

Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript - Thursday, April 13, 2017

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Date: Thu, 13 Apr 2017 11:52:19 -0400
Attachments: 20170413 - Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript.doc (107.01 kB)

Transcript of Provincial Question Period
41st Parliament, 2nd Session
Wednesday, April 13, 2017

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MPP Brown (Clark) to Premier Wynne (Thibeault) Re: Hydro One Ombudsman

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Did the Premier order the Minister of energy and Hydro One to keep the Ombudsman's departure a secret?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: No, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. Hydro One is a company for notorious -- notorious for terrible customer service. The former Ombudsman ended their investigation into Hydro One. After, Mr. Speaker, 10,000 complaints. 10,000 complaints. And how did the Liberals respond to this? They want to get rid of oversight. They take away oversight that was under the purview of the Ombudsman office and replace it with an office that is a shell of itself. And now what is unbelievable is the Liberals want to keep secret that the shallow office they created for oversight, that office -- Ombudsman is now gone. Here we have hydro where we know there's tens of thousands of complaints, and this government wants no oversight? How can they allow this to happen? Can we please get a justification from the Premier why they believe it's appropriate to have no oversight on hydro.

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Very pleased to rise and talk about the continued work that the Ombudsman office is doing at Hydro One. You know, Mr. Speaker, they're doing some great work addressing the issues and the complaints that are coming forward from the millions of customers that Hydro One has, Mr. Speaker. Ombudsperson Fiona Cray did an excellent job with Hydro One, Mr. Speaker, contributing to the company's ongoing transition to a better-run customer-focused company, and she recently accepted a new position at another organization and a step down from that role as ombudsperson and a search is under way for an appropriate replacement. In the meantime staff member Sophie -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the meantime, staff member Sophie Petrillo has been named the interim ombudsperson, Mr. Speaker. She'll continue to do the work of the ombudsperson for Hydro One, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to work forward on a hydro plan that works for everyone in this province.

>> MPP Steve Clark: Speaker, it's more than a coincidence that just as hydro's scheme ad hits the airwaves that the hydro within Ombudsman is M.I. O.. The -- M.I.A.. The former one used to hold town hall meetings about the high rates and inaccurate bills continue to cause. But that doesn't fit -- Government's narrative. In my riding, instead of a town hall Hydro One is planning an open House that sounds more like an opportunity to spin for this government. Speaker, will the Premier order Hydro One to stop wasting money on these travelling road shows to promote the government's scheme and get back to the public meeting that is actually fix the problem?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So Hydro One goes out to talk to their customers and the opposition doesn't like it, Mr. Speaker. It makes no sense. They have no plan for hydro. It's been 42 days since the leader of the opposition said they have a plan for how to deal with electricity, and they do nothing, Mr. Speaker. Hydro One has an acting ombudsperson in place -- Thank you thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Ombudsman office continues to operate as Normal, Mr. Speaker, with a full staffing complement -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So as I mentioned, the ombuds office continues to operate as Normal with a full complement of staff while the search for a new ombudsperson continues, Mr. Speaker. You know we have full faith that they'll continue to operate with an ombudsperson in the acting role and with a full contingent office to address all inquiries, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Brown (Scott) to Premier Wynne (Naqvi) Re: Sexual Assault Training for Judges

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. There is no monopoly on a

good idea no matter where that idea originates. Too often in this legislature, you see parties opposed simply because another party proposed it. The federal leader of the opposition Rona Ambrose and the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock have led the charge for mandatory sexual assault training for judges. This is a good idea. Even the Liberal member for Davenport has put forward a similar suggestion and supports -- For judges and I applaud her for that support. Unfortunately we are now hearing from the Attorney General he does not support that initiative. From the Minister of Correctional Service that is they don't support that training. The reality is everyone knows this is a necessary step. This is a good idea. It shouldn't matter that an opposition member raised a good idea. This is about -- Sexual assault victims. This is a right step. And my question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier. Will you support this great initiative from the member of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, this is an issue of not whether we support or not, because I know, for example, that the Attorney General and our caucus absolutely supports everyone having -- Mr. Speaker, to be able to -- in a responsible, sensitive and compassionate way deal with issues of sexual assault, Mr. Speaker. The issue is the actual jurisdiction and the purview that government has over training of individuals in the judiciary, Mr. Speaker. And I know that the Attorney General will speak to that. But this is not a matter of whether or not, in our opinion, something should happen, Mr. Speaker. This is about actually the mechanism for making it and having it get --

>> MPP Laurie Scott: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. Mandatory sexual assault training won't threaten the judicial independence. What it will do is give women more confidence in our justice system. So sexual assault survivors must feel comfortable coming forward. Mr. Speaker, mandatory training is what needs to happen. So why won't the Premier call for mandatory sexual assault training for judges in Ontario? You can do it.

