

Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript - Tuesday, April 4, 2017

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Transcript of Provincial Question Period
41st Parliament, 2nd Session
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MPP Brown to Minister Hunter (Matthews) Wynne Re: Autism Education Funding

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of education. We are joined here tonight -- today by so many passionate activists and parents of Ontario autism coalition. I hope everyone in the House will take the time to release the report they released today because they highlighted some very important problems in our system. For instance we know that 79% of school boards say they spend more money on special education than they receive from the province. And because of that, there are certain needs, certain special education needs that frankly aren't funded by this government, and we need accountability for those special education dollars to make sure no child is left behind. Mr. Speaker, will the government commit to a full and transparent review. Of a special education funding formula?

>> Minister Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the member opposite for the question, and I want to just say that we are working with the Ontario autism coalition. They are participating in the Ontario autism program committee. I've met with that committee. I've met with members of the coalition, as has the Minister children and youth services, and we are investing in supports to children who have autism and who have that particular exceptionality, Mr. Speaker. Our investments in special education is \$2.7 billion. And while there are many needs that are in place in our school boards, there's always more that we can do, Mr. Speaker, and we're constantly working together. With our partners, with our stakeholders like the Ontario autism coalition, to provide the best education possible for all students in Ontario.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of education. I did not get an answer to the real challenge we have that school boards have to spend more on special education than they receive in funding from the province. There's a cost to this. Because of this government's continuous failure to support children with autism, we hear story after story of children who are left behind. For example 6-year-old Carter from Cobourg. Carter is on the severe end of the spectrum. He is nonverbal and using communicative device and is a flight risk. He requires constant support. But in September, his family was told they were going to lose their highly trained education assistant. Carter's family fought back, and Carter got to keep his E.A., but it was after an emotional push by the family. Mr. Speaker, will Carter and his family have to do this every September? Can't we have the support for these children?

>> Minister Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. And, you know, we are continuously providing more supports for children with autism in our schools. We have 20,000 students now have autism in our schools, Mr. Speaker. In fact, let me just inform the leader of the opposition that students with autism are moving on to postsecondary education at four times the numbers that they were, Mr. Speaker. So we are ensuring that all students in our schools that have exceptionalities and especially students with autism receive the support that is they need. -- Autism. We have trained over 30,000 education workers and teachers in A.B.A., so that those supporters are available in the classroom, Mr. Speaker. There are also investments in specialized supports for students so that they receive the supports that they need in our schools.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of education, and I will repeat, special education funding does not meet the demand. There are children in this province that are being left behind. Here's another example. I've got here a note, a story from Melanie Sun from Niagara Falls. Melanie wrote us and said despite clear paperwork stating that her son needed one-to-one support, he wasn't given the proper help he needed. And you know what happened on World Autism Day in 2012? Instead of being given the support he deserved, Melanie's son was suspended from school. The school board told Melanie that there is no money to provide them what he requires. His son wasn't welcome at school. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell Melanie why there's no money to have the

proper education, the proper academic experience.

>> Minister Deb Matthews: Thank you. Thank you. The leader of the opposition is raising some very important issues, but I think it is important to remind him and others that, when he was a federal M.P., He actually voted against creating a national autism strategy. The member was presented with a bill in the House of commons to provide for the development of a national strategy for the treatment of autism. And he voted against this bill.

[Interjections] Treatment of autism act. He said no to children -- He said no to their parents. He said no to expanding access to I.B.I. And A.B.A. Today he stands in the legislature being

MPP Brown to Minister Hunter (Matthews) Re: Autism Education Funding

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of education. The natural inclination of this government, when they're embarrassed of their own position, when they can't defend their own position, they attack others. Now today the Ontario -- Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, the Ontario autism coalition report released today had this to say. I quote from the report -- teacher candidates should graduate knowing they will work regularly with students with exceptionalities and they should embrace this opportunity rather than fear it or avoid it. But this government has neglected to support these future teachers. Mr. Speaker, why has this government not done more to prepare young teacher --ers for the realities of Ontario's classrooms? Please, could we have an answer on the report, not another attack.

>> Minister Mitzi Hunter: Mr. Speaker, we actually have as part of our two-year curriculum in teachers College mandatory could tent on special needs and exceptionalities. But, Mr. Speaker, for the leader of the opposition to stand in this legislature claiming to be a champion of parents of children with autism, when he had an opportunity to help those students and he said no. He said no to children and to families to develop a national strategy for children with autism, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite only shows interest in parents and children with autism when he can use it as a part of his political ambitions, Mr. Speaker. And that is wrong, Mr. Speaker. That is absolutely wrong. Because we know children with autism deserve the best possible education in our province and that's exactly what we're working on, Mr. Speaker .

