

Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript - Monday, November 28, 2016

From: "Stinson, Jeffrey (CAB)" <jeffrey.stinson@ontario.ca>
To: "@CAB-ProvLegQP" <provlegqp@msgov.gov.on.ca>
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Transcript of Provincial Question Period
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>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of energy. This morning's Ontario association of food banks released their annual hunger report. This year it included a special feature called "Shedding the light on energy poverty in Ontario." The report notes and I quote -- Ontario's hydro rates are rising faster than any province in Canada or even the United States, and an 8% government rebate isn't stopping that. The report goes on to say, I quote -- Ontario's food banks are seeing an increase in the number of clients who say they simply cannot keep up with their rising hydro bills. I fear this trend will only continue under these Liberal policies. So, Mr. Speaker, given this astonishing report from the Ontario association of food banks and their annual hunger report. My question to the Minister of energy is what will this government finally do to help?

>> Min. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the Ontario association of food banks are an important partner and they do extremely important work right across our great province and I know the Minister of housing and poverty reduction will want to comment on this later, Mr. Speaker. But our government is committed to combating poverty and food insecurity and that's why we've invested \$5 billion in affordable housing since 2003, Mr. Speaker. We've raised the minimum wage and we've done more, Mr. Speaker. But I get, Mr. Speaker, that there are families in this province that are vulnerable and are continuing to struggle, Mr. Speaker. And that's why we want to ensure that we make this access to our clean and reliable electricity system also affordable, Mr. Speaker. We've introduced the oesp program back in January, Mr. Speaker. That will provide up to \$600 O bill rebates, Mr. Speaker, for many of these families. \$900 for seniors, Mr. Speaker, and there's also the low-income energy assistance program, Mr. Speaker. There are many programs out there and I know we've got more we need to do. Thank you.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of energy directly. Because the Minister of energy mentioned low-income energy assistance program. Well, the report actually referenced that. It says that is insufficient. To put this simply, if you are a single person working full time for a minimum wage, you are not eligible for leap in a rural area. And, Mr. Speaker, we're the highest number of hydro customers struggling with their bills? In rural Ontario. They're not eligible. Mr. Speaker, according to the report. Accessible aid programs do nothing for struggling attempt -- families so the Minister has just raised their program highlighted in their report as being insufficient. What are you actually going to do to help families?

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The programs that we've brought forward, Mr. Speaker, are helping families. We've helped over 145,000 families get on the O.S.P. Program, Mr. Speaker. We want to see over 300,000 families get on this program, but unfortunately in on -- Mr. Speaker on that side of the House they're not promoting it the way they should to make sure we can get every family on it as we can, Mr. Speaker. We've got many, many programs that are out there. The 8% -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 8% rebate that we talked about in the speech from the throne, Mr. Speaker, will help 5 million families, farms and small businesses right across the province, Mr. Speaker. The triple R.P. Program, Mr. Speaker, is going to help over 330,000 families, Mr. Speaker. So we know we've got more to do. That is something the Premier has tasked me with since June, Mr. Speaker. I will continue to work on ways.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of energy. He referenced this time the oesp program, Ontario electricity support program. That was also referenced in the food bank's hunger report. It said, I quote -- this program also is arguably insufficient. With the cost of hydro reaching unprecedented heights, a credit between 30 to \$50 per month is not enough -- Low-income House holds. That's a direct quote from the report. So these programs aren't reaching people. I don't need

Liberal spin. I don't need Liberal talking points. I don't need you to say that that's someone else's problem. It's the opposition's fault for not promoting it. Give me a break. You blew the program on Liberal consultants. Families are struggling. People can't afford their bills and this Minister of energy doesn't care. I don't want spin. When will you help families?

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm actually very pleased of a party that is actually helping families. We're the actually party that raised minimum wage. Didn't freeze it. Actually helped thousands and thousands of families across the province, Mr. Speaker. We had to rebuild the electricity system that they left in Tatters, Mr. Speaker, and it was affecting every family and business across this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've brought forward many programs that are helping families but we recognize, Mr. Speaker, that more needs to be done and that's what we continue to do, Mr. Speaker. We're bringing forward a plan that will continue to help families with what we have. That side of the House, Mr. Speaker, they have no plan and they could care less about the programs that are out there helping families, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Brown to Minister Sousa Re: Toronto Highway Tolls

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Speaker, since I can't get an answer on hydro, let's try something new. My question is for Minister of finance. Life is already too expensive in Ontario. We have hydro rates going up, new government fees and taxes all too high. Families are hurting and the Liberals just can't do anything to help. And instead they're doing the opposite. Right now we've heard that the Liberals have given permission. To charge tolls on the D.V.P. And the gardiner. \$2 every trip may not sound like a lot but it could be thousands of dollars out of the pockets of commuters each year. So, Mr. Speaker, a direct question to the Minister of finance. Is it true the Liberals are giving the city of Toronto permission to toll the D.V.P. And the gardiner?

