

Summary of Question Period for Wed. May 31, 2017

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Please see the attached select summary of today's legislative question period. There is a delay with the full summary.

MPP Brown (PC) to the Premier and Minister Sousa (Finance) re: the new FAO report

Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the **Premier**. Thanks to the financial accountability office, we now know that Ontario does not have a balanced budget. The books, the books were cooked for an election illusion. The F.A.O. said the Liberals won't --

The Speaker: I'm sorry but that the phrase can't be used. Please withdraw.

Patrick Brown: Withdraw.

The Speaker: Carry on.

Patrick Brown: The S.A.O. Said the Liberals won't be able I quote to balance the budget without significant policy adjustments. I repeat significant fiscal policy adjustments. What does that mean for Liberals? It means either hidden new taxes or frontline service cuts. So, Mr. Speaker, my question to the **Premier**, given what the F.A.O. Has clearly said, what will it be?

The Speaker: Question.

Patrick Brown: Is it going to be new taxes or is it going to be cuts to frontline service?

[Applause]

Premier Wynne: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the work of the financial accountability officer. I was --

The Speaker: The member from Leeds- Grenville will withdraw. The person that continues that trend. It's un-parliamentary and I won't accept it. **Premier?**

Premier Wynne: You know, I was pleased, Mr. Speaker, that his economic forecasts are broadly in line with ours, showing strong economic momentum in 2017 and 2018 and confirming strong job gains, Mr. Speaker. His analysis is also in line with the major Canadian banks and financial institutions, and they also predict Ontario will continue to lead Canada in economic growth, Mr. Speaker. That is very good news for the people of Ontario. Our unemployment rate is at the lowest that it's been in 16 years. Great news. And has been below the national average.

The Speaker: Answer.

Premier Wynne: For the last two years, Mr. Speaker. So I thank the F.A.O. for his report and, Mr. Speaker, we've got a good strong outlook and he agrees with that.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the **Premier**. And I get the **Premier's** talking point is to thank the F.A.O., and that may sound good, but the reality is the F.A.O. is calling this government's budget a charade, a sham. You know, look at what has actually been said. The F.A.O. Projecting continued Ontario budget deficits over the next five years. I quote -- 2017/18 F.A.O. Projects a deficit due to more taxes and a \$3 billion boost from onetime nontax revenues. Ontarians will not be fooled. The F.A.O. Is saying your numbers do not add up. Ontario has -- does not have a balanced budget. This is a significant deficit. And if I'm supposed to believe, if I'm supposed to believe the F.A.O. Or this Liberal government, I'm with the F.A.O.. Nonpartisan legislative oversight.

The Speaker: Question.

Patrick Brown: Is calling the government out. Will you do the right thing? Will the **Premier** admit we still have a huge deficit in Ontario? The Speaker: **Premier?**

Premier Wynne: Minister of finance.

The Speaker: Minister of finance.

Minister Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question from the member opposite, recognizing that the F.A.O. Has also revised his numbers from the spring to the fall, increasing the economic growth that the province of Ontario's been having, recognizing the trend are improving over time. The F.A.O. Max reference to that, Mr. Speaker. An independent work -- have also assessed it and we have actually taken their projections, papered it down in order to be -- tapered it down in order to be prudent. What's more important, Mr. Speaker, is the actual numbers. And the actual numbers year over year have always exceeded our budget and our targets. This coming year we project a deficit of \$4.5 billion. It's now down to 1.5 billion and improving, Mr. Speaker. [Applause]

The Speaker: It's going to calm down. Final supplementary.

Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the **Premier**. The Minister of financing is saying all that counts is the actual numbers. The F.A.O. Is saying we have a deficit well beyond \$5 billion. So how is it possible that we've got a **Premier** and a Minister of finance has the audacity to say to people of Ontario we have a balanced budget when we don't? The nonpartisan legislative oversight is saying your numbers do not add up. I want to make sure the government tells the truth to Ontarians. Is the F.A.O. Correct that your numbers do not add up? Is the F.A.O. Correct that we don't have a balanced budget?