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, -- Back to the Minister of education. The Minister seems so blif I couldn't say to the fact that they are in government. They have a record that they should be embarrassed of. They have a record where they -- families with children -- they took families with children with autism to court. They choose to throw smear. Children deserve better than this -- The reality is, Mr. Speaker, not even the teachers in this province believe that you're providing the necessary supports. There's an example. Elementary teachers' federation of Ontario said there is a critical lack of support for children with significant behavioural issues. Sam Hammond from es foe said many of these students are suffering and we need to step up and help them. Van Hammond is right. We need to provide support. The spin that the government saying they are providing training. The union says the exact opposite is happening. We need for support these children. We need support for our teachers. Will this government stop abandoning them?

>> Mr. Speaker, here's our record. Since 2003, we have increased funding for special education needs in this province by 70%, Mr. Speaker. \$2.7 billion to -- Mr. Speaker, there are more E.A.S in our Ontario schools than ever before, an increase of over 6,300 or 37%, including 900 more E.A.S since 2013., Mr. Speaker, over the past decade, we have invested \$77 million to strengthen. Our schools' capacity and improving the learning environment for students with autism who are welcome in our schools, who are welcome in our classrooms and are doing better, Mr. Speaker. There's more work to be done, and that's exactly what we're doing.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of education. This government has no reason to be proud of their record. And frankly, you wouldn't have seen hundreds and hundreds of families with a child with autism protesting at queen's park if this record was one that they could be proud

of. They wouldn't have taken these families to court if they were proud of their record. Frankly this government's record on helping families with autism has been shameful. Mr. Speaker, Sam Hammond, on behalf of the teachers, also said this. He said too many children, a lot of them as young as 4 or 5, are languishing on long wait lists for vital early interventions, interventions they need. These include assessments that would give them access to supports. But even then,, many of the resources are simply inadequate and will not meet the growing demand. That's what etfo had to say. So you have the families saying it's inadequate. You have the teachers saying it's adequate. The only person in this province saying what they're doing is adequate is the Minister. Do the right thing. Support –

>> Minister Deb Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. You know, the member opposite talks about our record. I'd like to talk about his record, Speaker. His voting record in Ottawa is in black and white. He can look it up himself. Anybody can. He voted against creating a national autism strategy. He might not even remember doing that, Speaker, but I can tell you that he voted against a bill to provide for the development of a national strategy for the treatment of autism. He decided to vote against this bill. He said no to those kids that he claims to champion today. He said no to those parents he claims to champion today, Speaker. Once again, we're seeing him standing in the legislature. When we compare what he said today with how he voted in the past, Speaker, I think he has some explaining to do about his record.

MPP Horwath to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. My question's for the acting Premier. Hydro One applying to increase cost of delivery by 20% at the same time as they give senior executive massive raises, including a -- For the C.E.O. Does the acting Premier think this is right, Speaker ?

>> Minister glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to the Hydro One rate application, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that we're going to be holding all of our increases, Mr. Speaker, to the rate of inflation. So when we have our fair hydro plan coming into effect, Mr. Speaker, our government is lowering those bills by 25%, and we will ensure that we achieve this reduction no matter the outcome of this application, Mr. Speaker. In fact Hydro One's rural customers will be seeing even greater reductions from our fair hydro plan, Mr. Speaker. They will be expanding the support to those customers facing some of the highest delivery costs in the province, Mr. Speaker, including Hydro One's rural customers. They will be seeing, Mr. Speaker, a reduction between 40 and 50% on their bills, Mr. Speaker. That is significant for those families, Mr. Speaker. So we will achieve this, as we said, no matter the outcome of this application, Mr. Speaker.

>> Andrea Horwath: Well, Hydro One is applying for a nearly 20% increase while they give their senior executives multimillion-dollar raises. The Liberals promised that privatizing Hydro One would mean lower bills, Speaker. That promise was total nonsense. Hydro bills are sky high and still rising. Hydro One is applying for delivery cost increases of nearly 20%. Will the Liberal government do what is right -- stop the sell-off of Hydro One today and stop reward, execute -- rewarding executives for Jacking up hydro bills?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again let's talk about what this executive has done with Hydro One over the last year, Mr. Speaker. They've actually saved, Mr. Speaker, \$60 million, Mr. Speaker. And that leads directly back to ratepayers, Mr. Speaker, by lowering bills. They've also given customer choices of billing cycles, helping them to better manage their bills, Mr. Speaker. They've introduced ebilling, working towards mobile billing as well, Mr. Speaker. They ended the practice of security deposits for new customers. And of course, Mr. Speaker, introducing a voluntary ban on winter disconnections, Mr. Speaker. So that is something that they've done as they've become a customer-focused business, Mr. Speaker. And we've also seen through our fair hydro plan and working with Hydro One a 40 to 50% reduction, Mr. Speaker, that will be seen for all of our rural and northern communities, Mr. Speaker .

>> Andrea Horwath: Anyone can see that the privatization of Hydro One has been a disaster,

Speaker. According to the F.A.O., it's increasing the province's debt. It means bills are much higher and delivery cost increases are going to go up by 20%. All to pay for bigger executive pay cheques and shareholder profits. This is exactly why, Speaker, 80% of the people of Ontario want to keep Hydro One public.

