

Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript - Thursday, October 27, 2016

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Transcript of Provincial Question Period
41st Parliament, 2nd Session
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The following is a partially edited transcript of Question Period.

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MPP Brown to Premier Wynne (Duguid) Re: Business Energy Rates

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The Premier may not want to admit it but we have a hydro crisis in the province of Ontario and it is very real. You just have to look at the story in the "London free press" this week. The article talks about Gail and Rob Fullerton from heritage village of Pasley in Bruce county. They decide under 2014 to open the local food store. The Fullertons' goal was expensive renovations was to have ultra energy efficiency in every aspect of their building. They invest today have energy efficiency. But because of Liberal energy policies, even with their energy efficiency, their hydro bills are skyrocketing. Mr. Speaker, when will this government open their eyes and realize that businesses cannot remain open. They cannot cope. They cannot afford their hydro bills unless we see some difference, some real commitment for relief for Ontarians.

>> Premier Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I know that the Minister of economic development and growth is going to want to speak to the supports that we have put in place for businesses, including, including the changes that were maintained around electricity prices, Mr. Speaker. The leader of the opposition will know that the announcements that we made in the throne speech were directed, yes, at individuals in their homes but also at businesses, Mr. Speaker. So taking the 8% off electricity prices, Mr. Speaker, and working to include more businesses in the conservation initiative, Mr. Speaker. That was directed at businesses that were smaller than the businesses that could take advantage of that up to 34% reduction previously. But, Mr. Speaker. To the crisis in electricity I would just remind the leader of the opposition in 2003 there was a crisis in electricity in this province and we've worked to fix that, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. The crisis is now. Families across Ontario are struggling. The London free press article continued to tell the story of the Fullertons. They spent half a million dollars to make it the most energy efficient building possible. But despite all their efficiencies, less than four years after opening, the business is facing hydro costs that will soon be back to where they were before the renovations. Gail Fullerton the manager said the single biggest obstacle to our success and to guarantee a grocery store remains open in their town, the single biggest obstacle, hydro. And I repeat they can't stay open because of hydro bills. So my question, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier is what do you have to say to the Fullerton family that just wants to work hard to keep a business open in a small town in Ontario. But because of hydro bills they're worried they have to shut the doors.

>> Min. Duguid: Speaker, we recognize that there are challenges for businesses regard to energy costs and that's why, Mr. Speaker, we've proudly put in place an 8% discount for all small businesses, all businesses across this province and all residents across this province. So if you have a \$4,000 a month energy bill, that's going to save a small business \$4,800 a year. Yet the leader of the opposition continues to denigrate our efforts to bring down those costs for businesses, almost as though, Mr. Speaker, he's trying to have two positions at the same time. Like he's not got a pattern of doing that, Mr. Speaker. A very long and arduous pattern of doing that. Mr. Speaker, we're going to keep promoting small businesses. We're going to keep our economy growing. We're going to continue to make Ontario the easiest place in the world in which to do business. And the result, Mr. Speaker, will be more jobs and more small businesses going forward.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. And the Liberal front bench wants to argue somehow there's going to be hydro relief. There's not. They bring in a P.S.T. Rebate but bring in the luxury rebate. Families are going to see their bills go up. Next year bills will continue to go up for seniors, for families, for businesses. There is no relief on the horizon. And it's unaffordable. We need some real change, not band-aid solutions. So my question directly to the Premier is rather than trying to point fingers and blame other people on the problems you've created for Ontario, my question directly for the Premier is what are you going to say to that family, that family that invested their life savings in energy efficient upgrades, renovations to make their business work, and now once again, four years later. They can't afford their bills. It's unacceptable.

>> Min. Duguid: Mr. Speaker, what we'll say to that family and what we'll say to small businesses across this province is that we're going to continue to invest with small businesses, contrary to the position taken by the leader of the opposition. We're going to continue to fund them through helping them grow through our regional economic development fund. We took the capital tax off those businesses, something that the party opposite opposed. We lowered the effective corporate tax rate in previous budgets, budgets that that party did not support, Mr. Speaker, and that gives them a corporate tax rate, Mr. Speaker, that's 13% less than those small businesses that are operating across the border. Mr. Speaker, we brought in place H.S.T., something that party didn't support us on either, something that's saving our small businesses

hundreds of millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, in administration costs. Mr. Speaker, I'll continue to -- Time. Let's talk about regulatory burden. We're making Ontario the easiest place in north America in which to do business.

MPP Brown (Nicholls) to Premier Wynne (Orazietti) Re: Thunder Bay Jail - Adam Capay

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Since I can't get an answer on hydro rates, they live in this fantasy world that everything is fine with the hydro crisis, I'll try a different tack. Let's talk about corrections. Almost a year ago I toured the Thunder Bay jail along with several members of the Ontario P.C. Caucus. I could not believe that such deplorable conditions could exist in Ontario. The mayor of Thunder Bay referred to the jail as a rat hole. In fact after my visit I challenged the Premier to visit the Thunder Bay jail. She has failed to do so, because the Premier didn't want to admit that there could be third-world conditions. In Ontario corrections. So, Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is will she finally commit here today to visit the Thunder Bay jail and have a tour with opseu?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, you know the leader of the opposition implies or states directly that I'm not concerned about the situation in the Thunder Bay jail, Mr. Speaker, and quite frankly in other jails in Ontario. Advice aid jail in Ontario, Mr. Speaker. I am concerned about it. The status quo cannot continue, Mr. Speaker. There needs to be transformation. And, Mr. Speaker, we have been working to make changes as recently as a few days ago, Mr. Speaker. Minister of community safety and correctional services talked about the changes that we know need to be made in terms of segregation, Mr. Speaker. I know there needs to be change. There needs to be change. Now we've hired over 1,100 new correctional officers. We're hiring 2,000 over the next three years, Mr. Speaker. We've put in place important security and infrastructure upgrades, Mr. Speaker. I know, I know that there's more that needs to be done in terms of the bricks and mortar, Mr. Speaker, of these facilities. In terms of support for staff and --

