

Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Thursday, May 18, 2017

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

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Last year there was a headline from North Bay that read like a plot of "Law & order S.V.U." And the headline was "North bay mother awakes to nightmare of a stranger attacking child." The attacker was charged with many crimes but among them were two counts of breach of a conditional sentence order. Mr. Speaker -- That was one year ago and a month and what has this government done? They've done nothing to watch over violent criminals on probation and conditional sentences. It's unacceptable. Mr. Speaker, in the last year, how many other children have been harmed by violent offenders? How long are we going to wait until the government will make sure that criminals are checked?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I know that the Minister of community safety and correctional services will want to comment on this. But, Mr. Speaker, obviously we all have to take these situations very, very seriously. Our government takes safety of our communities extremely seriously, Mr. Speaker, and we work in partnership with our police services and justice partners to make Ontario one of the safest jurisdictions in north America, Mr. Speaker. And of course not, not in any way diminishing the incident that the member opposite has identified, but for 11 straight years, Mr. Speaker, Ontario has had the lowest crime rate of any province or territory in Canada. We're also -- Ontario's also home to six of the 10 safest census metropolitan areas in the country, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to work with our police services, with our police partners to make sure the right policies are in place.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier. Another story out of North Bay read, I quote -- one woman and two men were arrested following a report of a stabbing Friday night that sent one person to the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. Following a verbal dispute with the man, one of the visitors was stabbed with a knife. One man was charged with assault with a weapon, aggravated assault and breach of probation. The last charge, breach of probation, clearly he was a violent criminal. Did this individual receive any home visits? Of course not. He's expected under this system that the Liberals support to self-report. But, Mr. Speaker, give me a break. You've got a violent offender who's expected to self-report if he feels tempted to stab someone? How can the government allow this to continue?

>> Minister Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess I'll thank the member, the leader of the opposition for his question, because it's actually great that I have to share with you, Mr. Speaker, and all Ontarians that Ontario is one of the safest jurisdictions in north America and I'm very proud that our crime rate has been decreasing for years, and offenders have been less likely actually to reoffend, Mr. Speaker. And when you talk about what we are doing as a government here in the province, you know, we are moving forward on a correctional reforms, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's -- I'm very proud that we are working on our correctional transformation, and I always like to share -- And thank all our correctional officers, our parole and probation officers. Who work extraordinary -- In our community.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier. What you just heard is government talking points. The question was on how can we accept when there's violent criminals, sexual predators, how we think it's good enough to simply allow self-reporting and not having home visits? The Minister praised the probation officers. They're the ones who are whistle blowing on this government saying it's not good enough. 4,513 convicted criminals of serious criming -- S out there and we're expecting them to self report. How many examples do I have to give? Last week it was a case of child luring in Durham. Then it's the case in North Bay of a stabbing. How many serious criminal charges are there going to be where you have criminals out in our communities and they think self reporting's good enough? A very clear question to the Minister. Do you think self reporting is fair and adequate -- Sex predators and violent criminals, yes or no?

>> Minister Lalonde: You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say that the leader of the opposition and I

would say his party, you know they talk a big talk and, you know, but their record shows otherwise. And I want to remind everyone about strictly the party leader's track -- I want to talk about our leader's -- the party opposite's leader on his track record, Mr. Speaker. He's cut Canada's correctional service budget by 10% and for those that don't know how much it's \$295 million, Mr. Speaker. He's also introduced ridiculous changes to our mandatory minimums. And let's not forget cutting award-winning programs to help our offenders in terms of reintegrating and releasing. So Mr. Speaker -- Well, instead of playing politics with safety, we on this side of the House, are committed actually to working with our partners, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Brown to Premier Wynne Re: Partisan Advertising

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. It seems yesterday the Liberals launched a new ad campaign about their budget. Mr. Speaker, how much more money will the Liberals be spending on these clearly partisan budget advertisements? Can you tell us a number? Ontarians deserve to know how much of their money this government's using to sell their tired old lines.

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I have to say that, on this side of the House we are very happy that the budget that we have brought forward has been passed in this legislature, Mr. Speaker. Submitted across the province. Obviously the member opposite is not happy about that. He voted against ohip plus so that 4 million people -- 4 million children, Mr. Speaker, 4 mill -- 4 million children and young people will have access to free medication starting January 1st, 2018. He voted against that, Mr. Speaker, so he is not supportive. We believe that that is a very good and important thing for young people and families in this province, Mr. Speaker. And he also doesn't want us to implement free tuition for young people in the province, Mr. Speaker. He doesn't want to see \$16 billion invested in new schools in places like Ottawa, Waterloo, Thunder Bay across the province, Mr. Speaker. We think those are important investments.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier. The question was on partisan government advertising, and I can see why the Premier doesn't want to answer, because they're embarrassed of how much they're using taxpayers. From wawa to petawawa, from Owen Sound to Parry Sound, this government is wasting taxpayer money on partisan vanity ads. And they applaud. They clap when they hear about how much money they're wasting, but I can tell you Ontarians are not applauding because it's unacceptable. It's unethical. Mr. Speaker, it's unacceptable, it's unethical, it's irresponsible. They are campaigning on the public's dime. And my question, Mr. Speaker, is, for once, will they do the right thing? Will the government cancel these partisan ads that are being paid for by taxpayers? It's not right. In the world and you're spending more to promote your own selfish partisan purposes.