>> Min. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the leader of the opposition, who knows all too well how important it is for us to invest in infrastructure I believe. I believe he also appreciates how important it is to make life easier for the people of Ontario, and now he's asking about people of Toronto and in surrounding areas congestion is creating quite a bit of havoc and we all know that. That's why we're taking the steps necessary to invest in transit, to invest in the infrastructure necessary to improve everyday life, to ensure that we get products to market more quickly and ensure that we get people and families to and from home more safely. The city of Toronto has put forward some suggestions and some requests. They're going to happen before council and they'll have to debate. The merits of those proposals. And I would think the member opposite, who has a close affiliation. To the leader, past leader of the Conservative party no less, would have some ongoing dialogue with him as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker back to the Minister of finance. The Minister finance has a close association with, the mayor of Mississauga has a few thoughts on these tolls, these Liberal tolls. According to the mayor of mississauga, these road tolls will affect the residents in Mississauga and all over the 905. Mayor crombie said understand the ramifications of these actions on business and tourism affecting mississauga, not to mention the daily ramifications on commuters. Nice attacks -- these attacks on 095 commuters must stop. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of finance is off side with his own mayor of mississauga. So if he won't do it for commuters, will the Minister of finance do it for Bonnie and stop these Liberal tolls?

>> Min. Sousa: Mr. Speaker, there is as much traffic leaving the city of Toronto into the 905 and into Mississauga as there is going the other way. We recognize how important it is for us to make a fair and improve congestion in the system so everybody gets to and from work more quickly and more safely. The member opposite also talks about toll roads. He talks a lot about how maybe it shouldn't be the case and yet, when we had an opportunity to have an outstanding highway system, which was the 407, they sold it for a song, Mr. Speaker. They gave it away and now we're losing billions annually to a consortium. -- Foreign consortium. We're going to ensure we proceed carefully and ensure we have the best interests of people of Ontario in mind.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of finance. This answer, going back 21 years, when I wasn't even old enough to vote. Mr. Speaker -- What I want is a real answer on the tolls. Why are they giving the city of Toronto permission to toll the gardiner and the D.V.P.? They didn't campaign on it in 2014. When they said they wanted to invest in infrastructure, they did not go to the people and say let us toll the D.V.P. And the gardiner. The reality is they've had 13 years. They've had 13 years to invest in public transit. They haven't done anything. And now their solution is to tax people more. Their solution is to toll the D.V.P. And the gardiner. It's not the right thing for commuters. It's not the right thing for the city of Toronto. It's not the right thing for the 905. You tell me one mayor in the 095 who supports this attack on --

>> Min. Sousa: Mr. Speaker, there has been tremendous amounts of investments by this government, historic investment, never before made, in order to provide for greater infrastructure and greater public transit. We're committing \$160 billion over the next 12 years in infrastructure. 30 billion just in transit, Mr. Speaker, and we take pride in enabling that to happen, recognizing that although he wasn't born or maybe doesn't remember, it was a mandate of that government not to build transit. Had we taken that out -- we would have had a better opportunity today, Mr. Speaker. So we will do our part to invest in transit. Mr. Speaker, it also begs the question what is their plan? Because they haven't provided any solutions whatsoever how to fund it and -- Build, Mr. Speaker. They're sitting on their hands. They're putting their heads in the sand. We're going to do -- Provide for transit and and make investments that are necessary.

MPP Singh to Minister Matthews (Murray) Re: Grassy Narrows

>> MPP Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the acting Premier. Last week the Minister of environ and climate change committed to cleaning the English wabgoon river. However it's something the Premier has yet to back up and confirm. Instead the government indicates there is money for testing the water but there isn't actually a plan to clean up the Mercury which has been poisoning people and the fish in the river for more than 50 years. Will the government put a commitment to clean up the Mercury in writing?

>> Min. Deb Matthews: Speaker, I do want to first of all welcome the new member to this legislature. Welcome. But the issue that the member has raised, the member opposite has raised is a very serious issue, Speaker. And I really want to emphasize that we are listening with and working with grassy narrows first nations. We take those concerns very, very seriously. We are committed to working with them on this issue. We are committed to working with the federal government on this issue, Speaker. And I have to say that, given the historical contamination of the river system, officials have worked with the community to provide information on the safe consumption of local fish. The ministry also. Alternative supply of safe fish to eat free of charge to the community. Speaker, there are options there. Dredging can make the problem worse. We are absolutely committed to doing the right thing.

>> MPP Singh: Mr. Speaker, that was a very disappointing anticipates. There's no commitment in that answer to cleaning up cleaning up the river. People in grassy narrows have been listening -- living with Mercury poisoning for over 50 years... impacts are devastating. They lose their vision, their hearing, their balance and ability to speak. Mr. Speaker, something has to be done. After 50 years of uncertainty, the people of grassy narrows deserve a clear answer. Account acting Premier give a date when the cleanup will begin and when they plan on finishing this cleanup?

>> Min. Glen Murray: I want to be very clear that the Premier and I have both visited grassy narrows have committed not to a vague commitment but to a very specific commitment. Dr. Rudd, we financed through the first nations under the leadership of chief fobisher, undertook a study. He did not say go in and remove the methyl mercury right away. What he proposed was over half a dozen different possible measures. We are now doing exactly what the chief and the first nations band council wanted and Dr. Rudd want, which is \$600,000 worth of research looking at which measures may work. Which ones could cause further problems, to put options before the community, Mr. Speaker, which is what everybody in grassy narrows would like to happen.

>> MPP Singh: Mr. Speaker, the government has been studying Mercury contamination in grassy narrows for generations. Cabinet has had a plan to clean up the table since 1984. It's time to act plain and simple. There's no time for further studies. We need to act. We need a plan that will actually clean up the river. Chief fobisher of the grassy narrows first nations has asked the Premier to put a promise in writing, quote, so that we know that it is real, end quote. They don't believe this government's actually going to follow through on anything. The Premier's back from Asia on December 2nd. Will she meet with chief fobisher and put a promise to clean up the river in writing so the people have some confidence this government will actually do something?

