

Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Thursday, June 1, 2017

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Transcript of Provincial Question Period

41st Parliament, 2nd Session

Thursday, June 1, 2017

The following is a partially edited transcript of Question Period.

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MPP Thompson (Yurek) (Scott) to Premier Wynne (Murray) Re: Wind Turbine Noise Complaints

>> MPP Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Speaker, either the Minister of environment and climate change is unable to manage his own staff or he instructs them to circumvent existing rules. According to global news, there's confirmation that between 2006 and 2014, his ministry chose to ignore thousands of noise and House complaints against industrial wind turbines. Just this past April -- excuse me -- the Minister shared how proud he is of his staff. But, Speaker, this is not a record to be proud of. Out of thousands of complaints, more than two thirds were ignored. Speaker, will the Premier instruct this Minister to do his job and investigate all of the complaints that he is receiving. On industrial wind turbines from every corner of this province? Especially those --Noise?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of the environment will want to

comment. But I also know, Mr. Speaker, that we take concerns from community members very, very seriously on a full range of issues, including -- Mr. Speaker I've spent an enormous amount of time over the years listening to and talking to people who are concerned about wind turbines, Mr. Speaker. And in fact when I became the Premier we changed the rules, Mr. Speaker, about municipal input and the siting of wind turbines, Mr. Speaker. I know that the member opposite knows, Mr. Speaker, that under the current rules that municipalities have much more authority to indicate whether they are willing hosts or not, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. Back to the Premier. Speaker, this government is forcing municipalities like Dutton-Dunwich to accept some of the province's largest turbines and the planned project in Dutton is the strong breeze wind project. Even though a poll conducted by the municipality showed that 84% of residents strongly oppose the project as did the municipality. Now we're hearing the ministry of environment climate change has ignored thousands of noise complaints. Not only the residents forced to accept wind turbines. They must now know that the ministry will not help them and ignore all the problems caused by wind turbines. Speaker, this government has already admitted they do not need energy that would be created by the strong breeze project in Dutton Dunn witch. Will the Premier do the right thing? Listen to the municipalities who say no and cancel the strong breeze wind project in Dutton-Dunwich?

>> Minister Glen Murray: Thank you, Speaker. First of all I was not the Minister in that period of time. Second of all -- really. First off. Speaker, not only do we take these seriously, and in the three years since I've been Minister and I assume the period before. I have met with numerous people. We're working with the member from Huron- Bruce on the k2 project. There is extensive testing going on. We are including and adding total testing, which is very important. We are expanding our road. I've talked to folks in the community. They are very concerned. We are working with them. We are not ignoring these things, but it's passing curious to me, Mr. Speaker. They never raise issues about nuclear waste. They never raise issues about coal pollution, about challenges of electric transmission lines. They only attack renewable green energy, Mr. Speaker. They have an obsession with anything that reduces greenhouse gas emissions. This is the party that --

>> MPP Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the Premier. On global news the Minister of the environment and climate change claimed that industrial wind turbine noise complaints are isolated to one project up in Huron- Bruce. But these concerns are not isolated. The proposal for Snowy Ridge, a project in my riding, was reviewed by a former MOEC employee who pointed out flaws in the project. The employee's assessment was redacted from the appeal process. Two expert noise witness statements were redacted. The concern of residents were redacted. Yet the Minister -- and he was the Minister at the time -- claimed that there were no expert witnesses to support health concerns. The Minister claims to take this issue seriously, but how can the Minister explain this blatant scheme to redact information and hide the facts? Your employees are even telling you.

>> Minister Murray: So Mr. Speaker -- So, Mr. Speaker, the party opposite, whose leader spent years in Ottawa denying climate change, actively undermining the efforts of Québec, Ontario attacking -- So the party opposite made the claim for better part of ten years that wind turbines cause health problems. This government spent a considerable amount of money hiding the leading experts and did medical research, as did the federal government and found out. The totality of the opposition party's claims were completely bogus and like so much not science based. The creation of this party, the delight that doesn't like --

MPP Jones (McDonnell) (Oosterhoff) to Premier Wynne Re: Wind Turbine Noise Complaints

>> MPP Sylvia Jones: Back to the Premier. Surprise to me to learn from global that the Minister has failed to investigate noise and health complaints related to industrial wind turbines. Liberal Minister s have been ignoring homeowners in Dufferin-caledon for over ten years. In 2011, I asked the Minister of environment to help 9 -- the Whitworth family when the doctor recommended they leave their home because of noise and electrical pollution. In 2013, the whitworths received a one-sentence email from the Minister of environment that said and I quote -- the ministry has closed your file at this time and the Minister will not be taking any action on your complaint. Will the Premier do the right thing and reopening the whitworths' file?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as I said in answer to the first question, I am and have been very concerned about the community reaction to the siting of wind turbines. I met with many groups over a period of years, Mr. Speaker. I sat with them. I listened to their concerns. I made sure -- I made sure that Premier Wynne: I made sure that we had studies in place, Mr. Speaker. I made sure that we worked with the federal government as the health Canada stud wrist done, Mr. Speaker. We made changes. We made changes in terms of siting. Changes in terms of the siting of wind turbines postpone in. We gave more responsibility and more authority to municipalities. We have made changes, Mr. Speaker, based exactly on the concerns that the members opposite are raising.

