

Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Thursday, May 11, 2017

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Transcript of Provincial Question Period
41st Parliament, 2nd Session
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MPP Brown to Minister Lalonde Re: Probation System

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of community safety. Global national's Carolyn Jarvis revealed a shocking number last night. 4,513. That's 4,513. That is how many outstanding warrants there are in Ontario for probation violations. Shocking. Mr. Speaker, how many of these 4,513 are sexual predators, paedophiles or violent criminals?

>> Minister Marie-France Lalonde: Well, thank you very much. I thank the member for his question. Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the Ontarians that our government takes the safety of our community very seriously, Mr. Speaker. And in partnership with our police services and our justice partners, we've made Ontario one of the safest jurisdictions in north America. For 11 straight years, Ontario has had the lowest crime rate of any province or territory in Canada. Also it's one of the six of the safest metropolitan areas according to the census. Mr. Speaker, we're building on this success through our strategy for safer Ontario and our plan to make our communities even safer. The strategy is the biggest transformation in 25 years, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister. When asked that question yesterday, the Minister said she had to look into it further and had this to say. This is from the Minister -- to know that number what it means and who are those individuals. We're all still waiting for an answer. Who are these individuals? Mr. Speaker, are they paedophiles? Are they sexual predators? Are they violent criminals? What offenders are walking our streets unsupervised with outstanding warrants for their arrest? Is the specific question hopefully the Minister can answer. These 4,513 individuals, are they paedophiles? Are they sexual predators? This global exposé is shocking and we expect the government to take it seriously.

>> Minister Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, as a government we take this very seriously, and I have to say we've hired more people on our parole and probation officers in the last few years to actually rehabilitate and reintegrate our high-risk offenders. Officers has decreased by 26% as a result. And parole officers have received specialized training on high-risk cases, such as domestic violence and sex offenders, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the opposite party has no plan, and we can say whatever they want. Their rhetoric about fear and bringing that fear to Ontarians. You know, as a member of the Harper government, the leader of the opposition fear mongered Canadian and increased actually our prison population. This mostly due to massive surge, Mr. Speaker. Indigenous and rationalized inmates, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister. Rather than attacking the opposition, this is a "Global national" exposé. Shocking response. 4,513 probation violations, criminals out on our streets. There is a theme of municipal -- a team of municipal and provincial police officers who hunt down prisoners that have -- federal parole. Enforcement squad, otherwise known as rope, continuously investigates and tries to find criminals in breach of federal parole but there is no team look for those breaching provincial probation. So my question is pretty simple. As the "Global national" exposé showed, if we're looking for those that breach federal parole, why are we not doing that provincially? We -- I'm struggling to get an answer here, Mr. Speaker, and rather than a partisan spin line, I would like the Minister to actually tell us. What we're going to do to keep our streets safe.

>> Minister Lalonde: So, Mr. Speaker, let's look at the leader of the opposition's record. At his time as a Harper Conservative, he actually supported measures Mr. Speaker -- So, Mr. Speaker, as I was saying before I was interrupted, he did what part of government that actually cut Canada's correctional service budget by 10% and \$295 million. Introduced -- He also introduced ridiculous changes, Mr. Speaker, to mandatory minimums and even supported the ending of an award winning

program called "Life line program" which actually provided support for those serving life sentences and reintegrate those released on parole, Mr. Speaker. The leader of the opposition and his party has a big talk, Mr. Speaker, but they have a record that shows definitely otherwise. So I am very proud to be part of a government. Rehabilitation, reintegration while maintaining community safe, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Brown to Minister Lalonde Re: Probation System

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of community safety. Through you, Mr. Speaker, should sexual predators and violent criminals be allowed to self-report while on probation, yes or no?

>> Minister Marie-France Lalonde: So again, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to take this note because, you know, there's some great work happening in our community. Our parole and probation officers are doing their job, Mr. Speaker, and, yes, always more can be done and we are working with them. But I'm so happy -- And, Mr. Speaker, we have made this jurisdiction the safest community in Canada. And we should be very proud of this. Thanks to our actions of working with our justice partners, with our community leaders and our police force, Mr. Speaker. And this is why we are working through our strategy of safer Ontario and our correctional reform, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister. This is very troubling. We have a Minister saying that everything's fine, that everything is safe. And yet we have 4,513 -- Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister was on self reporting, allowing violent offenders sexual predators to self report. I did not get an answer to the very clear question on, yes or no, whether the Minister feels that appropriate so I'll rephrase T., Mr. Speaker, should sexual red Tories and violent criminals on probation receive home visits? The probation officers want to have home visits. They want to do their job, but we have a Minister that seems to have a policy that, when it comes to sexual predators. Can you pinkie swear -- get them to pinkie swear to check up on themselves? We want home visits. We want to make sure to monitor violent criminals in our --

>> Minister Lalonde: So, Mr. Speaker, I think Ontarians in each of our communities, as we showed, we have safe communities, Mr. Speaker, and I think -- I'm looking forward to see how the member will vote on our budget, because as I go through my line, my budget has actually, within our community and safety, increasing, Mr. Speaker. So I look forward for his ability to say anything about our increasing in our budget to actually support and give tools to our parole and probation officers. So again I look forward for him to actually vote against our wonderful budget where we are increasing capacity, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister. I can't get an answer on this joke of a policy that self reporting for sexual predators is ok. So I'm going to try a different angle. Yesterday's Attorney General called this crisis, I quote, manufactured. Was the story of Kyle MacLachlan luring the child on the internet manufactured? Are the 4,513 outstanding warrants manufactured? Are the violent criminals and sexual predators manufactured? I didn't make up those stories. And facts matter, Mr. Speaker. So my question to the Minister is this, very clearly. Does the Minister share the opinions of the Attorney General that this crisis is manufactured, or is this government finally going to take the situation seriously?