>> Min. Murray: It will be an interesting question to ask the member opposite exactly what measures does his party think should be implemented ahead of completing the work plan, which will actually tell us which measures may work, which ones won't and what the risks are associated with that. It is not simply a matter of going in and cleaning up methyl mercury and being able to take it out in a week. This will involve probably months and maybe years of work to identify. It is already under way. Scientists have been out there with first nation leadership on the river every week since Minister Zimmer and I were there. Letters have gone back and agreements have been signed. I've got one right here where we agreed to do exactly this. A day. So I'd like to know why the NDP Sleep-walked through five years when they knew this was a problem with government and they didn't even have a conversation with the first nations for five years.

MPP Singh to Minister Matthews Re: Bill 75, Putting Voters First / Sudbury By-Election

>> MPP Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the acting Premier. On Thursday, 24 Liberal MPP S stood up and voted for a bill that would make it illegal for someone to accept a bribe in order -- in exchange to run for office. Would the acting Premier tell us why the Liberal government thinks it's ok that the Minister of energy is accused of accepting a bribe when they think that very behaviour should be illegal?

>> Min. Deb Matthews: Well, Speaker, we will allow this bill to proceed through the Normal process, Speaker. It is a question that is directly related to a case that is before the courts. And it is the responsibility of this government to ensure that we don't influence the outcome of that case in any way, Speaker. It's inappropriate for any member of this legislature to comment, question or speculate on any matter of this case, including the legislation. On this side of the House, we respect the court and the sub Judice rule. The government opposite, as Deputy leader of the third party, is fully aware of the procedures of this House. He is a lawyer. He knows how the law works, Speaker. We do not make up legislation on the fly without analysis or -- Or to score cheap political points.

>> MPP Singh: Mr. Speaker, the government has the ability to weigh in on what's appropriate or not appropriate in terms of behaviour that doesn't require the government to weigh in on the specifics of this case. Can members of -- ten members of Cabinet voted also to make sure that it should be an offence, it should be illegal to accept a bribe. They voted to say that what their Colleague is alleged to have done by a federal prosecutor should be illegal. If they think it should be illegal to accept a bribe in exchange for running for office, then why is the government still allowing Minister of energy to remain in Cabinet?

>> Min. Matthews: Well, Speaker, you know, I think there are questions that need answers. Let me pose one of those questions, Speaker. It was widely reported that the member for Bramalea- Gore-Malton was considering leading the Ontario legislature -- leaving the Ontario legislature to run for the federal leadership, Speaker. There was broad speculation and more than speculation, Speaker, that this was under consideration. And then all of a sudden, in some unexplained turn of events, Speaker, the member from Bramalea- Gore- Malton landed on the front bench as Deputy leader of the NDP Party, Speaker. I don't know how that happened. It's a bit of a mystery. We sure would love to have some light shone on that particular turn of events.

>> MPP Singh: Mr. Speaker, people across this province expect and believe they need a government

that has integrity. They want to have faith in their government. But what they see is a Cabinet Minister and Liberal MPP S voting to say that it's illegal to accept a bribe. At the same time when they have a sitting member that's accused of the very same action. He is the recipient of an alleged -- he is the alleged recipient of a bribe. He's directly involved in this matter, directly related to what the members and the Cabinet Minister of this government voted to make illegal. To maintain integrity, there's only one option. The Minister should step aside. What we're W going the -- asking the government to do is, to maintain faith in this government, integrity of the government, the Liberal government must act. Will they ask the Minister of energy. To step aside pending the outcome of these allegations?

>> Min. Matthews: Well, Speaker, maybe we need to have another walk down memory lane here. Let's go back to 2013, where another mysterious turn of events happened. The NDP Decided that Adam Giambrone should be their candidate, even though he was in fact in charge of the nomination process in in THA particular riding and there were of course other candidates running. So he was parachuted into the riding and the party hierarchy allegedly stacked the nomination meeting, Speaker. And that was with the apparent backing of the NDP Leader, the party brass, Giambrone decided that he would like the nomination, even though riding association insiders confessed he was not well known to them, Speaker. So I do think that there are some questions that need answers. Only the NDP Can provide answers to those questions, Speaker.

MPP Harris to Minister Matthews Re: Toronto Highway Tolls

>> MPP Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker. My question's to the Deputy Premier. Speaker, the Ontario Liberals can't seem to stop finding new ways for the hands of the government to dig deeper into the pockets of motorists. Whether it's for licence fee increases, plates, the transport Minister 's hot lane bling or allowing photo radar anywhere a municipality chooses. Motorists are paying the price for the Ontario Liberals' war on the car. And so, Speaker, when it comes to paying road tolls for the privilege of driving on roads we've already paid for, Ontario motorists know it's time to slam on the brakes. Speaker, questions surrounding the introduction of tolls on the D.V.P. And gardiner provide an opportunity to draw a line in the road and stop the government's use of motorists as cash cows. Account Deputy Premier tell us if her government will say no to the gardiner D.V.P. Road toll cash grab?

>> Min. Deb Matthews: Well, Speaker, I do listen to -- other questions have come from opposition and I'm always asking myself I wonder what their plan is. And we do not have any idea what their plan is. What I can tell you, Speaker, is that investments in infrastructure are important investments. We know when they were in office they did not make any investments in infrastructure. We're doing something different and the city of Toronto must make investments in their infrastructure as well, Speaker. So we do, we do understand governments have to make difficult decisions. We do understand that road tolls is the subject of conversation in Toronto. If the city of Toronto comes forward with ideas that are backed by their council, Speaker. Then of course we'll take a look at that.

