

Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Thursday, April 19, 2018

From: "Stinson, Jeffrey (CAB)" <jeffrey.stinson@ontario.ca>
To: "@CAB-ProvLegQP" <provlegqp@msgov.gov.on.ca>
Date: Thu, 19 Apr 2018 11:44:15 -0400
Attachments: 20180419 - Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript.doc (123.39 kB)

Transcript of Provincial Question Period
41st Parliament, 3rd Session
Thursday, April 19, 2018

The following is a partially edited transcript of Question Period.

Table of Contents

MPP Fedeli to Minister Thibeault
Re: Hydro One Exec Salaries

MPP MacLeod (Oosterhoff) (Martow) to Minister Thibeault
Re: Hydro One Exec Salary

MPP Armstrong to Premier Wynne (Jaczek)
Re: Long-Term Care Homes

MPP Taylor to Premier Wynne (Naidoo-Harris)
Re: Child Care

MPP Yakabuski to Minister Thibeault
Re: Hydro One Exec Salary

MPP Gates to Minister Thibeault
Re: Hydro One Exec Salary

MPP Qaadri to Minister Hunter
Re: University Campus in Milton

MPP Jones to Minister Thibeault
Re: Hydro One Exec Salaries

MPP Sattler to Minister Jaczek
Re: Surgery Wait Times

MPP Potts to Minister Milczyn
Re: Inclusionary Zoning

MPP Wilson to Minister Thibeault
Re: Hydro One Exec Salary

MPP Forster to Minister Coteau (Jaczek)
Re: Healthcare Investments

MPP Kiwala to Minister Damerla
Re: Home Care for Seniors

MPP Scott to Minister Thibeault
Re: Hydro One Exec Salary

MPP Gelinas to Minister Milczyn
Re: Social Housing Availability

MPP Fedeli to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro One Exec Salaries

>> MPP Vic Fedeli: Thank you and good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. A backroom deal struck by the board of Hydro One raised the c.e.o.'s severance to \$10 million if there was a change in control of the company. As the largest shareholder, Speaker, I ask the Premier, when did the Premier and the Minister of energy know of this deal?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again we recognize that executive salaries are high compared to the vastmajority of Ontario salaries, Mr. Ker. We remain committed to Hydro One's regulation and their accountability, Mr. Speaker, to our government's involvement as the majority stakeholder and shareholder, Mr. Speaker. That said, Hydro One is now a publicly traded company, not a government entity. Hydro One's rates continue to be set by the Ontario energy board. And the board is the energy sector's independent regulator with a mandate to protect the province's electricity consumers, and it continues to deliver on its Manda. Speaker. For instance, last fall the Ontario energy board capped the portion of executive compensation at Hydro One for electricity customers. They are required to fund 10% of base salaries, saving ratepayers \$30 million over this year and the next. Completely eliminating the C.E.O. Salary, Mr. Speaker, wouldn't even take pennies off of anyone's bills, Mr. Speaker.

>> Vic Fedeli: Back to the Premier. A backroom deal struck by the B of Hydro One asked up the c.e.o.'s severance to \$10 million if there was Ange in control of the company. Speaker, as the largest shareholder, did the Premier or the Minister of energy sign off on this back room deal?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again decisions made regarding executive compensation are made by the board of Hydro One. You know, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the article that is being quoted, Mr. Speaker, let's see what else the "Globe and mail" article said, Mr. Speaker. The article said the government cut hydro bills by 25%, Mr. Speaker. That's something that they voted against and have no plan on how to actually reduce rates, Mr. Speaker. Similar reductions were made for small businesses and farms. 500,000 of those businesses to be a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker. In rural areas, a number of -- were canceled and bil lowered. 30 to 50% on average. Thanks to our plantar families and small businesses are now paying less on average here than in many similar jurisdictions. And that's real relief for Ontario families and it's the relief that they can depend on. And it's part of our plan to invest in care and create more opportunity for everyone, Mr. Speaker .

>> Vic Fedeli: Thank you and back to the Premier. The millionaires' club that's rng Hydro One signed off on a secret \$10 million payout should the Hydro One C.E.O. Be fired. When did the Premier know?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'll reiterate for the opposition that decisions made regarding executive compensation are made by the board at Hydro One. But the one thing it is important to state, Mr. Speaker, that complete eliminating the c.e.o.'s salary at Hydro One would not even take pennies off of people's bills, Mr. Speaker, and it's up to the leader of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Ford, to try and explain exactly how his chaotic scheme would work to benefit ratepayers. The opposition know very well Hydro One's rates are set by the Ontario energy board, the independent Ontario energy board, not Hydro One C.E.O. But compare Mr. Ford's chaotic scheme to ourair hydro plan, Mr. Speaker, which has lowered bills by 25% on average for families. As many as half a million small businesses and farms have also seen that reduction, Mr. Speaker. Low-income families, they've also seen a 40 to 50% reduction if they live in rural areas, Mr. Speaker. We continue to move forward making our bills affordable for the people of this province.