>> Premier Wynne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is one province in this country that has a law in place that forbids partisan advertising, and that province is Ontario, Mr. Speaker. We are the only province that prohibits partisan advertising. So, Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite again, I understand he does not want people in the province to know about ohip plus but we think it's important, Mr. Speaker. We think it's important that the 4 million children and young people in this province know that on January 1st, 2018 that they will receive free medication much it's important to their families and important to them, Mr. Speaker. We think it's important, Mr. Speaker, to implement free tuition across the province and to build hospitals in niagara, Windsor, Hamilton, markdale.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier, and the Premier said that only one -- Passed a law to prevent partisan ads. Well, that was before this Premier. That was before this team completely eroded the powers of the auditor general for their only partisan purpose. Right now has the auditor general saying these are partisan self-congratulatory vanity ads and we have the government saying no. The auditor general's in favour of them. Who do I trust? Do I trust this Liberal Cabinet -- Or do I trust the auditor general? Mr. Speaker, I'm with the auditor general. They are abusing taxpayers. They are abusing tax pay Tories pay for their own partisan ads. You know what?

Maybe it's -- But it's not right. They need to stop using taxpayers to sell their misguided agenda. No one in Ontario. Thinks it's right to use taxpayer money for partisan ads. Do the right thing. Pull these ads.

>> Premier Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me just remind the member opposite that, because facts still matter in Ontario, the legislation that bans partisan advertising is still in place in Ontario. And, Mr. Speaker, let me just pick up on something that the leader of the opposition said. He talked about a misguided agenda. But what is he talking about? He's talking about ohip plus pharmacare for young people from zero to 25. He's talking about free tuition for young people from low income families. He's talking about building hospitals and schools across this province. He's talking about hydro leave across the province, Mr. Speaker. These are supports people of this province need. We have the first balanced budget in nearly a decade, Mr. Speaker. We are going to make investments in the people of this province because the people of this province have earned that support, Mr. Speaker .

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

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Hydro rates have gone up 300% under the Liberals and 50% just under this Premier. People have good reason to be suspicious about any action that the Premier takes on the hydro file. And now leaked documents of course show that hydro rates will be going up even further as a result of the Premier's scheme, causing even more scepticism about the Liberals' handling of our electricity system in this province. Will the Premier come clean with Ontarians on the future costs of hydro before they are hydro scheme, her borrowing scheme is voted on in this legislature?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister of energy's going to want to comment in the supplementary. But let me just say that we have been very clear. I have been very clear. The Minister of energy's been very clear with the people of this province that we have made investments in the electricity system in Ontario. \$50 billion to make a reliable, clean, renewable electricity grid in -- Clear that there was a cost associated with that, Mr. Speaker, and that that cost needs to be shared over the generations that are actually going to use that asset, Mr. Speaker, and so we are bringing forward a reduction of 25% on people's electricity bills to be in place by the summer, Mr. Speaker, and, to do that, we are spreading the costs over a longer period of time and that means that not just this generation today will pay for those costs. But that will be spread over a longer period of time. We've been very clear with the people of Ontario that that's what we're doing.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier's borrowing scheme will cause hydro rates to soar by over 50%. She denies this but she hasn't shown the people of Ontario any evidence to back up that denial. Will the public get any additional information on how much the Premier proposes to increase hydro costs after the next election so they can provide educated, informed feedback at the committee hearings next week, Speaker ?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As stated, we're bringing forward legislation that will actually reduce everyone's bills by up to 25% on average, Mr. Speaker. It's important that people know about this so they can understand that this government is acting to ensure that we're making our system as affordable as can be, Mr. Speaker, for many of these families. 800,000 families that live in the rural and northern parts of our province, Mr. Speaker, they'll see a 40 to 50% reduction. And that's what we're doing right now, Mr. Speaker, in the short term. In the medium term, Mr. Speaker, we're ensuring that we're holding the rates to the cost of inflation. And then for the long term, Mr. Speaker, the 2017 long-term energy plan will project where costs are going to be so people can see the transparent process that we have. Because we rebuilt the system, one that is coal-free, that is clean. That is reliable.