>> MPP Jim McDonell: Speaker, to the Premier. Her Minister 's either willfully uninformed of the number of complaints about wind turbine noise filed with his department or dplibly neglectful of his duties. One of my constituents complained about how measurements were improperly deducted in the nation wise wind project. Now I know for a fact his constituency office were c.c.'d in his complaints. He says there were only one complaint. As reported on global news there were House -- thousands. People across Ontario deserve answers and a resolution to a complaint. This government recently stated that, because of the surplus of power, they were cancelling the next round of energy projects. Will the Premier do the Honourable thing and order her Minister to put an immediate stop to all wind turbine developments until the massive backlog of complaint can be addressed?

>> Premier Wynne: Again, Mr. Speaker, we have worked to respond to concerns. We have responded to concerns to municipalities. Mr. Speaker, I take these concerns very seriously and we have worked to address them and we will continue to work with Mr. Speaker, I have to ask the question. Is it not that this party does not want to talk about the reality that we are making changes in this province that they are labels as too much too soon, Mr. Speaker, because they are going to help people, the changes that we are making, as in the development of green renewable energy. Help kids with asthma, Mr. Speaker. Cleans up the air. This party doesn't want to talk about a \$15 minimum wage. This party doesn't want to talk about 100,000 child care spaces, Mr. Speaker. They'll

>> MPP Sam Oosterhoff Speaker, it's past time the Premier paid attention. Hydro bills are skyrocketed by over 300%. Expensive and counterproductive power subsidies for power turbines we don't want or need have contributed to the soaring energy prices that are the greatest burden people are facing. Yet this government has ignored the thousands of complaints they've received. This Liberal government has not paid attention to the many petitions MPP S have presented regarding this issue, nor have they paid attention to their own communities. Some of the 90 unwilling communities are in several of their ridings as well. Just a few weeks ago this government had the opportunity to reverse their folly when my motion for a moratorium came forward. Respect for local decision making was at hand but they voted it down. Mr. Speaker ,. Why does the Premier continue to ignore and dismiss everyone's concerns?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, that's absolutely not the case. You know I have met with folks in that member's own riding of binbrook, Mr. Speaker, and heard their concerns -- As I said, Mr. Speaker, I believe that this party really does not want to talk about the concerns of people who believe that having a fair workplace, having a \$15 minimum wage is important. Their leader has made it clear that he thinks that is too much too soon but I'd ask, Mr. Speaker, is it too much too soon for the 30% of Ontarians right now who make less than \$15 an hour? Is it too much too soon for part-time workers to get paid the same as full-time workers?

MPP Tabuns to Premier Wynne (Thibeault) Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> MPP Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, to the Premier. The Premier has show Ontarians time and too many again, throughout this session that she simply doesn't get what they're going through. Families are at a tipping point when it comes to things like keeping up with their skyrocketing hydro bills. But instead of helping, the Premier has put herself and her party first by ramming through a borrowing scheme that she knows will call -- cause bills to soar even higher than they are now. When will the Premier apologize to Ontarians. For putting her political agenda ahead of the very real struggles of the people of Ontario?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, my plan, our plan for the people of Ontario is to invest in this province, to grow the economy, to work with business, Mr. Speaker, to the make sure that young people have access to education, an excellent education from preschool right through to postsecondary, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that families have access to child care, to make sure that kids have access to the medication that they need and their families can afford to look after them, Mr. Speaker. To make sure that kids have access to all of the services that they need and families have the support they need, including, including a reduction in their electricity prices, Mr. Speaker. A reduction that will happen this summer, not in the distant future if a federal government should Dane to agree with them as the NDP Plan would have, Mr. Speaker. Our plan is to make sure that people have the resources that they need and that they are able to take part in the economic growth of this province, Mr. Speaker. That's what our fair workplace plan is about. That's what our fair hydro plan is about. That's what our fair housing plan is about.

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Again to the Premier. The Premier is focused on bringing up her dismal poll numbers. This became obvious when, even after the financial accountability officer confirmed that her hydro borrowing scheme would mean higher not lower bills for families and businesses, she rammed it through the House anyway. This plan is not good for everyday Ontarians. It is good for those at the top though. Why is the Premier more concerned about her wealthy bay street friend than she is about the people who voted for her?