[Applause] Will the government admit this has been a huge mistake and stop the privatization before it's too late?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The criticism of the NDP's position with Hydro One just doesn't come from us, Mr. Speaker. There's also many others out there like Kim Collagey of the "Globe and Mail" calls the belief that only early ship of utilities in Ontario affects rates as one of the biggest misconceptions about electricity, Mr. Speaker. Martin Rhett Cohens agrees Hydro One could only charge that the O.E.B. Deems reasonable. Even an economist at the consumer policy institute, Mr. Speaker, and a frequent government critic calls the idea that privatization increases rates a straw man, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that we will continue to do on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, is invest in this province. By building infrastructure, by building roads, by building bridges, something that they would not do, Mr. Speaker, because they have no idea how to pay for it. Just like their plan -- On electricity, Mr. Speaker. It's pie in the sky. We have a plan that works. We have a system that's working and we're building infrastructure in Ontario.

MPP Horwath to Minister Thibeault (Flynn) Re: Worker Benefits and Hydro One Exec Salaries

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my next question's also for the acting Premier. The Premier said -- sorry, the Premier and the Liberal government took no time at all to sign off on nearly \$5 million salary for the C.E.O. Of Hydro One. But the government has spent two years trying to figure out if a working mom should be able to take a sick day without losing a day's pay, or worse being fired. Can the government explain why the C.E.O. Of Hydro One gets a 500% raise, but people in Ontario could still be fired for getting sick?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And when it comes to our agency executive Ken Sayings, our government strongly believes in ensuring that public salaries are fair to employees, Mr. Speaker, but also reasonable to the public purse, Mr. Speaker. And this just isn't talk. We've demonstrated this commitment time and again. And that's why we froze all salaries across the broader public sector in 2012, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we've implemented a new framework designed to test the fairness of public salaries. Ontario is now approaching the end of the planned salary freeze, but we're continuing to keep a strict eye on our agencies, Mr. Speaker, and salaries will remain frozen until agencies comply with our framework. Just like we did with the Colleges, Mr. Speaker, we're going to send agencies back to the drawing board. If we're not satisfied. And this includes agencies within my ministry, Mr. Speaker. Work is under way to ensure that the frameworks the remaining agencies --

>> Andrea Horwath: There is no reason a woman should take home less pay than a man doing the same work. People should be able to have their work schedule so that they can plan their lives. People who are employees should be recognized as employees, with the rights that come along with that. And after two years of study, nobody knows where the Liberals stand. It's a stark contrast to 500% raises for Hydro One C.E.O.s and \$11 million in pay for just five well-heeled executives at the new privatized Hydro One. Account acting Premier explain to people why her and her government's priority is million-dollar raises for the bosses at Hydro One, while everyone else is still waiting for action on minimum wage and decent jobs?

>> Minister Kevin Flynn: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the Honourable member for the question. Certainly there are a number of issues that are facing the workplaces in Ontario today, Speaker. And this government is meeting them head on. Never in the history of this province has anybody ever looked at the employment standards act and the labour relations act at the same time, Speaker. We've gone out and done that, Speaker. We've talked with organized labour. We've talked with business. We've talked with advocates. We've talked with employees themselves. We've

talked with people as to how we should close the gender wage gap. I don't think there's a person in this House, Speaker, that realizes -- that doesn't realize that the gender wage gap unfairly disadvantages women across Ontario and across every other jurisdiction, Speaker. This applies to government agencies. This applies to government itself and it applies to private sector and the nonprofit. Speaker, we're prepared to take these issues head on, Speaker. We've got a group that's advising us on the gender wage gap, Speaker. Speaker, there's people that like to talk about this issue. This government's going to do something about it. Thank you

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, for 14 years the quality of work has steadily eroded under this government's watch. Steadily. Under this government's watch here in Ontario. Now what, Speaker? Governing is about priorities. Ontarians are concerned to see that the Liberal priority, once again, is a few powerful people at the top and regular families are waiting for answers and waiting for answers again. Will the government start getting the basic rights? Stop the raises for Hydro One executives and raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

>>Minister Flynn: Speaker, the minimum wage in the province of Ontario has been pegged to inflation for a number of years now. Speaker, we went out and we talked to people. We talked to the people in the province of Ontario. We talked to business. We talked to labour. We talked to poverty advocates. We talked to those people. We talked to those people who represent people that are living at the lower income level, Speaker. We asked them what is the best process to put in place to ensure that the minimum wage in the province of Ontario keeps pace with inflation, Speaker? They gave us advice. They said set the minimum wage rate in April of the year, Speaker. Introduce it in October. Advocates wanted certainty. They wanted security. Business wanted flexibility, Speaker. We stood up for people that earn minimum wage in the province of Ontario at a time when they were needed the most, the NDP sat on their hands and did nothing for the people of the province of Ontario.