>> Andrea Horwath: The Premier and her Liberal government have made a mess of our hydro system, and it has cost Ontario families and businesses far too much. And they think it's funny, but it isn't funny when people have to make choices about paying their hydro bill or putting food on the table,

or choices about keeping people employed or paying their business's electricity bill. From the gas plant scandal to the broken promises not to sell off Hydro One, to the four years, four years of denying that there was any problem at all with people's rising hydro bills, why has this Premier had so much trouble reconciling what she says with what she does?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In terms of reconciliation, when it comes to talking, Mr. Speaker, and acting, it's this Premier that actually committed this government to bringing forward the fair hide rode plan and that's reducing everybody's bills across this province, Mr. Speaker, by 25%. If you look, Mr. Speaker, at a plan that has no reconciliation and no idea on how it ever achieve a number, it's the pamphlet that the NDP Put together, Mr. Speaker. There is absolutely no way that they're going to take off one cent, not a single cent off of anyone's bills. And let alone, Mr. Speaker, they don't even talk about helping low-income individuals until the last page in one line. Mr. Speaker, part of our -- a large part of our plan is helping our low-income individuals. Our seniors. Our on-reserve first nations people that they don't even mention in their plan, Mr. Speaker. This is a plan that will work for every Ontarian.

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

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: My next question's also for the Premier. Leaked documents show very clearly that the Premier knows her \$40 billion borrowing scheme is going to end up costing families and businesses on their already sky-high hydro bills. But she denies at that her plan is based on these documents. Well, if leaked information is inaccurate, Speaker, why won't the Premier just come clean and release the information that did inform her plan?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: So again, Mr. Speaker, let me just reinforce what I have said in this House in previous days, Mr. Speaker. There is a short term, a midterm and a long-term plan around electricity prices. We know that people need relief now, Mr. Speaker. That's what the 25% on average reduction for all Ontarians is, Mr. Speaker, and it will be in place by the summer. We will then hold those -- the rate of increase of electricity bills down for four years, Mr. Speaker, to the level of inflation. And then, Mr. Speaker, the long-term energy plan this is being developed right now will give businesses and families around the province a snapshot of just that, the long-term energy plan, Mr. Speaker. But we will continue over the medium and the long term to continue to take costs out of the system, which is -- Each one of our long-term energy plans, Mr. Speaker. We found ways to take costs out. That will continue and the people of the province -- when that plan is ready, they will see it, Mr. Speaker .

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, what the Premier neglected to say is that, after four years, those bills are going to soar in Ontario. By over 50%. Leaked documents show that the hydro bills will absolutely go up. Yet the Premier's answer to this disgusting betrayal of Ontario families and businesses, just trust me. Just trust me. It's going to all be fine. Well, Ontarians are getting pretty fed up with the "Just trust me" line, Speaker. It's what the Premier said before she broke her promise not to sell off hide rode one and what she said about the Sudbury bribery charges right before a criminal investigation got under way. "Just trust me" is not good enough for the people of Ontario. When will this Premier release the information she says is showing the long-term effects of her borrowing scheme so that Ontarians have all the facts -- Before she rams this legislation through the House ?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's be clear. We have -- So as I was saying, Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. The fact is 25% is coming off of everybody's bills, Mr. Speaker, before summer once this legislation passes. 50% is coming off 800,000 families' bills, Mr. Speaker, in northern and in rural parts of our province. That's a significant savings for these families, Mr. Speaker. We're also helping small businesses and farms. When you want to -- when you want to continue to talk about facts, Mr. Speaker, it is this government that cleaned up the mess left by the opposition parties when they were in power and the system that they left for us to clean -- Mr. Speaker, our plan has been praised by poverty advocates, by indigenous leaders, by business leaders and by energy experts, Mr. Speaker. Francesca Dobben executive director of the United Way of

Bruce- Grey says this government is listening to the people with positive changes our rural community will now truly benefit from the low-cost power it produces, Mr. Speaker.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, clarity is actually what the people of this province need and deserve but they're not getting any of it from their government. The Premier's scheme punishes families who are already struggling with their electricity bills. She is rushing through the House, shutting down debates. If I chance of meaningful public input is being truncated by this government. And she claims that the leaked documents that came to light last week about the plan are inaccurate, but she refuses to come clean with the people of the province about the facts. Why is this Premier going to such great lengths, Speaker, to make sure that the people don't have all the information about a plan that will affect their lives for three decades or more?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, we have short-term solutions, medium-term solution and a long-term solution, Mr. Speaker. 25% off with all of the other programs that are coming out, Mr. Speaker, through the fair hydro plan is something that all families will see right before summer, Mr. Speaker. We hope to have that passed and get it into their pockets, Mr. Speaker, as soon as possible. In the medium term we are holding rates to the cost of inflation for the next four years. And then when it comes to the long term, Mr. Speaker, we are the only party that actually can plan long term. These parties opposite have no idea. One of them doesn't even have a plan, Mr. Speaker. They have no idea on what to do when it comes to electricity. We're making sure, Mr. Speaker, that we're bringing forward reductions that will help families all at the same time, Mr. Speaker, we cleaned up a system. We've made sure it's clean. It's reliable and it is something, Mr. Speaker, we should all be proud of. People look to us to see what they can do to emulate our system, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Scott to Minister Naqvi Re: Sexual Assault Training for Judges

>> MPP Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question's for the Attorney General. Yesterday the Attorney General suggested that the Ontario justice council's new education plan would mandate sexual assault law training for Ontario judges. That would be great news. I've been calling this kind of training for weeks and even tabled a private member's bill about it. The problem is that this new training plan does not mandate sexual assault law training. The training, quote, encourages new judges to attend seminars, one of which is about sexual assault law. Mr. Speaker, this is not a solution. So my question to the Attorney General is how can the Minister suggest that this issue has been resolved when what we really have is a continuation of a status quo?