MPP MacLeod (Oosterhoff) (Martow) to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro One Exec Salary

>> MPP Lisa MacLeod: Good morning, Speaker. My question is again to the Premier. On April the 12th, the Minister of energy said, and I quote -- ultimately the board is there to make the best decisions for Hydro One. Why did the board not take that commitment to heart when they signed off on a \$10 million payout? Did the Premier sign off on her Liberal insiders and hydro cronies' \$10 million deal? Yes or no?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What this government and this Premier signed off on is a 25% reduction for all families right across the province, Mr. Speaker. It's that party that voted against it. It's that party, Mr. Speaker, that has no plan on actually how to bring forward any further savings for the people of Ontario. Weo, Mr. Speaker, and we continue to work hard to make sure that we have a clean system, a reliable system system and affordable system, Mr. Speaker. But let's take a look at what they're talking about, Mr. Speaker. They're going to fire the C.E.O. Of Hydro One. That will not do a thing, Mr. Speaker, will not do a thing for actually taking off anything, even pennies off of the bills for rate payers. We have the best interest at heart of rat pay NERs this province. That's why we brought forward a system and a plan that hased rates by 25%. We actually made sure that we eliminated coal and we've got the cleanest system, one of the cleanest systems in North America, Mr. Speaker. That is something we should be proud of.

>> MPP Sam Oosterhoff: For the Premier. Mr. Speaker, it's reported that the severance -- the \$10 million severance was signed off on in November. When did the Premier know about the deal?

>> Minister Thibeault: Again, Mr. Speaker, it's our government that the understands that affordability is critical for families and businesses, and that's why, Mr. Speaker, we launched an Ontario fair hydro plan, reducing rates by 25% on average for all residential customers and as many as a half a million small businesses and farms. Our plan is working, Mr. Speaker. Monday's report by the Environmental Commissioner reconfirmed that Ontario's families and small businesses pay less on average here than in many other North American jurisdictions. Families in cities like new York, Boston, San Francisco, for example, pay more than double the average Ontario bill, and custom NERs charlottetown, Regina, Halifax and moncton are paying more than the Ontario average. By bringing prices down -- For customers, Mr. Speaker, we're continuing to increase fairness and create more opportunity for Ontario families.

>> MPP Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and back to the Premier. The Premier can't sweep another scandal under the rug. Did the Premier T to hide the \$10 million severance for the last five months?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again Hydro One's rates Mr. Speaker -- and I know the opposition know this, but they pretend not to know a lot of things, Mr. Speaker. Hydro One's rates continue to be set by the Ontario energy board. And the board is the energy sector's independent regulator with a mandate to protect the province's electricity consumers and it continues to deliver on that mandate, Mr. Speaker. So when we're looking at Hydro One and their so-called scheme, Mr. Speaker, it actually will do nothing to reduce the rates for ratepayers right across our province. And that being said, Mr. Speaker, Hydro One is now a publicly traded company, not a government entity. And so while we recognize, Mr. Speaker, that executive salaries are high -- Compared to the vast majority of Ontario salaries, Mr. Speaker, we remain committed to making sure that we keep our system clean, reliable and affordable.

MPP Armstrong to Premier Wynne (Jaczek) Re: Long-Term Care Homes

>> MPP Teresa Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. Earls court village long-term care home is in my riding. Things got so bad at earls court last fall, they were forced to stop admitting residents.

Account Premier tell people who are worried about their loved ones why she is blocking a find-and-fix inquiry into Ontario's long-term care system?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to want to speak to the specifics of this question, but I just want to say that, this morning, the Minister of finance and I and the Minister responsible for seniors and the MPP For Trinity- Spadina were at Kensington Gardens, Mr. Speaker. A beautiful long-term care home. The Minister of finance had waffles and strawberries and whipped cream for breakfast served by the Premier. And, Mr. Speaker, we were thrilled to be able to announce that 5,000 beds, the locations for 5,000 new long-term care beds, have been finalized, Mr. Speaker. And it is -- You know, Mr. Speaker, this is on top, this is on top of the thousands of beds that have already been redeveloped in Ontario, Mr. Speaker. This is on top of the investments in home care that we've made, Mr. Speaker. This is a very, very important move forward, and 1,500 of those beds millimetre are for culturally specific communities. So it's a great move forward for seniors in Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Armstrong: Speaker, workers in long-term care homes are so dedicated and caring staff and they do the best they can. But when the ministry inspected Earls Court, things got so troubling, they were ordered that the company hire an outside consultant to report on how residents were being cared for. The ministry has that report, but they won't release it. Is the Premier more worried about bad political news than she is about getting answers for residents of Earls Court and their loved ones?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, our government is absolutely committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of our loved ones living in long-term care homes across the province and we take that responsibility very, very seriously. So of course all long-term care homes are overseen by a rigorous inspection system and regulatory framework, which includes an annual inspection to ensure compliance. What we have done as a government is to ensure that the results from every inspection are posted online and in the homes themselves. So we're constantly working to create an even more open and transparent health care system to ensure that families have the information they need to make more informed choices about the care of their loved ones. We are enhancing oversight through the strengthening quality and accountability for patients act to ensure all operators are addressing concerns promptly. We will continue in this regard, Mr. Speaker. To ensure the safety, the dignity of our loved ones in long-term care facilities.

>> MPP Armstrong: Speaker, people in my community live in Earls Court. People have families and loved ones in this home. They deserve answers. People deserve the answers they need to have to make sure that they know their families, their loved ones are being cared for and they will be safe, that seniors will be treated with human dignity and respect. Will the Premier release this report today?