>> Minister Lalonde: So again, Mr. Speaker, I'm actually not surprised but a bit disappointed that, you know, as a leader of the opposition actually made decisions to cut services, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about this, because this is, for me, so important about his record. And when you think about a no plan to keep our communities safe, he supported actually a funding cut, Mr. Speaker, for the 1 circles of support and accountability program, designed to prevent the most dangerous, high-risk sex offenders from repeating their crimes, Mr. Speaker. He also supported, as I've said earlier, an award-winning life line program, which provided support for those. Serving life sentence and reintegrate those released on parole, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry. So far he has no plan.

MPP Tabuns to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> MPP Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, my question to the acting Premier. Ontario families, businesses and municipalities are struggling under the weight of soaring hydro bills. Those bills have gone up 300% since the Conservatives first started to privatized hydro system, continues under Liberal rule. In fact 50% increase since this Premier came to power alone. We've told Ontarians stories in this House for almost two years now. We've told this Premier the family who have to choose between buying food and keeping the heat on in winter, who have to make the heartbreaking decisions not to contribute to their children's education fund rather than pay their hydro bills. The Premier's response this week was to move ahead with the disastrous sell-off of a majority stake in Hydro One move that will guarantee that these families will continue --To see their hydro bills rise. Does the Premier not listen to these stories or care about the people who are struggling to get by?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pleased to rise to talk about the 17% reduction that families, small businesses and farms have received so far, Mr. Speaker, thanks to this government's fair hydro plan. And on top of that, Mr. Speaker, 800,000 families across the province that live in rural or remote parts of our province, they'll see between 40 and 50% reduction. And on top of that, Mr. Speaker, many of those families are Hydro One customers. And when you're talking about the branding of ownership of Hydro One, yes, Mr. Speaker, our final ranch was done this week and with that sale we made \$2.8 billion that we can invest in things like the gtha, go rail regional express, Mr. Speaker. I know that's obviously something that the opposition party doesn't support. What about the \$5.3 billion in the Eglinton crosstown. Or the 1 billion in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker ? That's all great news for this province.

>> MPP Tabuns: Again to the acting Premier. We've told the Premier about businesses eager to expand and create more jobs. If only, if only they could get some relief on their hydro bills. No response for four years under her watch. We've told her about municipalities across Ontario, which are worried about having to close valued community centres and arenas because they can't afford to keep the lights on. No response. The people of Ontario said loud and clear, stop the wrong-headed sell-off of Hydro One, which the Premier knows will only cause more chaos and damage to our already fragile hydro system. No response. Why?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So we go back just even a few years, we can start talking about how this government pulled costs out of the system, Mr. Speaker. \$3.5 billion in the renegotiation of the Samsung agreement saving ratepayers money. We cancelled the Irt2 project, Mr. Speaker, saving ratepayers money. We can go back further and further, Mr. Speaker, to talk about ways that this government continued to find ways to save ratepayers money on their electricity bills. But one thing that we had to do, Mr. Speaker, was rebuild the system. The system was a mess. And it was left a mess by those two governments when they were in power. We stepped in in 2003 and had to rebuild the system at a cost of \$50 billion. And, Mr. Speaker, when we rebuilt that system we made it clean and we've made it reliable and we no longer use coal in our electricity grid, something that is seen as a leadership role, Mr. Speaker, around the world.

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Again the acting Premier. The Premier ignores 80% of Ontarians opposed to the sell-off of Hydro One. She looks away when she hears about the Rea and devastating impact that her mismanagement of the hydro system has had on families, businesses and local governments. She doesn't have a credible plan to fix any of the mess that she and her government have helped create. Maybe bury it in a mound of buried money. That seems to be what they're thinking b.without a mandate and just a year shy of being booted out of office she's decided to complete the sell-off of a majority share of one of the most profitable public utilities in this province. Does the Premier listen to anyone but bay street bankers, high-powered investors and an energy Minister who just doesn't seem to understand this file? Thank you.