>> Minister Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. First of all I want to thank the member opposite and the member from Davenport for their advocacy on this very important issue. Speaker, I've spoken on this issue numerous times and I've always advised all members of this House that, at all times, we have to respect the Independence of our judiciary when it comes to matters around what training they should receive. It's a decision of the judiciary. Therefore, Speaker, on behalf of this House, on behalf of our Premier and the government I also have written to the chief justice of the Ontario court of justice and had the chance to spoken to her. She has informed me, Speaker, through correspondence, that she has now expressly mandate -- has mandated sexual assault training for all new judges. She has informed me, Speaker, that changes have been made to the education plan that is available. Online. I commend the chief justice for taking this very important step. It is within per purview to make these decisions. Express mandate is not --

>> MPP Scott: Yesterday's "Toronto star" article by Christian rasha wi quotes the Ontario judicial council as saying that, under the changes, the legal and social context issues around sexual assault are integrated into various programs. But they are only for new judges, and I believe in the article -- and by the O.C. J., that it's not even mandatory. -- Ocj. I wonder is the Minister really satisfied with his answer? It clearly doesn't meet the expectations for survivors of sexual assault, who want to be sure that the court system will treat their cases fairly. I do know that the Minister cares about this issue. So my question to him, will he finally agree that mandated sexual assault training needs to be legislated?

>> Minister Naqvi: Speaker, again I thank the member opposite. I thank the member from Davenport and the Premier and all members of the House for -- for their work on this very important issue. And we should never, ever undermine sexual assault, violence against women or harassment in any shape whatsoever. Speaker, my responsibility as the Attorney General is always to work with our courts, with the judiciary, which are independent. I am sure all members will appreciate at no point ever we won't cross the line and interfere in the affairs of judiciary because Independence is key. My obligation on behalf of this House and all members is to do that work, and I have been doing that work, and I have been informed by the chief justice that the education plan -- Judiciary has been updated and now expressly mandates training for new judges. I think that's good step direction. I am confident more can be done and we'll continue to work on that. Thank you.

MPP Gelinias to Premier Wynne Re: Opioid Crisis

>> MPP France Gelinias: My question is for the Premier. Ontario is in the midst of an opioid crisis that demands urgent action. People are losing their lives every day on the streets of this city. In fact, 25 people died from a drug overdose in Toronto in 2015. And that number continues to climb. On March 20th, two months ago, the Toronto board of health requested additional funding of \$375,000 from this government to support the Toronto overdose action plan. But this government has so far refused to provide the additional funding that's needed. In the midst of a growing crisis of overdose deaths, when everyone recognizes the urgent action is desperately needed, why has this government failed to provide the resources that Toronto needs to help save lives?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: So, Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the question from the member opposite. This is an incredibly serious issue that is being dealt with across the country, Mr. Speaker. And in fact, our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has taken a leadership role with his Colleague Ministers across the country, Mr. Speaker. We have an opioid strategy in place. We are gathering data that now the federal government is coming on board and they are putting in place a strategy that will give us better information and will mean that we'll be able to track what is going on in the country and thereby be able to prevent -- prevent and provide better treatment. On the Toronto-specific issue, Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the request made by the city of Toronto regarding funding towards the Toronto overdose action plan. We received their submission. It's being reviewed. We're -- I want the member to know that we are -- Hosting a meeting of mayors and I will say more in the supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Gelinias: Thank you, Speaker. We are in the midst of a public health crisis, a crisis that is growing. Here in Toronto and right across our province. When local boards of health comes to the Premier to set up and provide additional supports to directly save lives, this government should be ready to help. I would say in a heartbeat. That's what urgent action means. That's the proper response to a growing crisis. That's what a crisis demands. How much longer will Toronto have to wait to get the resources to save lives and stop the over prices in this city?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite knows that we are there. We are supporting three proposed safe injection sites in the city of Toronto, Mr. Speaker. That was something that the city of Toronto had asked for. The mayor of Ottawa was here, Mr. Speaker, a number of weeks ago. I met with him. He brought forward a plan. I said that we would support that plan, Mr. Speaker. And out of that meeting with the mayor -- With the mayor of Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, came a meeting that we are hosting for all of the mayors who want to be involved, Mr. Speaker. This is not just an issue that is relevant in Toronto or Ottawa. It's actually an issue that's relevant in many urban centres and in small towns, Mr. Speaker. This is across the province that we need to make sure we're doing the right thing. We will be working with our municipalities as we already are to see what further needs to be done.

