
PREMIER WYNNE'S INTERVIEW WITH CFRB

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Speaker(s): Premier Kathleen Wynne

CFRB: We welcome to the show the Premier of the province of Ontario, Kathleen Wynne. Good morning.

PREMIER WYNNE: Good morning Jerry.

CFRB: Well try and start on a point of agreement here. Do you like Motown?

PREMIER WYNNE: Love Motown. Absolutely.

CFRB: Let's see where it goes from here then. It's a good start.

PREMIER WYNNE: It's a good start.

CFRB: Yes, it's a good start. And I guess you and I are getting together on Sunday. We'll talk about that in a bit.

PREMIER WYNNE: Yeah, I'm looking forward to it Jerry.

CFRB: Alright, although, she'll be the host.

PREMIER WYNNE: I'll be asking you questions on Sunday.

CFRB: I'm ready. Ok, let's start with hydro obviously. Here's a problem I'm having with the debate we've all been having this week – and we're talking about the 8 per cent reduction in the tax and then we're talking about yeah there was this 10 per cent program over here. To me that is all just nibbling around the edges. The real problem is that we're massive overcharged on the base price as it is as result of you foisting what I think are useless and expensive windmills onto communities that didn't want them in the first place. How are going to fix the real problem, which is the cost of electricity?

PREMIER WYNNE: Jerry, you know that we made a very challenging decision in Ontario to shutdown all the coal fired plants. And that has meant that this year, hottest year on record, we didn't have any smog days in Ontario. People can breathe easier, literally. That actually -

CFRB: But that didn't require windmills. You could have built those gas plants.

PREMIER WYNNE: We'll it's replacing the power. The windmills, the wind turbines and the solar and the renewable energy – all of that is part of replacing that power because the other reality is we had a very unreliable grid when we came into office in 2003. We've had to invest in it. You remember in that time period we had brownouts and blackouts. We've actually had to invest in more than 10,000 kilometers of

line, Jerry, to make sure that when people turn the switch on their wall, the lights come on and we don't have brownouts and blackouts. And there's a cost associated with that, right.

CFRB: But with all respect, we get six per cent of our power from those windmills. We're spilling water at Niagara in order to pay off the contracts for those windmill people, whether we get the power or not, and we get clean power from gas plants, but you didn't build them.

PREMIER WYNNE: We did build gas plants. We actually built 19 of 21, so we did build gas plants. Again, that part of the replacement. But the other thing is that we've created an industry in Ontario that is an export industry that is because of the decision around the renewable energy. There are thousands of people working in the turbine industry in Ontario and in clean tech because of those decisions.

CFRB: Yeah, but not efficiently – at an expense by the way. Bonnie Lysyk, the Auditor General, said that overpayment of Ontarians of \$37 billion. So we get to a number people understand – 7,400 per household.

PREMIER WYNNE: So, Jerry, here's the thing. We, as I said, go back the decision that we made to shut the coal fire plants – biggest climate change, pollution reducing initiative in North America. We made that decision; we did that in Ontario. Other jurisdictions around the world – not just in the United States, but around the world – are looking to us and saying, you know what, we've got there; how did you get there; what did you do?. So we made that decision; the air is cleaner. We have a 90 per cent clean electricity grid. And the reality is other jurisdictions are going to be working to catch up to us, Jerry.

CFRB: We didn't have dangerous air before. You closed those plants.

PREMIER WYNNE: We did actually.

CFRB: No we didn't.

PREMIER WYNNE: We're are saving \$4 billion in health costs because the air has been cleaned up and kids with asthma, people with asthma, people with repertory diseases are more able to breathe easily because of that decisions.

CFRB: It's nice to care about kids with asthma, as oppose to kids with autism.

PREMIER WYNNE: Hold on. I care both kids with autism and with asthma Jerry. And we can talk about that if you want. Do you want to talk about that?

CFRB: We'll get to that. But I want to stick with hydro thing for a minute. You are saying we save \$4 billion. We spent \$37 billion to do it.