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier, I will note my question and my challenge for the Premier to commit to visit the Thunder Bay jail has not been answered. You can't go to that jail and not realize that something needs to be done. We learned about the tragic story of Adam Capay held in solitary confinement without a trial for years. Mike Lundy president of opseu local 737 said, I quote -- staff and management have only done what we can do with the resources we have. He added -- all seven segregation cells at the century-old Thunder Bay district jail are constantly full. Ideally they would use segregation in order to maintain order but their resources are stretched too thin. They have no options. There are inadequate mental health resources in correctional facilities across Ontario and because of the lack of resources, because of the lack of commitment for the Premier to look at this. We're seeing stories like Adam Capay. The government failed Adam Capay and my question, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier is will the government actually commit to supporting to give the resources to corrections so another Adam Capay won't occur?

>> Min. Orazietti: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's great to see the opposition's newfound compassion for our correctional system. I want to say to all of our correctional workers, the folks that are here today -- Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank all of the correctional workers, the nurses, the health care folks. All of the folks that work in our correctional services ministry that are here today. Thank them for the work that they do on behalf of so many Ontarians, Speaker.

[Applause] And we do take these concerns very seriously, Speaker, and we are acting with respect to Thunder Bay jail. We've added 26 new correctional officers since 2013. We are moving to improve the infrastructure. Window replacement, a full body scanner, changes to unit doors, sallyport doors being put on nine living units. Closed-circuit television. There are a number of infrastructure improvements, Speaker, that we continue to make --

>> MPP Nicholls: Thanks very much, Speaker. You know, rhetoric is simply that, rhetoric. Speaker, back to the Premier. The Thunder Bay jail is Thank you, Speaker. Back to the Premier. The Thunder Bay jail is deplorable. There is no arguing that the similar problems exist across this province. Opseu's corrections divisions chair Monte Thistle Mire has been telling this government for years that they've been calling for more money and resources for mental health care because these people should have appropriate treatment. He said and I quote -- we told them and we've been ignored but now they are trying to hide years of neglect. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier visit the Thunder Bay jail. To see what years of Liberal neglect looks like? And while she's there will she look and see where Adam Capay was held by this Liberal government for four years --

>> Min. Orazietti: Speaker, you know the privatization plan of the prior government is not something we want to embark on. We're committed to publicly run institutions and supporting public services in something like our correctional services. I have to say, Speaker, that the investments that we continue to

make are very, very important. 1,100 new officers. We've added mental health nurses, Speaker, from 13 to 49 new nurses. We've added probation and parole officers, reduced the case load work that they have and we continue to make investments, \$25 million this year up over 7% for programs for rehabilitation for individuals in our correctional services, Speaker. We're committed to a full and comprehensive review to make the investments that need to be made in infrastructure. And support staff folks across the correctional services, Speaker. We're committed to doing that.

MPP Horwath to Premier Wynne (Hoskins) Re: Long Term Care Oversight

>> Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. My question's to the Premier. It's been two days since we found out about the tragic alleged murders of eight seniors living in long-term care homes in Woodstock and London. Has the Premier asked her Minister to undertake any review of oversight, infection and safety in our long-term care facilities?

>> Premier Wynne: So, Mr. Speaker, as I have said for the last couple of days, this is an extremely distressing situation, Mr. Speaker. The murder investigation is obviously a tragedy for the families and for the community involved, Mr. Speaker. And I understand that there's a real desire for answers. I think that is shared by all of us in this House. Many of the answers will be provided through the ongoing police investigation, Mr. Speaker, and through subsequent court proceedings. It's also possible that the independent office of the coroner may decide to conduct a coroner's inquest into these deaths, Mr. Speaker. We have to let those proceedings play out. But as I said yesterday I'm committed to looking at all options including calling an independent review or inquiry into these deaths, Mr. Speaker. I am absolutely open to that. But in the meantime. It's important for the member opposite to remember that the police have made clear that there's no threat to safety and we need to let those meetings unfold, Mr. Speaker.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, everyone in this House respects the need for the police to conduct their investigation. But there are 78,000 families in our province who have loved ones in the long-term care system in Ontario. They're looking to the Premier and her government for reassurance that their family members are safe in their homes following news of these shocking alleged murders. I'm asking a very straightforward question, Speaker. Has the Premier ordered any action or review of current oversight, inspection and safety in Ontario's long-term care system yet?

>> Min. Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier has said, the police specifically indicated to all Ontarians, particularly those who reside in our long-term care homes, that there is no need to be concerned about the safety as a result of this occurrence. Mr. Speaker, we have reiterated the same assurance to Ontarians. I think it's important that all Ontarians understand and within this legislature as well the importance of allowing a police investigation to occur and proceed. Of course we're co-operating fully with the police investigation. Of course the ministry also has plans within the confines of what we're able to do so we don't prejudice or hinder the police investigation of doing our own investigations and looking at precisely what has taken place in these two long-term care homes. But it's imperative, Mr. Speaker, that we ensure the police investigation is allowed to continue, that we give the coroner the ability to -- if he should choose to take measures. More fully investigate this, Mr. Speaker.