>> Premier Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's the last day in the legislature before we go on to the summer portion of our -- I'm not going to say break because I know that everyone in this legislature's going to be working very hard once the House rises. But because it's the last day, Mr. Speaker, I really have to say this. I know that the opposition parties believe that by making a personal attack and raising the issue of my personal polling numbers, that somehow that's going to get under my skin and that's a good political tactic. Here's a news flash, Mr. Speaker. I know what the polls say. I understand that, and I am absolutely focused on doing what's in the best interests of the people of this province. Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Back to the Premier. That was strangely nixonian I have to say, Speaker. Speaker, families and businesses have been telling the Premier for years now that they can't afford more hydro rate hikes. Yet she has pushed ahead with the sell-off of Hydro One and her borrowing scheme, both of which will, will drive up hydro rates. Why is the Premier ignoring what Ontarians are telling her?hikes. Yet she has pushed ahead with the sell-off of Hydro One and her borrowing scheme,

>>Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So let's talk about what happened in the House yesterday, Mr. Speaker. We voted in a plan that's going to reduce everyone's rates by 25% on average. They voted against that, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to makings sure that you

have in place a program to help the most vulnerable in this province when it comes to lowering rates, Mr. Speaker, both opposition parties voted against it, Mr. Speaker. First nations, first nations on reserve individuals who many live in abject poverty, Mr. Speaker. We're reducing their rates. One of the things that they did, Mr. Speaker, they voted against it. We make sure with our plan that we're helping every single family in this province. That's something they continue to vote against.

MPP Gelinas to Premier Wynne (Hoskins) Re: Hospital Funding

>> MPP France Gelinas: My question is for the Premier. Well, it's not just our electricity system that the Premier's Liberal government has made worse. After years of frozen hospital budgets and cuts to frontline health care staff, the Premier's 2017 budget short changes hospitals again, this time by about \$300 million short change. Why is the Premier so intent on keeping our hospitals chronically underfunded?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think that the member opposite knows that there is -- in our 2017 budget, a 3.1% increase to those hospital budgets, those operating budgets across the board, Mr. Speaker, and at least a 2% increase for every hospital in the province, Mr. Speaker. On top of that there's I think it's \$9 billion, Mr. Speaker, that will be available for construction and capital costs, Mr. Speaker. So we absolutely recognize the critical work that done by hospitals. We also recognize that there was a need on top of the more than \$450 million that we put in year funding onto hospital based funding last year, Mr. Speaker, that there needed to be an increase in hospital operations. We put that in the budget in recognition of those concerns, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Gelinas: Budget freezes and cuts to frontline staff leads to overcrowding. It leads to pour quality care. It leads to hallway medicine. Hospitals like the ones in Thunder Bay or Sault Ste. Marie are in constant state of gridlock. We've seen occupancy rate of 120% in acute care units, and people receiving treatment in hallways, TV rooms, shower rooms, storage area, patient lounge and the list goes on. The Premier's constant cuts to health care is hurting people. The very people she is supposed to help. Why does the Premier refuse to properly fund our hospitals?

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, when we provide a 5% increase to the operating budget of the Sault hospital you just referenced, this year, \$6 million -- more than \$6 million. When health sciences north in Sudbury received an additional \$6 million as well this fiscal year, in a budget that provides more than half a billion new dollars to our hospitals to help them address those issues that are most pressing to them. And, Mr. Speaker, it boggles my mind when the member opposite would argue so vehemently in support of increasing hospital budgets, yet she wot vote against a budget that does exactly that. Mr. Speaker, we have a long list of hospitals, and I'm happy to go through, which received this year -- Substantial increases in funding.

>> MPP Gelinas: What does hospital underfunding look like? Well, let me tell you about Anisha from my riding. What does his H.S.N. Look like? His first two days was on a stretcher in E.R. Then he was moved to a TV room. What he told me was that it was humiliating, embarrassing and a demeaning exp Erience that he never wants to have to go through again. Unfortunately Mr. Chartrand is just one of literally hundreds of people from across the province that have suffered the same indignity because of our hospital overcrowding, because of underfunding by this government. When will the Premier stop the cuts and finally invest in people's health and dignity? Minister Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, we just did last week in a budget that that member voted against and her party voted against. Mr. Speaker, I know that I think perhaps she's imagining what an NDP Government would look like. She might be imagining 1994 when the NDP Announced a \$53 million cut to 10 of Ontario's psychiatric hospitals, representing 17%, a 17% cut

in those hospitals. Or, Mr. Speaker, she might be remembering the last time that they were in government when they delisted 10% of all the drugs that were provided to Ontarians. By the way more drugs were delisted by that government than in their meager proposal to add 125 essential drugs in their so-called pharmacare plan, Mr. Speaker. They closed 24% of the acute hospital beds in the province. They closed as I mentioned 13% of the mental health beds. And they reduced hospital funding in their last year. Thankfully their last year as government.

MPP Yakabuski to Minister Flynn Re: Worker Health Benefits

>> MPP John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. My question's for the Minister of labour. It is injured workers day. This past January the workplace safety and the insurance board made significant changes to its hearing aid program without properly consulting audiologists and wsib recipients. They have now handpicked only three suppliers. As a result of these changes, workers across the province now have fewer options, which is negatively impacting their quality of life. Speaker, as a result of on-the-job hearing loss, tens of thousands of workers now require hearing devices in order to maintain a baseline quality of life. The new system does not save money but outcomes throughout wsib recipients are much worse. How account Minister defend a policy change where no one benefits?