MPP Martins to Minister Mauro Re: Golden Horseshoe Land Use Plan

>> MPP Cristina Martins: Thank you, Speaker. My question this morning is for the Minister of municipal affairs. As we prepared to celebrate the Victoria day long weekend, it is a good time to reflect on a region that is one of the most extraordinary places on the planet. It's blessed with fresh - abundant fresh water, Oak Ridges more rain, Niagara escarpment, excellent farmland and moderate though sometimes unpredictable climate. Support a high quality of life and economic opportunities. Canada's largest economic engine. That is fuelled by diverse and talented population. Today our government released updated land use plans for the region that will protect our natural resources and support future prosperity. Would the Minister please provide some details on today's announcement?

>> Minister Bill Mauro: Speaker, the member's correct. Today our government released four updated land use plans that will help grow the greater golden horseshoe. The region's a success story and attracts people from all over the country and around the world. Already home to 9.5 million people, the greater golden horseshoe is forecasted to grow by approximately 50% over the next 25 years. The growth plan for the greater golden horseshoe, the greenbelt plan, Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan and Niagara escarpment plan set out an overarching strategy of where and how future growth should be accommodated. What we need to protect for current and future generations. The updates will help us achieve a more efficient use of land, resources and infrastructure so that we can reduce sprawl, ensure the region is growing in a way that protects our vital assets and building communities that are vibrant, that are healthy and they're prosperous. Speaker, the updates are a result of significant -- extensive consultation which I will speak about more in the supplementary.

>> MPP Martins: Thanks to the Minister for his answer. And I was particularly happy to hear our government's commitment to -- reaffirmed commitment to protecting the greenbelt as were the many dozens perhaps if not hundreds of constituents in my riding of Davenport who called, wrote and visited my office to express their support. Our government established the greenbelt in 2005. I understand that we are now growing the greenbelt to include 21 new urban river valleys and associated wetlands. With five new parcels of land. We've also extended greenbelt like protections for natural heritage, water and agriculture to the entire greater golden horseshoe area. This will help protect sensitive lands for generations to come without constraining development. I appreciate the work that has gone into these changes. I understand many people provided input. Would the Minister elaborate on the consultation process that led to today's announcement?

>> Minister Mauro: Speaker, again thank you to the member. We're happy as a government to reaffirm our commitment to the greenbelt and the principles it was founded on. This process began in February of 2015. The first stage saw the establishment of an expert panel headed by the Honourable David Crombie and I want to give David my heartfelt thanks for his leadership and to recognize panel members for their recommendations. Throughout the process, which included a six-month consultation period in 2016 and a number of meetings with municipal leaders, we heard unanimous support for the goals of these plans. When size -- one size doesn't fit all was also something we heard a great deal about during the consultation. We've taken that into account in the final revisions to the plan. They provide greater flexibility that recognizes local circumstances without compromising the objectives of the plans. These new land use plans hit the foundations for a sustainable, healthy, vibrant and prosperous greater golden horseshoe. They've been shaped by thousands of people -- shaped by thousands of people across the province. I would like to thank all of them including my staff who have worked very hard on this.

MPP Harris to Minister Del Duca (Murray) Re: Electric Cars

>> MPP Michael Harris: To the Minister of transportation. Speaker, \$1 million can go a long way here in the province. It could help children with special needs or people struggling to pay their hydro bills. But instead of helping those in Ontario to need it the most the government has decided to use \$1 million of taxpayer money to open up an electric vehicle car shop. Minister Murray called this an absurd waste of taxpayers' money the first of I understand -- its kind. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister tell us if this taxpayer-funded vanity project will be also the last of its kind?

>> Minister Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. Very happy to take the question from the member. This member who's served in this legislature for a number of years would know that over the last number of years there have been a number of initiatives that our government has brought forward with respect to supporting consumers who tell us loudly and clearly, Speaker, that they want to do their part in the very crucial fight against climate change. Speaker, we know here in the province of Ontario that roughly 35% of all greenhouse gas emissions flow as a result of activities within the transportation sector, and a large share of those, Speaker, come as a result of people who are driving vehicles that have traditional internal combustion engines. That's why over the last number of years we have brought forward a number of initiatives, including the electric vehicle incentive program, Speaker, including support for the expansion of a significant build-out of a charging infrastructure network in every corner of the province of Ontario. Because we want to help enable the kinds of choices that consumers tell us they want to make in order to do their part with respect to that fight against climate change, Speaker.