>> MPP Harris: Well, our first plan will be not to waste billions like you have. You take the prize for that one. Speaker, forcing people to spend more on roads they've already paid for is highway robbery, plain and simple, especially since the conference board of Canada told us that gtha motorists already pay 100% of area road costs. New road tolls on the gardiner and D.V.P. Mean they'll be paying more than 100%. In fact a recent C.A.A. Report indicates that policy makers have many tools at hand. Road pricing -- should make road price ago last resort. Speaker w905 residents already paying full costs for gtha roads, can the Deputy Premier explain why her government is refusing... Last resort cash grab. On the gardiner and the D.V.P.?

>> Min. Matthews: Speaker, this government has made investment infrastructure a very, very high priority, Speaker. We are working to build Ontario up. We're working with our partners across the province to invest in projects that reduce traffic congestion, that get people home to their kids more quickly, Speaker. I think that's a priority everyone shares. The difference, though, between them and us is that we know how we're doing that. So let's talk of some investments we're making in Toronto. \$3.7 billion. For GE R.E.R. That forms the foundation for John Tory's smarttrack program. Another

\$10 billion for Toronto's L.R.T. Projects. The Scarborough subway. The Toronto-york Spadina subway extension. And we've also increased our gas tax. To the city year over year. Last year it was \$169 million for transit, Speaker.

MPP Percy Hatfield to Minister Chris Ballard (Thibeault) Re: Hydro Costs

>> MPP Percy Hatfield: My question is for the acting Premier. Ontario's food banks are feeding more than 335,000 people a month. Octobering acting Premier, good morning by the way. That's more than when the recession first hit eight years ago. This year's hunter report from the Ontario association of food banks shows the rapidly increasing cost of hydro is making it even harder for people to put food on their table. In fact, Speaker, Ontario's food banks say the rising costs of hydro is having a direct and devastating impact in the lives of struggling Ontarians. When will this government do the right thing stop. Of Hydro One and stop pushing people across Ontario into energy poverty?

>> Min. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the member opposite for such an important question. I'd lining -- also like to thank the Ontario association of food banks for their report and for the helpful recommendations contained in it. And I'm please -- pleased that the association recognize the efforts the province has undertaken on housing and the basic income pilot. You know, Speaker, we've seen the number of reports that food bank usage has actually decreased between 2015 and 2016. Since the Ontario association of food bank reports remind us food bank usage has not returned to a pre recession level, right? So this is one of the reasons that Premier Wynne has instructed me to develop a food security strategy. It's going to focus on improving access. To nutritious food across Ontario. Speaker, we know there's more to do and we're going to continue to build on our progress to improve the everyday lives of Ontarians.

>> MPP Hatfield: Interesting spin, Speaker. Hydro rates are out of control. You're pushing families and seniors into poverty since 2008, there's been a 23% increase in the number of seniors relying on food banks. This government just isn't doing enough to help people who are struggling and falling further behind on their hydro bills. Hunger report, Minister, says and I quote -- the help that currently exists from the provincial government is not comprehensive or inclusive enough for the majority of Ontario families struggling to make ends meet. Speaker, when will this government take real action to get hydro rates under control, stop pushing people into poverty and stop any further sell-off of Hydro One?

>> Min. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First off, as we are all aware in this House, the broadening of hydro ... does not have an impact on the rates the. The O.E.B. Sits -- sets the rates, Mr. Speaker. That's been very clear. What I do understand, Mr. Speaker, is that families are suffering, Mr. Speaker. I do under tan there are vulnerable families out there that do have a hard time paying their bills, Mr. Speaker. I get that. When I was part of the United Way, Mr. Speaker, even back in 2003 there were programs in place, Mr. Speaker, to help the food banks to help the United Way to help the red cross buy places like union gas and other electricity utilities to help families pay their bill, Mr. Speaker. We get that there's still families having difficulty. That's why we brought forward the oesp program, the Ontario electricity support program. If they actually heat their homes with electricity. There are many things we have out there and many INGs we will continue to

MPP Kiwala to Minister Jaczek Re: Combatting Domestic & Sexual Violence

>> MPP Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of community and social services. Today we are please today have the Ontario association of interval and transition House s in the legislature. The oath is a coalition of first aid shelters, second stage housing and community based organizations who work tirelessly every day to end violence against women. I'm proud of the tireless work being done by Kingston interval House in my riding, and I want to acknowledge pam-ry the executive director for her work and steadfast commitment to women's

safety., Mr. Speaker, we know that one in three women have experienced some form of violence in their lives. We know that women will return to their violators eight times before being free. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister please inform the House of the important work that O.H. does to support victims of family violence?

>> Min. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member from Kingston and the Islands for her question and for her advocacy on this important issue. The work of V.A.W. shelters and agencies makes the lives of those they serve better. Every November O.H. launches their campaign to increase awareness of women abuse in Ontario. I know I speak for all members in the House when I say we are extremely proud to be wearing this purple scarf to let women and their children know that they are not alone. In July of this year I was please today announce \$100,000 in funding to O.A., to help deliver training to the violence against women sector across the province. The training will include online resources and modules that cover a broad range of issues including domestic and sexual violence. This will ensure that workers in the field are able to provide even better service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker .

>> MPP Kiwala: Thank you to the Minister for her answer. Clearly this government recognizes the great work organizations such as O.H. do in our province. Speaker, unfortunately the members in this House are well aware violence against women remains prevalent in our society. More than 10,000 women and over 6,900 of their children were served by an emergency shelter last year. Violence against women affects us all. Not just the women who are the victims. It's their children, their families and also their communities. Speaker, our government has increased spending on programs to reduce violence against women by over 60% since 2003. However we know there is more work to be done. The province has initiated several other programs such as the it's never ok action plan which aims to stop sexual violence against women in Ontario. Women deserve. To live in an Ontario free from violence. Cot Minister please outline how we continue to support O.H. And the violence against women?