[Applause] The F.A.O. is correct that Ontario's economy is improving. The F.A.O. Is correct that we are trending downward. The F.A.O.'s correct that our debt to G.D.P. -- And those are projections by the F.A.O., which we actually do appreciate. In fact we appreciate others and their input so that we can then taper and --

Minister Sousa: Speaker, we've put forward a budget and it's a living document. We

always overcome challenges that they perceive and take those efforts. The member opposite is voting against pharmacare for children. He's voting against increased funding for hospitals. He's voting against increased funding for schools. He's voting for the elimination of free tuition for our students, the very measures that improves our economy that enables tous come to balance.

MPP Fedeli (PC) to Premier – FAO Report

Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for Premier. The headline on the financial accountability officer's release this morning says it all. Quote -- F.A.O. expects steady deterioration of Ontario's budget deficit. Despite the government announcing a so-called balanced budget, the F.A.O. confirms this is only by using onetime revenue from the sale of Hydro One. He confirms this is also due to using revenue from the onetime sale of buildings such as the O.P.G. Headquarters across the street. Speaker, what business in Canada would be allowed to pull the wool over their investors' eyes? In the real world, people have gone to jail for pulling a stunt like that. So I ask the Premier. Will you Fess up to the taxpayers and provide the real state of Ontario --

[Applause Premier Wynne: Minister of finance.

Minister Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the question because it does give us an opportunity to reinforce the tremendous growth in Ontario's economy, outpacing Canada -- Because of these initiatives and efforts we put forward a budget that not only is a balanced and balanced this year, next year and the year after that. Public accounts coming forward in the fall will reinforce that we've outperformed yet again even last year. Those are actual numbers, Mr. Speaker. But the member opposite is asking a question -- I say the member opposite is asking these questions because he and his party are uncomfortable with the warning. By increasing minimum wage. He even had the audacity to say --

Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. Back to the Premier. We know the government only announced a balanced budget through these onetime sales. They're going to run out of things to sell next year. So the financial accountability officer said the budget deficit will continue to deteriorate, quote, without additional government measures. We saw the government trying to balance the budget on the backs of frontline health care workers. They fired 1,600 nurses. We saw the government trying to balance the budget on the backs of students. The Liberals have closed more schools than any other government in the history of Ontario. So my question is to the Premier. Which group is she going to target next to continue this charade of balanced budgets?

Minister Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we're always looking at our economic policy, putting forward fiscal plans that enable tous grow our economy. We are of course looking at assets that are unproductive and purpose us to reinvest, Mr. Speaker, in making even greater contributions to our economy, and that is exactly what is happening. And part of that contribution, Mr. Speaker, in this budget is to increase support for our health care by \$11.5 billion, which that member opposite is voting against. He's 1r0e9ing against an additional 9.5 billion dollars more into our education. He's voting against pharmacare, free medicine for all young people under the age of 25, Mr. Speaker, and he's voting against free tuition for our students. He's voting against the very measures that enable our economy to succeed. As I said before he is distracting from the issues around

minimum wage and that is what affects the people of this province. We are talking about a plan for the people of Ontario for today and tomorrow. [Applause]

MPP Tabuns (NDP) to Premier and Minister Thibeault (Energy) on Hydro ads

Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Again to the **Premier**. And we are voting against soaring hydro bills. Make no mistake.

[Applause] Make no mistake. The **Premier** is focused on nothing but her own political fortunes this session. She's barrelled ahead with a massively unpopular sell-off of Hydro One. She's allowed hydro rates to skyrocket. She's ramming through a \$45 billion borrowing scheme that the F.A.O. says will do not nothing but drive hydro bills even higher. And she's forcing private companies to do some sneaky political manoeuvring for her in their bills. Why does the **Premier** get that she can't win an election or improve her poll numbers by continuing to make decisions that sound out the people of this province?

Premier Wynne: Minister of energy.

Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased that it's this **Premier** and this government that's bringing forward a plan that's going to be reducing bills for people right across the province by 25%, Mr. Speaker. But let me quote Ontario regional chief Isidor Day – “The elimination of the delivery charge will assist our citizens by reducing energy poverty in our communities. It also represents recognition for the use of the land and the development and expansion of the provincial energy grid. Today's commitment by the Ontario government is commendable and allows the path forward for the greater quality of life for first nations in Ontario.” That is what they are voting against, Mr. Speaker. Let me quote Ava Hill – each one of our community members will benefit from Ontario's fair hydro plan. This is a step towards reconciliation and recognition of our inherent rights as treaty holders. That is what they are voting against, Mr. Speaker. We are making a difference for every family in this province. That is what the opposition is voting against today, Mr. Speaker.