>> Minister Kevin Flynn: Speaker, thank you very much to the Honourable member for what is a very, very important question and one that I turn my attention to. Because of the same concerns that were being addressed, Speaker. The Minister of labour, the wsib, we're committed to making sure we treat injured workers with the dignity, the respect and the services that they need and they deserve, Speaker. We all know how important it is that Ontario workers who work with -- who are dealing with the challenges of work related hearing loss, receive the highest quality services and the highest quality equipment, Speaker. I was made aware of some of the concerns that injured workers and the audiologists themselves, Speaker, have with some of the recent changes. I've personally been in touch with the wsib on this issue and I'm confident that we can find a way to work our way through this with the new changes to make sure we serve injured workers in this province, that through no fault of their own find themselves dealing with the challenges of hearing loss, Speaker, with the respect and dignities they do deserve, Speaker.

>> MPP Yakabuski: Speaker, again to the Minister of labour. I know the wsib claims that there is an exemption process. But we've heard of cases where patients' requests are being unfairly delayed if approval comes at all. Moreover the price cap on hearing aid -- hearing aid devices remains the same. So the cost to the system is unchanged. Again it begs the question why was this change implemented in the first place? A hearing aid is not a one-size-fits-all. Choosing the right hearing aid is a choice for the patients and their hearing health care professionals. That decision should be left to them when there's no cost difference. Speaker, will the Minister of labour commit to ensuring that wsib reverses these flawed changes so that workers can choose the device that suits them best?

>> Minister Flynn: The Speaker: Thank you. Minister of labour. Speaker, once again my thanks to the member for that -- for the supplementary. Let me tell you, Speaker, after the discussion I've had with the wsib, the wsib is working very closely with the hearing aid manufacturers themselves, the Ontario association of speech language pathologists, with the audiologists, with the clinics across Ontario, Speaker. The workers themselves, Speaker, deserve to be treated with dignity, respect and have a smooth transition that goes along with it. I'm considering to monitor the situation, continuing to ensure that injured workers are provided with the necessary resources, whether they have exceptional needs, complex needs, Speaker. We can deal with these. But I'll tell you, Speaker, to take lessons from this party on the treatment of injured workers and the way that they're approaching what we're trying to do, Speaker, about helping workers in Ontario, I would love to see them support increases to the minimum wage for the lowest income workers in the province of Ontario that face challenges on a daily basis. Paying the rent, buying clothes for their kids, Speaker. Ordinary expenses.

MPP Bisson to Minister Hoskins Re: Pharmacare Plan

>> MPP Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. I want to tell you the story of rich and from Timmins. Richard unfortunately suffered a stroke a short time ago. Treated at the Timmins hospital. Doing their very best. The budget KETS -- gets cut. Richard loses his physiotherapy. Comes to go home. There's not enough service buys CPAC to allow him to be able to live at home alone so his wife has to quit her job in order to care for him because he can't be left alone for long, long periods of time. What makes matters even worse is he's 64 years old. He has no drug plan. He needs medication in order to deal with his medical condition. He gives me a call and he says why is it Kathleen Wynne invented a drug plan that doesn't allow me, a person who's 64 years old, to get the medication that I need? So my question is to you, why did you leave people like Richard nedor. Out of the drug plan where clearly people are 64 suffering from a stroke need to have their medication costs just like the NDP Proposed?

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And you know obviously, when any of us hear stories like this, we're moved. It's -- and concerned. And it's important that all Ontarians have the supports that they need at that moment, those moments, those times when they truly need that support. We have a strong hospital system, Mr. Speaker. We're increasing the budget this year of Timmins hospital itself to help it provide those highest quality services. Our ccacs are going through transitions now by merging with our lhins so we can bring that care closer together and push the services to the front line where they truly do benefit patients. And when it comes to drugs, and I'm happy to talk about it in the supplementary, Mr. Speaker. We make every effort. To provide drugs to those who do need them through variety of programs, including trillium, Ontario works, odsp be, our seniors program.

>> MPP Bisson: Had a choice. Your government had a choice to be able to cover people like Richard and you chose not to. Not that people under 24 don't need medication as well, but we know the vast majority of people that use medication are over 25 and under 65. And they're not covered. Yes, the trillium drug plan is there but they have to Coe pay. And he has no pension. She had to quit her job in order to be able to stay with him so they have hardly the income to even pay the co-pay. So my question again to you is very simply this. Why did you exclude people like Richard nedor who's 64 years old to have some quality of life as they go through their illness?

>> Minister Hoskins: Well, it is true, Mr. Speaker. If you're one of the Ontarians who are lucky enough to be prescribed one of the three, less than 3% of the drugs that are publicly available in this province, that's their proposal. So if you're lucky enough that the drug you've been prescribed by your health care provider and god knows who would not want to limit the ability of physicians and nurse practitioners who prescribe what they believe is the best medication. If you're lucky enough to have one of those 125 out of more than 4,400 drugs, that's their proposal. But the vast majority of Ontarians would not fall into that category. And I know it irks the member and the party opposite when we have people like Steve Morgan, who stood up with the leader of the third party when they proposed their pharmacare program, who said bravo about ours. He said when the history of the pharmacare in Canada are written this will be seen as a time when a clear principle was laid down by this government.