MPP Jones to Minister Hunter Re: Autism Education Funding

>>MPP Jones: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of education. We've all heard about the challenges students with autism face when they transition into schools. They sit on a waiting list for a psychological assessment. They get their individualized education plan or I.E.P.. Even with an I.E.P. They wait for an educational assistant to support them in the classroom. In a report released today, the Ontario autism coalition recommend a review of special education. Will the Minister commit to review special education funding to ensure students with exceptionalities get the help they need?

>> Minister Hunter: Mr. Speaker, first off I'd like to thank the Ontario autism coalition for their continued advocacy when it comes to autism services in Ontario and for children with special needs, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank them. And you know, Mr. Speaker, our government is moving forward with investments in autism services, and the advice that we received from the autism advisory committee of which the Ontario autism coalition is a member of is greatly appreciated, and we want to ensure that we strengthen our schools for children with special needs, Mr. Speaker. And that's exactly what we are doing. In 2016, we announced that we'd be investing an additional \$500 million to improve autism services in Ontario, and this school year school boards are receiving more than \$2.7 billion. To support students with special education needs. Mr. Speaker, absolutely there is more to be done and that's exactly what we're focused on.

>> MPP Jones: Minister, there is no doubt that the Ontario autism coalition is doing excellent work but they are now looking to you for action. There are currently 20,000 students with autism attending Ontario public schools. We all know that autism doesn't end at 5 and it certainly doesn't end at school. Will the Minister commit to reviewing how special education funding is being used in our schools as recommended by the Ontario autism coalition?

>> Minister Hunter: Mr. Speaker, it's very difficult to listen to the opposition to give advice on education, Mr. Speaker, when they left it in a complete mess. Mr. Speaker, we know -- we know that more needs to be done for students with special needs, and that's why we have constantly increased

our support. In fact we've invested \$77 million to strengthen school capacity in improving the learning environment for students with autism. We have 20,000 students with autism in our school boards, Mr. Speaker. As I have said, many of them, four times as many, Mr. Speaker, are moving on to postsecondary education and on to their life. Since this morning, Mr. Speaker, the member from Etobicoke- Lakeshore and the member from Kingston and the Islands and I, we were out at silver creak, Mr. Speaker, an environment that is supporting students with special needs. Learning -- with special education leads including autism and we see the great support they're receiving in their communities, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to do more.

MPP Tabuns to Minister Jaczek Re: Rental Increase

>>MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, my question to the acting Premier. Yesterday we learned that tenants at liberty village have been told by their landlord that they can either pay double their current rent or move out by July 1st. After receiving this outrageous rent increase notice, one tenant said I didn't even know it was legally possible. Yes, this is legally possible because of a loophole in the residential tenancies act that allows landlord rentals built after 1991 to the raise the rents to whatever they want. Will the Premier do the right thing and close this loophole as the NDP Has proposed?

>>Minister Jaczek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and our Colleague, the Minister of housing, did address that this type of a question yesterday. And so we do on this side of the House find it absolutely unacceptable that so many Ontarians are faced with housing costs that continue to rise dramatically. And as he said, this is exactly why we are developing a plan to address unfair rises in rental costs by delivering substantive rent control reform in Ontario as part of an ongoing review of the residential tenancies act. The ministry has in fact consulted very broadly on this, and we have a number of initiatives that we've also taken in the last couple of years. And so I will address more of that in the supplementary. Thank you.

>> MPP Tabuns: Speaker, back to the acting Premier. How these policies should be bush housing policies should be about providing homes for people, not profits for investors. But for the last 14 years, this government has put investors first by letting some landlords raise the rent to whatever they want. This loophole gives investors an easy way to evict tenants whenever they need a unit for quicker sale. All tenants deserve the same rent protections, including tenants in liberty village. Will the acting Premier -- will the Premier close this rent control loophole?

>> Minister Jaczek: Well, of course our government has taken really substantial action in a number of different areas over the last few years. We've been working with our municipal partners to make secondary suites a quick way to provide affordable housing in our communities, passing inclusionary zoning legislation that will empower municipalities to require the construction of affordable units in new residential developments. Freezing the municipal property tax on apartment buildings to provide relief to renters, doubling the maximum refund for first-time home buyers, etc. Now of course we do need to recall that the third party was in government from '91 to '95, and I don't recall that they took any action in relation to this member's private member's bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Rinaldi to Minister Hoskins Re: Hospital Wait Times

>>MPP Rinaldi: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Speaker. I know health care's a top priority for our government providing all Ontarians with timely access to care they need, whether at home ntheir community or in an outstanding hospital -- hospitals. Is of the utmost importance to our government but also to me as a member from Northumberland-quinte west. I know our government increased funding for health care by 1 billion this year, including investing 485 million in our hospitals improve access to care. Because of the investment these are government reduced wait times for surg Eries, increase the number of

Ontarians who have health care providers and we have spent a lot -- expanded access to office -- services for Ontarians across the province. Last week released a report identifying this problem. Can the Minister of long-term care please inform this House on some of the important progress our government's making on reducing wait times?