>> Minister Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, our ministry has had the home get the consultant to do a report on the recommendations to date. We take this incredibly seriously. We're going to be working towards our commitment to transparency in releasing this report in due course. We want to ensure that everyone has the information they need to make informed choices in terms of the care of their residents and to ensure that long-term care homes in this province live up to our expectations of the government as to the type of care that they provide. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Taylor to Premier Wynne (Naidoo-Harris) Re: Child Care

>> MPP Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. With 49 days left, does the Premier regret that she failed to make child care affordable?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I'm very proud of is that we are in the process of building 100,000 new child care spaces. I'm very proud, Mr. Speaker, that, when I was the Minister of education in this province, we moved and began to create full-day kindergarten, Mr. Speaker. That

has now been in place for a number of years, Mr. Speaker, and that is great for kids, but it also saves families \$6,000 a year per child, Mr. Speaker, in child care. So, Mr. Speaker, we have built a strong foundation, and now, Mr. Speaker, in our budget, we have committed to free preschool child care starting in 2020, Mr. Speaker, for children from 2-and-a-half to 4 years old. So that builds on the foundation that we've already constructed, Mr. Speaker. So I thank the member opposite for the question, because I'm very proud of the work that we have done in child care in this province.

>> MPP Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. Back to the Premier. The Liberals have been in power for 15 years. His Premier has sat in her role for over five years. That's nearly 1,900 days. Last year the Canadian centre for policy alternatives noted that child care costs in Toronto increased six times faster than inflation, with 49 days left, does this Premier regret -- With 49 days left, does this Premier regret that she ignored this problem personally as a Premier for over five years and for 15 years as a government?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, that is just not the case. It's just not the case, and I am really pleased that, this time around as we go into an election, the NDP Has come on board and actually talking about education, is talking about child care because those issues were absent from their platform the last time around, Mr. Speaker. But it's great that now they have taken the bit and they are running with it, Mr. Speaker. And the centre for policy alternatives has always talked about education and has always talked about child care. So that's not new. But it is new that the NDP Has grabbed onto that. I'm pleased about that. We've been working on providing excellent education, high-quality child care, Mr. Speaker, rebuilding, building new spaces, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to do that. Mr. Speaker, the threat, the threat in this province as we go into an election is from a Conservative party. And has no intention not only of building child care spaces, Mr. Speaker, but actually no intention of even retaining what is in place and would cut across government. That is the threat --

>> MPP Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. The government has ignored affordable child care for the last 15 years. But there is change coming. And people need to decide what sort of change they want. On one hand they know that Doug Ford will cut and privatize. Child care will get more expensive. Quality will get worse. We will see more corporate child care and less high-quality public child care. New Democrats think that affordability should be based on need. The Premier thinks it should be based on how old the child is. Why?

>> Minister Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member opposite for this question, because really it gives us a chance to talk about some of the amazing work that we have been doing. And frankly, I don't even know where to start so, yes, let's start with the commitment to 100,000 more spaces. Let's start with the commitment of historic amounts being put into operational budgets. \$1.4 billion across the province. Let's talk about building spaces 1.6 billion dollars which is going to lead to building 45,000 spaces. And let's not forget that we are committing to making sure that there will be free preschool child care. For all children across the province from the ages of 2-and-a-half to 4. Saving families \$17,000 per child and building on our full-day kindergarten commitment, which also saves families \$6,500 per child. So, Speaker, if you want to talk about child care and what we're doing, we have been working hard. Not just now but for several years, building the foundation to ensure that we give our families a solid foundation. And our children the best start in life.

MPP Yakabuski to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro One Exec Salary

>> MPP John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, it's great that the Premier has decided to answer a few questions. Perhaps you'll answer this one. This is directed to the Premier. Perhaps you'll answer this one. Give a straightforward honest answer to this question. The Hydro One board secretly, recently secretly agreed to pay the Hydro One C.E.O. Over \$10 million in severance should he be fired. Now the Premier had to know of this deal because she has said herself that the province retains control of the board. The question is this. When did he know and why would she sign off on this kind of secret obscene deal?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, I find it very ironic that the opposition talks about not answering questions, when their own leader refuses to answer questions of the media -- This Premier answers questions in the House. This Premier answers questions to the media. But what we saw yesterday was Mr. Ford take one question and then do the duck and dash, Mr. Speaker. He needs to put on running shoes, not dress shoes. Yet the man refuses to answer questions. Mr. Speaker, it's appalling that the opposition has no plan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take no lessons from the opposite party when it comes to making sure that we take questions, answer questions and make sure that we put forward a platform and a policy that makes a difference to the people --

>> MPP Yakabuski: Speaker, we look forward to the opportunity to answer questions in this chamber. Back to the Premier. We'll try again. If the C.E.O. And the board of Hydro One have any respect for the taxpayers, for Ontario or for the people, they would resign today. Will the Premier March over to Hydro One, demand and subsequently accept the resignation of the board?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So how will that help ratepayers, Mr. Speaker? Right now we brought forward a plan that's reducing rates by 25%. 25% on average for all residences across the province and for 500,000 small businesses and farms, Mr. Speaker. The c.e.o.'s salary wouldn't take pennies off of anyone's bills, Mr. Speaker. So that's why we brought forward the fair hydro plan, and the fair hydro plan, Mr. Speaker, takes that 25% off and actually helps many Hydro One customers, customers from Chappleau, from Atikokan, customers from Innisfil Hydro, from northern Ontario wires just to name a few, Mr. Speaker. They're seeing their rates reduced somewhere between 35 and 50% on average, Mr. Speaker. That is something that we actually put in place and is something that they voted against. Once upon a time, Mr. Speaker, they snuck that into the people's guarantee. Now we know where the people's guarantee went. That went to the trash, Mr. Speaker. But the fair hydro plan, this is a program that's working for the people of Ontario. They recognized it once. They should recognize it again, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Gates to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro One Exec Salary