MPP Rinaldi to Minister Duguid (Leal) Re: Small Business Growth

>> MPP Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of economic development and growth. Minister, we always hear you talking about how the Ontario economy is in a position of strength. We've been leading the G-7 in growth for the past three years and the lowest unemployment rate in 16 years. You're right we're doing well today and Ontario's incredibly competitive. This government almost made efforts to cut red tape by removing 80,000 unnecessary regulations and hosting sector roundtables but, Minister, that's no guarantee we'll be doing well tomorrow. We're part of an aggressively comparable global economy. What is this government doing to ensure our business remain competitive and make Ontario the easiest place in North America to do business tomorrow?

>> Minister Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member's absolutely right. We've done a lot to make Ontario one of the easiest places in the world in which to do business, but there's still more that we can do, Mr. Speaker, and we're very ambitious in our vision to ensure that we continue to make Ontario the easiest place to do business in the new economy and that's why the Minister of small business and myself just last week announced eight new key reforms that are going to help us get there. The first is a measure to reduce future regulatory administrative costs. For every \$1.25 incurs in administration costs, Mr. Speaker, they'll have to save \$1.25 for any company that incurs that cost. We're taking measures as well to streamline compliance for small business to align our regulations with other small business, to recognize that -- Need compliance initiatives. There's more, Mr. Speaker, and I'll be referring the supplementary to the Minister of small business who will continue on with some of these support initiatives.

>> MPP Rinaldi: Thank you. Thank you, Speaker. So my next question is to the Minister of small business. And being somebody that's been involved in small business all my life, this Minister's very, very important. Canada big banks are forecasting Ontario will lead the country in economic growth this year. We also know that Ontario's created almost 700,000 jobs since the depth of the recession. Recovery over 250% recovery rate. Minister these are promising figures and we want to make sure that Ontario continues down this path for prosperity. Would you please tell the legislature what initiatives are in place to help support this economic growth in Ontario? More specifically what small business can expect in the coming month and years to come.

>> Minister Jeff Leal: And I want to thank the member from northumberland-quinte west, who knows a lot about a small business. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that this year's the 50th anniversary of the Brighton speedway. A business that has been owned by the Rinaldi family for over 30 years.

[Applause] So, Mr. Speaker, I'm telling you on a sunny Saturday night the place to be is the Brighton speedway. The member knows how important small businesses are to the province of Ontario. And just this past Monday, I had the opportunity to be at the Galleria supermarket. We announced we're cutting fees by \$2,000 per year for Independence grocers in the province of Ontario on their beer and wine sales. That is a 66% decrease in the cost of doing business in that particular sector of our economy. And we're doing a couple other things. We're looking at ways to increase government procurement for small business in the province of Ontario, and we're launching Mr. Speaker -- A one-stop --

MPP Ted Arnott to Minister Murray Re: Bottled Water Regulation

>> MPP Ted Arnott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of environment and climate change. New regulations governing water taking permits for water bottling companies were

recently posted on the environmental registry. For years I have maintained that any decisions regarding large-scale water taking permit applications should be science based to ensure that our groundwater is preserved and protected for future generations. I also believe that communities should be consulted and that their long-term growth plan should be taken into consideration and that hydrogeological studies should be peer reviewed. Account Minister assure this House that his new regulations will ensure the long-term sustainability of our groundwater resources?

>> Minister Glen Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for a very thoughtful question. And from our ongoing conversations I know he has a very sincere concern about this. He represents a part of the province which is water stressed and that particularly in the adjacent neighbourhoods of Kitchener- Waterloo and Cambridge, where we have groundwater being drawn off and our concern with these regulations, Mr. Speaker, is the security of groundwater resources, which are particularly challenging, and where they are being drawn off and also used by municipalities and private water bottlers, these are areas that are most water stressed and it's exactly for those reasons to protect the security of Ontarians' water supply to clean, reliable water that we are posting those. And through the posting period and the review and the science-based teams that are looking at this and our partnership with community leaders and municipalities. Exactly what the member's asking.

>> MPP Arnott: Mr. Speaker, each year an untold number of plastic water bottles are thrown away ending up landfills or littering our countrysides. I've said for years that the government needs to provide the necessary leadership and policy to encourage the recycling of more plastic water bottles. Most Canadian provinces have a deposit or refund program that covers plastic water bottles to encourage recycling and I've been told that Manitoba will be launching a deposit system soon. The government recently raised the fees charged to water bottling companies by \$500 for every million litres of water drawn. I maintain that some of that money should be shared with host municipalities and not just be a cash grab for the government. Will the Minister commit to sharing some of that money with municipalities and also put some of it towards improved efforts to recycle all plastic water bottles in province of Ontario?

