

Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Tuesday, February 27, 2018

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Date: Tue, 27 Feb 2018 11:54:38 -0500
Attachments: 20180227 - Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript.doc (105.98 kB)

Transcript of Provincial Question Period
41st Parliament, 2nd Session
Tuesday, February 27, 2018

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MPP Fedeli to Minister Jaczek Re: Homecare Worker Lawsuit

>> MPP Vic Fedeli: Thank you and good morning, Speaker, my question for the Minister of health. First of all let me say congratulations on your new ministry. I know that you're well aware that homecare providers are taking your government to court. For heavens sakes, Speaker, the V.O.N. is suing the government. The Liberals are putting homecare patients at risk with their sdiu-backed provincial agency. The application for judicial review says "The decision to introduce an untested homecare delivery model, centered on an agency with no track record, jeopardizes Ontario homecare patients. And the organizations fighting this government account for 95% of the services in the system. Speaker, why continue the fight? Will the new Minister's first order of business be to scrap this sdiu-backed agency.

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members of this House for congratulating me on this new role. I know that I have very big shoes to fill in following the footsteps of former Minister Hoskins but I assure every member that I will do my very best to fulfil the role as Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and in response to the member's question, I would also like to say that we are very conscious of the wonderful work that is done by front line staff in health care, those psWs and those support staff that support some of our most vulnerable people in this province in terms of their needs for homecare and in the supplementary I will address this question more directly.

>> MPP Vic Fideli: Thank you, Speaker, well it doesn't sound like the new Minister is going to scrap the plan, but Speaker, as I stated, the V.O.N. is suing the government of Ontario in June of 2016 sdiu health care started lobbying the ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to adopt this exact model for personal support service. In the same month, the former Minister gave of a speech at an sdi UConn venges in Detroit, bragging about the government's strong relationship with this group. In that speech, the Minister stated that with the advice of sdiu his ministry was seeking a "Common employer for care providers." Mr. Speaker, are the Liberals undertaking this massive change in care delivery solely at the request of sdiu?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Well, thank you Mr. Speaker and on this side of the House we certainly believe that Ontarians should have the option to have more control and choice over their homecare services and that's why our government is launching a new self-directed care model that patients could opt in to. It would provide homecare clients with funding to purchase services in their care plan or to employ people to provide these services. And so what we believe is that there will be a small group of patients with chronic long-term care needs, where they want an especially strong relationship with their care provider. We know that continuity of care for the elderly, when it comes to homecare, is a very important aspect of the care plan. We know that our Provide not only physical support but very importantly that emotional support over the long-term.

>> MPP Vic Fideli: Thank you, Speaker. In November much last year, the cbc reported on the cozy relationship between the Liberal party and seiu health care and that included past Liberal party president mikers Vitelli, the senior lobbyist for seiu. The ministry of health has no track record employing P.S.W.S and has never directly provided this type of care. The government set up this agency with no consultation and no explanation of how it will benefit our most vulnerable. This makes it painfully obvious that this agency is set up solely to benefit the seiu. Mr. Speaker, are the Liberals risking the service that Ontario's most vulnerable depend on in order to further physical relationships?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, ourself directed care agency will help individuals with the navigation process that allows both the P.S.W. And the client to focus on what is important, and

that is the care. This is a model that has been very successfully implemented in other jurisdictions such as Washington, California, Australia, Germany, France, and Scotland. And we will be slowly implementing this model to ensure that it meets our goal of excellent care for our very vulnerable seniors and others with chronic conditions. Our government has supported psws through major investments. We delivered on our commitment to raise the new base wage for publicly funded psws to \$ 16.50. We also saw a \$10 million psw training fund which has supported training and education to P.S.W.S working in homes and community care. More to do but definitely on the right track, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Walker (Thompson) (Oosterhoff) to Minister Jaczek Re: Long-Term Care funding

>> MPP Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and congratulations Minister. After 14 years of inadequate investments in long-term care, your government has forced municipalities to fill bigger and bigger funding gaps. This means local property taxpayers are footing more of the operating costs. About \$300 million every year, and sadly the number keeps going up. Meanwhile, your government hasn't so much as kept up with inflationary increases in long-term care. Minister, will you stop this egregious downloading?