>> MPP Wayne Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question's to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, the C.E.O. Of privatized Hydro One now makes over \$6 million. About eight times what the previous C.E.O. Made when Hydro One was a publicly owned company. The board of Hydro One must have known how outrageous this looks to the people of Ontario because they changed the rules to actually increase the payout and protect the C.E.O. If a cap is placed on his salary or he is fired. Instead of protecting ratepayers and the public, the board protected their executives. They also protected themselves, because to fire the board, the government must first fire the board. Why did the Premier privatize Hydro One and handpick the board that protects its executives and itself but not the Ontario ratepayers and the public?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I will say that we recognize that executive salaries are high compared to the vast majority of Ontario salaries. We remain committed to Hydro One's regulation, accountability and transparency through our government's involvement as a major shareholder, Mr. Speaker. But that said Hydro One is now a publicly traded company, not a government entity. Decisions made regarding executive compensation are made by the board of Hydro One but, Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. Completely eliminating the c.e.o.'s salary would not even take pennies off of people's bills. Our fair hydro plan did take money off of people's bills. It took 25% off, Mr. Speaker. And in other parts of the province, we saw anywhere between 35 to 50% off for those individuals that live in rural or northern parts of our province, Mr. Speaker. And included in the fair hydro plan is an enhanced Ontario electricity support program as well, Mr. Speaker, making sure that low-income individuals actually can save more on their bills, Mr. Speaker. We eliminated the first nations delivery charge, Mr. Speaker, making sure that those that live on reserves. Actually didn't have to pay that delivery charge helping them with their bills as well, Mr. Speaker. We brought forward a plan that actually worked for the ratepayers.

>> MPP Gates: My question back to the Premier. No C.E.O. At hydro should make \$6 million when people can't afford to pay for their hydro bills. Privatization has made Hydro One more efficient or reliable. It has not. It has not lowered hydro costs. Privatization has allowed the C.E.O. To extract over \$6 million to Ontario ratepayers. It has allowed Hydro One to borrow billions, billions to pay -- to buy up a coal plant in United States and expose Ontario rate payers to even new debt risks. It has allowed the Liberals to Collect campaign donations from bay street. Who are in turn now ccting hundreds of millions in Hydro One profits that used to belong to the people of Ontario. Will the Premier finally admit that her privatization of Hydro One was a mistake –

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, Hydro One has become a better-run company, Mr. Speaker. They found \$114 million in savings last year. They actually moved forward and eliminated winter disconnections on their own, Mr. Speaker, before we had to implement that legislation, Mr. Speaker. They've actually increased their customer service and they've seen their calls to their customer service offices drop significantly, Mr. Speaker. They have been doing a lot to become a better-run company and I understand that, Mr. Speaker, that, youknow, the costs that are out there can be concerning to some pple, but it's -- Mr. Speaker it's this government that brought forward a plan to reduce rates by 25%. But, Mr. Speaker, when you're looking at electricity platforms there are pie-in-the-sky platforms, Mr. Speaker, and that party has one of them when it comes to this sector. Buying back billions in shares of Hydro One will not take one cent off electricity bills for Ontario families and businesses. They should know that, Mr. Speaker. They're choosing ideology over the people of Ontario and not even reducing rates one cent.

MPP Qaadri to Minister Hunter Re: University Campus in Milton

>> MPP Shafiq Qaadri: [Speaking in French] Voice of Translator: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the skills development and education Mitzie hunter. [End of Translation] I would like at the outset thank Minister hunter to be at the free tuition pathways announcement and for as well presenting yourself in this chamber for questions and scrutiny, and not engaging in "Doug" and cover. Speaker, the strong economy in Ontario, the lowest unemployment rate in two decades and construction boom in Ontario proceeding. Of course with that growth comes population growth. Speaker, a community like Milton is one of the fastest growing communities in Canada. And of course it is a powerhouse of economic growth now and certainly -- We have a responsibility to young people in Milton and I invite the Minister to please explain to us how we will encourage access to continuing education.

>> Minister Mitzie Hunter: The member is absolutely right. We live in a beautiful province and, Mr. Speaker, one of ttest growing -- the fastest growing community in Canada is Milton. And it is an up-and-coming powerhouse. So I want to say thank you to the member from Etobicoke North for this question. And this is part of our government's commitment to people of Milton. We promised to build a university campus in that community. We asked our universities and Colleges in Ontario to partner and to really shape a vision and, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand in this House today to say that we have delivered on that tment. Speaker, yesterday in front of a packed room, the member from Halton naidoo-harris and I announced a third view of proposals has allowed us to arrive at a decision. Wilfrid laurier and conestoga College will partner to develop -- Power investment. Speaker, that is such great news for the people of Milton and Halton region. We know this community is nested in the niagara escarpment. Aht in T greenbelt. And I want to thank the member from Halton for the Premier, for her championship and leadership on this important –

>> MPP Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker. I know of course this is welcome news not only for the residents of Halton itself but for the entire region. Speaker, local investments such as these are critical because we know that population growth over the next ten years is expected to be concentrated in and around the city of Toronto, including York, Peel and Halton regions. Having of course local access to high-quality postsecondary education and training at this new site will improve access to local talent in Canada's fastest growing community. Speaker, my question is this. Would the Minister of advanced education and skills development please tell us more about the residential every Halton and the important investments that we're making for its development?