>> Minister Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, my mom and my dad, Bill and Jean Hoskins are watching today. It's my dad's 89th birthday. Last week was my mum's birthday as well. I just wanted to give them that shout-out and say happy birthday. But, Mr. Speaker, the Kai report from last week confirms that Ontario's making great progress on reducing wait times. 5% of hip replacements in this province are completed within the medical benchmark. That's 6% better than the national average. 81% of knee replacements in Ontario are completed within the medical benchmark. That's 12% better than the national average. And 99% of radiation therapy begins within the medical benchmark. Again the best in all of Canada. And the report also notes that Ontario has the lowest wait times for M.R.I.s and cat scans in the entire country. This is important progress, Mr. Speaker, and I wanted to share that with the legislature and Ontarians today.

>>MPP Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister, for setting the record straight in this House. I know health care's a top priority for our government and I've witnessed first hand in my riding the impact health care investments are making. Such as an additional \$2.88 million this year to Campbell Memorial hospital, Northumberland hospital and Quinte Health Care Corporation. Mr. Speaker, I know that this isn't the first time that our government has been recognized for improving wait times and for leading Canada when it comes to beating wait times targets. Unfortunately both opposition parties continue to spread misinformation about our health care system especially in rural Ontario. Account Minister of Health and Long-Term Care please remind this House of the findings from the Fraser report on wait times that was released just a few months ago?

>>Minister Hoskins: Those third-party reports, scientific and evidence based, are so important for us to understand the progress that we're making. The Fraser report indicated several months ago that Ontario has the shortest wait times from G.P. to specialist in the entire country. In fact about 25% shorter than the national average. We also have the second-shortest wait times from specialist to treatment, Mr. Speaker. 20% shorter than the national average. And on average Ontarians are receiving care more than four weeks earlier than what happens across this country. We have the shortest total wait times in Canada. The shortest wait time for a C.T. scan, for an ultrasound and M.R.I. And in just one year from 2015 to 2016, wait times for general surgery have gone down by a further 13%. Wait times for medical oncology 39% faster and elective cardiovascular surgery 36% faster, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Martow to Minister Coteau Re: Autism Care Funding

>>MPP Martow: Thank you very much. My question is to the Minister of children and youth. Today the Ontario coalition for autism released its report to improve outcomes for students with autism in Ontario schools. Like so many parents of children with autism from across Ontario, they are also worried about the specifics of the new autism program. So worried that they're speaking out in the media. Tanya Cory, a parent from Ottawa, says that she's scared and doesn't trust the government. Parents need information about the new programs so that they can plan. Mr. Speaker, what is the Minister going to tell Tanya and other parents of autistic kids to convince them to trust our government to do what is in their child's best interests?

>>Minister Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, I'm quite proud of the direction we're going in as a government when it comes to supporting families with children with autism. Mr. Speaker, we're going to implement a new plan, and within that new plan we'll create 15,000 new spaces. We'll increase the amount of spaces for A.B.A. during the transition period. As the member knows last week, during my statement, I said anyone who's actually receiving funding today, transition funding, will continue to receive that funding until the new program is put in place. Mr. Speaker, this is a program that I believe all members in this House can be proud of. We have the best supportive program in the entire country.

if not north America. It's something we should be proud of. I will be sending out correspondence to parents right across Ontario. Like I did months ago to ensure that they understand exactly what that transition will look like -- ensure.

>>MPP Martow: Julie bridge drove all the way from Brant today. Her son has been improperly restrained at school, left unprofessed at times and once her son was even found locked in a computer lab in the dark. Unfortunately the school board won't allow her son's I.B.I. Therapist to provide any help in the classroom. Will the Minister show compassion and offer Julie's son the support that he needs and not make them wait for the plan to be revealed? They need the support now. Thank you.

Minister Coteau: Mr. Speaker, I've been very clear that I will be communicating different elements within the plan. But in June we will be launching a brand-new plan. Mr. Speaker, I was at city hall yesterday with advocates, with parents, with city councillors and one of the Speaker's got up and talked about building a national strategy across this country. And, Mr. Speaker, it is incredible to stand in this legislature and have the leader of the opposition stand and ask these questions when he had an opportunity to support a national plan a decade ago, and he failed our students.

MPP Forster to Minister Flynn Re: Workers' Rights

>>MPP Forster: My question's to the acting Premier. Today I was joined by three young workers, some in the gallery today, from different sectors here at Queen's Park to talk about the urgent need for better jobs, better wages and better benefits. They talked to me about how hard it was to organize, to join a union and to get a first contract once there. So today I'm introducing a bill that will do just that, a bill that will go a long way to making sure that people in this province have the protections that they need to secure stable jobs. These young workers echoed the message I hear every day across the province. People who are concerned about how unstable their working conditions are. Will this government do the right thing and make sure that Ontario workers have access to better and fairer process to join a union and to get a first contract once they're there?