>> Minister Murray: Mr. Speaker, again I'm going to rush to qualifiedly agree with the member opposite because I know he and his party supported bill 151, circular economy waste free Ontario act. And ice water springs, for example, have 100% recycling recovery using extended producer responsibility which is an economy wide market mechanism that is working very well, which your party supported to do exactly that. We are open to a discussion about alternatives as the member suggested but we want to make sure we're not create ago duplicate system and we won't allow industry and environmental groups to work with the ex -- extended producer responsibility of which the Gott and ice water springs company are familiar with. Is a global reader -- leader right now in resource recovery. Should this not work we will have to look at alternatives. A bill just passed months ago which has --

MPP Sattler to Minister Matthews Re: Post-Secondary Mental Health Services

>> MPP Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Speaker, there is a provincewide crisis in student mental health that this government continues to ignore. Between 2012 and 2012 Algoma university had to increase its mental health counselling budget by 133%, even as enrollment was declining. At Georgian College, there was a 211% jump in the number of counselling appointments between 2013 and 2016. At the university of Toronto there was 143% increase in the number of students receiving mental health accommodations between 2009 and 2016. The additional \$6 million this year for campus mental health to be shared by 24 Colleges and 20 universities is a drop in the bucket compared to the explosion and the need. Speaker, instead of one-offs, when will this Liberal government. Implement comprehensive long-term strategy engaging both cam pisses and community to deal with this urgent crisis?

>> Minister Deb Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you for this question, because it is a very important one. I can tell you as I travel the province, as I meet with student groups, the number one issue that I hear about is about mental health. There is no question that demand for mental health services is growing and that's exactly why, Speaker, in this last budget, which the member opposite voted against, sadly, included a 60% increase in funding for campus mental health support, Speaker. That is a six zero percent increase because, Speaker, we need to be there. When students are faced with challenges. When they want some help with their mental health, we need to be there. I have to say that I did this announcement with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care at the university of Toronto and it was extremely well received, Speaker. Extremely well received.

>> MPP Sattler: Thank you, Speaker. This week I met with both Colleges of Ontario and council of Ontario university who --S to hold me this government's lack of action is forcing Colleges and universities to become mental health providers as well as educational institutions. Many of the 12,000 children and youth who are waiting in Ontario for mental health services are only able to access supports once they get to postsecondary. But without adequate resources on campus, many schools feel that they have no choice but to farm out support services to private contractors. Something McMaster university psychiatrist Dr. Catherine Munn says will be a disaster for students. Speaker, we don't expect postsecondary institutions to treat physical illness. Why does this Liberal government expect them to treat mental illness?

>> Minister Matthews: Speaker, let me repeat. This budget contains a 60% increase. Speaker, a 60% increase in funding that is earmarked for campus mental health. But that is not the full extent of the investments that we're making, Speaker. We're expanding access to psychotherapy services while developing a new provincewide publicly funded psychotherapy program to help people, including students living with conditions such as anxiety and depression. We're supporting up to nine integrated youth service hubs to provide young people with walk-in one-stop access to mental health, which as the member opposite knows is in great demand because those students are using the services as a hub. This will be a youth focused service for mental -- people with mental health and addictions, as well as other supports under one roof, Speaker. And free prescription medications for people 25 --

MPP Vernile to Minister Chiarelli Re: Infrastructure Spending

>> MPP Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of infrastructure. Every member of this House knows that our province is well into an unpress dented period of investment and infrastructure where building and repairing critical public infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and public transit because we're committed to making life better in Ontario. In my own riding of Kitchener Centre just last week I announced \$2.3 million to repair sewers and deliver clean water. Speaker, as I said at the time, sewers may not seem that glamorous but they're essential to create ago livable city. And we know that this multibillion-dollar infrastructure strategy is improving lives, not just in my riding but in every riding in this province, including every single one represented by members of the opposition. Speaker, could the Minister -- First speak to how the benefits of these investments are being felt in communities right across Ontario?

>> Minister Bob Chiarelli: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. I have to start by saying thank you to the leader of the opposition and the leader of the third party. I'm sure they're aware that not one member of their caucuses has asked me a question on infrastructure in this place since I became Minister of infrastructure over two full sessions, Speaker. Speaker, that must be because they think we're doing a terrific job on infrastructure in the province. Because it's hard to criticize a plan that will deliver at least \$53 million in ocip funding directly to municipalities and P.C. Ridings in 2017. And a plan that has delivered a -- a 474 million mental health facility in the opposition leader's riding as well as over 8 million in ocip and water infrastructure funding to communities in his riding. Speaker, our record speaks for

itself. And the opposition's deafening silence on infrastructure is worth a thousand words.

>> MPP Vernile: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for his very informative answer. So with these facts, Speaker, facts do matter. Perhaps the leader of the opposition might stop giving speeches where he's claiming we aren't getting shovels in the ground. Just come to my community of Kitchener Centre and you will see plenty of shovels in the ground. In the L.R.T. Projects, the Shirley avenue widening and the new G.O. Train and G.O. Bus storage facility. It's important for every member of this House and every constituent that we represent to have these facts. We're moving forward with our \$190 billion infrastructure investment plan. Our economy is responding, Speaker, to the steps that we're taking making life easier and more affordable. Our unemployment rate is lowest it's been in 16 years. we've added 700,000 net new jobs since the height of the recession. Could the Minister please share more facts on how he is helping to build Ontario up.