>>Minister Jaczek: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question. It's great to have you as my critic again. Mr. Speaker, I'm very familiar with the long-term care homes in this province as in my former capacity as the commissioner of health services for York region, I had the responsibility for the administration of the two municipal homes in York region, the new market health centre and the maple health centre, and so I'm very conscious of the issue of long-term care funding and of course our government has seen increasing funding in really quite a dramatic way over the last number of years. We certainly believe that every Ontarians deserves to grow old with dignity in a safe, secure, and compassionate environment and so we've always made clear that support for long-term care is important and are that's why we continue to make critical investments.

>> MPP Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, back to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Over the holidays and into the new year, Seaforth and Clinton hospitals were filled to capacity in part due to lack of long-term care beds. Staff, patients and families alike tried their very best to deal with this difficult situation. Speaker, they all deserve better so through you to the Minister, I ask what is the Minister going to do to alleviate the need for long-term care beds in rural Ontario?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you Mr. Speaker. So I'd like to elaborate on what we've been doing over the last last number of years. First of all funding for long term care homes has increased by \$348 million or 9% since 2013. Our investment long-term care homes increased by \$80.5 million this year alone we've opened 10,000 long-term care beds and redeveloped 13,500 long-term care beds since 2003 and we've announced that we will be opening 5,000 new long-term care beds over the next four years, as well as providing 15 million more hours of nursing, personal support and therapeutic care annually for residents in long-term care homes. And this is part of our 10-year plan to create more than 30,000 new beds over the next decade.

>> MPP Sam Oosterhoff: place, niagara has seen an enormous influx of retirees that shows no signs of stopping. According to region of niagara numbers, from now until 2031, seniors 65 years and older will account for 60% of our population growth. Senior after senior, in my riding, has expressed concern about the lack of long-term care capacity in niagara. Right now the average wait time for a bed in the niagara peninsula is close to four years. This is almost twice the provincial wait time of two years. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has not built new beds in my riding since woodlands of sunset was completed in 2004. That's over a decade ago. Will the Minister today commit to building more long-term care beds in the niagara region?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I've certainly talked about all the investments we've made and continue to make. As of now I'd like to turn to what we know about the opposition position on this question. We now know that four of their leadership candidates are permitted to

absolutely no action on climate change, and since the commitment in their people's guarantee platform were largely funded by --Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm just trying to show a contrast between what we're proposing to some of the comments made across the way. Basically what we're hearing from the opposition is that they have no plan to increase any of the long-term care homes that we have --We have now a proposal call for applications which will be closing very soon, and we will be announcing the successful applicants.

MPP Gelinas to Minister Naqvi (Jaczek) Re: Long-Term Care Standards

>> MPP France Gelinas: Thank you, Speaker. My question for the acting Premier. Ontario front line's health care workers, many of them are here today with us, are some of the most talented and dedicated people I know, health care providers, folks in long-term care homes, we're being asked to care for our parents, grandparents, frail elderly people with fewer support from this Liberal government than ever before. Why is this Premier standing by and doing nothing while our long-term care system fails both? The dedicated worker and the frail resident needing care.

>> Minister Yasir Naqvi: Well, first of all I want to welcome all the members of Cupe who are here in the House today. They are, as we all know, a very hard working members of our community working in a long-term care setting, Mr. Speaker. Just this morning I had the opportunity to have a sitdown downstairs with some of the Cupe members from Ottawa who work in different communities you like in Ottawa South and Ottawa-orleans, and to hear directly from them the kind of challenges they're seeing. And Speaker, as a government I assured them that our government has a plan to ensure that we have more long-term care beds in our community, Speaker. As you know, the government has announced additional investments in creating 5,000 new long-term care beds over the next four years, and also, Speaker, our commitments have to increase -- And Speaker, also our commitment to increase the number of hours of care that is required to appropriately help our seniors who live in long-term care settings, Speaker. Speaker, there's nothing more important. Than to look after our elderly, parents, grandparents. They're the ones who have worked hard to build this great society that we live in and we also have to provide proper and appropriate care to them.