>> Minister Yasir Naqvi: Well, thank you very much, Speaker. This is a very important issue, and I first of all stand here very proud of my Premier and our government for taking the charge and taking the lead on putting an end to sexual violence and harassment for our province. Speaker, we are a leader -- In the country. And that charge has been led by the Premier herself. It's never OK campaign, Speaker, has been held now around the world as one of the most progressive and proactive strategies to deal with issues around sexual violence and harassment. It is focused on providing supports for victims. It is focused on most importantly changing the attitudes of people around our province. And around the country when it comes to putting an end to sexual violence and harassment. I look forward to speaking in the supplementary as to the roles of the judiciary as well.

>> MPP Scott: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. We don't need blind partisanship on this. The federal government received a report called "Taking action to end violence against young women and girls in Canada." That report details the importance of improving training in the field of sexual assault on the Canadian judiciary. And it's important we do the same on the provincial level. But Liberals at all levels stalled. Mr. Speaker, it's time for Liberals provincially and federally to wake up to the reality that we need to do more. Will the Premier give the Prime Minister a call? Get on the same page. Support mandatory sexual assault training for the judiciary. Will you do that?

>> Minister Naqvi: Speaker, Speaker, this is not a partisan issue. The member's right to that point. However, she continues to make this into a partisan issue. Speaker, this is -- Speaker, this is an issue of respecting our constitution. This is an issue of respecting the judicial independence that is key and the cornerstone of our democracy. I don't think, Speaker, anybody in this House or across our province or the country would say that politicians somehow should interfere in the manner in which our judiciary -- Speaker, clearly within the scope of the judiciary to determine the training that they said themselves. More recently at our parliamentary committee in Ottawa. That is exactly what the judiciary presented as well. I'm in conversations with the chief justice. I know she takes this matter seriously and we look forward to the action from the judiciary.

>> MPP Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The question is to the Premier. The NDP Recently received a letter from Lenny in Burlington. In January Lynn got a hydro bill for a trailer in burk's falls with nearly a \$500 delivery charge. She wrote to us because she was concerned that she received at the same time the delivery charge for her home in Burlington was just \$135. Out-of-control rural delivery charges mean that Lynn could lose her trailer, the place where she spends time with her partner to relax in the summer. Why has the Premier done nothing to address the outrageous delivery charges, the outrageous prices when it comes to hydro bills? And why is she leaving people like Lynn wondering if she can keep her trailer?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: I not Minister of energy is going to want to comment in the supplementary. But I hope that when the member opposite got the letter from Lynn, he responded to her and let her know that she will see a 25% reduction come summer, Mr. Speaker. The 17% on top of the 8% that she already has. And I don't know the specifics, but I imagine from the location of her home, Mr. Speaker, the trailer, that she may also be eligible for up to a 40 or 50% reduction, Mr. Speaker, because the distribution charges will be reduced. So, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the member opposite -- if he didn't have all that information, we would certainly be happy to provide it to him so that he could get back to this constituent and give her the good news about the reductions that she's going to see, Mr. Speaker .

>> MPP Singh: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian transport museum in Kingsville has also reached out to the NDP, similar to my Colleague the member from Essex. The museum is facing bills so high that staff don't know they can keep the museum afloat. They're not sure they can keep a community museum afloat. They cannot hire the needed staff. They can't grow their children's education program, and they're putting exhibition designs and capital projects on hold because they don't have the resources. The museum needs help now, not months from now, not years from now. They need help now. Why has the Premier done nothing?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So now that organization can actually call their local utility and get one of the many programs through the save on energy program, Mr. Speaker, that will actually help them save their money now, Mr. Speaker. But on top of that, on top of the programs that we already have in place that help thousands of businesses across the province, we're also bringing forward Ontario's fair hydro plan. Our fair hydro plan will help many businesses, 500,000 of them, small businesses and farms in this province, Mr. Speaker, actually see 25% reduction or more, Mr. Speaker. And on top of that, if these businesses are larger, Mr. Speaker, they can qualify for the I.C.I. Program. But when it comes to our museums, Mr. Speaker, there are numerous programs in place that will help them, Mr. Speaker. We have done that before the fair hydro plan and when you take that into consideration, Mr. Speaker, many of these places will actually see significant reductions in their bill come summer.

>> MPP Singh: Mr. Speaker, families like Lynn's, small community museums, hospitals, municipalities, Ontarians. Everyone is waiting for the Premier to actually act. P.R., press releases, paid government ads are not a plan. They are a desperate attempt to salvage the Premier's dismal approval numbers. That's all they are. Why is the Premier prioritizing her political career over the people of Ontario?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Families, individuals, small businesses, farms, large manufacturing, greenhouse growers, Mr. Speaker. They will all be seeing significant reductions on their electricity bill by summer, Mr. Speaker. We have made sure that everyone is going to see significant relief, that's going to last, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that they can plan. On that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we've got one party that has no plan, that has no idea on what to do with electricity and another one that makes a pamphlet that actually relies on some pie-in-the-sky negotiations with some determined committee, some day to be determined that is, Mr. Speaker, and I know this expert panel hasn't really reported back anything yet, Mr. Speaker. And they also want to have negotiations with the federal government. When he's touring around Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, maybe he can have a conversation with them and see if they'll actually help, Mr. Speaker