>> Minister Hunter: Thank you, Speaker, and I want to say thank you to the dynamic and hard working member from Etobicoke north. I know he understands this, that when we talk about miltonieng located in Ontario's innovation super corridor, it's Canada's innovation region. So we want people to learn, to be trained and to stay right here in this region. And with our programs like free tuition and the We're making university and Colleges making more accessible to families who believe they can't afford tuition. Our focus is to create a talent pipeline for science, technology, engineering, art and math. Our focus is to make sure that we are enhancing the already talented and innovative regions in Halton. So, Mr. Speaker, along with the member from Halton, our government announced an investment of \$90 million to support this opportunity. For the people of Halton. Mr. Speaker, tens of thousands of smart companies are already doing business in this region. By building this campus, we will support --

MPP Jones to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro One Exec Salaries

>> MPP Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of energy. When Hydro One board changed the compensation package to pay the Hydro One C.E.O. Over \$10 million in severance, did the Premier know about this deal and why did she support this exorbitant severance package?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I understand executive salaries are high compared to the vast majority of Ontario salaries, Mr. Speaker, and I know they're quoting a "Globe and mail" article today, Mr. Speaker. So let's see what else, Mr. Speaker, was in the "Globe and mail" article that they were talking about. That article says, Mr. Speaker, that the government cut hydro bills by 25%, Mr. Speaker. Similar reductions were made for small businesses and farms, 500,000 small businesses and farms, Mr. Speaker. In rural areas the number of fees were cancelled and bills were lowered even further. We're talking, Mr. Speaker, somewhere between 35 and 50% reductions on average. And so it's thanks to our plan, Mr. Speaker, Ontario families and small businesses are now paying less on average here than in many other similar jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker. And all of that being said, I understand, Mr. Speaker, that, you know, what they have is no plan when it comes to reducing rates and even talking about the C.E.O. Salary eliminating it wouldn't take pennies off the bill, Mr. Speaker. We brought forward a plan that took off a lot more than that, about 25%.

>> MPP Jones: Completely is surrounding respect for the taxpayers, something you seem to have forgotten how to do. The Minister continues to suggest the government has majority control of Hydro One. If that's the case then he needs to explain why he allowed changes that would give the C.E.O. A \$10 million severance package. Did the Minister ask the board to roll back this change? And if not, why not?

>> Minister Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting she says they have a plan. They have no plan. They're not even bringing forward a platform, Mr. Speaker. It was this government actually brought forward a plan to reduce rates by 25%. We actually then enhanced that even further, Mr. Speaker, and brought forward changes to the rrrp, making sure we could reduce rates for individuals that live in rural or northern parts of our province anywhere between 35 and 50%, Mr. Speaker. We made sure that our plan lked at everyone in this province and brought all families and 500,000 small businesses and farms, Mr. Speaker. That 25% reduction. We also enhanced the Ontario electricity supports program and we also made sure that first nations were part of this plan, Mr. Speaker, making sure that they actually had their delivery credit or charge removed, Mr. Speaker. Saving them about \$80 a month on their bill on average as well, Mr. Speaker. Our plan worked for the people of Ontario, Mr. Speaker. They voted against it.

MPP Sattler to Minister Jaczek Re: Surgery Wait Times

>> MPP Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the acting Premier. Speaker, Eleanor

Varga lives in London West and is 73 years old. She has been waiting two years for hip surgery and has developed fractured vertebrae as a result. Her hip is now bone on bone and because she can't take pain medication, she lives with excruciating pain. She says -- I used to be a vibrant, energetic person. I am now broken pain-ridden senior citizen all because the government only allows so much funding for hips. Speaker, will this Liberal government remove the arbitrary caps on surgical procedures so that Londoners like Eleanor Varga can get the surgeries they need?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And certainly when we hear stories as we just have about individuals such as the member's constituent, we feel very badly. We obviously would not want anything like this to happen to one of our loved ones. So first of all I'd like to ask the member whether her constituency office has approached my ministry for some further details that we can look into this case, because obviously this sounds like a case that should be dealt with very expeditiously. But on a broader policy note, Mr. Speaker, we certainly have heard now from the NDP as to their platform, and it seems as they -- as though they agree with us, with our budget. Of course in our 2018 budget, we are increasing our funding for some of the -- Vital procedures such as hip replacements. And so I look forward to hearing the specifics of this case. Thank you, Mr. Speaker .

>> MPP Sattler: In to the acting Premier. Speaker, Beverly Garlow also lives in London west. She is 65 years old and was first referred to an orthopaedic surgeon in 2016, after waiting almost a year for an appointment, double the provincial target, she learned that she will have to wait another year and a half, at least, to get the surgery. That is three times the provincial wait time target. Speaker, Beverly now has to walk with a cane. She can no longer work or carry out her usual activities like spending time with her grandchildren. She wrote to me to ask how did health care in Ontario become so broken? Speaker, will the acting Premier admit that it is Liberal funding cuts that have broken Ontario's health care system?