>> Min. Jaczek: Speaker, I'm proud to say my ministry invests \$147 million every year to support the violence against women sector. And some of these investments include \$1 billion to the rural reality fund, help rural remote and northern agencies develop local solutions that address the unique challenges in serving their communities. \$1.5 million in Aboriginal designed and deliver community services including the development of an expanded province-wide counselling help for Aboriginal women and \$17 million over three years through the ministry of housing for affordable housing benefit pilot which will support up to 3,000 survivors of domestic violence across 22 municipalities. I'd like to thank O.H. And all the shelter staff with us today. Your work makes a real difference in the lives of women and children who have experienced domestic violence. Mr. Speaker, let make this a transformative time for women in Ontario and build a safer future for every woman and girl in this province.

MPP MacLeod to Minister Hoskins Re: NCC New Ottawa Hospital Site

>> MPP Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For the Minister of help. Last week Ottawa patients, health care professionals and community leaders have shocked and disappointed to learn the unelected national capital commission overturned an 8-year decision by the Ottawa hospital to rebuild across the street on the experimental farm. Instead of keeping civic campus and the heart institute together the N.C.C. Picked the sixth ranked pastor location which isn't as accessible for firefighters and ambulances, will cost more because it will require demolishing existing buildings, and it will inevitably delay the much needed rebuilding. My question to the Minister is will he intervene with the federal government and demand that Ottawa patients come first in order that the Ottawa hospital build on the appropriate site, its preferred site across from the civic campuses?

>> Min. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question and I also appreciate the fact that the member acknowledged that it is a federal issue in terms of the ultimate decision with regards to the siting of the civic hospital. What I'm proud of however, Mr. Speaker, is that there has been a significant community process and engagement of -- virtually of the residents that could

potentially be impacted by those that benefit from the services that are provided at the current hospital, Mr. Speaker. That those are concerned about with legitimate concerns with regards to the siting of the possible options for siting the hospital. There has been a recommendation put forward by the national capital commission. That's all it is at this point, Mr. Speaker. It is a recommendation following a process that they LED. It's now up to the federal government and the federal Cabinet to review that recommendation along with other -- Considerations and make an ultimate decision, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP MacLeod: Hospital rebuild will be funded by the provincial government. You are the major stakeholder. In fact my constituents are major stakeholders as well and they expect that you will follow what the Ottawa hospital has recommended, which is the site of experimental farm directly across the street. The only Ottawa residents on the N.C.C., there are only three of them. They did not support the change to community pasture. Dr. Jack Kitts does not support the new site. Former mayor Jackie Holzman and Jim Durel oppose the move. Former C.E.O. Ray Hathi don't know opposed the move. The physicians and community leaders I spoke to over the weekend reject where our hospital should be located. The choice by the local health care experts is the experimental farm in Ottawa across from the existing hospital and heart institute. It's accessible, the right site and closer to shovel ready. Will the Minister be on the side of Ottawa patients and against the federal government's recommendation to build that hospital on the preferred site? Thank you.

>> Min. Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'm definitely on the side of patients with regards to the provision of health care services in the province of Ontario. The member does know of course that the hospital has a board, which is a community board, which is representative of the community that benefits from that service as well as those that are residents there. That -- my understanding is the board is meeting tonight. They have not yet made a determination or recommendation based on this information that came last week from the national capitol commission. Mr. Speaker, I think it's appropriate that we not insert ourselves in a community process aimed at siting a hospital within a jurisdiction. No more than what the Windsor hospital as well. There's been a long consultation process with regards to siting of that hospital as well. I think the three members that represent that jurisdiction in Windsor would agree with me when I say it's important that we let the community decide. With appropriate safeguards in a community-led process to decide where they believe the best siting should be.

MPP French to Minister Hoskins Re: Ajax-Pickering & Lakeridge Hospital Merger

>> MPP Jennifer French: Thank you, Speaker. My question's to the acting Premier. My community is reeling from this government's decision to pull \$20 million more from health care in my community by saddling local hospitals with the costs of a forced merger of Ajax- Pickering hospital with Lakeridge health. That will mean fewer hospital beds, fewer nurses, longer wait times and more cuts to patient care. Thousands in my community have signed a petition calling on the Minister to reconsider this decision. But instead of listening, the Minister is plowing ahead. How did this government expect our local hospitals to find \$20 million to pay for this forced merger without cutting patient care?

>> Min. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of the work that's been done over the past year, year and a half by community members right across Scarborough and across Durham as well. I referenced I think last week the \$20 million investment in the Scarborough hospital, the five -- \$10 million investment I believe for a new emergency hospital at Rouge Valley. When it comes to Ajax- Pickering just last week I made the announcement that quite the opposite of decreasing services. I provided guarantees in terms of the sustainability of the services that are there like the shoulder program. I actually announced that there would be 20 new mental health inpatient beds at Ajax- Pickering hospital. Taken away previously are coming back to Ajax- Pickering. I also indicated that the name of the hospital is going to represent the local community. Those investments that they've made in assets. Generated the fund for. All of those things are going to continue and services are going to continue to improve, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP French: Thank you, Speaker. The Minister is talking about community and has talked about consulting with the community. Yet the community doesn't feel like they've been consulted at all. In

fact members of the community are here today to make it -- make their voices heard. Last week the Minister quietly signed the integration merger, something he neglected to mention when I asked him during the period that same day. Did it slip his mind or just another example of how this government has tried to ram this through as quickly and as quietly as possible? This is death by a thousand cuts, or really it's more like death by almost 20 million cuts. Will the Minister please listen to my community and prevent the damage he could be doing to our local hospital?