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'm very pleased to stand and talk about the significant reductions that families are already receiving, the 17% reduction that they

are receiving today. When talking about not understanding the file, Mr. Speaker, outside experts and observers agree that the NDP's pamphlet on what they would do with energy won't even help Ontarians. Thomas Watkin from the "Toronto star" called their proposal thin gruel and said it consisted of wishful thinking, Mr. Speaker, and puts off tough decisions. This government is making tough decisions to make sure we're bringing lasting relief right now for families, small businesses and farms. So we take no lessons from a party that has no plan that, has no idea and won't do anything to help people now. We are acting. We are bringing forward legislation that is bringing forth 25% reduction. That is something we should be proud of, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Gelinias to Minister Matthews (Hoskins) Re: Pharmacare

>> MPP Gelinias: **Merci, monsieur president.** The acting Premier. This week new Democrats received a letter from Sarah. Sarah lives in Norwich which is just outside of woodstock. She works at Tim hortons trying to put herself through school. She wants to become a social orker. Sarah has a chronic eye disease that caused blurred vision, dark floating sts and Progressive vision loss. Sarah is 27 years old. Can the acting Premier explain why she thinks Sarah should have to pay for the expensive medication for her eyes out of pocket?

>> Minister Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. I will ask the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to respond to the supplementary. But Sarah is a perfect example of why the changes we have made to osap are going to transform her life. She will, I'm assuming, working at Tim hortons, she's making under \$50,000 a year. I expect significantly below that. So not only will she have free tuition. She will also have money in the form of nonrepayable grants that will allow her to cover some of her living expenses. If Sarah happens to have a child, the news is even better for her. So, Speaker, Sarah is exactly the kind of person we had in mind when we took away the restrictions on osap that related to age. Osap is now available to all students if they qualify financially regardless of their age.

>> MPP Gelinias: Mr. Speaker, Sarah doesn't want to get pregnant. She wants help to pay for her medication. She told us and ind quote -- no person with any severe health problems should be forced to choose between paying bills and paying for much needed medications. The NDP's universal pharmacarerogram would help Sarah and the thousands of other Ontarians who have to make those heartbreaking decisions each and every month. Why is the Premier ignoring the best advice? Refusing to bring in a universal pharmacare and refusing to help people like Sarah.

>> Minister Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pride to be able to stand up to talk about our pharmacare program, which is a great leap forward to what I think we all agree ultimately should be universal pharmacare for all Ontarians and for all Canadians. And not somewhere in the future, perhaps in 2020 as with the third party's proposal, but actually January 1st of next year, 4 million children and youth will have access to 4,400 drugs absolutely free. No annual deductible. No co-pay, Mr. Speaker, and we continue to hear from Ontarians just how important this program is and that there are many, many families and individuals that are celebrating the fact that, in many cases expenses that can run into the thousands of dollars. For them will now be covered under this plan starting January 1st next year.

>> MPP Gelinias: Thank you. Health care is based on universal access. Our health care system is built on the principle that nobody is turned away. Sarah shouldn't have to worry about school, about working, about trying to pay for her medications because she is 27 years old rather than 24. Ontarians want a fair system. They want their government to implement a fair system. Why won't the Premier bring in universal pharmacare that leaves no one behind?

>> Minister Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I think the third party needs to describe their own proposal more accurately. It's not universal. It provides -- the proposal's for 125 drugs. Our commitment is for 4,275 drugs more than their program, the entire formulary. They proposed to income-test access to their program as well. It's not universal when it's income tested, Mr. Speaker. So here -- to give you an example, iran Wong-riger who is the C.E.O. Of the Canadian organization for rare disorders had this to say -- we believe Ontario's child and youth ohip plus pharmacare program is a bold move and a

really big deal for Ontario families. Coming at a time when other drug plans, including the private plans, seem to be abandoning those who are most vulnerable and in need. The Canadian organization for rare disorders is committed to working with the Ontario government and calls on other provinces to follow suit. Mr. Speaker, that's just one of literally dozens of examples of organizations and individuals. Who support our commitment, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Smith to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> MPP Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question this morning is for the Minister of energy. Speaker, yesterday I received an order paper response from the Minister but it really wasn't much of a response. He said he couldn't answer my question and that I should submit a freedom of information request. What I wanted was documents and correspondence from January and February, from the ministry, i.e. S.O. and O.P.G. To use word like fees, commissions, broker, lender and refinancing. Now the Minister knows that this House is going to have to vote on legislation that he brings forward. So why is he trying to get members to pay for information that they should have before we vote on legislation?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and of course I always like to stand and, you know, address the questions that are brought forward by the opposition. Of course, Mr. Speaker, the Ontario fair hydro plan and the relief that is coming is an important issue and it's a position, you know, where we stand in this House on this topic is very well known, Mr. Speaker. But, you know, what's the position of the official opposition when it comes to their plan, Mr. Speaker? It makes you wonder. It's been almost 70 days now in which the leader of the opposition stood and said that they have a plan forthcoming. It went from a three-point plan, Mr. Speaker. To five-point plan to a zero-point plan, Mr. Speaker. You know part of the role of the opposition. Should be putting forward a credible alternative and, Mr. Speaker, we're still waiting for anything credible coming from that party.