>> Minister Jaczek: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure that everyone understands there's absolutely no arbitrary cap on a particular type of surgery. So I would like to bring that to the member opposite's attention. And certainly across this province we have reduced wait times for hip and knee replacement by some 25%, and so we are -- we're investing some \$11 million more to provide over 1,300 more hip and knee replacement surgeries specifically in the coming year. This is in addition of course to so many other initiatives that we have in this budget. I would hope that the member opposite will encourage her Colleagues on that side of the House, hearing what we've said about our budget this year, to in fact vote with us for this very Progressive set of priorities that we've established that they seem to agree with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Potts to Minister Milczyn Re: Inclusionary Zoning

>> MPP Arthur Potts: Well, thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of housing. Housing affordability touches the lives of so many Ontarians, and I know that many of my constituents in Beaches- East York feel the pressures of buying a home or affording the. With the introduction of the fair housing plan in April 2017, we brought greater stability to the rental market. In particular many of my constituents I know were glad to see that rent controls were now being applied to their homes and rent control has helped protect 237,000 people in Ontario who can now rest easy knowing they can't be forced out of their homes because the rents have suddenly doubled. Earlier this month, Speaker, the Minister announced the details of another housing policy that I and many of the members on this side of the House have been advocating for and that is inclusionary housing -- zoning, sorry, inclusionary zoning. Will the Minister share the details of this new affordable housing tool to the members of this House?

>> Minister Peter Milczyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for Beaches- East York for his advocacy on this issue. I was happy to announce last week, Mr. Speaker, that inclusionary zoning is now the law in Ontario.

[Applause] Municipalities across this province now have access to this tool that will help them

design and formulate their own plans on how to deliver affordable housing in partnership with the private sector, Mr. Speaker. Municipalities will be able to decide how many units would be provided in terms of development. The period of affordability, the level of affordability, what kind of financial contribution they would make towards that, and they would be able to devise the housing solution for their community that fits their needs. Municipalities across the province, housing advocates, and we have all welcomed this proposal -- not proposal but this new tool that we've brought forward, Mr. Speaker. Another commitment made and commitment delivered.

>> MPP Potts: Thank you, Speaker. I certainly want to thank the Minister for clarifying this policy for us and being able to make that announcement. A very important tool I know in Beaches- East York as we're building new rental and condominium properties all across the neighbourhood will be very, very useful and I want to thank the Minister particularly because of the service he had on municipal council with Doug Ford the leader of the P.C.S, where we know that housing policy consisted of handing out \$20 bills to residents in Toronto community housing. We know creating housing accessible to young families buying their first home or to a minimum wage worker is quite vital to support Ontario. Housing affordability is a part to create opportunity and make life more affordable today and tomorrow. On behalf of my constituents I would like to thank the Minister and this government for putting in place Progressive policies in housing that help us all build a productive and fulfilling lives for that I children, for their parents, for our communities. Will the Minister then please tell us more about the public's reaction to last week's announcement?

>> Minister Milczyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reaction has been overwhelmingly supportive, Mr. Speaker. We worked with our stakeholders. We worked with municipalities. We listened and we've created an inclusionary zoning tool that reflects what municipalities ask for, which is flexibility. The ability for them to craft their own local bylaws and policies that will help deliver thousands of new affordable units every year. But, Mr. Speaker, there's more to affordable housing than just inclusionary zoning. We're investing over \$540 million in social housing retrofits. Doug Ford wants to cut the cap invest program that would fund that. Doug Ford has said he's not in support of rent control, which we've expanded to all Ontario -- When Doug Ford and I sat on the board of build Toronto, the city of Toronto's real estate agency. He was not supportive of using city land for affordable housing. And he doesn't even support supportive housing for autistic kids. There is no affordable housing --

MPP Wilson to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro One Exec Salary

>> MPP Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, my question's to the Minister of energy. The Hydro One board secretly agreed to pay the Hydro One C.E.O. Over \$10 million in severance should he be fired. I'll just remind everyone this gentleman is already making over \$6 million a year and now, should he be fired, he gets an additional \$10 million. This is a slap in the face to people of Ontario. It's insulting and shows a complete lack of respect to the taxpayer who has to pay these millions of dollars. I'll ask the Minister since we didn't get an answer from the Premier, when will the Premier know? Did the Premier sign off on this \$10 million severance deal?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'm always pleased to rise in this House and speak, Mr. Speaker. The executive salaries I recognize are high compared to the vast majority of Ontario salaries, Mr. Speaker. We remain committed to Hydro One's regulation and accountability and transparency through our government's involvement as a major shareholder. You know, Mr. Speaker, that being Hydro One is a publicly traded company, not a government entity. Decisions made regarding executive compensation are made by the board, Mr. Speaker, of Hydro One. I know, Mr. Speaker, they're quoting the "Globe and Mail" article and they talk about that article often, Mr. Speaker. But let's reiterate what that article also talked about, which is our plan, Mr. Speaker. A 25% reduction. Off bills for people right across this province, Mr. Speaker. That is something that we implemented and something they voted against.