>> Min. Hoskins: Well, I hardly see how issuing a press release announcing the integration is doing it quietly, Mr. Speaker. If that's what I did when I announced the 20 new inpatient beds, when I talked about the importance of sustaining the services that are there. And I think the member opposite needs to speak to the community and the representatives of the community including the friend of Ajax-Pickering hospital, who I met with two weeks ago, who I spoke again last week as well, who are very satisfied with the approach that we're taking and in agreement with the safeguards and the measures that I took in place. Stop talking and actually listen to my response, Mr. Speaker, she would understand that the community actually is confident that the steps that we're taking are going to preserve and in fact enhance the services at that important local community hospital.

MPP Potts to Minister Hoskins Re: Eastern Ontario Healthcare Investments

>> MPP Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. My question is also for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. And this is a question that I know with intense interest to our new member from Ottawa-Vanier. Speaker, if I could just take a moment to note not only was our new member a prestigious -- being of a -- Dean of a prestigious law school. She also is sporting her order of Canada. That's the kind of candidate we can attract on this side of the House. My question concerns health care, Speaker. Providing Ontarians with timely health care is of course extraordinarily important. Just last week, Speaker, in Beaches-East York, I was able to make an announcement for almost a million new dollars to Toronto east health network to assist with local health care. So, Minister, I know the Minister was in Ottawa region last month to make a very important announcement, Speaker. I would wonder if the Minister could update this House on the. Access to care for patients in eastern Ontario?

>> Min. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for this very important question and giving me the opportunity to talk about a great project that's now under way the Carleton place and district memorial hospital. In fact a few weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, I was in Carleton place with my Colleague across the legislature, the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and I want to commend him for his hard work and advocacy on behalf of that hospital. Together we were able to announce, Mr. Speaker, that we're building a brand new emergency department at Carleton place hospital. A new project that's going to be comprised of 9,000 square feet -- sorry a 9,000-square-foot addition to the hospital. Will reduce wait times and improve care for patients -- patients and their families in eastern Ontario. While visiting Carleton place I had the privilege of meeting with many patients in the hard working health care professionals of Carleton place. I know these individuals as well as the member from Lennox Frontenac and adding ton are anxious to improve health care at that hospital.

>> MPP Potts: Thank you to the Minister for these incredible initiatives in eastern Ontario and indeed for the hard work he is doing to modernize health care in the province of tomorrow. It's great to hear of the significant investments the government is making right across our province. I know our government is making -- reducing the time we spend in Ontario emergency rooms a priority. I also know that we have seen positive results since our government implemented the wait times strategy. Wait times alliance, the Canadian institute for health information, the Fraser institute have all found year over year that Ontarians have entirely better access to care for this province. Since 2008 Ontario hospitals have been able to decrease the time spent in emergency rooms by almost 16%. Speaker, will the Minister. Agree to inform all the House what other investments we are making at Carleton place hospital and what it will mean for patients in eastern Ontario?

>> Min. Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, this is I think a great example of legislators working together. Again I

want to give credit to the member from Lanark. He advocated -- brought the mayor to come and see me and speak about the needs of the hospital as well and we worked together over a recently short period of time I would say to actually arrive at the stage where the government is investing almost \$9 million to redevelop that emergency department at Carleton place and district memorial hospital. It's going to have a big impact with enhancing the ability of individuals to get timely care through their emergency provide ago large number of diagnostic technological and therapeutic tasks. This emergency department will ensure that more patients, even more patients are able to receive emergency health services where they need and when they need them. The project will result in expanded services which are better for the local community.

MPP Smith to Minister Sousa Re: Hydro One

>> MPP Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of finance this morning. I would like to quote a former member of the legislature who said on Thursday that selling a major electricity utility wasn't necessary to build infrastructure in the city of Toronto. Mayor John Tory said the city is the sole shareholder of Toronto hydro and that is an investment that I take seriously. In fact more seriously apparently than the Premier of Ontario took her obligation to Hydro One customers. Speaker, now that the mayor of Toronto has admitted that privatization isn't the right way to go, will the Minister stop the fire sale of Hydro One shares?

>> Min. Charles Sousa: Speaker, the broadening of that ownership, we've now had two tranches. It's been highly successful. Anything but a fire sale because we're receiving a lot more than was ever anticipated. And unlike what they did opposite, Mr. Speaker, by giving away the 407 all in one swoop, without an ability for the market to respond, taking the full risk and, Mr. Speaker, without the control measures necessary to control the pricing. All of that's been done. It's being done in a gradual way. Greater receipts have been now afforded to the province. We are still the larger shareholder and will always continue to be and we're investing dollar for dollar in new infrastructure, in new transit and an act to be more ... long term. The returns we're going to be getting, Mr. Speaker, will be and are much higher than it was when we held Hydro One in its traditional way, Mr. Speaker. So we're going to invest and ensure that more money's made for the people of Ontario.