>> Andrea Horwath: So, Speaker, my question has to do with the oversight that's needed today to protect the most vulnerable seniors and residents of long-term care, not the police investigation. And I'm not alone in asking, Speaker. Seniors' advocates, health care professionals and families are asking the same questions and really are just looking for reassurance on an issue of vital importance. Speaker, the safety and security of people living in long-term care. If the Premier is open to an independent review or an inquiry into the oversight of long-term care facilities, why not give people the peace of mind that they seek sooner rather than later? Why won't the Premier order that review today, Speaker?

>> Min. Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, it's important that Ontarians understand a level of inspection that we do each year in all of our long-term care homes. In fact 100% of our long-term care homes were inspected in 2014. 100% of our long-term care homes were inspected in 2015. Continually on an ongoing basis, every single long-term care home in this province will be inspected annually. Now, Mr. Speaker, we have a whole set of measures from allows us to understand if there are critical events that occur. If there are patient concerns or public concerns. We have a hot line where we invite the public if they've got any concerns about a loved one or situation in a long-term care home. We also of course have requirements on long-term care homes themselves for the requirement they report any critical incident or any unexpected death, any occurrence which might be suggestive of abuse or neglect. There's a legal requirement for them to proceed in that fashion. We prioritize those critical incidents and investigate them thoroughly and immediately.

MPP Horwath to Premier Wynne (Hoskins) Re: LTC Oversight follow-up

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker my next question's also for the Premier. I can only imagine what it must feel like, Speaker, as a family member of someone who passed away in long-term care to learn that your loved one was taken from you in such an untimely and heartless way. These alleged murders have shone a light on what many people have long believed to be serious concerns. Seniors advocates, professionals and families are not asking the government to interfere with a police investigation, Speaker, nor am I. But we are rightfully calling for a broader review of the system. When will the Premier order that review, Speaker ?

>> Premier Wynne: Again, Mr. Speaker, I would remind the leader of the third party that these are allegations that being -- that are being dealt with, Mr. Speaker. They're allegations, and in the context of that reality there is an investigation that's ongoing. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has laid out the inspection process that we have in place that is an annual process, Mr. Speaker, and obviously, you know, we are all very, very concerned and want to know what the answers will be, what the answers are in this very terrible situation. But we are dealing with allegation -- dealing with allegations, Mr. Speaker. There is a police investigation that's ongoing. There may be a coroner's inquest. That is up to the office of the coroner, Mr. Speaker. And I've said if we perceive that there's a need to do an inquiry, Mr. Speaker, or a different review, we are absolutely open to doing that but we must let the proceedings that are in place. Unfold, Mr. Speaker, as they need to.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, of course the police investigation is of utmost importance. I don't think anybody here disagrees. But its outcome will address only the terrible alleged murders in these two homes. What about the other 78,000 residents of Ontario's long-term care homes and their families who worry about them each and every day? Who worry about them more now in light of these tragic allegations. When will the Premier be taking actions to reassure all Ontarians that this province has the most effective oversight and monitoring of our long-term care facilities as humanly possible?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will want to go over the process once again in the final supplementary but I just want to say to this House and to the people of Ontario that in a situation like this, where there are very serious allegations and where there are processes that need to take place, my concern and the questions that I have for my staff and my Colleagues is is there a systemic issue we need to look at? Mr. Speaker, I understand that the leader of the third party is asking that exact question. So, Mr. Speaker, it is, it is the question that we have to ask. We have protocols in place, Mr. Speaker. We have allegation in a very terrible situation and where those two meet and where the questions need to be asked, Mr. Speaker, some of those questions will be asked as part of the proceedings that are under way now. We need to hear the answers to those questions, Mr. Speaker, and not get in the way of the proceedings that are under way right now.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care said that Ontario's long-term care homes have and I quote among the best oversight mechanisms for critical incidents, as well as for general annual inspections in the world. And I think he repeated some of that already this morning. But not everyone agrees, Speaker. The auditor general reviewed Ontario's long-term care inspection program last year and concluded that there were serious problems and the process could be improved. The tragedy that is unfolding in Woodstock and London right now should give us all pause, Speaker, to consider the things that we can do better to protect and care for seniors living in long-term care. Yesterday the Premier was open to her review. I'm asking today, don't delay. There is no need to wait. There is absolutely no need to wait. Please order that review today. Will the Premier do that, Speaker ?

>> Min. Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, the changes recommended by the auditor general for our inspection process are precisely the changes that we have made and implemented. So every single home is still being inspected every year. 100% of homes are being inspected. That means that investigators go into every home. They meet with residents. They meet with families. They interview staff to identify any issues of concern. In fact consistent with the auditor general's recommendations, we're focusing those investigations based on risk. She asked us. She said the ministry needs to better prioritize comprehensive inspections, allocate resources more efficiently and assess the frequency of comprehensive inspections based on risk. That is exactly the change that we've made, Mr. Speaker. Of course if staff identify any additional or further concerns in the course of these annual 100% comprehensive inspections. They will pursue those concerns directly at that time.