>> MPP France Gelinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ontario used to have a legislated minimum hours of hands-on care, but this Liberal government abolished it, and since then there is no laws in Ontario that guarantees the amount of care that the seniors in our long-term care homes should get. As it stands right now, we have some very good homes in Ontario, but we also have many, many seniors who are not getting the care they deserve. We have many front line health care workers running off their feet, trying to do the best they can, working short shift after shift after shift. If the Premier asks the dedicated incredible long-term care workers in the House with us right now whether the residents get enough individual care, she would hear a resounding no. They would tell the Premier that we need a minimum standard of four hours of hands on care. And we've been needing it for a long time. So why hasn't the Premier done it?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I do want to assure the member opposite that certainly on this side of the House, we appreciate the number of work that is done by our front line staff and in particular we know that members of Cupe are here and need to have the good work acknowledged at every opportunity. So we have talked about the 15 million more hours of nursing, personal support and therapeutic care annually for residents in long-term care homes and this will increase hours of care to an average of four hours per day per resident. But we're doing a lot more in terms of other supplementary areas of care because we are absolutely committed to providing resident-centered care and investing in people who support our residents each and every day. So what we are doing is that we're providing additional staffing to targeted streams including \$18.5 million per year invested under the high intensity needs funds.

>> MPP France Gelinas: Thank you, Speaker. Those good people travelled a long distance to come here today to deliver one message. We need a legislated four hours minimum standard for in-homecare. Nothing else will do The government has chosen to sweep the problem under the rug. We've seen understaffing going worse, we -- facilities needed to be updated, we've seen wait times

increase by 270%, and the list of people waiting for long-term care now sits at 33,000 people. Years after years, the Liberal government was told four hours-hands-on care was not necessary. We are already doing it, they say. Although the body of evidence and the frontline workers will tell us that four hours of hands-on care is exactly what we need. It is time to care, Minister. Why don't we have four hours of hands on care?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to make it very clear that delivering resident-centered care means all licensees are responsible for providing appropriate levels of staffing based on the individual, and changing care and safety needs for all residents at all times. In other words, individuals get the care that they need and we are increasing the hours of care to an average of four hours per day per resident. And some of these -- these ancillary areas of assistance one of the others I think is of extreme importance is an additional \$10 million for behavioural support for specialized services for residents with cognitive impairment who are exhibiting challenge and complex behaviours. We know that throughout many long-term facilities this is an issue, so this is bringing our government's base funding to \$64 million.

MPP Armstrong to Minister Jaczek Re: Long-Term Care Standards

>> MPP Teresa Armstrong: My question for the acting Premier, in her 2017 annual report, Ontario's auditor general criticized the Liberal government for not providing enough information to the public about the performance of individual long-term care homes. In January, we learned through the media reports that the Premier and her Minister's of health are keeping a secret list of long-term care homes that they consider medium or high risk for Ontario seniors. Families with a loved one in care and the front line health care workers who care for them are now being left to wonder if their loved ones or mom or dad is in a facility that the ministry calls itself high risk. Will the Premier release the list immediately?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and of course, as we've said so many times all residents living in Ontario long-term care homes deserve to be cared for in a safe, secure and compassionate environment and our government is absolutely committed to ensuring their safety and well being through a rigorous inspection system and a regulatory framework that we are continuously working to improve every long-term care home in Ontario under goes a comprehensive, resident quality inspection each year to ensure they are in compliance with the long-term care homes act. When there's a complaint there will be an unannounced inspection also. The results from every inspection are posted online for the public to see, as well as in long-term care homes, and we're actively working to provide even more information online which will be available in the very near future. We're also enhancing our oversight through the strengthening quality and accountability for patients act to ensure all operators are addressing concerns promptly.

>> MPP Teresa Armstrong: According to the auditor general, about 10% of Ontario long-term care homes are high risk. A home's risk level is determined by its record to comply with laws that govern long-term care. Why does the Premier think people living in these homes, and the front line staff who take care of them don't have a right to know if they are at risk.

