

Summary of Question Period for Thurs. May 18/17

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Date: Thu, 18 May 2017 12:03:23 -0400
Attachments: Q P SummaryMay18-17.docx (15.08 kB); 20170518 - Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript.doc (120.32 kB)

Please see the select or full summaries of today's legislative Question Period.

MPP Jones (PC) to the Premier and Minister Sandals re: BPS Executive Salaries

>> MPP Jones: Speaker, from the sunshine list, we saw the release of the salary and benefits of the C.E.O. For the central west ccac. Her benefits for last year were almost \$20,000. Up an incredible 1,000%. The auditor general has already record That 39 cents of every dollar spent at our ccacs go to administration, not frontline services. How can this **Premier** justify this massive increase in the c.e.o.'s compensation?

>> **Premier Wynne:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that we have put in place salary caps, a range of caps, Mr. Speaker. She also knows that where there are situations where the comparators that have been used -- and I don't know the details of this specific situation. I'm sure the president of the treasury board will be able to speak to it in the supplementary. But, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that where the comparators -- Are not reasonable, then we will push back on that and ask for a review of those. Mr. Speaker, we have put those caps in blast for very good reason and those ranges need to be retested, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Jones: Clearly the caps aren't working. Back to the **Premier**. After the auditor general's scathing report the Minister of health wrote a letter to all ccacs telling them and I quote, not to enhance compensation or entitlements for non-union management staff in any way, including wages, benefits, bonuses and termination provisions. Clearly the ccac in central west ignored the Minister's direction. When will the **Premier** put an end to these unacceptable ranges in executive compensations?

>> Minister Sandals: Thank you. I think what we're -- I can't comment on the particular individual -- I can't comment on -- I can't comment on that the particular individual's salary and what has happened in the particular circumstance, but what I can do is talk about the process that we are currently undergoing, which is we've asked our broader public sector partners to look at comparators that are public sector, that are Canadian, that are comparable, that take into consideration the geography, the scope of responsibility. That people have. And to not pay more than the midpoint of reasonable comparators. I can tell you that that -- Has not yet --

Here is the text of Speaker's ruling on a recent point of privilege. Question below.

>> **The Speaker:** On Monday, May 15, 2017, the member from Leeds-Grenville, Mr. Clark, raised a question of privilege concerning advertising on electricity pricing. According to the member, a number of items which were issued or authorized by the government alluded to future price cuts and other changes in the electricity sector. The member alleges that they constitute a prima facie case of contempt of the Minister of Energy because they presume a time line and outcome of a bill currently before the House.

The government House leader, Mr. Naqvi, also spoke to the matter and both members filed written submissions. Having had the opportunity to review the written notices of the member from Leeds-Grenville, the oral arguments and written submissions of the member from Leeds-Grenville and the government House leader and other relevant precedents and authorities, I am now prepared to rule on the matter. This matter is directly related to my earlier ruling on March 23rd, 2017. In that instance, the member from Simcoe-Grey had raised a substantially similar question of privilege, and based upon apparently the same materials as are in question in the current instance. Those materials are, one, an undated screen shot of a Facebook advertisement from Ontario energy. Two, a screen shot of a retweet of a similar ad to the one from Facebook showing the date March 2nd. Three, a screen shot of a retweet of a graphic containing the Hydro One name and logo showing date March 2nd. Four, an Ontario Liberal party publication of unknown permanence, referring to the fair hydro plan and, five, actual audio advertisements about fair hydro plan sponsored by the government of Ontario. In my earlier ruling, I was not able to find a prima facie case of contempt had been made out largely due to the fact, and I paraphrase, that to do so would have required me to have been capable of conducting or to have some sort of jurisdiction to conduct a legal analysis of the legislative framework that would have been necessary to produce the results alluded to in the ads and other items. Speakers do not undertake legal analysis, make legal findings or attempt to interpret the law. That is true in the present case, as it was in March. So the question of whether or not the specific piece of legislation currently before the House, bill 132, is the sole available mechanism to the government of Ontario to implement its fair hydro plan is not one that I can study or answer. Were there or are there other variable means, viable means to give effect to the electricity rate reductions, I cannot know. However, now that a bill is before the House, which has provided the genesis of the complaint from the member of Leeds-Grenville, I can examine if any of these items do what the ads did in the seminal case of the government advertising that was referred to by the member, that being the 1997 ruling by Speaker Stockwell. Let me remind the House of what Speaker Stockwell had to say. In addressing definitively worded statements in government ads about municipal reform in Toronto, he stated -- and I quote -- "How is one to interpret such unqualified claims? In my opinion, they convey the impression that the passage of the requisite legislation was not necessary or was a foregone conclusion or that the assembly and the legislature had a pro forma even inferior role of the legislative and law making process and in doing so they appeared to diminish the respect that is due to the House. I would not have come to this view had these claims or proposals and that it is all that they are, been qualified by a statement that they would only become law if and when the legislature gave its stamp of approval to them." Let me begin by examining the five items provided to me by the member from Leeds-Grenville that I mentioned before. The Ontario Liberal party ad and the Hydro One are not the responsibility of