MPP Singh to Premier Wynne (Naqvi) Re: Rental Costs

>> MPP Jagmeet Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is to the Premier. Another day has passed and the 1991 rent control loophole remains open. While the Premier was out politicking yesterday, it was another day on which tenants throughout the G.T.A. may have received another devastating rent hike. When will the Premier knock off the political games and close once and for all the 1991 rent control loophole that leaves renters in this province unprotected?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, you know we absolutely share the concerns of the member opposite about housing affordability generally in the G.T.A. And beyond quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. We know that it's important that people find a place to live, that they are able to find an affordable place to live. But there's no simple answer to this, Mr. Speaker. And so we have been working to put together a package of options because there are -- there are many different issues at play here. There are issues around housing affordability, Mr. Speaker, in terms of being able to buy homes. There are issues around rental affordability, Mr. Speaker. There are issues around supply in order for units and homes to be built, Mr. Speaker, and there are issues around the regional demand for housing, Mr. Speaker. So we are looking at all of those issues. There is a lot of advice that's coming at our Ministers and at our government. And we'll be bringing forward a package very soon, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Singh: Mr. Speaker, instead of getting her picture taken, the Premier could have been in the House -- Passing the NDP's -- Mr. Speaker, instead of pictures, the government passing bills like the NDP Private member's bill that would immediately protect people from unfair rent hikes. By saying that she's doing one thing and then not doing it, she's signalling that now is the time to increase rents. And people and tenants are rightfully scared, Mr. Speaker. They're scared. How could she continue to delay and do photo ops when the people of Ontario need action now?

>> Premier Wynne: So, Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite is referring to yesterday, when we were opening a new urgent care centre in Peel Mr. Speaker -- Peel memorial -- Or if he's referring to the meeting that I held with GTA mayors, then yes, Mr. Speaker. The media came in and took a picture of the meeting at the very beginning of the meeting and then left, Mr. Speaker, and we had a fair -- we had a very important conversation. So if the member opposite is referring to either of those instances, Mr. Speaker, then I just want him to know that the work that we are doing is extremely important to get to the right answer. It's very important that I talk to the people who are on the front lines, whether it's from the home building industry Mr. Speaker -- Met with yesterday or whether it's the mayors, Mr. Speaker. We need to hear what's going on on the ground so we can come up with the right path to --

>> MPP Singh: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's meeting with the mayors was a desperate attempt to get a good headline. But you know what would have gotten her a good headline? Taking immediate action to close the 1991 rent control -- You know the Premier could have gotten a good headline if she immediately closed the 1991 rent control loophole. That would actually help real people in Toronto, the GTA and across the province. When will the Premier stop stalling and close the loopholes and protect all renters in this province?

>> Minister Yasir Naqvi: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you how hard this Premier is working every day in and out to make sure that life is affordable for people of Ontario. Speaker, unlike the member opposite, she's not taking time off to do photo shoots for the "GQ" magazine. Nor is she taking time to do photo shoots for fashion shows. Nor she's modelling in this province, Speaker. She is working hard every single day to make Ontario move forward, to ensure the people of Ontario have opportunities to be prosperous, Mr. Speaker. It takes a lot of nerve from the member opposite, whose appearance on G.Q. To talk about -- Speaker, he must be careful asking the Premier about issues that are important to Ontario. Every single day when she is working.

MPP Fedeli to Minister Sandhu Re: Ontario Budget

>> MPP Vic Fedeli: Thank you. Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, Speaker, the government hit a new low. Instead of acknowledging the growing debt burden, they opted to keep their heads buried in the sand and ignore reality. Our leader, Patrick Brown, put forward a motion that called on the government to immediately begin paying down the debt. But the government voted against our motion. They clearly demonstrated that they would rather spend more money servicing a growing debt than spend it on essential programs people rely on. Their lack of commitment to pay down the debt is both troubling and reckless. Will the Premier take our party's advice, and the advice of the auditor general, and provide a long-term plan -- To get their debt under control now?

>> Minister Liz Sandals: Well, and of course, as we all know, we are going to be balancing the budget again this year. This year. Again I am telling you. Again I am telling you. But I think there's actually some news about this year's budget that the member opposite would be really interesting. Because the borrowing for the year we've just come out of, the '16/17 year, will be our smallest borrowing program since the beginning of the recession. And we've actually borrowed \$2.6 billion less in 2016/17 than was indicated in the budget. So in fact we are beating our targets. One of the other things we've been able to do is beat our target on the payments for interest. So we have a lot of very good news about managing debt that you just choose to ignore.