>> MPP Harris: Yes, thanks, Speaker. You know, Speaker, this government refuses to fund life changing treatments for rare disease patients. While these Ministers hand out 14 grand rebates to luxury electric Tesla owners and waste millions every dollar on electric car lots. Now in the real world, if someone wants to open a car lot they use their own money. But when the Ministers of transportation and environment unveiled Steven Glenn's electric car shop yesterday, they used \$1 million of taxpayer money on their government-funded vanity project. They can call it a discovery centre, an education centre. They can use whatever verbal spin they choose, but when it comes down to it, the Liberals just waste \$1 million taxpayer dollars building an electric car dealership. Mr. Speaker, will the Ministers be working weekends at the car dealership?

>> Minister Glen Murray: Mr. Speaker, -- I just want to point out that we are in a strategic partnership with all the major auto manufacturers and global. Every single vehicle, electric vehicle made in Ontario is sold in Ontario has been donated to be part of it. The car dealers -- Dealers know this centre's absolutely essential to advance e.v. sales and the development of them. Every major auto manufacturer. But, Mr. Speaker, it does not surprise us over here that the party that voted -- Against every investment we've made in the auto sector that would have seen the Collective our auto sector -- Support this. The party who doesn't support 200 million, the biggest investment in E.V. Mobility to develop. Autonomous vehicles didn't support that.

MPP Horwath to Minister Flynn Re: PTSD Legislation for Nurses

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Nurses are leaders in our health care system and I want to welcome registered nurses that are here today from Vona. From owna. Every day nurses are on the front lines as first responders in our emergency rooms and throughout our health care system. Nurses see and experience trauma in their workplaces each and every day, whether it's patients in life threatening conditions or the violence that puts health care workers themselves at risk. New Democrats believe that all nurses in Ontario need to be covered by presumptive PTSD legislation. Why doesn't the Premier agree?

>> Minister Kevin Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the leader of the third party for that excellent question, because certainly I think if there's an issue that we have come along, far away along in the past year, Speaker, it's on PTSD coverage for the purpose of our first responders. Speaker, we all came together as three parties in this House to support a bill that was passed about a year ago, Speaker. And each one of us had some input into that. Each one of us chose at that point in time which people should be covered under that bill, Speaker. As we move on obviously, Speaker, questions are being asked that should some other people be included in that, Speaker? And at this point in time, Speaker, we should be proud of what we've done as a government, Speaker. Look to the future as what potentially we could do, Speaker, because posttraumatic stress disorder amongst our first responders is something we've ignored for far too long. We have a piece of legislation in place now, Speaker. Legislation can always be improved upon but we're in a leadership role in the province of Ontario.

>> Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, during the committee process of the bill that the Minister is talking about, we brought the amendments to clue nurses and --Which the Liberal government refused to include nurses in the legislation at that time. So in fact we could have legislation right now that does cover nurses, but the Liberals decided not to do that, Speaker. At a time when nurses are dealing with violence in the workplace, overcrowding in hospital hallways, increasing work loads and the physical and psychological demands, Speaker, that come from this government's cuts to hospitals, the Premier has chosen to turn her back on these nurses and deny them wsib coverage that every first responder needs and deserves. Why is this Premier and her government refusing to do the right thing? Stand up for -- And extend PTSD legislation to every nurse in Ontario?

>> Minister Flynn: Speaker, I don't believe for a minute that anybody's turned their back on anybody in this process. This has been one of the best processes that this House has ever undertaken in taking an issue that was ignored. You had people, Speaker -- there was tragic outcomes to some of the things that were happening at that point in time, Speaker. We had our first responders, as a result of not being able to get coverage, Speaker, presumptive coverage under wsib were choosing to take their own lives, Speaker. We knew we need today do something about that, Speaker. We brought bill 109 I think it was, Speaker, PTSD or 160, Speaker. And, Speaker, we've made a huge step forward. We're always open to discussions, Speaker, nurses we know play such a huge integral role in the provision of services to our society, Speaker. Speaker, in a first responder role, nurses are -- Our correction institutions, Speaker. We've come a long way. Perhaps we have more to do, Speaker, but we should be proud of what we've done.

MPP Colle to Minister Leal Re: Agricultural Trade with the U.S.

>> MPP Mike Colle: Question to the Minister of agriculture and rural affairs. Mr. Minister, as you know, in the recent months, our farmers and agri-food sector has come under vicious attack from our American Neighbours, and to many people in Ontario, we know full well that our agri-food industry is a \$36 billion industry. And it employs 800,000 people, and we create and they create clean, safe quality food in Ontario every day. Our dairy farmers, our milk farmers. Yet we're being told that we have to abandon our successful supply management system. I know you're going to meet with the great Lakes representatives to tell them about our strong agricultural system in Ontario and that we're not going to be bullied by those --

>> Minister Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the question from my Colleague the member from Eglinton- Lawrence this morning. I want to recognize that he was the unsung hero that helped to bring back French's ketchup production in the province of Ontario.