the government of Ontario or the Minister of energy, so I accord them no value for the purpose of this particular consideration. As for the Facebook and Twitter ads, which are substantially the same, I can report that they each predominantly feature both a web address and a separate link to the fair hydro plan website. Right on the landing page of this site, it is the following language -- Ontario has introduced legislation that would, if passed, reduce electricity bills, etc. And, quote, in addition, if the proposed legislation is passed, your billets, unquote. In short, the language of this website is conditional throughout with respect to the fair hydro plan. Likewise the audio ads that the member from Leeds- Grenville provided, which are archived from links of the "Toronto star" website, direct listeners to the same fair hydro plan website as the Facebook and Twitter ads I just mentioned. I take note of the fact that the member from Leeds- Grenville advises these audio ads are aired sometime during March break two months ago. The ads make both statements, as I noted in my March 23rd ruling, but they also have to be taken as a whole. The predominant links and the references to the fair hydro plan website are just as much a part of the ad as the other statements in them. The advertising and the messaging on bill 132 has been drawn to my attention, including that provided by the government House leader, contains language that, in my opinion, is substantially differential to the requisite and superior role of the House in first passing the legislation to enact the plan. Finally, in the 1997 Stockwell ruling precedent that has rightfully become so influential in the area of government advertising, was made in a context where legislation was then currently before the House. Though the then government advertised about its application in a way that conveyed the impression that it was a done-deal. I have not had similar advertising specific to bill 132 brought to my attention. For the various reasons just mentioned, I cannot find a prima facie case of contempt that has been established in this matter. In closing, I will say that the fact that advertising and other messaging around bill 132 is conditional in nature and explicitly recognizes the need for the bill to first pass in the Legislative Assembly is, in my view, both a vindication of the direction established by Speaker Stockwell 20 years ago, and full answered agrieve advances to the member of sicko gray and Leeds- Grenville in current instance. I thank the member from Leeds- Grenville and government House lead irfor their contributions to this matter. -- House leader. Point of order. Member from Leeds- Grenville.

>> MPP Clark: Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your ruling. I'm very mindful of your ruling and what you said and I look forward to hopefully receiving a copy through Hansard today. I guess my message is to the government that, regardless of what the Speaker ruled -- We set a very --

>> The Speaker: Be seated, please. Be seated, please. The member will be seated. Order. Order. Whatever the member's feelings are about the issue, first of all if he wishes to challenge the chair, go to his House leader and ask for a confidence in the Speaker. Second of all, when the member -- when the member realizes I'm standing he sits and therefore I'm going to start the member with a warning. It is now time for question period. The leader of Her Majesty 's loyal opposition.

MPP Brown (PC) to the Premier – re: government advertising

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. It seems yesterday the Liberals launched a new ad campaign about their budget. Mr. Speaker, how much more money will the Liberals be spending on these clearly partisan budget advertisements? Can you tell us a number? Ontarians deserve to know how much of their money this government's using to sell their tired old lines.

>> Premier Wynne: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I have to say that, on this side of the House we are very happy that the budget that we have brought forward has been passed in this legislature, Mr. Speaker. Submitted across the province. Obviously the member opposite is not happy about that. He voted against ohip plus so that 4 million people -- 4 million children, Mr. Speaker, 4 mill -- 4 million children and young people will have access to free medication starting January 1st, 2018. He voted against that, Mr. Speaker, so he is not supportive. We believe that that is a very good and important thing for young people and families in this province, Mr. Speaker. And he also doesn't want us to implement free tuition for young people in the province, Mr. Speaker. He doesn't want to see \$16 billion invested in new schools in places like Ottawa, Waterloo, Thunder Bay across the province, Mr. Speaker. We think those are important investments.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier. The question was on partisan government advertising, and I can see why the Premier doesn't want to answer, because they're embarrassed of how much they're using taxpayers. From wawa to petawawa, from Owen Sound to Parry Sound, this government is wasting taxpayer money on partisan vanity ads. And they applaud. They clap when they hear about how much money they're wasting, but I can tell you Ontarians are not applauding because it's unacceptable. It's unethical. Mr. Speaker, it's unacceptable, it's unethical, it's irresponsible. They are campaigning on the public's dime. And my question, Mr. Speaker, is, for once, will they do the right thing? Will the government cancel these partisan ads that are being paid for by taxpayers? It's not right. In the world and you're spending more to promote your own selfish partisan purposes.

>> Premier Wynne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is one province in this country that has a law in place that forbids partisan advertising, and that province is Ontario, Mr. Speaker. We are the only province that prohibits partisan advertising. So, Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite again, I understand he does not want people in the province to know about ohip plus but we think it's important, Mr. Speaker. We think it's important that the 4 million children and young people in this province know that on January 1st, 2018 that they will receive free medication much it's important to their families and important to them, Mr. Speaker. We think it's important, Mr. Speaker, to implement free tuition across the province and to build hospitals in Niagara, Windsor, Hamilton, Markdale.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier, and the Premier said that only one -- Passed a law to prevent partisan ads. Well, that was before this Premier. That was before this team completely eroded the powers of the auditor general for their only partisan purpose. Right now has the auditor general saying these are partisan self-congratulatory vanity ads and we have the government saying no. The auditor general's in favour of them. Who do I trust? Do I trust this Liberal Cabinet -- Or do I trust the auditor general? Mr. Speaker, I'm with the auditor general. They are abusing taxpayers. They are abusing tax pay Tories pay for their own partisan ads. You know what? Maybe it's -- But it's not right. They need to stop

using taxpayers to sell their misguided agenda. No one in Ontario. Thinks it's right to use taxpayer money for partisan ads. Do the right thing. Pull these ads.

>> Premier Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me just remind the member opposite that, because facts still matter in Ontario, the legislation that bans partisan advertising is still in place in Ontario. And, Mr. Speaker, let me just pick up on something that the leader of the opposition said. He talked about a misguided agenda. But what is he talking about? He's talking about OHIP plus pharmacare for young people from zero to 25. He's talking about free tuition for young people from low income families. He's talking about building hospitals and schools across this province. He's talking about hydro leave across the province, Mr. Speaker. These are supports people of this province need. We have the first balanced budget in nearly a decade, Mr. Speaker. We are going to make investments in the people of this province because the people of this province have earned that support, Mr. Speaker .