>> MPP Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. Back to the Premier. That answer, by the way, is 180° opposite of the advice of the auditor general. Under this government, the people of Ontario have been subjected to crisis after crisis. Families are facing a hydro crisis, a housing crisis and a growing debt crisis. Our party brought forward five critical budget asks to get this province back on track. Take action on the growing debt. End the hydro crisis. Address the housing crisis. Make cap and trade revenue neutral and save our schools. Speaker, does the Premier agree with our recommendations or does she agree with presenting an artificial balance of the budget?

>> Minister Sandals: Yes, thank you. And you know we made a very conscious decision at the beginning of the recession about how we were going to manage the economy. We made a conscious decision that we were going to continue to invest in education, that we were going to continue to invest in health care, that we were going to continue to invest in the infrastructure that this province needs to move forward, that we were going to invest in job growth, that we were going to invest in the future of the people of Ontario, despite a global recession. That's the decision that we made. You know, there were a whole bunch of recommendations at the standing committee on finance and public affairs made by the opposition party. Do you know how many of those were about education? 43 recommendations. One. Was about education. Do you know how many about health care? Zero, Speaker.

MPP Gelinias to Minister Hoskins Re: Hospital Wait Times

>> MPP France Gelinias:

[Speaking in French] Voice of Translator: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[End of Translation] My question's for the Premier. Speaker, our hospitals have been pushed to the breaking point by this Premier. Hamilton health sciences is taking care of 138 more patients every single day than they have beds for. Their occupancy rate has soared to 114%. Of course surgery had to be cancelled and people are waiting longer in the E.R. And in the last three months, Speaker, there has been 36 times when there's either just one or no ambulance at all for all of the emergency in Hamilton. When will this Premier own up to the crisis that she's creating in our hospitals and when will she do something to fix it?

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that some of our hospitals face challenges as we go forward, Mr. Speaker, and that's why last year we allocated nearly half a billion dollars. And, Mr. Speaker, for our hospitals and for operating costs to allow them to address those challenges wherever they might be, and, Mr. Speaker, that included 29 million new dollars for

Hamilton health sciences for example. It included for St. Joseph's in Hamilton \$15 million additionally -- So and I should mention that that was a more than 3% increase for Hamilton health sciences last year alone. We're working on an ongoing basis with all of our hospitals to ensure that they -- we have a program called pay for results. In E.R.S to address capacity issues there. We've got issues as well -- we're working with them on A.L.C. Challenges they might face. I'm happy to speak in more detail in supplementary.

>> MPP Gelinis: Speaker, this government has been living in denial. Like completely out of touch. Freezing hospital budgets for four years straight, pushing health care to the breaking point. St. Joseph's in Hamilton has been overcrowded since January. We're now in April. Brampton civic has been in gridlock and the Premier's new urgent care centre won't fix the overcrowding. In London we're seeing horror stories, Speaker. People who need mental health care waiting for seven days. Nights and days on stretchers in hallways with the lights on 24/7 because there are no beds to care for those people. Why is this Premier failing the people of Ontario who need care? And failing to fix the overcrowding in our hospitals?

>> Minister Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, it's important that Ontarians know that the vast majority of hospitals in this province operate at significantly less than 100% capacity routinely. Mr. Speaker, we have increased the number of acute beds in Ontario since 2013 alone by 600 new additional beds. We're making the largest infrastructure investment in hospitals in this province's history right now with new hospitals like Humber River Hospital and Oakville Hospital and many others in expansions like at Joe Brant. Many, many examples of expansions in hospitals. And what we're not going to do, Mr. Speaker, we're going to make sure we continue to invest. We're not going to do like that party did when they were in government when they closed -- 24% of the acute hospital beds in this province, where they closed 13% of the mental health beds in this province. We continue to -- We continue to fund, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Malhi to Minister Flynn Re: Temporary Workers

>> MPP Harinder Malhi: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Labour. Before I came into politics, I was often asked what the government was doing to strengthen protections for workers. In particular temporary workers. This was an issue that I wanted to explore after becoming MPP for Brampton-Springdale. My constituents believe that everyone who works in Ontario deserves a fair chance. That's why I was proud to introduce a private member's bill on temporary help agencies to highlight some of the changes that I would like to see confirmed changing workplaces review. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Labour please share with the House some of the things that our government is doing to help temporary workers in the province?

>> Minister Kevin Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. And thank you to the member for her question. And I want to thank her for the advocacy she does for ordinary working Ontarians that live in her riding, Speaker. Speaker, we've been making great strides for temporary workers in the province of Ontario. We've put in place a number of safeguards for employees of temporary help agencies and the powers to assert their rights and protect them from legal fees, stronger workplaces for stronger economy. An act which was passed by this House in 2014 added even more protection, Speaker. And this legislation makes Ontario the first province and one of the few jurisdictions in the world anywhere, Speaker, that specifically addresses temporary help agency employment in legislation, Speaker. We're very proud of that but we haven't stopped there. Our government's making sure temporary help agency assignment employees have certain rights as all other rights under the employment standards act, occupational health and safety and labour legislation, Speaker.