>> MPP Smith: Speaker, if the Minister would like us to do his job for him, we would gladly do it but our job is to scrutinize the plan that they are putting forward, and the people of Ontario deserve to know if the government's hydro plan involves millions or billions paid out in fees to brokers or bankers. It may as well be brought to you by Goldman Sachs at this point. The people of Ontario deserve to know. Because by the government's own admission, those fees will be recoverable on their hydro rates. So will the Minister turn over exactly the documents I asked for in my order paper question or will this be yet another Liberal scheme done in the back rooms by a Liberal Minister who's got his hand in the pocket of ratepayers?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important that I do remind the critic from the opposition party, as the critic for the energy file, that he did attend a technical briefing where officials gave him all the details of our plan. So, you know, we're more than happy to share more information with him. And I know we offered an additional technical briefing, and I do agree, Mr. Speaker, that it is the role of the official opposition to make sure that, you know, they question what the government is doing. I understand that role. And you know what? It also takes courage, Mr. Speaker, to bring forward a plan, to talk about what they would do differently. And who thinks that, Mr. Speaker? Let me read a quote. I think the challenge for anyone who aspires to be Premier, any party that aspires to serve in government is to say what we would do. Do you know who said that, Mr. Speaker? The leader of the official opposition. It's just too bad when it comes to energy, or Ontario, they have no plan at all.

MPP DiNovo to Minister Del Duca Re: Toronto Transit Funding

>> MPP DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the acting Premier. Prior to the 2014 election, the Premier told Torontonians that the relief line subway was one of her top transit priorities. But since the election, she has refused to commit to funding the construction of the relief line. Mayor of Toronto and the TTC Say that the relief line must be built before the Yonge line

extension, or else there will be transit chaos. But the Premier seems to be more interested in saving Liberal seats north of Toronto than funding a subway project that transit experts say must come first. Why is the Premier once again putting her own political interests ahead of what's best for Toronto transit riders?

>> Minister Del Duca: Thank you very much, Speaker. I thank the member from Parkdale for her question this morning. That member and every member in the chamber will know that we are the provincial government that is investing more in public transit, in the city of Toronto and in communities in every corner of Ontario, more so than any other government in history. Speaker, our investments in transit in Toronto -- Are in fact unprecedented. Now interestingly, Speaker, just a couple of days ago at the city of Toronto there was a staff report that came out that said, among other things, that over the next up to two years, the city of Toronto's staff will continue to refine and provide the public with a finalized budget for some of the projects that the member opposite's talking about like the relief line, Speaker. We look forward to seeing that information flow out of the city of Toronto, and I've said repeatedly the conversation will continue with Toronto. But in the meantime, we are the only level of government that's provided \$150 million in planning money. To help advance the relief line, 55 million for Yonge north, Speaker. At the same time we're investing literally billions in Toronto and in the 99 communities across Ontario that have transit systems that deserve our support.

>> MPP DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back again to the acting Premier. What Toronto wants is pretty clear on this file, Mr. Speaker. They have declared the relief line to be the top transit priority. Nothing new in that. And prior to the 2014 election, the Premier said the relief line was her transit priority, too. But so far, the Premier has committed exactly zero dollars to the construction of the relief line. It's impossible for the city of Toronto to plan the construction of major infrastructure projects when it doesn't know if the provincial government will be a funding partner. So I'm asking again, and it's clear, will the Premier commit today to funding the relief line or will she keep letting down Toronto transit riders?

>> Minister Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. I -- you know, I do appreciate the passion that members on all sides of this House bring to the transit discussion and transit debate. I sincerely hope that Andrea Horwath -- sorry the leader of Ontario's NDP And the third party and members of her caucus, I sincerely hope they're not suggesting that it would be pruned for any level of government to confirm contribution for a project for which there is not yet a confirmed budget, Speaker. That doesn't make a lot of sense to me. In the meantime I will say again we are the only level of government that has provided \$150 million to prepare or to help advance the planning to make sure that the relief line is shovel ready. Speaker, one of the other problems that I have with the line of questions coming from that member and from that party is that they seem to suggest that we should favour one community over all of the others. Speaker, that's not how this side of the House views transit in the gtha. We know gridlock is not a uniquely Toronto problem or 905 problem. It doesn't respect municipal boundaries. We need to keep investing in Toronto and in every other community that needs our support and do so in the way that makes the most sense, Speaker. That's what we have done. That's what we are doing and will continue to do. Thanks very much.

MPP Hoggarth to Minister Hunter Re: Student Success Strategy

>> MPP Hoggarth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of education. Minister, we all know how committed our government is to helping our kids become lifelong learners. This is a commitment as an educator that I have made many years ago. -- Years ago. Earlier this year you announced increasing funding to education to \$23.8 billion, an increase of \$849 million from last year. I'm also pleased to hear that 71% of elementary students are achieving our high provincial standards in literacy and numeracy. Ontario's grade 8 students are ranked the second highest in science and math in the country and that Ontario students do outperform nearly every oecd country. Speaker, I also know that the Minister made a very special announcement earlier this week. Regarding graduation rates across the province. Can the Minister please tell us about this announcement?

>> Minister Hunter: Thank you, Speaker, and I want to thank the member from Barrie for her question and for her relentless focus on education. Mr. Speaker, our government's 2017 balanced budget includes an additional investment of \$6.4 billion over three years in Ontario's education system. This reflects our commitment to help learners reach their full potential by supporting them from full-day kindergarten to postsecondary education and beyond. Ontario's unprecedented investments in education have pushed the high school graduation rate to a historic new high. On Monday, I was joined by members of my Minister student advisory council to announce that in 2016 the five-year graduation rate of our high school students reached a new high of 86.5%. And that's an increase of. More than 18% since 2004, when it was just 68%. This is about the hard work of students. Teachers and their parents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker .

>> MPP Hoggarth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased to hear this fantastic news. This is an excellent example of how committed we are to ensuring that our youngest learners become successful. Since 2004, about 217,500 more students have graduated than would have if the graduation rates had remained at the 2004 level. That's a population the size of the cities of Kingston and Thunder Bay combined that now have high school diplomas. Despite this great news, we know there is still more work that can be done. This includes additional funding for a number of programs our government introduced through the student success strategy that are credited with helping to sharply boost the graduation rate since 2004. Minister, please explain how these programs have helped our students achieve -- Results and in turn increase the rate of graduation?

>> Minister Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we want all of our students to succeed. There are a number of students in the gallery today, and you know we have a number of innovative programs that were introduced as part of our student success strategy and they've helped the graduation rate. These are programs like specialist high skills major, dual credits, our expanded co-op education, our youth -- Ontario youth apprenticeship program. So that they can one day maybe become electricians like our friend Jim Roberts here, Mr. Speaker. And instead of use ago one size fits all approach -- using a one-size-fits-all approach students can match their strengths, their interests, their career goals, creating more in engaging learning environments and better preparing them to pursue their future opportunities. As mentioned by the Minister of advanced education and skill development yesterday. The new career kick start program is helping students to even gain more exp Erience from the \$190 million investment, Mr. Speaker.

MPP MacLeod to Minister Hoskins Re: Opioid Crisis

>> MPP MacLeod: Thank you very much. Good morning, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the acting Premier. I'm joined the here today by SHAWN owed leery executive director of we the parent an organization dedicated to parents of youth who are struggling with opioid addictions. Sawn and his 17-year-old daughter Paige have courageously shared her struggle with addiction percocet laced with fentanyl. Including requesting the Minister of health to visit Ottawa where the opioid crisis is claiming the lives of children as young as 14. Can the acting Premier commit today to provide funding to deal with the opioid crisis in Ottawa?

>> Minister Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. First of all I want to acknowledge SHAWN o'leary, who is in the audience with us. I'm not sure if you're here with your daughter Paige or not but -- and thank you to both of you for being here today. And I want to applaud his advocacy and that of Paige's, who is an incredibly courageous young woman, and with a courageous father as well, that have advocated, as the member opposite has indicated, very strongly about the dangers we're facing in this opioid crisis, dangers that are found throughout this country but are, as SHAWN and Paige can so eloquently speak to, particularly prominent in Ottawa and in the Ottawa region. Know that they have advanced some very important activities and suggestions, activities and suggestions that we're looking at very closely.

>> MPP MacLeod: Thank you very much, Minister. I appreciate that acknowledgement of Mr. O'leary and his daughter Paige. According to Ottawa public Helt, they, quote, have not received any

additional information as to when, how or to whom funds will be allocated or whether there will be any conditions or expected deliverables associated with this new funding source to deal with the opioid crisis. So although there has been a verbal agreement from the Premier that these funds would flow according to public health in Ottawa it hasn't yet. I'm wondering if the Minister could assure Mr. O leery and public health that funding to fight this crisis will indeed flow and the answers to when, whom and how the resources will be allocated will be shared expeditiously?

>> Minister Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I should -- I acknowledge the advocacy of the member opposite. I should also reference the strong advocacy and involvement of the Liberal MPP S in Ottawa as well, who have met with many individuals that either have a concern or have a responsibility to deal with this crisis. We announced \$140 million in health supports. There are additional funds in the budget that we are now debating that will go specifically to opioid treatment so I look forward to the member opposite supporting the budget and supporting those initiatives. We also have invested just last year \$1.5 million in Ottawa to the Dave Smith youth treatment centre which will provide a 30-bed youth treatment centre for individuals that are faced with addictions to opioids and other narcotics. Mr. Speaker, there are 80 pharmacies in Ottawa that are providing naloxone free of charge. Lifesaver. We have a very comprehensive plan that was announced last fall that we're now in the process of implementing, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Forster to Minister Flynn Re: Changing Workplace Review

>> MPP Forster: Thank you, Speaker. My question's to the acting Premier. Sadly the polling tells us that 90% of Canadians have lost hope. They no longer believe that their children will do better than they did. When the federal Liberal finance Minister tells workers across this country to get used to precarious employment, who can blame them? That's why déjeuner love is left with the work that she's in. She works at goodlife fitness, and she cannot afford to take a sick day when she has a concussion from a work injury. Worse, she and her goodlife Colleagues have spent months fighting for a first contract. Hardworking Ontarians like déjeuner expected improvements to labour standards in the budget last week but sadly, there was nothing. Liberals have had over 14 years to the actually improve working conditions. How much longer do workers across the province have to wait to see improvements to working conditions from the Liberal government?

>> Minister Flynn: Well, Speaker, the short answer would be not very long. And certainly we've put I think the right effort into this. I hope all members of the House support the work we've done on the changing workplaces review, Speaker. Because we know that since these two acts, the employment standards act and the labour relations act, Speaker, were last looked at in 1995 and 2000. The world of work has changed under our feet. The world of work that young people, as you describe, are going into is quite different from the world of work that I went into and many. People in this House that are of my vintage, Speaker. The concerns you're talking about will be clearly addressed by the advisors, such things as scheduling, hours of work, sick time, emergency leave, domestic violence. These are all issues that have seized the attention of the advisor, Speaker. I want -- I'm looking forward to bringing in a very comprehensive report on this issue.