>> MPP Wilson: Thank you. Back to the Minister. The Premier and Minister continue to suggest that

the government has majority control of Hydro One. If that's the case -- and I believe it is -- then the Minister needs to explain why he allowed changes that gives the C.E.O. A \$10 million severance package, and did the Minister at any time ask the board to roll back this change? And if not, why not?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again our government understands that affordable is critical for families and businesses. And that's why we launched, Mr. Speaker, the fair hydro plan and that's Ontario's fair hydro plan. Rolling back rates, Mr. Speaker. We rolled back rates by 25% on average for all residential consumers and as many as a half million small businesses and farms and our plan is working, Mr. Speaker. Just last week, a report by the Environmental Commissioner reconfirmed that Ontario's families and small businesses pay less on average here than in many other North American jurisdictions. Families in cities like New York, Boston, San Francisco pay less than double the average of Ontario's bills, Mr. Speaker. Consumers in Charlottetown, Regina, Halifax and Moncton are paying more than the Ontario average. By bringing down prices for customers, we're continuing to increase fairness create more opportunity for families in Ontario, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to do that on this side of the House .

MPP Forster to Minister Coteau (Jaczek) Re: Healthcare Investments

>> MPP Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker. My question's to the acting Premier. Don Bremner is a constituent of mine. Dawn Bremner. She has worked hard her entire life first in the machining department at Garrison Tools and Ties and later at Edshaw. After decades of grinding physical work, she's now with a disability and chronic pain. She relies on ODSP. She needs skin graft gum surgery. Her dentist says she needs it but ODSP won't cover it. After working her entire life, why is Dawn being left without the health care that she needs when she needs it?

>> Minister Michael Coteau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the member for the question Mr. Speaker, as a government, we've done much to look at ways and to support different people from around the province. Anyone that's on ODSP, we know that within our budget, when it comes to any type of income security, we've made some changes, some massive changes. In fact these are the biggest changes in any type of income security in recent times. In regard to this specific case, when we're talk about health care, I would love to get the information from the member opposite and see how we can work together to find a solution.

>> MPP Forster: Dawn is so disappointed that this government is, in her own words and I quote, playing God with her health. She needs health care. She needs dental surgery. She can't get it and she's not alone. Millions of people in Ontario cannot get the health care or the dental care that they need. Today one in three working people in our province is working without health benefits and two out of three seniors have no retiree health benefits. After 15 years in office, why has this Liberal government left people like Dawn and so many others without the care that they need and the care that they deserve?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And of course this is precisely why our government has continued to make investments in health care over the time that we've been in office. Every single year the health budget has increased. And of course in this year's budget, the 2018 budget, we're making a deliberate choice to invest even more in the care of the people of Ontario by investing more in hospitals, in home care, mental Health and Long-Term Care, and of course even dental care and prescription medication. So we have increased our budget by some 5% this coming year to reduce wait times and to increase access across the entire health care system. We believe that everyone in Ontario should receive the care that they need and when and where they need it, and this is precisely why we are proposing to make these investments. I hope the members opposite will support our budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Kiwala to Minister Damerla Re: Home Care for Seniors

>> MPP Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of seniors affairs as I'm sure you know, seniors make up the fast growing segment of Ontario's population, and today there are more than 2 million seniors in our province and that number is expected to double in the next 25 years. And let's face it seniors have spent a lifetime contributing to their communities and the economy. In turn, we need a government willing to make impactful investments in care that will allow seniors at all stages of life to stay independent as they age providing the supports they need to remain healthy, active, engaged and socially connected with their families. Mr. Speaker, this government knows seniors want to remain in their homes for as long as they can, and just last November, your ministry announced \$150 million -- I'm sorry, \$55 million in investments to support aging with confidence Ontario's action plan. Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of seniors affairs please explain to this House about this crucial investment in care that will benefit Ontario seniors?

>> Minister Dipika Damerla: Thank you speaker. I want to begin by thanking the member from Kingston and the Islands for the important question and her continued advocacy for seniors. Mr. Speaker, as the Premier alluded to earlier this morning, I along with the Premier, the Minister of finance and MPP Dong announced that the first 5,000 long-term care licences have been allocated so that -- Mr. Speaker, we also know that Ontario seniors have told us over and over again, we want to live in our own homes for as long as we can or as the member from Barrie so memorably put it, no one was going to take her out of the House into a funeral home. So WHA, Mr. Speaker, we continue to invest to make sure that our seniors continue to stay at home. That's why in this budget we announced a very innovative and important initiative that we call the seniors healthy home program and I look forward to speak more on that in the supplementary.