MPP Harris to Minister Del Duca Re: Winter Road Maintenance

>> MPP Harris: Thanks, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of transportation. Speaker, the first snowfall is an annual reminder of the government's continued failures of winter road maintenance. After a scathing auditor's report on this government's substandard winter road maintenance contracts, indications that we're paying more to reextend with contractors whose agreements had just been cancelled meaning

motorists can expect more of the same. Speaker, there is something clearly wrong when the Minister rewards the same contractors who walked away from fixed price ten to twelve years' contracts with brand-new agreements at increased rates. The Minister was unable to tell me during estimates how much we were paying for re-extending the cancelled contractors in Kenora, Sudbury and Ottawa. So can the Minister tell us today how much more taxpayers will be paying those contractors, including Niagara and Hamilton, to meet his winter maintenance contract standards that have risked Ontario motorists' safety?

>> Min. Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. I thank the member opposite for the question. I know obviously as we head into this winter season and in fact in some parts of Ontario we have already begun to see winter weather, that the winter maintenance with respect to our highways is a concern that's top of mind for the travelling public. The member opposite would know, Speaker, as I've said many times in this House, the safety of the travelling public is the top priority of the ministry of transportation. I recognize and again I said in this House particularly in response to the auditor's report that there is additional work the ministry needs to do in conjunction with our contractor partners right across the province. It's one of the reasons that we accepted each of the auditor's recommendations, Speaker, and also one of the reasons that we've moved forward working closely with our contractors to make sure, as we enter into this winter season, that in each part of the province. That we are ready for winter weather that's coming, Speaker. I would be happy to elaborate in the second answer. Thanks very much.

>> MPP Harris: So the Minister's awaiting fine payments from many of these same contractors with one hand and handing out increases with the other. Speaker, if the Minister doesn't want to tell us how much more we're paying, then of course I will. During estimates, the Minister's Deputy admitted that following the cancellation of regional contracts for Ottawa, Niagara, Sudbury and Kenora, the ministry was budgeting an extra \$31.6 million for winter road maintenance this year. Since that time, we have seen another renegotiated contract in Hamilton. Account Minister explain why we are paying at least \$31 million more to some of those same fine contractors who had walked away were their -- from their agreements?

>> Min. Del Duca: Well, Speaker, I'd like to give the member who's asked this question from the opposition the benefit of the doubt. Of course I would only imagine, and I would imagine that every single member of this legislature would want to make sure that the ministry of transportation did everything that it possibly could to make sure that our contractor partners are ready for upcoming winter weather so that we can provide maintenance on our highways in winter and year-round, Speaker. That's what the travelling public expects and deserves. I find it interesting that on the one hand many months ago that member and members of the Conservative party were suggesting that we had not dedicated enough resources to the winter maintenance program. And today he's questioning why we appear to be providing additional resources for winter maintenance, Speaker. There seems to be a bit of a disconnect and where that member was a few months ago where he is today. I will repeat again, the priority for the ministry of transportation to make sure. That we're providing winter maintenance the people of Ontario expect and deserve and it's why for 13 years. We've had the safest highways in North America.

MPP French to Minister Orazietti Re: Correctional System Conditions

>> MPP French: Thank you, Speaker. And my question is to the Minister of community safety and correctional services. Earlier this week I asked the Minister to address the crisis in corrections and provide mental health supports those who need it and the Minister replied, quote -- those supports are in place in all of our institutions end quote. Well, Speaker, those supports don't exist in every institution. Centrally correctional centre in Lindsay has an infirmary that has been convert today dorms for female in -- inmates. They used to have an unofficial health unit but it got closed. How many infirmaries have never been opened and how many mental health programs have been cut by this ministry?

>> Min. Orazietti: Again I want to thank all of the folks that work in our correctional division for the work that they do. What I can say with respect to mental health nurses, for example Speaker, was we hired 36 additional mental health nurses in our correctional division. That's up from 13 to 49 now since 2013 alone. We've also invested \$25 million this year alone in programs to support inmates, including programs like domestic violence, guns and gangs, relapse prevention and indigenous programming as well. Speaker, we continue to make these investments in our correctional system because we know it's the right thing to do. We've also committed to a full review because we know that more needs to be done, more investments need to be made to in -- improve our infrastructure, to continuing to build the staffing capacity. That's needed to ensure we have a correctional system that we all want to see, Speaker.

>> MPP French: Thank you, Speaker. There is a crisis in corrections and this government talks and talks and talks, but after years of neglect this ministry needs action, not announcements. You avoided a strike by promising yet unseen legislation are installing body scanners without policies or staffing and you've made changes to disciplinary segregation but nothing for the majority indefinitely held without mental

health supports. What this government has allowed to happen to Adam Capay the Ontario human rights commissioner has now called torture. These are decisions made by correctional staff or even the institution superintendent. It is the responsibility of the Minister and the Premier. Is neglect and torture acceptable to the Minister and this Premier?

>> Min. Oraziotti: Speaker, what a ridiculous question. Of course it's not. And, Speaker, we are taking action on this issue. It is a very, very important issue. Granted the use of segregation is over-relied on in the correctional division, and the challenge that we have is physical infrastructure and space and obviously the conditions that an individual's in while in segregation, which we continue to work to improve. But let me remind the member opposite that the human rights commissioner in fact today said and I quote -- I accept this was not an individual who could have remained in the general population. So she also goes on to refer to systemic issues in the correctional system. The point being, Speaker, yes, segregation is over-relied on and we need to find better ways in our system to address these challenges. We're committed to doing that. That's why we've called for a full intentions intensive review of the entire correctional system in Ontario. Thank.