>> MPP Colle: Anyways, when you are going on this trade mission to talk about the importance of our supply management system in Ontario and the fact is that we have a surplus. In other words the Americans get more out of trade with Ontario and agri-foods than what we get back. Yet they want us to scrap this incredibly good system. So I ask you, Minister, what are you going to tell our American Neighbours about our great agri-food industry and our great farmers and our great supply management system which is second to none in the world when it comes to producing good, safe, quality foods?

>> Minister Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for the supplementary. Basically what we have here today is a problem with no production is in United States. We have oversupply in places like Wisconsin, New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania. I'll be going to Wisconsin next week to tell my Colleagues down there that Ontario is not prepared to see What it comes to our supply management system. The best system that's ever been designed for agriculture. Fair price to consumer. Fair price to our producers in the province of Ontario and we won't let the Americans attack a very successful system that contributes more than 22% to Ontario's agri-food sector, 23% of their sector's just, and I'm asking all members on all sides to stand up for Ontario's supply management.

MPP McNaughton (Bailey) to Premier Wynne (Hunter) Re: School Closures

>> MPP Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Premier. On March 24th, the MPP From northumberland-quinte west will be in Thetford in the municipality of Lambton shores in my riding for a public meeting about the government's plan to close more rural schools. Curiously, the invitation sent by the issues management team at the ministry of education specifics that, and I quote -- photography and video recording does not occur once the engagement session begins, unquote. Speaker, Heather Wright, publisher of the petrolia independent, calls it a shameful excuse to limit press freedom and a trampling over the very basic freedoms of the press. Speaker, the Premier's plans to fast-track the closure of more rural schools is not only an important issue in my riding of Lambton-kent- Middlesex, but all across the province. Will the Premier direct the ministry of education. To lift the media blackout on this so-called public meeting or will the government continue to close more rural schools under a veil of secrecy?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister of education is going to want to speak to the supplementary. But, Mr. Speaker ,, over my years as a parent and as a member of a school council, Mr. Speaker, and as a school trustee and as a community member, Mr. Speaker, I've been to more education consultations than I can count, Mr. Speaker. And what I know is that at those meetings there are people who want to be on the public record and want to speak out. And then there are people who want to talk about an issue but actually don't want it to become a public discussion. And what we need at a meeting like the one that's happening around the rural schools and community schools is we need everybody to feel free to speak, Mr. Speaker. And of course the Minister of education will always speak to --. To the media. There will always be opportunities for the media to know what the discussion is about. But, Mr. Speaker, people need to be able to speak freely.

>> MPP Bob Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the Premier. In the email exchange between the spokesperson for the ministry of education, Heather Wright and petrolia independent, the Minister 's spokesperson spins the need for media blackout by citing, quote, consent concerns of the participants, end of quote. But how does the ministry already know there are consent concerns at a public meeting that is still a week away? So far, the only confirmed attendee is the member for northumberland-quinte west. Is it possible that your own government is concerned about there being a video recording of this meeting? Premier, there are already many concerns that this listening tour is much ado about nothing. Premier, journalists have an important role to play in our democracy. Will you lift this blackout today so Ms. Wright and other journalists can do their job as professional journalists?

>> Minister Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the members for the question. It's a great opportunity to talk about these engagements and the fact that we're going into ten communities across rural and northern Ontario to talk about how we improve education for the purpose students. And that's what we're there to do, Mr. Speaker. My Colleagues that have been doing these consultations along with me, we've engaged with media. Media have attended as the sessions were beginning and there's a process for the media to be involved in these consultations, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier has already said, we want to have a really robust conversation with parents, with students, with school boards, with municipalities, with everyone who is engaged in this very important dialogue around how we can improve our schools in rural and northern communities and we want to ensure that we create the spaces for them to do that. And we have a process for the purpose connecting with the media that is quite open and transparent, Mr. Speaker.

MPP DiNovo to Minister MacCharles Re: Gender Identity on Birth Certificates

>> MPP Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of government and consumer services. Joshua Ferguson is a queer nonbinary person who has applied to change the sex designation on their birth certificate. Currently in Ontario, one cannot amend their birth registration of birth to anything other than male or female categories. Ontario yans Schiff the -- should have the

rights to have their birth certificates accurately correct the correct sex designation. Will the Minister issue an amended birth certificate to Joshua and others like them that correctly reflect their sex designations?

>> Minister Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the member from the member from Parkdale- High Park for the very important question because I have been Joshua's story with great interest. Joshua presented recently. I want to say off the top of course that our government values acceptance, respect and diversity and we're very committed to ensure that all Ontarians are treated ethically, equitably, fairly including the trans and nonbinary community. Important to note of course that Ontario has already changed the way it displays information about a person's sex on health cards and driver's licence making it easier for people to document in line with gender identity. We've also recently introduced the policies to help the trans and nonbinary community to live according to their gender. New rules. I'll talk more in supplementary.