PREMIER WYNNE: Again, the auditor has a perspective on the investment – and those are costs over a long period of time, Jerry. In the interim, as I say, we've taken the largest imitative and I acknowledge – This is the fundamental here. I acknowledge that there are costs associated with decision that we've made. We recognize that. So, for example, since I've been Premier, we've actually renegotiated for example the Samsung deal so that billion dollars were taken out of that deal. We changed that contract.

CFRB: We could have gotten out of that deal.

PREMIER WYNNE: We changed the contract. There were 200 jobs at stake as well.

CFRB: But when we are haemorrhaging money, saving 200 jobs for billions of dollars is an economic mistake.

PREMIER WYNNE: What I'm saying is we took billions of dollars out of that deal. We've taken debt retirement charge off people's bills. We've made the changes that we announced in the throne speech about the provincial portion the HST. We're recognizing that people in rural communities need on top of that 8 per cent another 12 per cent, so 20 per cent, and we recognize that businesses need support so we've expanded the number of businesses that can save up to 34 per cent. But I recognize Jerry that there have been costs associated with what we've done and we need to find way to help people to deal with those costs. I acknowledge that.

CFRB: Let's talk about education here. We have increased the cost of education from \$10 billion to \$25 billion since your government came in. Inflation would have been 44 per cent, but that's something like 250 per cent. We have 70,000 fewer students and we are failing in math and doing well in English. We are getting less education for more money. Why is that?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well so, let me just push back on what you said about math and English. So the literacy and – it's not just English either. It's French as well. So literacy skills. In fact, the test scores for kids across the province have gone up since we came into office. They are flattened in math and going down in some grades and we're really concerned about that, but the point about the testing is to get that information so that we can put the remedies in place. And you know, we've got an education system in this province Jerry that draws people from all over the world, to look at it, to see how we integrate kids, to see how we create a level playing field. I've been, as you can imagine, I've in every corner of this province, both as the Education Minister and now as the Premier and I can tell you, you can go into a school in the far north in Ontario, in communities in the eastern and the western part of the province and you'll see the same well qualified teachers, you'll see the same resources and the same excellent classrooms. Now the one place that's not true is on our reserves and we're working with the federal government and with First Nations to bring up the quality of education on reserves because there's a huge gap there.

CFRB: But we already spend more money on First Nations education per student than we do on for the first of us --

PREMIER WYNNE: No no no no no no no --

CFRB: Yes we do.

PREMIER WYNNE: That's just not true.

CFRB: I've looked the numbers up. The federal government --

PREMIER WYNNE: -- there's a \$4,000 – no Jerry, there's a \$4,000 per student at least gap between what we've spend provincially and what the federal government spends on reserves.

CFRB: Okay, but the government numbers actually disagree with you, but let's get back to the other number directly affecting people in this province. We have gone to a -- from \$10 billion to \$25 billion with 70,000 fewer students. Why the massive increase in expense when we're not getting better education results?

PREMIER WYNNE: You know when our government came into office under the previous Premier in 2003 one of the things that we were really intent on rectifying was the damage that was being done to the education system. So you're right. We've improved education in Ontario. There are more education workers. More teachers. Kids have full day kindergarten --

CFRB: --That doesn't mean we've improved education. That means you've hired more people.

PREMIER WYNNE: No. It means that kids -- kids can go to school, full day kindergarten, the research is there. They are better ready for grade one having been to full day kindergarten in both the English system and the French system and in fact, we looked at the French system because for a number of years the French system in Ontario had already had full day kindergarten and we saw they were having better results. So in fact, you're right. We have rebuilt the education system because it was being denigrated by the previous government and the results are very, very good. Can we continue to improve? Absolutely.

CFRB: It's more expensive. I think it's more expensive because you keep shovelling money to the unions and buying off the unions. You gave money. This is unbelievable. You gave money to the teachers' union to pay their expenses to negotiate. That's their job.