>> MPP Forster: Well, Speaker, new Democrats value consultation, but the public has already made it clear what they want. We know what their concerns are. We've known for years. The final recommendations are in and it's unacceptable, Speaker, that 3 million workers in Ontario have to worry about losing pay if they need to take a day off because they're sick. We believe in the minimum wage as new Democrats we believe in protecting workers' right to join a union and to get a first contract. We believe in the same pay for the same work, and we believe in access to sick days for workers. The changing workplaces review is in. The Minister has it, and so we ask again, when is the Minister planning to release the final report so that hard working Ontarians can see some change?

>> Minister Flynn: Speaker, thank you to the member for the question again, Speaker. The work is done. The consultations have taken place. Organized labour's been consulted. The chamber of commerce, the business community, poverty advocates. People that have been asking and advocating for changes to these pieces of regulation, Speaker, have had their say to some very

learned individuals who have put together in a very comprehensive report that we've taken the right amount of time, Speaker, I think to make sure that when we bring this package forward, it's going to address the needs of all working Canadians while keeping Ontario's economy competitive. What I don't agree with, Speaker, is the NDP has called this process a waste of time and, Speaker, it's anything but a waste of time much it's work that needed to be done properly, needed to be done right and the results I think, Speaker, are going to support everybody that works hard in this province. Plau.

MPP Potts to Minister Zimmer (McMahon) Re: Indigenous Culture and Sports

>> MPP Potts: Well, thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of indigenous relations and reconciliation. Sorry? Our government is committed to reconciliation with indigenous people through closing gaps, supporting indigenous cultures and reconciling relationships. Mr. Speaker, as you know so well, the residential school system was established and mandated to wipe out indigenous cultures and indigenous art has stood as a testament to the resilience of indigenous communities in the face of cultural genocide. The significant influence on indigenous arts and culture on Canadian society too often goes unmentioned and unappreciated. Now, Speaker, my father, Mr. Justice Potts, as he toured Ontario and the northwest territories, often returned home with glorious pieces every indigenous art and we as a family were exposed to this unique art form early on. I would like to ask if the Minister could provide examples of how *din* -- indigenous art and culture are being recognized.

>> Minister Zimmer: Thank you. I'd like to reference the contribution of indigenous music culture. Speaker, this past weekend, I attended the hot docs festival on Sunday evening for a viewing of a film entitled "Rumble: The Indians who rock the world." It won two major prizes. It won the \$50,000 prize for the audience's choice of the best documentary, and then it also won the documentary festival's award as the best documentary. What "Rumble" highlights is the underappreciated and often unknown that indigenous musicians made to rhythm and blues, rock 'N' roll, heavy metal music. It was a splendid documentary and it showed the indigenous musicians working with these world superstars in rhythm and blues and Rock 'N' roll. Tremendous contribution they've made to that.

>> MPP Potts: Thank you, Speaker. I look forward to seeing this documentary "Rumble" and I want to thank the Minister for the great work that he is doing and his leadership in helping heal cultural wounds in our society. The work that we're doing, our government is doing, supporting an in -- and investing in indigenous art and culture is so important and in complete accord with the truth and reconciliation's recommendations to recognize the significant arts and culture in Canadian heritage. I know that this is also a very important matter for the Minister of tourism, culture and sport and that her ministry is very involved in supporting indigenous arts and culture and providing those supports so that those works of art can be seen by all Ontarians and Canadians. So, Speaker, will the Minister also elaborate on how our government helps support and promote indigenous arts and culture particularly when it comes to youth in our society?

>> Minister McMahon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the member for Beaches- East York for his advocacy and his question. A timely question indeed as the Minister responsible for indigenous relations and reconciliation has pointed out not only in this important year of our 150th anniversary but also in light of the hot docs festival which is another program that my ministry and our government is delighted today support. We are supporting, as the member pointed out, two important cultural camps as part of our journey of reconciliation with indigenous peoples. One in upward avenue first nation and the other at the *can ji couple*. We know the healing power of sport and of course it's giving them also an opportunity to try out for the North American indigenous games going to be held this summer, Speaker, in Ontario supported by our government. In this province for the first time. Across the board, Speaker, we're absolutely thrilled and delighted our support for indigenous arts and culture is longstanding and we look forward to maintaining that robust support.

MPP Coe to Minister Hoskins Re: Stroke Recovery Services

>> MPP Coe: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Despite the Royal assent of bill 9 and discrimination against stroke recovery patients act in December 2016, this Liberal government continues, Speaker, to discriminate against post-stroke recovery patients between the ages of 20 and 64. Speaker, Jim macewan is one of those patients and he's here this morning in your gallery. Because Jim is not 65 yet, he's unable to access post stroke recovery services that he needs and deserves. That is why I introduced bill 9, which provided access to post stroke rehabilitation service regardless of age. But, Speaker, this Liberal government continues to deny Jim and thousands of others like him. The post stroke recovery services they need. When will this government stop the discrimination of post stroke recovery patients. 20 to 64 years of age?