MPP Milczyn to Minister Albanese Re: Newcomer Language Supports

>> MPP Milczyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of citizenship and immigration. We know that in Ontario both English and French language skills are the foundation of success for newcomers in our communities and workplaces. In my riding of Etobicoke-lakeshore, a significant number of residents rely on language training programs delivered by our school boards and other local agencies. It's crucial to my constituents and to newcomers across Ontario that these services are provided so that they can contribute fully to our province and society and economy. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister inform this House of how her ministry is supporting newcomers and enhancing their language and literacy skills?

>> Min. Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the member for Etobicoke- Lakeshore for advocating for newcomers in his riding and for his question. Speaker, our government supports newcomers by improving their English and French skills through our adult language training programs. This program provides tuition free language training courses to all newcomers including refugees regardless of how long they have lived here in Canada and also after they have become naturalized Canadian citizens. Mr. Speaker, the program also offers literacy classes to prepare newcomers for postsecondary studies as well as citizenship classes so that they learn the information they need to know to successfully pass the citizenship test. This is only one of the many initiatives our government offers to newcomers so that they can integrate and contribute to our society.

>> MPP Milczyn: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for her response. It's very reassuring to see that our government is committing to helping immigrants succeed. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the Minister would agree that the work of our school boards and local community agencies is critical to the success of our newcomers. Mr. Speaker, it's great to have the Minister recently visit my riding of Etobicoke- Lakeshore at the Mimico adult learning centre to promote access to this language training program. Just a few blocks away from where my own family first came to live in Ontario. So I strongly believe it's important that we continue to encourage newcomers across the province to access the adult language training program so they can improve their speaking, reading and writing skills. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell us how our government is working -- continuing to work with school boards and local agencies to deliver these supports so newcomers can succeed in this province?

>> Min. Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I announced a continued investment of up to \$60 million for the free adult language training program for this year. And this investment will include up to 70,000 newcomers to improve their language skills. The program continues to evolve to meet the unique needs of today's newcomers. For example we're developing and piloting the new e-learning options to make it easier for people to access the program no matter where they live in the province. During my visit at the centre it was great to meet people like MARIA Ruth, a small business owner today who accessed the program when she first arrived in Canada and now she's gone back to enhance her language skills. Mr. Speaker, since 2003, our government has invested more than \$710 million in the program because when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

MPP Jones to Minister Del Duca Re: Highway 10

>> MPP Jones: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of transportation. In Dufferin-caledon we're very concerned about the safety of highway 10 between Orangeville and highway 89. One can stitch went write me and said in light of recent severe accidents on highway 10, I don't feel safe driving to work anymore. The ministry has decided to make some minor changes to the highway but no one believes that these changes will address the safety concerns. The town of mono has been trying to work with the

Minister for years to address the years for additional turning lanes. Will the Minister agree and meet with the town of mono to work on solutions that will improve road safety along highway 10?

>> Min. Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. I thank the member opposite for this question. It's the first time she's raised it by way of a question formally but we've had the opportunity to chat about it informally. I am aware of the meeting that took place recently and I know that that was covered by some local media. Of course at all times, Speaker, making sure that we maintain our highway infrastructure whether we're talking about Dufferin-caledon or talking about any corner of the province as a priority for the ministry of transportation. I think the member opposite would know that in 2016/17 for example, Speaker, we're investing nearly \$3 billion in Ontario's highways and bridges. This includes about \$1.6 billion in southern Ontario specifically, Speaker. Having said that I recognize that there is a challenge that's being expressed by people in her constituency, Speaker. And I'm open to an ongoing conversation so if that requires -- Meeting, that's something I'd be happy to take a look at. I will also encourage M.T.O. Officials to continue to work with the committee on a reasonable solution. Thanks very much.

>> MPP Jones: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that and I will take you um on the offer to meet because this is an important issue. I've written the ministry on six different occasions over the last three years about concerned residents in my riding along highway 10. Drivers in Dufferin have started avoiding the highway because they are so concerned about safety, putting more strain on local roads and municipal road budgets. I am pleased to hear that you want your ministry to continue to work with mono but I would also like to take you up on the offer of having a meeting directly with the Thank.

>> Min. Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. So as I said in the opening answer, happy to follow up in that regard. I will say as well as pointing out as I did in the first answer, \$2.7 billion being invested on Ontario's highways in 2016/17, Speaker. It's important to note that since 2003 this government has built 1,409 what we call lane kilometres. That's the total length of individual lanes of new highway and 215 new bridges across the province of Ontario. Whether we're talking about highway 10 in Dufferin-caledon or four-lane highway 17 in northern Ontario, Speaker, the extension of highway 27 in York region something I know will also support people living in Dufferin-caledon. This is a government that's committed, particularly through our moving Ontario forward plan, Mr. Speaker, keep building the province up, keep improving the quality of life for the people of Ontario and building a strong economy. Ongoing discussions along highway 10, Speaker, and I thank the member for her question today.

MPP Fife to Minister Naqvi Re: Political Fundraising

>> MPP Fife: Thank you very much. My question is to the Premier. Earlier this year the Liberals' cash-for-access practices were exposed and criticized for repeatedly offering exclusive access to Cabinet Ministers at big-ticket political fund-raisers. And yesterday -- And yesterday the government tabled amendments to its political fund-raising bill that could further entrench cash for access while driving it underground. The amendment prevents MPPs from attending \$20 barbecues and corn roast fund-raisers but the amendments do not prevent a Cabinet Minister from, I quote, soliciting contributions by mail, telephone, electronic communications or other means, unquote. Why did the Premier include a loophole that could drive a truck full of Hydro One private investors through?