>> MPP Smith: Speaker, unfortunately nobody believes what the member is saying, and this is one of the members who cost us over \$1 billion in the gas plant scandal. Over 80% of people in central Toronto opposed the sale of Hydro One. That's over 80%. The members on the government side should actually listen to that number. It's massive. The people of Toronto overwhelmingly opposed selling Toronto hydro. The city council overwhelmingly oppose selling Toronto hydro. Hydro rates are the number one issue for all Ontarians regardless of where that's live, Mr. Speaker. Speaker, why is it that the mayor of Toronto is capable of listening to constituents when it comes to keeping hydro in public hands, but this government continues to ignore the will of the people of Ontario? Speaker, the Minister, will he simply admit that the mayor is right to stop the further fire sale of Hydro One?

>> Min. Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we're making \$4 billion in that transaction, all of which is going to the trillium trust to ensure it gets reinvested. And, Mr. Speaker, it's evident that a dollar invested in these infrastructure projects provides \$4 in the long term. Mr. Speaker, that's essentially what is happening here. The additional 5 billion from that transaction is going to pay down debt. And as we proceed forward we're going to create more revenue, and at the same time, Mr. Speaker, this must be reaffirmed. We will always retain 40% ownership of Hydro One. We will always have that opportunity for improving those dividends and making certain that the company operates more efficiently, more effectively and produces greater results for the people of Ontario. Further note there's 72 competitors. In competing with Hydro One. Essential for everyone to acknowledge that the more we put this in perspective. The greater the competitiveness and nature of Hydro One and the O.E.B., which is the one who controls the pricing, did not agree to pricing last quarter, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Peter Tabuns to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Costs

>> MPP Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, my question to the Minister of energy. There is a newspaper report today showing that food bank use is soaring because families can't afford to pay their hydro bill and their electricity bill. Sorry. My apology, Speaker. Their hydro bill and their grocery bill. This past summer, the Minister of energy refused to call energy poverty a crisis, even though 60,000 Ontario families have had their hydro cut off. We can expect the number of disconnections to soar next spring, when Hydro One will resume cutting off families who can't pay their bills. United Way of Bruce- Grey has called for a moratorium on hydro disconnections in Ontario. Will the Minister agree to this moratorium?

>> Min. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I know that there are families that are out there having difficulty, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to electricity and it's important that vulnerable customers have the resources to help avoid the disconnection. And that's why we've overseen enhanced consumer protection rules, including requiring a ten-day advance notice of disconnection, Mr. Speaker, which accompanying resources that will go with this notice, Mr. Speaker, to help customers in arrears, Mr. Speaker. We also have that right now. We've given those powers to the O.E.B. But we do have a bill in front of the House right now, Mr. Speaker, bill 27. I do hope they will all support even unanimous support, Mr. Speaker, that will ensure that there will be no disconnections during the winter months, Mr. Speaker. That is in front of the House right now. I hope all parties will support that, Mr. Speaker, because we do recognize that the more work needs to be done and that's what we're continuing to do, Mr. Speaker. We've actually got programs out there to help. The oesp program, the leap program but there is more to do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Tabuns: Speaker, the Premier has finally acknowledged that soaring hydro prices are, quote, mistake. But the Minister refusing to -- refuses to do anything to correct that mistake. Owe won't halt he won't halt the sale of Hydro One even though we know that privatization is going to drive prices up even further. He won't direct the Ontario energy board to put the interests of consumers ahead of the private investors who will benefit from that privatization. Will he at least agree to a moratorium on hydro disconnections?

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said there is legislation in front of the House right now but I hope that they will actually support, Mr. Speaker. We even take unanimous consent on it, Mr. Speaker, bill 27 that will actually put -- put a moratorium on disconnection during the winter months, Mr. Speaker. We've got that plus the ten-day notice, Mr. Speaker. There are many, many things that this government has done to ensure that we actually help families that are struggling. We know there is more to do, Mr. Speaker, and we've been doing that. When it comes to looking at the announcements that we've made, Mr. Speaker, just in the last two months our government's put significant efforts in to ensure that electricity rates are kept affordable, Mr. Speaker. You know we will continue to work hard and if it's 50 cents in savings, Mr. Speaker, or it's \$50 in savings, Mr. Speaker, we will look at all aspects. That we can do, Mr. Speaker, to help families. Because we understand that the oesp program is there is a program. The leap program is there as a program but there is more to do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Hoggarth to Minister Chiarelli Re: Infrastructure Investments

>> MPP Ann Hoggarth: Thank you. My question is to the Minister of infrastructure. Minister, infrastructure is relied upon by millions of Ontarians for everything from transportation to clean, safe drinking water. Our government is building Ontario up for people in every corner of the province by making a historic investment in public infrastructure. A multibillion-dollar job-creating program that the opposition opposes. I know that positive partnerships between business and government are key to delivering larger projects, including in my riding of Barrie where the expansion of the Royal Victoria regional health centre resulted in the opening of a new cancer centre with space to serve 2,000 patients annually. I know that the Minister oversees infrastructure Ontario, the agency tasked with managing infrastructure projects all across Ontario, which is doing great

work. On behalf of the people of the province. Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister, could he please elaborate on the effectiveness of infrastructure Ontario's efforts. To build bridges between business and government?

>> Min. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you, Speaker. I thank the member for the question. And she is correct. Our government is making the largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history, including in each single riding on the opposition. And the member knows that the opposition has no credible plan to build the infrastructure Ontarians need. In fact the leader of the opposition was a member of a Conservative government whose anaemic investments contributed to the infrastructure deficit we suffer today, Mr. Speaker. And, Speaker, we invest double the amount in infrastructure that the opposition leader did for all of Canada. And we want to be sure projects are delivered on time and on budget. The largest projects are delivered through a made-in-ontario model called alternate financing and procurement. A.F.P. Has a track record of success. 98% of the first 45 projects were completed on budget, Mr. Speaker. Speaker A.F.P.. Has saved the people of Ontario \$6 billion.