>> Minister Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I want to commend the member opposite for the initiative that he took last year, private member's bill that we supported. I think unanimously was supported in this legislature but it certainly passed with the involvement of and co-operation of my ministry. The end age discrimination against stroke recovery patients act. Mr. Speaker, we are in the process of implementing that act as a government and as a ministry. I'm proud of the investments that we have been making across the board. In fact there's an important investment in this budget that speaks to acute care for patients with stroke, which is a game changer, Mr. Speaker. And so while I hope the member opposite who's heckling me right now will support this because critically important to stroke care. But, Mr. Speaker, we continue to invest in -- So, Mr. Speaker, the funding in the budget and the efforts that we're making providing publicly funded physiotherapy to stroke patients where their clinician believes that it is relevant to and advantageous to the therapy, we continue to fund that in hospitals, in hospital outpatient clinic. In home care, in long-term care homes and in community physio clinics across the province.

>> MPP Coe: Thank you, Speaker. And back to the Minister of health. Once again, Speaker, the intent, the intent of bill 9 has always been to provide post stroke recovery services to patients regardless of age, Speaker, regardless of age. So will this Minister agree this morning, yes or no, to end age discrimination and post stroke recovery services for those 20 to 64 years of age?

>> Minister Hoskins: So Mr. Speaker -- and I want to acknowledge Jim in the gallery as well, who has taken his valuable time to come and join us here in the legislature for this question. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the member opposite's difficulty is, because we actually, by working together, the ministry, myself, his office, him directly, we actually refined and passed unanimously his private members bill to end age discrimination against stroke recovery patients act 2016. We are in the process, as we are legally bound to as a government, in legislation that was passed here, we are providing -- we are implementing that act that he authored, and as I mentioned we are continuing to invest significant millions of dollars in funding. Specific to the aspect of physio, which is, Mr. Speaker, relevant and important and impactful for many post stroke patients.

MPP Taylor to Minister Hoskins Re: Hospital Wait Times

>> MPP Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the acting Premier. Steven is a hamiltonian who was waiting for a liver transplant on his way to an appointment at St. Joe's to remove fluid from his abdomen, Steven fell in the parking lot, cutting his chin and losing consciousness. Inside the hospital, Steven waited to be seen. In fact he waited for eight and a half hours. And finally, late that night, he was sent home, still bloodied, still disoriented and still with fluid in his abdomen. Steven's heartbreaking story shows exactly what is happening to patients in dangerously overcrowded hospitals across Ontario due to years of Liberal cuts and layoffs. Why doesn't the Premier see the damage that she's done to patient care?

>> Minister Hoskins: Well Mr. Speaker -- and I obviously can't speak to the particulars of this individual, but, Mr. Speaker, despite what the member opposite says we have among if not the

shortest wait times in our emergency rooms in the entire country. In fact despite -- so there's third party independent evidence and reports that have been issued over the past several years, including from the Fraser institute, including from the Canadian institute for health information, that demonstrates despite an increasing population and despite increasing volumes to our E.R.S, the wait times have continued to go down. In fact 85% of E.R. Patients are getting treatment within the target. If he they are complex patient and 89% within the four-hour target for minor patients, Mr. Speaker. So the wait times have actually gone down by almost 30% in the last -- Several years despite the fact that E.R. Volumes have gone up by 40%, Mr. Speaker. So and the E.R. Wait times have gone down by 15%.

>> MPP Taylor: I don't know if the Minister heard me, Speaker, but 8 and a half hours is not within the target time and still to be sent home. Steven's wife Debbie drove him to the hospital. Debbie has mobility problems and uses a wheelchair. While in the hospital, Debbie had to help Steven to get him to the toilet. Then, on her own, had to clean him up and get him back into his bed. When they left the hospital, Debbie had to get Steven out of the car all alone. Remember, Speaker, this woman is someone who needs to be in a wheelchair herself. Debbie and Steven deserve so much better. But once again the Premier's hospital funding in this year's budget falls more than \$300 million short of what is needed. When will the Premier admit that she is failing Steven, Debbie and patients all across Ontario?

>> Minister Hoskins: Well, so I have to disagree with the member opposite, and I hope, Mr. Speaker, that she supports this budget, because it has -- An infusion of more than \$500 million this year, a 3.1% increase to the operating budgets of our hospitals. Mr. Speaker, it has over \$1 billion specifically dedicated to wait times, to reducing wait times throughout the hospital system. It has specific elements that add additional hours for M.R.I.S. 2,800 more hip and knee replacements, 2,100 more cataract surg Eries. In fact we're investing \$11 billion, when you look at last year's budget and the increases that were built in in this year's, more than 11 billion more dollars over the text three years in the health care system and the health budget. So I would hope. She'll support us strongly, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Kiwala to Minister Moridi Re: Tech Investments in Ontario

>> MPP Kiwala: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of research, innovation and science. Over the past few years, Ontario has become a leading destination for companies interested in opening research and development branches. Ontario is one of the highest educated workforces in the world, a low tax rate and red tape burden reduction. These commerce-friendly policies make doing business in Ontario profitable, stable and enticing for private entities looking to expand into new markets. A particularly exciting area is Ontario's massively expanding tech sector, an industry that is expanding at an exponential rate in my riding of Kingston and the islands, a city where history and innovations thrive. One great example of an innovation incubator is the breakout project, which started yesterday at port renlry and Kingston and the Islands sponsored by the Minister of tourism culture and sport. Cot Minister of research and innovation and science please tell the members of this House about tech companies investing in Ontario?