>> MPP DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the Minister. It's difficult to get a health card or driver's licence if you can't get a birth certificate. Ontario passed Toby's law in 2012, adding gender identity and gender expression to the human rights code. Applying for a birth certificate with nonbinary designation is entirely legal under Toby's law. But sadly Joshua may not be afforded rights. This should not be an issue. Trans and nonbinary rights are human rights. Why is the government breaking its own law?

>> Minister MacCharles: Again I want to thank the member for the question. And similar to the driver's licence and health card examples I mentioned I'm very pleased to report to the legislature that the ministry of government consumer services is developing a gender neutral option for Ontario birth certificates. We know a birth certificate is a foundation for many forms of identification and we need to ensure we get that right. We need to work with the federal government and other ministries of course on this. Recent consultation held with the trans and nonbinary community on the development of an opsy policy and that is going to help inform our work on this birth certificate issue. I attended that session. Speaker, I was deeply moved from the conversations I had with a number of attendees. It's my hope that we will target further consultations. With the key partners I mentioned and get moving on this this summer. Thank you.

MPP Hoggarth to Minister Lalonde Re: Nuclear Energy Response Plan

>> MPP Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of community safety and correctional services. Nuclear energy is a vital part of Ontario's energy mix in the economy. Our province is at the centre of nuclear energy advancements and technologies and that's something of which all the members of this House can be proud. Our nuclear facilities power more than half of Ontario and help us get rid of dirty coal. When it comes to nuclear energy, public safety is of very high importance. Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister. Account Minister update the House on the recently announced changes to the provincial nuclear emergency response plan?

>> Minister Marie-France Lalonde: Merci, monsieur president. Voice of Translator: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to thank the MPP From Barrie for these questions. [End of Translation] Safety and security of every Ontarian, and we are updating our provincial nuclear emergency response plan this year to ensure that it reflects the most current technologies and facilities so that we can keep Ontarians safe in the highly unlikely event of a nuclear accident. We are taking lessons learned from past nuclear emergencies, such as the Fukushima accident, to ensure Ontario remains at global leader in nuclear safety. The proposed change to the penr are now available for public comments for the first time, Mr. Speaker. And it is crucial that everyone -- Everyone comments, including the general public. I encourage everyone all interested to comment on this important issue.

>> MPP Hoggarth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And to the Minister for her response. I'm confident in Ontario's safety record and our emergency plan. I know that the Minister has been working hard to ensure that this plan is fully up to date and reflects all best practices. Account Minister further speak to the provincial nuclear energy response plan?

>> Minister Lalonde: Again I want to say thank you to the member for her questions and I want to assure the House, Mr. Speaker, that we're fully prepared should the highly unlikely event of a nuclear emergency occur. Mr. Speaker, nuclear power has been meeting Ontario's energy needs safely for over 40 years, and our government is proud of that excellent and proven record. It helps us achieve our environmental goals and brings tens of thousands of jobs to Ontario. Once we receive our public input on our updated plan, our newly established expert advisory committee made up of top nuclear experts from around the world, national and international, will provide recommendations based on the feedback that we are receiving. And, Mr. Speaker. I am proud that the public is participating in this process for the very first time. As well as everyone who's commenting. Merci, monsieur president.

MPP Jones to Premier Wynne (Sandals) Re: BPS Executive Salaries

>> MPP Sylvia Jones: Speaker, from the sunshine list, we saw the release of the salary and benefits of the C.E.O. For the central west ccac. Her benefits for last year were almost \$20,000. Up an incredible 1,000%. The auditor general has already record That 39 cents of every dollar spent at our ccacs go to administration, not frontline services. How can this Premier justify this massive increase in the c.e.o.'s compensation?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that we have put in place salary caps, a range of caps, Mr. Speaker. She also knows that where there are situations where the comparators that have been used -- and I don't know the details of this specific situation. I'm sure the president of the treasury board will be able to speak to it in the supplementary. But, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that where the comparators -- Are not reasonable, then we will push back on that and ask for a review of those. Mr. Speaker, we have put those caps in blast for very good reason and those ranges need to be retested, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Jones: Clearly the caps aren't working. Back to the Premier. After the auditor general's scathing report the Minister of health wrote a letter to all ccacs telling them and I quote, not to enhance compensation or entitlements for nonunion management staff in any way, including wages, benefits, bonuses and termination provisions. Clearly the ccac in central west ignored the Minister 's direction. When will the Premier put an end to these unacceptable ranges in executive compensations?

>> Minister Liz Sandals: Thank you. I think what we're -- I can't comment on the particular individual -- I can't comment on -- I can't comment on that the particular individual's salary and what has happened in the particular circumstance, but what I can do is talk about the process that we are currently undergoing, which is we've asked our broader public sector partners to look at comparators that are public sector, that are Canadian, that are comparable, that take into consideration the geography, the scope of responsibility. That people have. And to not pay more than the midpoint of reasonable comparators. I can tell you that that -- Has not yet --