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So as I've already said, we do inspect very thoroughly. We're working to provide more information online. It will be available in the very near future and it will include specifics related to the performance of individual homes in relation to other homes in the province. So we are doing a number of things through the strengthening quality and accountability for patients act. I've just described some but we're also partnering with the mitcher institute on a personal support worker registry that will improve transparency for patients and families. We have a comprehensive plan to increase safety in our long-term care homes.

>> MPP Teresa Armstrong: Speaker, what New Democrats want for Ontario is zero homes to be on a high risk list. We want the long-term care system fixed and for every home to be a safe, caring place. But this Liberal government has refused to take a serious look at long-term care system with the broad public find and fix inquiries. The Liberal government won't show Ontarians the list, and it's

pretty clear the government is not taking action to fix the problems in long-term care. Why are the Premier and the government continually sweeping the problems in long-term care under the rug?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Well, it's true that our goals are exactly the same, because obviously on this side of the House, we are committed to the safety of the residents living in our long-term care homes and this is why we have taken so many measures to strengthen the quality and the accountability for the residents living in their homes. And as we continue, there's always more work to be done. We're always open to positive ideas for improvement, but I think that the measures that --So we've made so many changes to enhance our oversight system, and we are also increasing financial penalties for home operators with recurring care and safety concerns that are not being addressed.

MPP McDonnell (Wilson) to Minister Jaczek Re: Long-Term Care Funding

>> MPP Jim McDonnell: Thank you, Speaker, the Minister much Health and Long-Term Care. I would like to congratulate the Minister on taking on her new challenge, and we all know that this government has created many challenges. The ministry numbers do not add up. My region is oversupplied -- they state, with long-term care beds yet our residence already face long wait times and our seniors population will double during that time. Moreover, once a patient is assigned to a bed, they're confronted with a broken system. Chronic underfunding leaves less than six minutes for our overworked psws to complete a patient's morning routine, including the highlighted weekly bath. Which fantasy world does this ministry live in? When can we expect a fair and realistic funding required to give our seniors the care they truly deserve?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Speaker. Well perhaps I need to reiterate all the investments that in fact our government has made in the long-term care system. We know that our population is living longer, and developing care needs that are becoming increasingly complex. And that is precisely why our government has increased funding for long-term care homes by \$80.5 million this year, and we've almost doubled the funding since 2003. We have committed to the average of four hours per day of care to residents so is that they do receive the high quality care and access to supports that they need. And I'm sure the member opposite will recognize that to the behavioural supports that I've been speaking about, which I have observed in a home in my riding that cares for those with Alzheimer's, Ensuring excellent quality for the most vulnerable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker .

>> MPP Jim Wilson: Thank you, and back to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and as a former Minister of health, I want to extend my condolences to the new Minister of health. Minister, my offices are flooded on a regular basis, as you can imagine, with inquiries from people seeking help, either finding a bed in long-term care homes or assessing personal -- accessing of personal support workers. One recent example is a 537-year-old man suffering from Alzheimer's. Right now he's sitting in a retirement home, waiting for a bed in long-term care. His wife works full-time, she's raising their 6 I can't remember old daughter. She's also juggling the \$4,600 monthly cost of the retirement home along with her regular House hold expenses. The man's priority for a bed, Minister, recently increased when he was physically attacked by another resident in his retirement home. So, Mr. Speaker -- The government's neglect of long-term care is appalling. Can the Minister explain why her government has failed to build the necessary long-term care beds to keep up with our aging population.

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: And that's precisely what we're doing. Since 200 three, we've opened over 10,000 new long-term care beds intersection. And we developed over 13,500. We know that --And we certainly heard from communities about the need for additional beds. And so we will be supporting our growing and aging population. We put together our action plan for seniors and we're responding to our seniors' growing needs, and that's precisely why we are creating 5,000 new long-term care beds over the next four years. The first phase of those long-term care beds, the applications are being reviewed, the proposal time limit is coming up very shortly, and announcements will be made in the very near future.