>>Minister Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. About two years ago, Speaker, we started a very important conversation in the province. We talked to families. We talked to businesses. We talked to organized labour and it was about what work had become in the province of Ontario and what it should be, Speaker. And, Speaker, the NDP this morning called this process a waste of time. Speaker, I just could not agree with that any more, Speaker. Speaking with workers, speaking with families, speaking with organized labour, speaking with unions, speaking with business, Speaker, is never a waste of time, Speaker. Speaker, it's been over 25 years so as we looked at the employment standards act, which we looked at the labour relations act, which governs, Speaker, how you join your union, what rules, what rules are associated with the joining of unions. Speaker, for the past two years. We've had a conversation with the people of Ontario. We'll be bringing forward the report in the very near future. Speaks to exactly what the NDP's talking about.

>>MPP Forster: I think the workers are ready for some doing, not some talking. Speaker across Ontario have not seen improvements to the legislation in over two decades, 14 years of which the Liberals have been in power. And they've done nothing to date. New Democrats value public consultation, but the public has been clear on these issues for years. So clear in fact that the government's federal counterparts also agree, and they already have legislation tabled. We've seen how quickly the government was willing to claw back emergency leave days for nonunion workers in the auto sector through regulation and we saw how quickly the government was willing to move for Ellis-Don. So why isn't the government moving just as quickly for the workers in this province? Will this government do the right thing today and make sure that workers get a better and fairer access to join a union and get a first -- Arbitration once they're there?

>>Minister Forster: Speaker, the changing workplaces review, Speaker, is foundational to some of the changes that the member talks about. Speaker, the issues that have been raised obviously are things like scheduling, things like -- things like the ability to join a union. Things about the conditions that precarious workers are -- vulnerable workers face when they find themselves with temporary health

agencies, Speaker. Out of work. Pay, vacation pay, nonenforcement of employment standards. These are all the issues that are being addressed by the changing workplace review. Speaker, I have to file a report now for the special advisors. We're going to review it. We're going to consider the recommendations. It's got to be translated. It's got to be made accessible, Speaker. But now, three weeks or four weeks before the release of the report, the NDP Suddenly finds religion on these issues, Speaker. We've been working on this for years, Speaker. It's something that, Speaker, I look forward to bringing to this House, to discussing these important issues.

MPP Vernile to Minister Murray Re: Cap-and-Trade

>> MPP Vernile: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of the environment and climate change. Recently Ontario held its first ever cap and trade auction. The results of this historic auction are now in, and it shows that 100% of the allowances that were available have been sold. Front participation from this industry our efforts to reach our emission reduction target. It also means that we can and we will continue to make progress when it comes to investing in green projects. The true mark of success, however, is going to be reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. By working alongside other jurisdictions in the western climate initiative, Ontario is committed to achieving the highest amount of emission reduction at the lowest possible cost. Speaker, could the Minister please explain to the House. What the latest results of Ontario's cap and trade auction mean?

>> Minister Murray: Mr. Speaker, the auction raised just over \$471 million which goes into programs. It also caps the price of transition very low at \$18.08, which is very important. And there's something called the herseff evaluation which tells us what the level of participation is. And we had strong participation from all sectors of the economy. So we're probably looking at 80% up of participation, which is one of the highest, which means there is big buy-in from business across Ontario to participate in –

>>MPP Vernile: Thank you, Speaker. And I'd like to thank the Minister for his response. It's promising the year that the province is engaging industry in an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It's also promising to learn that we're building bridges with other jurisdictions in the global effort to tackle climate change. Ontario's cap and trade auction was administered by the western climate initiative. This is a nonprofit organization that develops strict oversight rules in the carbon market, which the opposition has publicly stated it would opt out of. Speaker, climate change knows no boundaries so a united front as exemplified by the members of the W.C.I. is needed to make real progress in this effort. Speaker, could Minister please talk to this House about the Na Ontario's climate change effort?

>> Minister Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the member. So the pembina institute, very well regarded, says that for every million dollars invested in energy and home retrofits generates 3 to \$4 million, Mr. Speaker, in additional economic activity. So our \$2.5 billion program would create 7.5 to \$10 billion in investment in business activity. It would also, according to pembina, create 13 jobs for every million dollars, which if you do the math is a minimum of 33, are 0 jobs, Mr. Speaker. One of the biggest jobs -- it will also, pembina estimates, cut home heating costs on average by 15%, Mr. Speaker. Let me say that again. Pembina estimates that a retrofitted home costs about 5% less to heat. So what the Opposition's going to do is Jack that \$18 to \$74, tear up all of those programs, cancel \$2 billion and leave homeowners with high bills --

MPP Coe to Minister Coteau Re: Youth Special Need Services

>>MPP Coe: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of children and youth services. The grandview children's centre is the only treatment centre in Durham region where children and youth are special needs and disabilities receive the therapy they need. Does the Minister know how many children are on the wait list for services at grandview?