>> MPP Hoggarth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the Minister for his response. I'm glad to hear that infrastructure Ontario is diligently supporting our government's commitment to -- commitment to create jobs and stimulate growth. I know that ridings across this province, including many ridings represented by the members opposite, will benefit from \$160 billion our government is investing in schools, hospitals and rapid transit. And with much more to be built, that investment will continue creating jobs and stimulating growth well into the future. That means our government will continue delivering good jobs for Ontario's every corner of this province from Windsor to Waterloo to North Bay. Even if the opposition is opposed to the plan and projects it creates jobs. Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister. Could he please elaborate on what the future holds for the alternative financing improvement model?

>> Min. Chiarelli: Speaker, our government is announcing more important infrastructure projects every month. Infrastructure Ontario just released its annual market update, outlining up coming projects that include hospitals, courthouses and rapid transit. Much of which will be built using our A.F.P. Public-private partnership model. These projects represent \$11.8 billion in investments in addition to \$32 billion already invested in past projects. The third party, Mr. Speaker, is ideologically opposed to triple fees, Mr. Speaker. The third party can disagree, but the facts are clear. A.F.P. Is a successful procurement model with broad support, not just in this government, Mr. Speaker, but among the NDP's base including trade unions who work on p3 projects and many union pension plans who invest heavily in p3 programs. Mr. Speaker, their friends are investing in triple Ps and the A.F.P. Model, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Walker to Minister Sousa Re: Energy Management

>> MPP Bill Walker: To the Deputy Premier. Public institutions into a catch-22. As it cut services and run deficits. Hospital is the most recent one to face the brutal consequences of hydro rates. Either shut down the emergency room or run a deficit to run utility hikes. No emergency services means longer times for critically ill patients. It means patients have to wait longer and get sicker. Frankly it could mean the difference between life and death. This is wrong, Mr. Speaker. Another mistake by the Premier. And sadly it is why no leader in the history of the province has lost the confidence of the people so quickly and by so much like the Premier. So my question is has the Premier gotten so tired and so out of touch that she won't commit to stopping the sale of Hydro One and another mistake before it does any more damage to the healthful Ontarians?

>> Min. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite makes reference to the integrity of the leader of this party and this government and the Premier of Ontario, who has taken every step necessary to make decisions in the best interests of the people of Ontario. I take great pride and value in the work that she's been doing, recognizing that we take a balanced approach to invest in our economy, invest in the people of Ontario, invest in their skills and training, Mr. Speaker, investing in infrastructure so we have more competitive economy. And making sure that our dynamic business climate attracts even more investments from around the world. That's why we have

become one of the top destinations for foreign direct investment and more importantly -- More importantly, Mr. Speaker, she takes every necessary step to create a fair society. Where no one is left behind to ensure those most vulnerable are given the supports most necessary. Unlike that party opposite, she supports more minimum wage.

>> MPP Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the finance Minister. I respectfully remind you, sir, and all of your Colleagues, that Ontarians don't approve of your government's hydro policy. In fact they feel -- War with you. Again, Mr. Speaker, hospitals are getting -- patients' lives are being put at risk. First hydro hikes were dictating how many surg Eries will be cancelled. Now they're -- at a timing emergency room closures. This is wrong, Mr. Speaker, and another mistake. We want to know, since the finance Minister won't stop the fire sale of Hydro One, how is he going to fix the mess that he and his government have created and ensure hospitals can provide the care people expect and deserve?

>> Min. Sousa: So, Mr. Speaker, indeed this side of the House made the necessary investments to make our grid more competitive and more secure. We invested billions in more transmission in new production facilities and became emissions-free 93% of emissions in this province are free of carbon, Mr. Speaker. That means we've had no more smog days, zero last year. We'll continue to take those steps. At the same time jurisdictions around the province of Ontario are going to now have to make those investments which we have made. While we're doing these we're taking the necessary steps to provide programs to alleviate and support those hydro costs and rates as we do with our programs, as we've just done in our throne speech to reduce 8% of the provincial portion of the H.S.T., which is coming out. By reducing the debt retirement charge, a charge which is a legacy of that government, Mr. Speaker. That side of the House so that we can make it more affordable for people of Ontario. We know there's more to be done. We are taking those steps. Meantime we've got clean air and we have integrity in our system, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Gretzky to Minister Hunter Re: Education Funding

>> MPP Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the acting Premier. In markdale the closure of beaver crest community elementary school would devastate the community and hinder economic growth in the area. Chapman's went so far as to offer to buy the school. Even the mayor of Grey highland offered to offset the deficit spending. Hundreds more schools like beaver crest may be on the topping block. Schools schools like queen Victoria, Hugh beeton in a and in Windsor. Rather than providing the community schools with resources to stay open, this government is cutting rural grants, eliminating base top-up funding and grossly underfunding renewal needs. Speaker if business, local politicians, students and families can see the value of schools like beaver crest and those in my community, then why doesn't this government?

>> Min. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for this question. Mr. Speaker, what was their plan for education, Mr. Speaker ? Their plan for education was to in fact implement a \$600 million cut. \$600 million cut, Speaker. So when it comes to our investments in education, Mr. Speaker, we have increased the budget for education, Mr. Speaker, since 2003. We have ensured, Mr. Speaker, that we make considerations for rural schools, Mr. Speaker, 199 million more dollars for rural schools taking into consideration the unique factors that exist. So, Mr. Speaker, we're working with our local communities. We're working with our local school boards to ensure. The need of the children of this province.