>> Min. Naqvi: Well, Speaker, I find the question very odd because I had the opportunity to personally brief -- walk through a technical briefing with the member opposite who asked the question and the member from the P.C. Caucus as well and very clearly articulated the very strong measures that we have put in place through bill 2. I think, Speaker, it's worth repeating. We are putting a ban on corporate union donations. We are putting a very strict limit on the maximum contribution an individual can give. Speaker, we are also going a step further by making sure that elected representatives like MPPs and those who are seeking office are not able to attend fund-raising events and making sure the riding associations get subsidies for that, Speaker. I think the rules are very clear. Clearly NDP Does not support these rules and they want dinners to continue.

>> MPP Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Bill 2 and the amendments fundamentally do not address the conflict of interest. And this is a classic bait and switch, Speaker. With these amendments, sure the Premier must avoid attending her riding association's annual \$20 potluck fundraiser but she can still pick up the phone and personally call every deep-pocketed donor in her rolodex and hit them up for thousands of dollars, all of this happening outside of public scrutiny. In fact she'll have more time to do it because she doesn't have to show up at the fund-raisers. And nothing in these amendments, nothing prevents chiefs of staff or other influential government staffers from doing the same. When does this Premier think she will get serious about truly banning cash for access in the province of Ontario?

>> Min. Naqvi: Well, Speaker, it is rich. It is so rich. It is \$19,950-per-table rich for that member to talk

about cash for access because I wonder where she's going to be on Thursday, November 17, 2016 for her leaders vision dinner. Speaker, using that -- Andrea Horwath for only \$19,950. I want to know how many people from her riding, how many people from her riding can actually be able to afford to be at that dinner. I want to know who she's sitting with and what kind of promises she's making at that dinner. Speaker, we are putting some of the most stringent limitations on how fund-raising is to be done in the province of tomorrow. It's NDP Does not support those changes. They should come out and just say it.

MPP Martins to Minister Chiarelli Re: Infrastructure Investments

>> MPP Martins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of infrastructure. Public infrastructure's relied upon by millions of Ontarians for everything from transportation to clean, safe drinking water. I know that our government has committed to an historic infrastructure investment, \$160 billion over 12 years, for many infrastructure projects across this province and there are currently many projects under way and planned for my own riding of Davenport such as the Crosstown L.R.T. T., the Davenport diamond guideway, expansion of the west Toronto rail pass and plans for Bloor/Lansdowne G.O. Station. I also know that the federal government has committed to its own extensive infrastructure program which supports and supplements the investments made by provinces such as Ontario. The Minister's mandate letter tasks him with leading the province's negotiations with the federal government on new infrastructure agreements. Speaker, through you to the Minister, could he please elaborate on the work that he has been doing to build effective partnerships that yield results for the people of Ontario?

>> Min. Chiarelli: Thank you, Speaker. Ottawa West- Nepean. I thank the member from Davenport for the question. Speaker, our government recognizes the critical importance of investing in infrastructure. In fact we're investing in every riding across this province, Mr. Speaker. That is why our government is making the largest public infrastructure investment in the province's history, one that will stimulate economic growth and sustain over 110,000 jobs per year. We also recognize the importance of working with other levels of government to deliver on important projects. And we are working with the federal government to shape a productive partnership, one that supports our shared infrastructure priorities. Just this past summer, Speaker, Ontario signed two important bilateral agreements with the federal government. These committed to over \$4 billion in federal, provincial municipal funding for our province's infrastructure priorities and, Speaker, every constituency in the province. Will benefit from these programs and almost immediately.

>> MPP Martins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the Minister for her response. I'm so glad to hear that our government is working closely with this federal counterparts to advance infrastructure priorities of Ontario's municipalities. I know that ridings across the province, including my riding of Davenport, will benefit from the \$160 billion in provincial investments and \$60 billion in new federal investments in infrastructure over the next ten years. That means broader access to public transit, important repairs to sewer systems, drains and pipes and more hospitals and schools for Ontarians in all corners of the province. It is encouraging to know that the federal government shares our desire to build Ontario up by investing in infrastructure that creates jobs and stimulates growth. Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister, could he please look rate on the efforts he will make to ensure federal infrastructure funding in the future?

>> Min. Chiarelli: We are committed to working with our federal partners on the design of the next stage of funding for infrastructure and we will continue to collaborate with them. And, Mr. Speaker, our Colleagues in Québec share our commitment to an efficient and successful next phase of federal funding. That is why last week at a joint Cabinet meeting we announced that Ontario and Québec will be jointly advocating for a federal infrastructure program that is flexible and formula based. So we are pushing for the programs to be proportional to provincial populations and compatible with our existing long-term infrastructure plans. Speaker, infrastructure spending fuels economic growth and enhances our quality of life, and those goals are best served by working together.