PREMIER WYNNE: Well so here's the thing. We have more teachers and more education workers in the system and I know there was a discussion about those expenses and we need to make sure that all of those are accounted for and we understand what those dollars were for, but the big increases in the system Jerry have been about putting more supports in place for kids with special needs. You talked about autism in the country and in the world than there has been in the past so that means there has to be more supports in place, there has to be more ---

CFRB: Then why did you take the supports away when the experts told you not to and you came on this station and told Ryan Doyle you were listening to the experts.

PREMIER WYNNE: And we have listened to the experts and we changed the implementation of the program.

CFRB: But they told you not to do it. You weren't listening to them.

PREMIER WYNNE: Well actually there were lots conflicting opinions, but we listened to -- you know who I listened to? We listened to the parents and we listened to the parent--

CFRB: Well they don't say you did.

PREMIER WYNNE: Well that's why there's another \$200 million in the system and it's why kids are getting -- we've put the \$300 million, there's another \$200 million so that families can actually access dollars and spend those dollars in the way that they want to and find the services that they need and that's exactly what the parents said to me. How do we work with you so that there's more possibility for

direct funding and that's exactly what we're doing. We're working with those families who came to us and said we like that you're putting more money in, but you're not doing it in the right way. Let us work with you and they're working with us.

CFRB: All right. You've talked a number of times here about how you're proud of the fact that you've hired more people in the government. Macleans magazine this summer ran an article, I'm sure you saw it. How Kathleen Wynne has Ontario going backwards and one of the things they talked about was we've lost 347,000 manufacturing jobs since the Liberals took office, but we have gained 368,000 people working for the government that anybody with even a soft grip on economics knows that's not a sustainable thing. That's – you can't grow government while we're going in the other direction in the private sector.

PREMIER WYNNE: So let's talk about because I know you talked about jobs a lot on your show and I'm glad you're doing that –

CFRB: Thanks for listening.

PREMIER WYNNE: Only three provinces. That's Quebec, Ontario, British Colombia are going to see job creation this year. You know, Ontario's economy is one of the strongest in the county. Our growth is almost 3% so we're doing well. So since the recession Jerry, Ontario has created almost 600,000 net new jobs. I know you've heard that number. But here's the breakdown of that. 75% of those jobs are in the private sector and that's really important because you and I know because what you said first is absolutely true. It's not sustainable for government to be creating all the jobs. What government has to do is create the environment that will mean that, for example, a GM, will actually stay in Ontario and keep those jobs and create more jobs. So it's really an important marker for me that of the nearly 600,000 net new jobs 75 percent are in the private sector.

CFRB: Well, it's still out of balance, in my view. But you talk about building a stronger economy. Governments should create the environment; you are right. They shouldn't be creating the jobs. But we're 306 billion in debt; you're going to increase it. There isn't a plan to do anything about that. And so here's my question. Why should young people -- the sons and daughters of people listening right now -- why should my children plan a future in Ontario when all they're going to do is pay way too high a whack of their income to pay off this unbelievable debt you've built up?

PREMIER WYNNE: So, I am so glad you're asking me that question because I remember you did a show on that, you did a riff on that, about why should your son or why should a kid stay in Ontario. So, you're right. There is a debt and there is a deficit, and we are on track to balance our budget, so eliminate the deficit next year. And then what I've committed to is then we see the debt to GDP go down. So we see economic growth; we have to keep fostering economic growth. And in that way the debt to GDP goes down. And I agree with you Jerry, I don't want to saddle my kids and my grandkids with a burden into the future, in the same way that I don't want to saddle kids in this province with no retirement security. And I don't want to saddle them with pollution in the air and pollution in our water –

CFRB: Okay, how are you going to pay off \$306 billion then? I didn't hear a plan.

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, I just told you the plan. I just told you that –

CFRB: No, you said you have a plan. It's going to take massive cuts in government in order to pay off that kind of money.

