moving forward on our digital strategy. Hiring a chief digital officer is very much part of that, and I will ask the member to be a little bit patient because, Speaker, this is an important job that we are hoping to fill very soon.

>> MPP Oosterhoff: Speaker, my question is back to the Deputy Premier. Ontario have seen the result of this Liberal government's bungling and digitization before. This government simply can't be trusted to get the job done. Let's look at the facts. Ehealth was an \$billion scandal, and the rollout of the Social Management System or SAMS was a disaster. CPIN, the child protection information network, a cumbersome system that won't even have a searchable database. Consulting costs alone on spin have cost tens of millions. What will the Deputy Premier do to ensure this government delivers a digital system that is actually a service to the people of Ontario instead of another expensive boondoggle?

>> Minister Matthews: Mr. Speaker, there are many initiatives that are already under way when it comes to digital government. And I have to say I'm enormously proud of our digital government team in Ontario, Speaker. They're doing excellent work. One example of this and one that I hope the members opposite, all the members in this House have actually taken advantage of, is the new OSAP calculator. This is a tool, Speaker that, allows people, students, elementary school students, their parents, high

school students, actually understand how generous and transparent our student assistance program now is, Speaker. What it means is that hundreds of thousands of students in this province will have access to the education because they have the ability. They've earned the right. They've been admitted but free tuition for over 200,000 Ontario students. And more supports, Speaker, more generous support. So having that calculator available so people know up front how much they can expect is a big, big step forward.