>> MPP Malhi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Minister for his answer. As the Minister is aware, the House will vote on a motion from the third party that piggy backs on much of the work that we're already doing. In fact I made many of the same points in my own P.N.B. Speech last year. I was also disappointed last week when they called the changing workplaces review a waste of time and made no mention of the act. Unfortunately they are not acknowledging we have been taking improvements for temporary workers seriously and have introduced many changes that will not only

help my constituents but also people who work right across this province. Can the Minister please share with the House what the importance of the review and why our plan to help precarious workers make sense?

>> Minister Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the member again for an excellent supplementary. Speaker, the goal of the changing workplaces review is to make sure that all workers in Ontario feel they have the protection of law. Changing workplaces review is a key part of that. After all, why wouldn't we want to hear from experts, special advisors on this issue who have been studying this issue for some time? The reality is, Speaker, we know the fundamental change is needed and the incomplete plans that are coming forward from the opposition party simply miss the mark, Speaker. We've made significant changes. We're doing a very comprehensive review. Private member's buys that I'm hearing will do nothing to create a sustainable framework where everybody can share in the success of this great province. Speaker, no person in Ontario should ever feel underappreciated, undervalued. No person should feel they can't get ahead. The changing workplaces review, Speaker, is going to help us get there.

MPP Jones to Minister Hoskins Re: Hospital Wait Times

>> MPP Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. My constituent Lori Ikey contacted me after her daughter Jamie Lee was forced to wait in a hallway for five days because there was no hospital bed for her at Brampton Civic. From the Brampton Guardian Lori's daughter said, quote -- I spent five days in a hospital afraid, in pain and staring at a white partition wall as I anxiously awaited answers. Lori wants you to explain why her daughter had no hospital bed for five days.

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I -- you know, I have to say that I was distraught when I learned of this particular individual and in a very vulnerable state what she had to endure at one of our hospitals, Mr. Speaker. And it's important that all of us that have a role to play in providing that highest quality care remember specifically that we're dealing with individuals, individuals in an extremely vulnerable state. And we need to do everything we can to ensure their safety that they're taken care of in a compassionate way and, Mr. Speaker, I -- Am looking very carefully and specifically in terms of measures that we can and should take that hopefully the situation doesn't happen.

>> MPP Jones: Minister, I'm sure that Lori and Jamie Lee appreciate your sympathy, but you are the Minister of health. You have an opportunity to fix this issue. It's not new. We just heard about it in Hamilton. It's happening in Brampton. It's happening all over Ontario. Please do something. It's unfair to people like Jamie Lee. It's an example of hallway medicine. No privacy, no bed, just another justification. There's no way it's acceptable that someone has to lay in a hallway for five days without a bed in the province of Ontario. When will the Minister ensure that our loved ones get a bed when they need one?

>> Minister Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, -- and I was asked this question yesterday by the media, and I was asked at the brand-new Peel Memorial Health and Wellness Centre that the Premier and I opened yesterday, which has -- Vast array of services available to individuals of the Brampton and neighbouring communities, including an urgent care centre, which is drawing away some of the patients that previously would have gone to Brampton Civic, which is the hospital that the individual -- that the member opposite referenced. It has dietitians, chiropractors, day surgery, cataract surgery, dialysis. Many, many services in this brand-new facility, which is so -- had been so well received and appreciated by the community. And it's measures like that, Mr. Speaker, which will draw individuals in the community to the appropriate resources and reduce the overcrowding the member opposite mentioned.

MPP Bisson to Minister Hoskins Re: Moosonee Helicopter Base

>> MPP Gilles Bisson: The question is to the Premier. Premier, you would know this late week on behalf of our constituents on the James Bay raised the issue of air orange shutting down the helicopter base in moosonee. I was told by orange by a subsequent phone call that they had consulted with chiefs in other communities such as moosonee and everybody was fine. That is not the case. I've talked to kashechewan. I've talked to fort Albany. I've talked to the mayor of moosonee. I've talked to the Deputy chief in moose factory. The mash keg wuk Deputy chief. Nobody's on side. The question here is the people living on the James Bay are no different than anywhere else in this province. Why would we allow that base to shut down when we don't do it anywhere else when it comes to servicing helicopters?

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the advocacy by the member opposite on this issue, and I appreciate actually the opportunity to collaborate. We've had a number of conversations and I'm pleased to hear as well -- and I'm aware of that orange reached out to him as well because they specifically wanted to discuss the issue with him and explain what was being anticipated in terms of the necessary, and necessary for a whole variety of reasons, particularly safety reasons while we're thinking of moosonee, I think we all recognize just how vitally important that is. So they had an opportunity to have that discussion. As I've mentioned to the member opposite as well, that my goal is to ensure that the services in moosonee and those that depend on the orange services that come out of moosonee, are of the highest quality as well. This maintenance is necessary for the safety of the pilots and the paramedics and others as well as the passengers, patients. But we're looking to see what we might be able to do in terms of finding a replacement helicopter during that period of time.