>> Minister Chiarelli: Thank you, Speaker. I'm glad to share some important facts about our infrastructure investment. Here's the fact to the leader of the third party. Our government has procured four major health care projects in Hamilton worth almost \$1 billion. All four use the A.F.P. Procurement model the NDP Detests so much. To date all are delivered on budget and all but one were delivered on time. Another fact, Hamilton is receiving \$1 billion for its L.R.T. And up to \$33 million this year for water and wastewater infrastructure. And our current budget added \$30 billion more for critical infrastructure. Both leaders opposite voted against enhanced quality of life for all Ontarians by opposing our budget. So, Mr. Speaker, the next time those two leaders go to the ballot box they should take a good hard look in the mirror and then vote for Kathleen Wynne.

MPP Walker to Minister Hoskins Re: Personal Support Workers Spending and Registry

>> MPP Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question's to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Back in December of 2016 the Minister received a proposal material personal support workers association requesting become the provincial governing body of P.S.W.S. The Minister will know there are many more P.S.W.S in the health care system today than ever before. There's great need and role of our hard working P.S.W.S to match the increased need for home and urt -- community care. There's a big need for proper oversight to oversee the need of P.S.W.S and their clients, by government. The Minister purports to be support tiff of a health care system that protects all patient and health care providers. Therefore can he tell this House when we can expect response or action regarding this proposal?

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about the government investments in our personal support workers and I have to say I have the greatest respect for the thousands upon thousands of personal support workers who work so hard day and night often on very short notice, Mr. Speaker, and when you talk to people who are receiving care for them, might be in a long-term care facility, might be in their home, I think alongside nurses the individual, the type of health care worker so most highly respected by individuals and the ones that they develop that strong respectful challenging at times relationship with are our P.S.W.S so we've made investments where we've dramatically increased the minimum wage here in Ontario now \$16.50 is the minimum. It reflects the talent they bring. But we're doing. More with regards to our P.S.W.S and I'll talk about that in our supplementary.

>> MPP Walker: Perhaps the Minister should look to the people in the audience that are here from the P.S.W.. They were shaking their head no. I remind the Minister his government already failed just a year ago, closed the P.S.W. Registry. Confident Ontarians over \$5 million. With an increasing aging population and our health care services being rationed it's imperative you take action and get this right. The opswa

proposal is comprehensive and outlines the important -- importance of safety, accountability, Len it massy, trust and oversight, things your government -- you claim your government upholds. Mr. Speaker, the Minister's response acknowledges the important and expanding roles of our P.S.W.S and our health care system. Will he now agree to give them their right to have a say on the future of their profession?

>> Minister Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are continuing to the work on the future of the P.S.W. Registry. It is true that I made the decision to close the previous registry in 2016 because I had had respect for the profession and I wanted to make sure registry was a powerful tool for individuals for P.S.W.S to gain employment, for employers to find employees and for individuals that rely on P.S.W.S to get that support. So we're working hard on that. We've also created a curriculum, standardized curriculum for P.S.W.S. We've got a \$10 million annual fund for P.S.W.S who want to advance their training further. We contributed an additional \$100 million this year alone to enhance home care clients the support to them home care clients. That translates into \$.3 million -- to 1.3 million more hours. More hours. These are the kind of investments we're making to this important profession.

MPP Campbell to Minister Lalonde (Zimmer) Re: First Nations Safety

>> MPP Sarah Campbell: The Speaker: Thank you. New question. The member from Kenora- Rainy River. To the Premier. Speaker, Josiah Baggs 14 years old found dead in the McIntire river may 18. Tammy keeash 17 years old found dead in the Macintyre river less than two weeks earlier. Stacey debunsky 41 found dead in the river in 2015. Three more deaths to add to the seven unexplained deaths of young first nations people in the river in the last decade. There to pursue a public education and health care they can't get in their home communities. I named those seven students as well and called on this government to investigate what happened to them. A year ago the coroner's inquest made a list of recommendations including for this Liberal government. What has been done?

>> Minister Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you very much. I thank the member opposite for that question. As I said to grand chief if I had heard and chief Leonard yesterday, on behalf of all of us, our condolence to the loss of life that's been taking place, and certainly as the Minister responsible we want to make sure and I want to say on this side of the House we really would like to address the situation and we are addressing the situation, Mr. Speaker. We are completely committed to working with our first nation partners. We value the positive relationship we have with indigenous communities across our province, and at this point the member fully knows there is a component that, because of the ongoing reviews that are taking place, I am unable to answer some details. But I have full confidence as we know on the O.C. P.C., the Ontario civilian police commission. And the office of the independent police review director that will conduct -- fair review

>> MPP Campbell: To qualify, my question is about action and what this Liberal government has done. In fact the jury in the coroner's inquest recommended that all levels of government, including this Liberal government, acknowledge that without improvement of conditions in first nations reserve communities, a gap in education outcomes between indigenous and nonindigenous students will remain, and where jurisdictional divisions between government threaten to delay services such as a quality of on-reserve education or funding for first nations children, that the government of first contact should provide the services or funding without delay. So I ask again, without excuses, without passing the buck, what has this government done to act on the recommendations into the ongoing deaths in Thunder Bay?