MPP McDonnell to Premier Wynne (Duguid) Re: Hydro Affordability

>> MPP McDonnell: Thank you, Speaker. To the Premier. Last Friday I heard the Minister of energy on cfr and he could not have sounded more smug promoting the new power deal with Québec as a great savings for ratepayers. He slipped up and quoted a 10 cent saving and the host was relentless. Was it 10 cents per day, per hour, per kilowatt or per House hold? But the Minister's masterful dipping and diving finally ran the clock out with no answer. The Premier could have -- would have scored a perfect 10. So on Monday she seemed unaware of the questions about the Québec deal were being asked. Will the Premier tell us today if she is aware of the sheer magnitude of Ontarians' electricity bills or does she believe that 10 cents a month should be called relief or just another slap in the face?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister of economic development and growth is going to want to comment in the supplementary but, Mr. Speaker, you know it seems to me that for some time there have been call from the opposition members in this House from both opposition parties that we should be doing more. We should be doing more to find agreements with Québec, Mr. Speaker, that Ontario and Québec should be working together to get that clean power, Mr. Speaker, at a good price for the people of Ontario. That's exactly what we've done, Mr. Speaker. This is a landmark seven-year deal. It will help make electricity in Ontario more affordable. It's clean and reliable, Mr. Speaker. It's 2 terawatts of power and that's enough power to power the city of Kitchener for a year, Mr. Speaker. The agreement will reduce electricity system costs for consumers by \$70 million, Mr. Speaker. \$10 million. For seven years, Mr. Speaker. It's a good deal for Ontario. It's a good deal for Québec. It was a good deal for the country, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP McDonell: Speaker, back to the Premier. The Premier thinks that \$37 billion Ontarians overpaid for electricity was worth it. The additional \$133 billion they'll overpay by 2030 is worth it. So let me tell her about my constituent Mary. She's been battling cancer for four years. The billing problem results in a \$15,000 hydro bill. Her family's not eligible for social help. She can't afford any more bills. She can't afford her food or even a phone for her to keep in touch with her doctor. The family is now at the end of their rope. Speaker, with electricity rates that have quadrupled over the last 13 years, they simply are too high. Could the Premier explain, in light her spin with the Québec deal, what she would tell Mary about handling measly dime?

>> Min. Duguid: Mr. Speaker, the Premier -- the Minister of energy, all of us have been very clear on this side of the House that we care about those residents that are struggling with their energy bills. That's why, Mr. Speaker, we're reducing their bills by 8%, something that the members opposite submit that. That's why we're reducing the bills of those in remote and rural areas. Something the members opposite think isn't substantial enough. \$70 million savings to the system with regard to the Ontario Québec system, it's \$70 million that residents don't have to pay. You sniff at that. We've suspected the second round of large renewable procurement process. You criticized us for doing that. That's \$3.8 billion in savings. Reducing the feed-in tariff prices. That saved \$1.9 billion. Again the members opposite said that's not good enough. We removed the debt retirement -- retirement charge. I have a list of a dozen items, Mr. Speaker. Each and every one of them they opposed. Each and every one of them we make is making a substantial difference to the lives of Ontarians.

MPP Tabuns to Minister Sousa Re: Hydro One & Public Accounts

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. My question to the Premier. The Premier says the Hydro One proceeds will be used to build infrastructure or pay down the \$25 billion electricity sector debt. According to public accounts the Hydro One cash didn't pay for any infrastructure last year. Yesterday the Minister of finance didn't deny that but he said a good portion of that has gone to pay down the debt. While Hydro One cash did not pay down any electricity sector debt either. Public accounts show that last year \$3.8 billion came in from the Hydro One sale and just sat there. So why wasn't the electricity sector debt paid down?

>> Min. Sousa: All right, Mr. Speaker. Here we go again. We had an initial I.P.O. Of Hydro One. We had established \$1.9 billion in growth proceeds. That was 1.1 billion was for book value. The netted proceeds of the first tax benefit almost \$3 billion went into the trillium trust. That's what's happened. The second round of the offering again 1.3 billion of the book value was established. Another .8 billion went to the trillium trust as part of the proceeds. It is being allocated to the trillium trust that was established specifically for the purposes of ensuring the fund received per tax benefit that was established goes to the trust and gets reinvested into infrastructure as we move forward. It's simple as that. That's what we said we would do. It is what is being done. Thank you.

>> MPP Tabuns: Speaker, the public account shows that about \$3.8 billion in Hydro One cash came in last year that was supposed to pay down the hydro debt but it didn't do that. The public accounts show the money sitting on the books not paying down any debt at all. Meanwhile Ontario businesses are paying \$600 million a year in debt retirement charges to service this hydro debt that the government has failed to pay down. Since the Hydro One cash is not being used to actually pay for infrastructure and since it's not being used to reduce the hydro debt, what exactly is the government using the money for?

>> Min. Sousa: So I'll reiterate, Mr. Speaker, the cash used that's been garnered from the broadening of this ownership that was about \$2.4 billion was used to pay down debt, \$2.4 billion is being used to pay down debt. The rest of the allocation, which is about \$3.6 billion from this tracks is being allocated to the trillium trust. And as the flow-through occurs and as the items are materialized and reconciled, that's necessary through the process, that is what will happen, Mr. Speaker. And furthermore we're then using

the proceeds built into the trillium trust to invest in transit, Mr. Speaker, to invest in infrastructure, to invest in new assets that generate greater returns for the province of Ontario and for the benefit of Ontario. Thank you.

MPP Vernile to Minister Moridi Re: Carbon Dioxide reduction/Clean Tech

>> MPP Vernile: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of research, innovation and science. Our government is committed to supporting an innovation ecosystem that will help young entrepreneurs succeed in today's knowledge based economy. In my riding of Kitchener where we have a booming tech sector, that is great news. In Ontario we are continuing to find new innovative ways to help people move their ideas and discoveries into the competitive market economy. In 2015 carbon expedite was launched. It's an extremely successful competition designed to spark innovation to combat climate change. Last week the carbon X prize competition announced the team that would be going to the semifinals and 12 of those teams are Canadian. This government has made certain that Ontario is at the forefront of climate change fighting technologies and I know that the Minister has personally seen to that. Speaker, could the Minister please tell this House more about this competition?