>> MPP Bisson: I heard you correctly. I think you just said that you're looking for a replacement helicopter? And if that is the case, the people of moosonee and people of James Bay will say thank you but I've got to make the point again. When you have -- we have helicopter bases in Sudbury. We have them in Thunder Bay, Kenora, Toronto and moose factory -- or moosonee. None of the other bases are shut down. We're able to shift equipment around to make sure those bases continue to operate at the times the equipment is out for maintenance. It is not acceptable that we shut down that helicopter base in moosonee. Utilizing the ambulance mode is good sometimes but due to tides, due to wind, due to weather there's all kind of times that you cannot use that ambulance boat and we're putting people at risk, not to say what that helicopter does when it comes to emergency extraction out of cache and other places when things happen. So I ask you again on behalf of the people of moosonee and James Bay. Will we put in a replacement helicopter during the time that is that machine is out for servicing?

>> Minister Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And as the member referenced that the vast majority of transports that take place out of moosonee involve the first instance marine transport, to make that hop to the island where the hospital's located. And the majority of transports on James Bay and the surrounding area take place by fixed wing as well. But there is an important role for the orange helicopter at times. I know that the member opposite will agree with me that if -- in fact it's my commitment, if there is a safe way -- and this is about safety of passengers, safety of the paramedics, of the pilots in and around moosonee. If there's a safe way that we can keep rotor wing service throughout the summer, the two months when this maintenance is due to take place, we will make sure it happens.

MPP Dong to Minister MacCharles Re: Reliable Elevator Act

>> MPP Han Dong: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of government and consumer services. Minister, over the last decade, more and more people in Toronto have chosen to live in high-rises. In fact over 40% of homeowners over the age of 65 live in high-rises. Every day family, especially seniors and children and people with mobility restrictions, find themselves trapped because their building's elevator is out of order and often remain that way for a long time. This morning at the press conference, Mr. Gonzalez, a gentleman in a wheelchair, told us that he missed his blood transfusion appointment because of elevator outage. That is why, Speaker, I have introduced bill 109, reliable elevator act, which if passed would ensure future buildings will have

enough -- Capacity and elevators are repaired within the specific deadline. Speaker, account Minister share her perspective on the importance of creating a strong connection. For the growing population

>> Minister Tracy MacCharles: Thank you. And I would like to thank the member from Trinity-Spadina for his question and introducing a very important piece of legislation on elevator availability. Fantastic work. I know that out of service elevators can be a great source of frustration for tenants and condo owners. It's especially concerning, as we've heard, for elderly persons or people with disabilities who have no alternative or other means of getting from floor to floor. For people who rely on elevators, Speaker, to get in and out of their buildings, disruptions, slow repair times cannot only create Barriers to daily activities -- they may also pose health and safety risks. Currently the technical standard safety authority does have a mandate to ensure elevator safety. However it does not have set-out time frames which an out-of-service elevator. Must be returned to operation. So I agree it is the right time to start looking at how can we ensure greater reliability and availability of elevators? Thank.

>> MPP Dong: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the Minister for her answer. As our province continues to grow up and buildings are frequently reaching 70-plus storey range, access to elevators for Ontarians that own or rent condominiums is not just a convenience. Reliable elevators are essential. Not too long ago, residents of 79-storey aura building on Yonge street were trapped on their floor unless they took the stairs. While some of the tower elevators have since been repaired, weeks later there are many, many -- many elevators remain out of service. Speaker, bill 109 is a direct answer to the changing needs of Ontario's residents and tenants and offer them an increased consumer protection. Will the Minister support creating greater protection for Ontarians by strengthening the rules and regulations. Pertaining to elevators?

>> Minister MacCharles: So again, I couldn't be in stronger agreement, Speaker, with this bill. To make changes that reflect the way we can enhance consumer protection for renters and owners, and this issue is important to me not only as the Minister of government and consumer services that oversees the T.S.S.A., but as the Minister responsible for accessibility, recognizing Barriers disproportionately impact people with disabilities. Under our accessibilities for Ontarians with disabilities act, all organizations including multistorey residential buildings in Ontario are required to post a notice of disruption for an out-of-service elevator and prepare a document outlining the steps it would take to accommodate persons with disabilities in the event of a temporary --Disruption. I know more can be done, and that's why I'm really looking forward to the debate this afternoon on this building. Again I want to thank and congratulate the member for Trinity- Spadina.

MPP Oosterhoff to Minister MacCharles Re: Education Accessibility Standard

>> MPP Sam Oosterhoff: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister responsible for accessibility. I recently moat with the joint accessibility advisory committee of niagara as well as hosting my own round table in grimsby to learn more about the obstacles faced by 1.85 million Ontarians with a disability. This allowed me to hear from Alexandra stanovic, a student with hearing challenges who faces great obstacles in high school after being assigned a poorly educated interpreter who failed to interpret the course properly. The Premier agreed to establish an education accessibility standard last December. However, four months have gone by and an education standards committee still does not exist. How much longer will persons with disabilities like Alexandra have to wait for this government to take action?