>> Minister David Zimmer: The question is a fair one much it's an important one. So much of what happens to indigenous youth here in Ontario and particularly with respect to your question in northwestern

Ontario revolves around the issue of education. And education is a responsibility that the federal government and the provincial government share. We are looking -- working with the federal government to facilitate ways in which those children who are sent from for instance the northern remote communities to the southern communities to complete their high school, that they can find that education in southern Ontario in a culturally environment and in a protected environment. Many of the youth that come from northern Ontario to the remotes, they're 13 or 14. They find themselves in very difficult circumstances in Thunder Bay, in the largest cities. We are working to provide a situation -- In Thunder Bay where they can achieve their

MPP Potts to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> MPP Arthur Potts: Well, thank you, Speaker. My question's to the Minister of energy. Now this week I'm so delighted to say, we all know that we passed legislation with the government's fair hydro plan which will lower electricity bills by 25% on average across the province. This change is going to result in significant and much needed relief for every House hold in Ontario, and I know my constituents in Beaches- East York are looking forward for their discounted hydro bills in the coming months. However there are other elements of the government's plan that provide additional supports particularly to communities who need it most. Many low-income Ontarians are taking advantage of the Ontario electricity support program which provides an on-bill subsidy to those qualifying for the program. And inted -- I understand the fair hydro plan will be expanding on this program much so, Speaker, would the Minister please provide the House more details on how the oesp is being expanded for the benefit of low income families and individuals across

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>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to thank the member for the question and of course on his hard work on this file for his constituents in Beaches- East York as well. Unlike the opposition parties, our government has made support for vulnerable communities a central pillar of our plan. The official opposition have no plan. The third party forgot to talk about vulnerable Ontario in their energy plan, Mr. Speaker. We didn't. Mr. Speaker, we'll use existing fund through the Ontario energy board that they already have to expand the oesp program based on our direction, Mr. Speaker. The on-bill rebates offered to recipients have increased by 50% with the maximum credit now \$900 a year, Mr. Speaker, and a special credit for those with unique electricity needs. They can see that credit, Mr. Speaker, up to \$1,300. The expanded program. Not only offers higher credits but is also accessible to more people because we have increased eligibility for the program, Mr. Speaker. We heard, we will acted and we listened.

>> MPP Potts: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for the incredible work that he is doing to make electricity affordable for all Ontarians. On this side of the House we were so thrilled to see that bill pass and I know that Ontarians are asking, because the opposition on the other side of the House, what were they thinking? How could they be voting against lower people's electricity bills? Ott E.C. Program provides supports to low income House holds in my community and I'm proud our government is demonstrating our government by helping these people in expanding the program. Expansion of oesp is not the only social initiative being taken in the fair hydro plan. All taxpayers will receive the savings of 25% on ample there are other programs which would support savings of upwards of 40 and 50%, Speaker, for certain customers who qualify.

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to thank the member for that follow-up. Speaker, one of the other programs that would be expanded under our fair hydro plan is one designed to lower delivery rates and that's called the rrrp. This program provides the subsidy that lowers distribution costs for those in the most expensive-to-serve areas of our province. That's 800,000 families, Mr. Speaker, that will see a 40 to 50% reduction. I could only assume the opposition voted against that, Mr.

Speaker, because that 40 to 50% reduction was too much too soon, Mr. Speaker. Just like when you're talking about bringing forward a minimum wage that will help families in this province. That's too much too soon, Mr. Speaker. But what about part-time workers to get paid the same as full-time workers, Mr. Speaker? I know for the official opposition too much too soon, Mr. Speaker. 100,000 new child care spaces. Free tuition, too much too soon.

MPP Wilson to Minister Hoskins Re: Hospital Funding

>> MPP Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of health, Mr. Speaker, by now the Minister would be well aware of the need for new hospitals in my riding. I brought this issue to the government's attention on a number of occasions. I've written letters. I've made statements. I've asked questions. I've collected thousands of petitions. The local health integration networks in my riding have indicated that their top priority are the new hospitals in Collingwood and Alton Place. To date the government has been very good to listen to our concerns, Mr. Speaker. But has never really indicated its support for the new hospitals in Alton Place and Collingwood. So today's litmus test is to see if our hospitals really do have the government support. So Speaker, late this afternoon all parties will debate my private member's resolution that calls on the government to approve the planning grants. By both hospitals. So I ask the Minister, will the government do exactly that and –

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to have the last word before the summer break in question period. And especially on such an important subject. However, however I do have to say it's slightly ironic, because a party that has consistently told the government to spend less, which was a question about investing in hospitals and spending more, and ironic as well of course because we had \$9 billion of new capital infrastructure in this year's budget that was just recently passed that that member and that party voted against. Notwithstanding that, the Collingwood and the Stephenson hospitals are important hospitals to their communities and they're important hospitals to this government. They have both submitted pre-capital submissions, which they've now moved on with the ministry's support. To stage one. We continue to move forward, and I think it is positive that we continue to work collaboratively as we move through and all hospitals in this province. The various process and stations required.