PREMIER WYNNE: I think you said that when we were dealing with the deficit and we have gotten to the place where next year we will balance the budget without cutting and slashing across government. Every ministry has had to constrain. We've had very difficult discussions with our employees. They were held to net zero increases over the last two years. They haven't –

CFRB: Well, we heard that once from McGuinty and it turned out not to be true.

PREMIER WYNNE: Sorry, say it again?

CFRB: We heard that once from McGuinty and it turned out not to be true.

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, but the thing is because we've done those things, Jerry, we're going to balance the budget next year. So that was my responsibility. But at the same time, Jerry, when I came into this office, we had a need for increased development and investment in transit. We had hospitals and schools and roads and bridges around the province that needed to be repaired and needed to be built. And the number one ask that municipal leaders had when I came into this office was increased and sustainable spending and investment on infrastructure. And you know you can't –

CFRB: So that's a nice answer on how you're going to continue to spend, not on how you're going to continue to do something about the debt.

PREMIER WYNNE: No, no. I told you that we constrained cost and we're on track to balance the budget next year. We made those decisions and they were very tough. And you know the program spending in Ontario is the lowest in the country per resident, per citizen in Ontario, per Ontarian, the lowest program spending.

CFRB: And yet we're hemorrhaging and going further and further into debt somehow.

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, that's why I talked about the infrastructure, because we did have a need to invest in infrastructure, and so there is a long-term cost associated with those investments. But if we don't do that, you know, if we don't make those investments now then in 20 years your equivalent will be talking to my equivalent saying, why didn't they 20 years ago build the transit that we need in the GTA? Why didn't they 20 years ago build that highway in the north that we need? And they'll be cursing me because I didn't do it, you know? So that's why we had to make those investments.

CFRB: So we're not going to fix the debt. I'm going to ask you a personal question.

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, we are going to balance the budget and that leads to being able to deal with the debt.

CFRB: Okay, I wish you would start dealing with it before the election instead of – you know, parties on both sides of the equation, all three parties, will magically pretend to balance the budget on election day.

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, I'm balancing the budget next year, Jerry. There's not an election until 2018. So we're going to be well ahead of that timeframe.

CFRB: Okay, this is kind of a personal question.

PREMIER WYNNE: Okay.

CFRB: The polls say there's no way your party can win an election unless you resign. How does that feel?

PREMIER WYNNE: So I know you have to ask that question, and you're doing your job, and you need to ask that question. I respect that. I respect the job that you do. I was elected in 2014 on a plan and a commitment to the people of the province. We're mid-term in that plan, Jerry. You know, we have worked very hard to make sure that kids can go to school and that they can afford post-secondary education. We're putting in place free tuition. I've worked very hard to make sure that we have a better retirement security plan for people when they retire. And as I said, I made a commitment to make investments in infrastructure, roads, bridges, schools, hospitals around the province. I'm midway in that work, and so I'm going to complete that work and we'll go to the polls in 2018 and people will decide. But I made a commitment to the people of the province and I'm going to make good on that.

CFRB: Alright, are we still talking on Sunday?

PREMIER WYNNE: We are. Absolutely.

CFRB: What are we doing?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, I'm hoping I can ask you – first of all, I want to ask you about the job that you do because I think it's really interesting to people, how you prepare for it because –

CFRB: No, I mean what's the event because they're going to make us cut off here in a second because I've gone way over time with you.

PREMIER WYNNE: I'd love to know what you do in my chair. We're going to Word on the Street.

CFRB: Yeah, which is?

PREMIER WYNNE: We're going to be at Word on the Street down by Harbourfront and I'm going to have you on as – because I'm going to be hosting an hour from 12 to 1 I think.

CFRB: On Sunday.

PREMIER WYNNE: On Sunday.

CFRB: An event having to do with books and literacy, et cetera.

PREMIER WYNNE: Absolutely.

CFRB: That's an area where we will have some agreement.

PREMIER WYNNE: Absolutely (laughs).

CFRB: Alright, Kathleen Wynne, thanks very much.

PREMIER WYNNE: Look forward to it, Jerry. Thanks.