>> Minister Tracy MacCharles: So first I want to thank the member so much for hosting that roundtable. I think it's fantastic when any member of the legislature can engage -- With the community. You know also that every municipality in Ontario has an accessibility advisory committee, so I think it is so important that we listen to what the issues are, listen to what Barriers still exist and bring those forward. But, Speaker, I'm' also very proud of our legislation. In fact this year, 2017, is the first year where all organizations have to start reporting on their accessibility plans and their progress. And, Speaker, we know that the legislation is important but it's also about

changing attitudes and removing Barriers. I will be very happy to speak in the supplementary about the new education standard that we'll be developing -- To complement the other standards that already exist. Thank you.

>> MPP Oosterhoff: Mr. Speaker, that answer let down over a third of a million students in elementary, secondary and postsecondary studies. These students have been waiting for equal opportunities for 11 years since the accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities act was passed in this legislature. It is letting down students such as Alexandra, who have faced unnecessary obstacles in education because of this government's failure to act. Students are losing hope that educational Barriers will be removed through the establishment of standards. Did you forget about the Premier's promise, or is this just another one of your government's stretch goals?

>> Minister MacCharles: Speaker, it is an important question. It's also important the member knows we already do remove Barriers in schools, whether it's elementary or postsecondary education. We have obligations in place for the education sector under our standards and that policies be in place, that educators are trained on programs, that libraries and other services are provided in an accessible format. These all help our students but we know there's more to be done. That's why the Premier announced education standard in December of last year. She made it a public commitment, Speaker and we are working -- I am working with my Colleagues, Ministers in education and advanced education skills development, to get that standard going, to strike an S.D. C., a standards development committee. As we've done recently with health care. And we know that improving, enhancing inclusion and accessibility for students is an important -- And we'll continue to work hard on this.

MPP Hatfield to Minister Mauro (Leal) Re: Tecumseh Flood Relief

>> MPP Percy Hatfield: My question's for the Minister of municipal affairs. Good morning, Minister. Last September my riding had record rainfall. In the short period of time, storm sewers overflowed. Thousands of homes were flooded. 110 millimetres of rain in five hours. 190 over 48 hours. More than what we would normally get in two months, Speaker. The Minister came to see the Dan first hand. The Minister promised financial help from the provincial disaster relief fund. It's been six months. Yet only 36 people have received relief payments. Many more have partial payments but their file is still open. Speaker, when can the rest of my constituents receive the relief they were promised?

>> Minister Bill Mauro: Thank you to the member for the question. I know the Minister of agriculture, food and rural affairs will want to weigh in on this on the supplementary. The member's right. I was in southern Ontario within a very short period of time after the flood occurred. I met with mayor Bain in will she -- lake more, mayor dilkens in Windsor and mayor Mcnamara in tecumseh. We visited a number of the homeowners who were affected by the flood. Speaker, I can tell you very quickly the program was activated in fact on October 23rd, 2016. We activated the program. The deadline for applications was January 31st, 2017. One of the significant changes, Speaker, I want to mention that we brought to the program under my predecessor, Ted McMeekin, was that no longer are local municipalities required to fund-raise as was the case under the old odraft program. That's significant. Another change that was brought in I want to share with the legislature that is very significant. Unlike every other province in the country. Sewer backup is the result of Hovey flooding. Low-income people are now eligible to apply in Ontario for coverage where there's been sewage backup.

>> MPP Hatfield: Speaker, two-thirds of those applying for disaster relief have been denied. I heard from a constituent this morning that is still waiting for her phone calls to be returned. The provisions of the disaster relief fund were established in the last century. Climate change is here. It's a reality. This Liberal government has got to come to grips with that and realize communities can't cope with rainfalls of this magnitude. Speaker, when will the Minister update the disaster relief plan so more homeowners will be protected in storm events of this magnitude?

>> Minister Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, on Monday I had the opportunity to be in beautiful Picton, Ontario, to announce a number of projects under the Ontario community infrastructure fund. Part of that announcement on Monday was to assist the town of Tecumseh in the neighbourhood of \$806,000, to prepare the damage that occurred in that flood back in September. He was particularly interested, when I looked at the damage, in wards 1 and 2 in the town of Tecumseh, where within a very short period of time 2.7 billion litres of water surged to the town's pumps and eventually overwhelmed the system. Mr. Speaker, what we're encouraging now throughout the province of Ontario is to move from disaster management to disaster prevention. We're asking our municipalities to separate -- The creek water from their treatment water to make sure that the system is overflowing. That's why we're giving \$806,000 to the town of Tecumseh.

MPP Qaadri to Minister Coteau Re: Municipal Islamophobia

>> MPP Shafiq Qaadri: Merci, monsieur LE président.

[Speaking in French] Voice of Translator: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for Honourable Michael Coteau.