>>Minister Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the member for the question. Ontario children's treatment centres provide rehabilitation services for children and youth with special needs and families. Mr. Speaker, since 2008/09 we've continued to make investments in these areas. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we've invested over \$12 million in Ontario mental health funding for treatment centres here in the province of Ontario since Mr. Speaker, Grandview is an important place for families in the Durham region. I've had the opportunity to go out there and meet with parents, and they have a full commitment from this government that we're going to look for ways, through a process we have here in Ontario, to make Ontario mental health investments. There's an application and a process that's in play, and we're going to ensure that we follow the process in order to ensure that we're delivering the best types of programs for our young people here in the province of Ontario.

>>MPP Coe: Speaker, back to the Minister. Minister, almost 100 families in the Durham region are waiting to receive services at Grandview. Because Grandview is waiting to expand, families and children with special needs are not receiving the services they desperately need. Speaker, the town of Ajax has donated the land for Grandview's new treatment centre. The Grandview foundation has raised over \$8 million from the community. But for nine years, Speaker, nine years, and after multiple Ministers, this government has yet to commit the necessary funds to the Grandview children's centre. What are you waiting for, Minister? Will you support the expansion of Grandview children's centre now? So that the families and children with special needs in Durham region get the help that they need? Thank you.

>> Minister Coteau: Well, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for the question. The member knows that there are centres here in the province of Ontario. 20 are funded by the ministry of children -- To provide -- Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to making the investments necessary to ensure that our children and youth here in the province of Ontario get the services they need. In fact, Mr. Speaker, when we're talking about children treatment centres, the ministry of children and youth invested more than 500 million into special needs and to support families and children with special needs in 2015/2017. Mr. Speaker, we continue to make investments. There are three facilities that we've created in the last two years.

MPP Taylor (Sattler) to Minister Coteau (Hunter) Re: Autism Support Services

>>MPP Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the acting Premier. We are concerned today by members of the Ontario coalition. Families whose lives continue to be dominated by stress, anxiety, frustration and financial hardship. The new autism program is supposed to be launched in just two months. Yet families still have no idea where they stand as they try to plan for the future, many are being told that they should register their children for school now in case there's nothing else available. Families need to plan for the new school year, and they can't do it. Schools need to be prepared. When will your government be clear with families that the services they need will be there and allow them to plan for the future? Thank you.

>> Minister Coteau: We're going to create 16,000 new spaces here in the province of Ontario. We've been very clear that we've made an historical half-a-billion-dollar investment into supporting families with children with autism. We opened up -- Mr. Speaker we opened up five more diagnostic hubs here in the province of Ontario. One of which I visited last week, and we're diagnosing children earlier so they get the treatment they deserve.

>> MPP Sattler: Thank you, Speaker. Again to the acting Premier. The report released today by the Ontario autism coalition makes clear that the education system is failing students with autism and that the supports that are available to students vary widely across the province. It's no wonder, Speaker, this year 25 school boards received \$8 million less in special education funding than the year before. And according to people for education, 79% of school boards are spending more on special education funding than they receive from the province. Speaker, when will this Liberal government accept its responsibility to provide the funding, training and resources that students

with autism need to be successful at school regardless of where they live in Ontario?

>> Minister Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the member for the opportunity to address this question, because one of the things that we do in our education system is to ensure that, six months before a student -- a child with autism comes into our schools, that there's a transition team that meets together with the school board, the families, as well as any therapists that are supporting that child, Mr. Speaker, to develop a transition plan, Mr. Speaker, and to ensure that, six months after they are in school that there are continuously -- they are continuously monitored and checked in. Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that students with autism receive the supports that they need, and we have 20,000 students with autism who are in our schools, Mr. Speaker. They are getting the much needed support. I want to say to the member opposite, in your plan in 2014 -- No mention at all, Mr. Speaker, of education. There was no plan in place other than to cut \$600 million out of the funding for education and health.

MPP Martins to Minister Hunter Re: Career Skills Training

>> Minister Martins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of education. The focus of this government has been on how to best prepare our students for this constantly changing and globally interconnected world. In the face of changing times, the students in my riding of Davenport and all across Ontario need a wider range of skills and knowledge to succeed -- succeed. They'll also need to learn to be resilient and adaptable in the world where the only constant is change. As they explore their future career opportunities in an increasingly complex job market. Speaker, through you to the Minister, can you tell us more about what our government is doing to ensure that our students are equipped account skills -- with the skills they need to succeed now and in the future?

