

MEDIA EVENT: MPP SYLVIA JONES ON PARTISAN ADVERTISING BILL

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MEDIA EVENT: MPP SYLVIA JONES ON PARTISAN ADVERTISING BILL March 29, 2017

Time / Location:
9:30 a.m. / Media Studio, Queen's Park

Speakers:
PC Deputy Leader Sylvia Jones

Summary:

- Earlier this week, MPP Jones introduced PMB 112, which she says, if passed, would put an end to taxpayer funded partisan advertising. The Bill will be debated tomorrow afternoon.
- She said that in 2015, the government changed rules around government advertising that removed the auditor general's power to reject ads that promote government policy.
- Jones said that since 2015, the Auditor General has reported that taxpayers have paid for millions of dollars "in (the Auditor General's) own words; misleading ads that do little more than sell Liberal policy". As an example, Jones cited \$18.1 million she says the government spent to promote the ORPP. She also said that after the cancellation of the ORPP, the government spent nearly \$800,000 on radio ads promoting the federal CPP.
- She calls the recent ads promoting the fair hydro plan, which aims to reduce hydro bills by 25%, a series of "vanity ads" that have been done using taxpayer money.
- Jones says the hydro plan ads represent "a million dollars going towards premier Wynne's re-election campaign. This is taxpayers' money that should be going to important issues. It could be used to provide desperately needed hydro relief for families, businesses or hospitals; or help increase awareness of the dangers of fentanyl abuse."

Media Attendance:

Print – 2
TV – 1
Radio – 1

Media Outlets:

Ferguson – Star; Zochodne – QP Briefing; Lewkowicz – Newstalk 1010; Wong – CP24;

Questions:

Q: Lewkowicz: The Liberals made the advertising changes in 2015 - Couple of years ago. Why did your party not bring this forward sooner, as opposed to, you know, a year before the next election.

So, what we're seeing is an escalation in how much spend in advertising, particularly related to partisan priorities. So we're, we're just trying to stop the loophole.

Q: Zochodne: I haven't had a chance yet to read the bill itself, but does it have anything that addresses the simultaneous running of both government and party ads, that I think this happened last week, where there - the Liberal Party was handing out flyers for the hydro plan while the hydro - the fair hydro plan ads were running on the radio. So is there anything there that would, like, ensure that people know which is which,

or that one can't run while the other's running?

Yeah - the piggy pat, the piggybacking on the two campaigns. I think what you will find is if the Auditor-General's powers are returned or restored, then you wouldn't have the government advertising happening. If the Liberal Party wants to spend money promoting their policies - have at it. They can do that - but they shouldn't be using taxpayer dollars for it.

Q: Lewkowicz: Can you just talk about - elaborate - what specifically about this I don't think makes it partisan. And your thoughts on their argument that, you know, they're just trying to warn people so that they can budget ahead.

So - ah, I'll give you an example: when, when there's a government ad campaign that promotes "be a donor". You proactively have to go to a Web site; you have to sign up; you have to do something in order to participate in that campaign. This advertising campaign on their hydro scheme is quite the opposite: regardless of who you are in the province of Ontario, you don't have to do anything to implement the coming changes. And to me that's the, the egregious part of how they're promoting what is a policy, and not an action that needs to happen on the part of the, of the Ontario resident.

Q: Ferguson: So, it's totally different from your flu shot ads; your Zika virus warning ads – those you're good with?

In those cases you have to do something - you're educating people, you're saying: go to this Web site; sign up to become a donor; make sure you get your flu shot, because these are the following reasons why it will assist you. There is no benefit. There is no action needed on behalf of the listener or the reader when they see those ads - all they're seeing is their money flying out the window, courtesy of the Lynn, the ah, Wynne Liberals.

Q: Lewkowicz: Do you buy the argument that they're trying to inform people so they can plan ahead on their budget.

If that truly was a valid argument; then why weren't they promoting the fact that their - the Hydro was going up, for the last five years? They didn't do that. And there's far more planning that needs to happen when your hydro rates are going up by 30, 40, 50 percent. Thank you.

N.B.: Comments captured are not verbatim quotes

Prepared by:

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