>> Minister Moridi: I would like to thank the member from Kingston and the islands. She has a great advocate for research innovation particular -- particularly as her area. Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. Companies from all over the globe recognize Ontario for its reputation as a business-friendly ecosystem. Mr. Speaker, just a couple of days ago Uber apopular ridership company, that has deep interests in artificial intense, announced it would be starting a partnership with vector institute for artificial intelligence as a platinum investor. This marks the first occasion that Uber has ever invested outside of the United States on research and development. The r&d office at vector institute will be LED by university of Toronto professor utesan is a move that speaks volumes to our capacity for talent retention. Mr. Speaker, we will continue. Our innovation economy.

>> MPP Kiwala: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister of research, innovation and

science for his answer. I am delighted to hear this fantastic news. I can't think of a better testament to Ontario's capacity for leadership in this sector. Creating new jobs isn't a simple matter of reducing red tape and supporting existing sectors. It's a matter of trading a highly skilled work force, assisting entrepreneurs and commercializing their ideas and attracting businesses that are looking to expand into new tech economies. We need to be leaders and visionaries in the innovation field to increase our capacity, and we are doing that. Account Minister elaborate a bit more on the types of companies who are established in Ontario and are contributing to Ontario's economy?

>> Minister Moridi: Again I want to thank the member from Kingston and the Islands for her question. I will be delighted, Mr. Speaker, to speak a little more about international investment in Ontario innovation. Last year, ventures and -- partners to invest in therapeutic stem cell research company based in discovery center as March. Their investment, which was a total of \$225 million was the second-largest financing for a medical science company. In January of this year, highland therapeutics was able to \$200 million in financing for Morgan and Stanley company. Mr. Speaker, this just the beginning. More and more tech and medicine firms are looking to invest in prove vin of Ontario's innovation and research.

MPP Clark to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> MPP Clark: My question's for the Minister of energy. Mr. Speaker, has Cabinet ever been briefed or received a document detailing the expected cost of hydro through the year 2024, yes or no?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Very pleased to talk about our fair hydro plan because as we talk about it, we are talking about how we are moving forward in refinancing, like remortgaging our home, Mr. Speaker. A portion of the global adjustment. With that, Mr. Speaker, we have said that this will take up to 20 years longer, Mr. Speaker, and we've always acknowledged that this will cost us a little bit more, Mr. Speaker. In terms of what we want to do, Mr. Speaker. We want to ensure that the folks -- the families right across the province that are investing in our energy system will see that, Mr. Speaker, and utilize that system for the duration of its lastful life. So, Mr. Speaker, in terms of what we're doing, we're making sure. That we're lowering rates for families, farms and small businesses right across the province.

>> MPP Clark: Speaker, back to the Minister. That didn't answer the question. So let me ask you this. What is the expected cost of hydro in 2024?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have a crystal ball. I'm sure maybe he does. Maybe he can look into it -- in it and see their plans. Maybe they can find what they were -- they would do in terms of what they would do to lower rates now, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know their policy's going to come up in the magic weekend in November, but on this side, we're worrying a&bout families now, Mr. Speaker. We're worrying about small businesses now. And that's why we're bringing forward Ontario's fair hydro plan with on average will reduce rates by 25% on average. But right now, Mr. Speaker, rates are lower by 17%. That is something that families, small businesses and farms right across this province are applauding, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Gates to Minister Leal Re: Horse Racing Industry

>> MPP Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the acting Premier. As you are aware a recent announcement from woodbine racetrack on their new stable policies will stop any horse stabled at woodbine from racing at another track more than once a year. Alongside 40 new turf race dates, woodbine is going to offer \$5,000 claimers, \$6,200 conditional claimers on the main track. Quite frankly this policy is completely self-serving and will have serious negative impacts on racetracks. The fort Erie community has serious concerns about the negative effect this will have on the beloved track, putting 1,000 jobs in sdwrepy. I have spoken to the mayor. The Ontario racing commission and Ontario government should immediately stop woodbine in its tracks and ensure

horse owners have the ability to stable their horses wherever they want. As long as they want and whenever they want. Fort Erie expects nothing else. I ask the Premier again, will you please step in, address this important issue. And stop the unfair attack on the livelihood –

>> Minister Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I really want to thank the member from Niagara Falls. He was very courteous about a week ago. He provided me the information, the background about Fort Erie and its relationship with Woodbine. The two of course Thoroughbred tracks in the province of Ontario. Fort Erie racetrack of course hosts the second leg of Canada's Triple Crown the Prince of Wales stakes that will be held there in and around July 25th. And I indicated to the member that we're taking a look at this right now, and I certainly committed to him just earlier this morning that I would be back to him in a timely way.