>> Minister Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I want to say thank you to my Colleague, the member from Davenport. I was so proud to announce launch of a s Eries of career pilots in the riding of Davenport, Mr. Speaker. In fact we were with students who were participating in the specialist high skills major program on transportation. And I got to change a tire for the first time, Mr. Speaker. It was quite, quite a great event. Mr. Speaker, as part of this new initiative, we are working with our great educators and partnering with them as researchers to explore new ways of learning, including teaching in entrepreneurship, career and life planning, digital literacy, Mr. Speaker, and of course financial literacy. And if I can say, Mr. Speaker, strengthening financial literacy --Is a priority for our students. It's a priority for us as a government And we are moving forward with that. The career studies pilot project are a step in the right direction as we work together with our

>> MPP Martins: Thank you, Minister. It was truly a pleasure to participate in that announcement with you. I know from Ontarians of all ages that they really value this initiative. I was actually back at St. Mary catholic academy last Friday and had an opportunity once again to speak to the staff and students from that school in my riding. And all are thrilled about about this revamp to the curriculum. As a parent, I'm pleased to hear that we are providing additional tools to our students to make informed decisions about how to plan for the financial future. Minister, can you tell us more about what the collaborative work behind these pilot projects is all about?

>> Minister Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of the pilot project, the focus of the educators who are acting as researchers will investigate new approaches to the course, Mr. Speaker, and we will be gathering that feedback from the educators as well as from the students. And it will allow us to acquire the skills and the knowledge that we need to refresh our career studies course in grade 10, ensuring that students receive the education for the new global economy. It ensures that they have focuses on critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity and entrepreneurship. And these pilots are a great opportunity for our government to work closely with our educators as -- Thank you, Speaker. And the feedback from these pilots will be instrumental. In informing what the course could become. I also want to mention that per cash from the Toronto youth Cabinet and his team have talked to us about enhancing literacy and we're doing just that.

MPP Munro to Minister Hunter (Coteau) Re: Autism Services

>> MPP Munro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of education. A report from the Ontario association for behavioural analysis recently called for action on autism supports. In fact it found the province and the child would benefit from treatment as the long-term benefits outweigh immediate costs, not to mention it's just the right thing to do. In fact the report noted early health can save up to \$3.7 million over a person's lifetime. And proper treatment would make for a more independent person. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister heed this advice and give children the support they need?

>> Minister Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our top priority is ensuring the success and the well-being of all our students including students with autism spectrum disorder. Over the past decade, Mr. Speaker, we've invested \$77 million to strengthen school capacity and improving the learning environment for students with autism. And that of course includes training and hiring professionals with expertise in applied behaviour analysis, to assist principals and teachers and transition teams in supporting students with autism. Mr. Speaker, I want to let this House know that the training of thousands of teachers every year is happening. In fact we have trained more than 30,000 educators in A.B.A. So that students with autism and all students in fact can benefit from this expertise within the classroom. We're working closely with school boards and the ministry of children and youth services. And their agencies and coalitions of parents and students to make sure we strengthen our supports for –

>> MPP Munro: Minister, right now there are more than 21,000 children on wait lists for therapy in Ontario. That's more than the number of children who are receiving it. How long will these children languish on wait lists?

>> Minister Coteau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. People in this legislature need to understand that there's been a huge transition when it comes to working with young people with autism here in the province of Ontario. When we came into government, there's about 1,000 young people who were receiving autism services here in the province. That number today is around 12,000. So we've seen a drastic increase and, yes, the wait list is increasing and that's because there is more demand. Mr. Speaker, a decade ago, one in maybe -- one in 268 young people who were diagnosed with autism. Today in southern Ontario it's one in around 65. So we're seeing a drastic change take place here in the province of Ontario and we are allocating the right resources and changing -- Based on the demand. I would hope that the members opposite would look at our plan, and I know that they do not have a plan but look at our plan and realize --

MPP Mantha to Minister Hoskins Re: Rural Medical Services

>> MPP Mantha: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Deputy Premier. New research published Monday shows people in northern Ontario face nearly double the level of cardiovascular health issues than residents around the G.T.A. How can we explain that, Mr. Speaker? This should be a wake-up call to this government. Two regions of northern Ontario, including mile riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, have some of the lowest health outcomes for cardiovascular health in the province. So a father in my neighbourhood is twice as likely to suffer a heart attack as a father in southern Ontario communities. I think we all understand that's not acceptable. When will this Liberal government go beyond broken promises and invest in health care for northern people?

>> Minister Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, this government knows and believes and understands just how important it is to provide the highest quality care to people in this province regardless of where they reside. Mr. Speaker, that's why we've continued to make important investments in all parts of this province including in the north. In fact with regards to cardiac care, I was so pleased to be able to announce in Thunder Bay in June of 2015, we announced our support to develop a cardiovascular program for patients in northwestern Ontario and the two local MPPs were instrumental, Mr. Speaker, in Thunder Bay and Thunder Bay region to enable that to happen. Thunder Bay is expanding its cardiovascular services program not just for vascular but cardiovascular. Vascular late

last year got up and running and we're looking forward to – In the near future.