[End of Translation] Privilege of being joined by Imam and his Colleagues from Québec. He addressed the Prime Minister, thousands of people in the arena when he stood and spoke bravely celebrating the lives of six men who were killed while praying at their mosque in Québec city. These men were fathers, husbands and Neighbours, and on that murderous day, 17 children lost their dads. These men lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow, loved and were loved, and now lie in a French field. They dreamed of their own futures and the futures of their children, the youngest of whom is 18 months old.

[Speaking in French]

Voice of Translator: As member father and Muslim men, I understand how important it is to fight against islamophobia.

[End of Translation] What our province is doing to address this latest round of racism.

>> Minister Michael Coteau: Thank you. I would like to thank the member from Etobicoke North for the question. And I'd like to thank the Imam and our other guests here for joining us here in the legislature. It is a great privilege to have you here today. Mr. Speaker, the tragedy that took place in Québec reminds us all that islamophobia is real here in the province of Ontario and it's a problem right across this country. Ontario's home to 61% of all Muslims in Canada. Mr. Speaker, we are home to 90% of Muslims who are racialized. Here in the city of Toronto, 5% of our population is Muslim. This is the largest population in all of Canada, including the United States. A better way forward, Ontario's three-year anti-racism strategic plan includes specific initiatives to address islamophobia. The anti-racism director -- Is engaging with community organizations and researching better ways to understand the cause and impacts of islamophobia so we can move forward on future initiatives.

>> MPP Qaadri: Thank you, Minister Coteau, for your ongoing work and thank you, Premier Wynne, for your leadership on this and many other fronts of intolerance. Over the past few days, Speaker, I've been heartened to hear members from all parties, all three parties deliberate and respond to bill 114, an act to provide for anti-racism measures. The content of the proposed legislation is substantive and has opened up an important and indeed essential conversation in our legislature. I note that the bill proposes a Collection of key data and anti-racism impact assessment framework and proactive methods to apply an anti-racism perspective to government decision making.

[Speaking in French] Voice of Translator: Mr. Minister, can you share with the House how bill 114 relates to the future of the province?

[End of Translation]

>> Minister Coteau: Speaker, the scope of bill 114 an act to provide anti-racism measures is unprecedented in Canada. Through the strategic plan in bill 114, we're working to ensure that Ontario remains a place of inclusion, where everyone feels safe and has the ability to fully contribute to society. This bill ensures that government is held accountable and that the anti-racism work we are doing today continues for future generations. Mr. Speaker, I was so inspired by the words of the Imam joining us here today when he said -- let's go from today to be a real society united the same way we are united today in our sorrow and in our pain. Let us start today to be united in our dreams, our hopes and our plans for the future. Thank you again for being here and joining us in the legislature today. Thank you.

MPP Hardeman to Minister Ballard Re: Housing Costs

>> MPP Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of housing. After I called for an expert housing affordability panel, the Minister claimed that he had a housing affordability team. But it seems no one has heard about that team. Account Minister tell us who was on the team and what they have actually done thus far?

>> Minister Chris Ballard: Thank you, Speaker. I know everyone on this side of the House is on that team. You know, we'll -- we will continue to answer the call, Speaker, to provide more affordable housing across the province. And as we heard yesterday, as we met with our municipal partners, affordable housing is a very complex issue. It requires close coordination with our municipal partners, with builders and with members of my ministry and other ministries. And that's who we turn to, Mr. Speaker. We've put together between the Minister of municipal affairs and myself have put together our team of senior people within our ministries to look at some of the issues that have been raised by both municipalities and builders and environmentalists, just to make sure we get our -- Right. So, Mr. Speaker, the most important thing that we're doing is continuing our consultations with municipal leaders, with our builders, with other stakeholders in the field. To make sure we get our solutions right.

>> MPP Hardeman: Well, Speaker, Minister, the housing crisis has developed under this government. Under your watch. Team of insiders has done nothing to stop it. This team has piled cost after cost on new housing, without any realization what the impact will be. It's time to consult with the people who actually understand the housing sector. We proposed the housing affordability panel, with clear goals, broad membership and short time lines. Since the Minister 's team doesn't seem to have any of that, will he simply agree to support our panel so we can actually address the challenges of affordable -- of housing affordability in the province of Ontario?

>> Minister Ballard: Well, certainly what I will agree with, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a growing concern right across the gtha and beyond about the impact of the booming housing market. You know, Speaker, I absolutely understand that Ontarians are worried about affording homes in this region and they want the peace of mind knowing that they'll have an affordable place to call home. The fact is, Speaker, we have been working on this in a number of areas, and I will say, Speaker, that it's nice that finally the -- the member opposite and his party have joined the conversation to talk about affordable housing, right? I can tell you, Speaker, the question that I would put back to them is -- Is that they have been late to this game. We have been working on this game. We're talking to renters. We're talking to municipalities. We have legislation coming forward. We're getting it right.