>> MPP Kiwala: Thank you, Minister, for reiterating to this House the priority that this government places on providing care for our seniors. I'm pleased to know that this government has a vision and a long-term plan that ensures seniors have the necessary care and supports for whatever their needs may be. While our government recognizes the importance of making significant investments in care, it has become clear that not everyone in this House shares this view. However this government knows that now more than ever we need to make these critical investments in care to ensure that seniors are supported. Mr. Speaker, I was also pleased to have -- of my riding Kingston and the Islands alternative innovative seniors' residence recognized by our Premier yesterday. Account minute staff of seniors affairs please inform this House of how the seniors healthy home program will help seniors in my riding of Kingston and the Islands and across the province stay independent in their homes? Mr. Speaker

>> Minister Damerla: Thank you, Speaker. I'd be delighted to tell the member from Kingston and the Islands and this House how the healthy home program is going to help our seniors. What this program's going to do, Mr. Speaker, is provide up to \$750 annually to seniors 75 years or older for every eligible household. With the extra \$750 a year, our \$1 billion investment will provide seniors across this province with financial assistance to help offset the cost of maintaining a home with services like snow removal, house cleaning or cutting the lawn. But, Mr. Speaker, it's really disappointing that the opposite side of the House has no plan. Doug Ford Conservatives are still without a plan for how they would care for our rapidly aging population and, Mr. Speaker, day before I was disappointed to see that when the NDP unveiled their platform, they would cut \$1 billion of -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying yesterday -- the day before, I was disappointed that when the NDP unveiled their platform, that they would cut our billion-dollar investment that would help seniors stay independent in their homes. It is clear --

MPP Scott to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro One Exec Salary

>> MPP Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of energy. The Hydro One board of directors agreed to pay the Hydro One C.E.O. Over \$10 million in severance should he be fired. When did the Premier know about this? When did the Premier know about this? And did the

Premier sign off on this outrageous secret deal?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only thing that's secret in this province is what they're going to cut, Mr. Speaker. What are they going to cut? Is it the \$750, up to \$750 a year to help seniors stay in their home, Mr. Speaker? Is that what they're going to cut? That's what we think they're going to cut, Mr. Speaker. What about free child care -- child care and individuals children from the age of 2-and-a-half to 4, Mr. Speaker? They're going to cut that, Mr. Speaker. The only thing that's secret, Mr. Speaker, is their platform because no one sees it. No one talks about it, Mr. Speaker. All they do, Mr. Speaker, is talk about firing and cutting, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House, we talk about care and opportunity. We are going to continue to care for the people of this province, invest in our province and make sure there's opportunities for everyone in this province, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we made sure that. Tuition for 225,000 people will be free this year, Mr. Speaker, thanks to this government.

>> MPP Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of energy. Well, if the C.E.O. And the board at Hydro One had any respect for their customers, the people of Ontario, if they cared, they would resign. So will the Premier and the Minister join us in calling for this outrageous decision to be reversed?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, talking about reversing, Mr. Speaker, that party that reverses course more often than a spinning turtle, Mr. Speaker. They actually sit there and one day will say that they're actually going to keep the people -- the fair hydro plan, and they sneak it into the people's guarantee and then next thing you know, Mr. Speaker, the people's guarantee is gone out the window. The carbon tax is gone out the window. Apparently climate change just stopped, Mr. Speaker, according to the Conservatives. But on this side of the House, we're going to continue to invest in the people of Ontario. We're going to continue to make sure that we bring forward minimum wage, something that they will cut, Mr. Speaker. We know, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House that governments are here to make sure that we can continue to invest and help the people of Ontario. That's what we did through our fair hydro plan. That they voted against. That's why we're bringing forward more day care, more medicine for everyone --

MPP Gelinis to Minister Milczyn Re: Social Housing Availability

>> MPP France Gelinis: [Voice of Translator]: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of housing. [End of Translation] There are presently 1,577 House holds in greater Sudbury waiting for rent geared-to-income one-bedroom apartment. One third of those people on the wait list are seniors. They are told that they will have to wait on average five years before they can move out their House, that they cannot manage more, and move into an apartment where they could keep living in the community. My question is why is the government doing nothing to help elderly, vulnerable Ontarians in need of housing?

>> Minister Peter Milczyn: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. Our government takes the issue of affordable housing creating additional affordable housing very seriously. We introduced fair housing plan to actually help with the creation of additional affordable housing. Through that plan, we're offering \$125 million in development credits to municipalities to be able to use them with the private sector, to waive development charges to encourage the creation of more rental and affordable rental housing. We're releasing provincial lands for the creation of affordable housing. But in communities across the province, including across the north, we are working with those municipalities and those service providers by offering them funding to build more affordable housing, especially with supports for vulnerable communities. We've helped with the creation of over 22,000 affordable rental units over the last number of years, Mr. Speaker, through programs like investments in affordable housing, our homelessness prevention strategy and of course now with the national housing strategy. Coming forward, we'll be able to do even more. I will elaborate more on that, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Gelinas: Thank you, Speaker. Ung responsibility for social housing onto municipalities, the last Conservative government laid the foundation for today's social hng crisis. Shamefully, this Liberal government has continued with the same policies for the last 15 years. In fact the current budget does not have a single new penny of social housing for this yea. The government has more or less kicked the can down for the next election., Mr. Speaker, account Minister please tell me why seniors in my riding need to wait five long years for an affordable one-bedroom apartment?

>> Minister Milczyn: Mr. Speaker, in fact we're working with housing service providers across the province, including in Sudbury, on giving them tools and funds for them to be able to create more housing. We're investing \$543 million for the retrofit of social housing units across the province, which will help free up units which perhaps were uninhabitable to be able to be offered to individuals. We're supporting investments in affordable housing jointly with the federal government. That's creating thousands of units. And in fact we have just agreed, in principle, to the framework of the national housing strategy and we arefinalizing our bilateral agreement with Ottawa and the national housing strategy, which will allow billions of dollars of new housing money to flow into Ontario, to help create the units for seniors and other vule people throughout the province with new housing units, Mr. Speaker .