>> Min. Moridi: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for that very good question. Mr. Speaker, carbon X prize is an extremely exciting initiative. Global CO2 emissions by creating innovative solutions to convert CO2 from a liability into an asset. Mr. Speaker, investing in the fight against climate change is part of our plan to create jobs, grow our economy and help people in the province of Ontario in everyday lives. Ontario centres of excellence, Mr. Speaker, my ministry has invested over \$2.4 million to support our teams competing in this exciting challenge. Teams will be competing for \$20 million prize, Mr. Speaker. Of the 47 carbon X prize teams I am proud to announce that three Ontario-based teams have made it to the semifinal round. This is a huge -- for Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Vernile: Speaker, I want to thank the Minister for the answer. The need to curb CO2 emissions and to fight the effects of greenhouse gases is not only an important issue for environmental reasons but it is rapidly a growing business sector with great potential. Just yesterday while sitting on the estimates committee our energy Minister spoke at length about that. Ontario has the opportunity to be a leader in the sector. Could the Minister please tell us about the clean technology sector and what projects the team selected for carbon X prize are working on. I know that the people in my riding of Kitchener Centre will be very interested in this news as it concerns many of them who are choosing to pursue careers in the environmental and clean technology sector.

>> Min. Moridi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for her advocacy, for science and research and innovation particularly in the riding of Kitchener- Waterloo area, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that the House will be delighted to know Ontario's clean technology sector is made up of 3,000 firms employing 65,000 people and is worth an estimated of \$8 billion in annual revenue and \$1 billion in export earnings. And I will be happy to tell you, Mr. Speaker, about the teams participating in carbon X prize. One team using natural gas pipe to produce ascorbic acid. Upon technology a team producing biodiesel and solid biofuel. Tandem technical, a team producing health supplements, toothpaste, paints and fertilizer. All team versus excellent ideas that I am sure will find a way to make their impact on Earth and clean Earth for the future generations, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Yurek to Minister McGarry Re: Moose-Wildlife Supports

>> MPP Yurek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question's to the Minister of natural resources and forestry. Minister, yesterday the Environmental Commissioner informed us that Ontario's moose populations have declined by 20% over the last decade and by as much as 60% in areas such as Cochrane. The report further revealed that your ministry and I quote -- often fails to use its tools to provide effective conservation for Ontario species. Speaker, this Minister's refusal to release details on spending of the special purpose accounts and the failing of conservation of Ontario's wildlife raises hunters and anglers' suspicions of mismanagement. Speaker, will the Minister ease those suspicions and release details of the special purpose accounts today?

>> Min. McGarry: Oh, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for his question today. And certainly we thank the Environmental Commissioner's report from yesterday on the state of our moose population, and I wanted to address that first and I'll address the other in the supplementary if I may. Moose hold an important place in our province. It's an iconic and very important part of Ontario's biodiversity. My ministry has been working for some years on the declining moose population throughout North America. We know that in parts of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and Minnesota that those moose hunts have been cancelled. We know about the decline here. It has various reasons for that, notwithstanding climate change issues. So we have recently completed the second phase of Ontario's moose project to continue discussions

regarding research to ensure sustainability.

>> MPP Yurek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the Minister. Minister, we would have known about declining moose populations over five years ago if your government actually did its job and actually reviewed how the moose population was doing. But back to the Minister. Special purpose account is to be used for the management of wildlife and fish populations. However we saw in information received in the 2011/2012 years that the ministry spent the money outside the purpose of the fund. They cheated hunters and anglers. Mr. Speaker, the special purpose fund should not be used for House keeping, cleaning services or psychologists. The environment AI commissioner's recent report said the M.N.R. F.is gambling with Ontario's moose populations. Speaker, Ilt Minister stop gambling on our wildlife, open and transparent and show hunters and anglers how they're spending the money in the special purpose account?

>> Min. McGarry: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the member opposite for the opportunity to the correct the misinformation about our fish and wildlife program. 100% of our fishing and hunting revenue from licences are supporting fish and wildlife management across Ontario. This fund supports a number of fishing and hunting activities, such as stocking almost 8 million fish a year in all Lakes across Ontario. The community fish hatchery program having conservationist officers to enforce the rules, monitoring, researching and conducting wildlife population studies such as flying over all our northern wildlife management unit to track the moose population. This fund supports staff such as biologists, conservation officers, resource technicians and conservation officers. Staff are boots on the ground. These staff like all public servants are entitled to receive a fair wage and health benefits. Thank you..

MPP Taylor to Minister Jaczek Re: Services for Adults with Developmental Disabilities

>> MPP Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. This week news broke that a mother in Mississauga was forced to abandon her 21-year-old son with autism because she could not access appropriate supports for him. She has struggled for years trying to get access to services, and this government has completely failed this family and other families across the province. It just isn't right that families are living in crisis. Speaker, families and children with special needs should be able to raise their own children. As a mother I can't even imagine what this family is going through. Having to give up their child is absolutely devastating. Families trying to access supports for adults with developmental disabilities have been in crisis for years and the Ombudsman made that perfectly clear. Will the Premier commit to providing support for children and autism and families that are instead of putting them in crisis and tearing them apart?

>> Min. Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And although of course I cannot comment on the specific case, I'd like to say that of course I have the greatest respect for those family members, parents, caregivers who look after those with developmental disabilities. And of course there are times when those challenges looking after individuals with perhaps behavioural issues, medical issues can become overwhelming for the family. And so because of that, we have put an unprecedented emphasis on looking at these very urgent cases. Developmental service organizations have a consistent approach across the province to these very urgent cases and we ensure that the appropriate respite or other appropriate solutions are found. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.