MPP Fife to Minister Jaczek Re: Spouse Reunification Long-Term Care

>> MPP Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Since December I have been advocating for the reunification of Patricia and don baton. They have been married for 64 years but are being forced to live apart without each other because of Ontario's broken long-term care system. In fact, when I can, every Friday, I've been driving don to see Patricia. They are a loving couple, and they miss each other. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of health claims that a new reunification regulation has solved the problems, but the Daytons are still separated. In fact Patricia's lhin care worker has asked 387 residents to switch homes and make space for don, but the list has been exhausted, and there is no hope nor reunification in sight, and this is completely unacceptable. Can the acting -- account Minister of health explain why this Liberal government is saying that there is no longer a problem with couple reunification in our long-term care homes when don and Patricia are still living apart?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And certainly stories as illustrated by the member opposite really touch us all, and I think we all understand very clearly the need for spouses to continue to live together whenever we can support them in that goal. And we know it's really important for families and for the emotional supports that they need from each other, and so our government has been giving a very high priority to residents who are seeking to be reunited with a spousal partner, and we're taking a number of steps to ensure this process is as smooth as possible for families. Now, we do know that there's more that we can do, and we recently made changes that designate a number of reunification priority access beds in every long-term care home. These beds will help to address delays in reunification for those in crisis to be reunified with their loved once in a long-term care home.

>> MPP Catherine Fife: Thank you, the MPP for Nickel Belt has been trying to reunite 919-year-old Gottfried Adler and his 88-year-old wife hildegaard as well. The adlers have been separated for over six months after 67 years of marriage. Like the Dayton, the adlers are emotionally distressed because of their separation. Ontario seniors shouldn't have to settle for long-term care system that repeatedly breaks promises and hearts. Will the Minister of health direct her ministry to reunite the Daytons and the adlers today? I'm asking for you are direct intervention to help these families.

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I would certainly say to all members of this House, if one is aware of a particular situation in one's constituency, please feel very free to approach me to draw my attention to that particular item. I have operated like this since being the Minister of community and social services because sometimes there is a solution that can be found more readily. But as a systemic issue going back to the fact that we do have reunification priority access beds, we do encourage families to work with their local lhin partners to ensure that seniors do have access to the care this they need and the best quality of life in their later years. And we are responding to the needs of our growing and aging population. I've mentioned the number of beds that we are increasing over the next --Short time, and we will continue to work in this record. Thank you, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Kiwala to Minister Naidoo-Harris Re: Education Investments

>> MPP Sophie Kiwala: Ontario is now an international leader in education, thanks in part to our historic investments in building new schools. NFL my riding of Kingston and the islands, we have recently opened two new schools, Molly Browns elementary school and just last fall, St. Francis of assisi catholic school. It's a tait the art building, it's designed with a beautiful open concept, and many collaborative spaces. Mr. Speaker, our government recently announced a number of new investments that will bring new and improved schools to students in communities across Ontario. Speaker, through you to the Minister, what is our government doing to build on historic improvements and investments to ensure that students are learning a new and improved schools that support student achievement, equity and well being.

>> Minister Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the member from Kingston and the Islands for this very important question. Mr. Speaker, giving our kids the best possible start in life is one of the most important things we can do as a government. That's why I'm proud of the strong investments our government has made in education. In fact, no government in the history of this province has invested more in building and expanding Ontario's publicly funded education system. That's because we know that investing in our schools is about more than bricks and mortar. Building better schools builds better learning for our students. That's why we've made a historic investment of more than \$18 billion since 2003 in schools, building more than 860 new schools, and more than 840 additions and improvements -- Mr. Speaker, these investments in modern learning environments ensure -- That our students are on a strong path to success.

>> MPP Sophie Kiwala: We are extremely proud of the investments made in Ontario's publicly-funded education system, and we know that giving students the best possible learning environment, high quality and modern buildings is part of our plan to grow the economy, create jobs, and bring fairness and opportunity to the people of Ontario. The French community and Kingston and surrounding areas growing, and our government is doing more to support that growth. Recently I had the honour of making a very special announcement in my riding.: This was an announcement that I was very proud of. I was very proud to see everyone get together and work together with such an intention for our students. (End of Translation) Recently announced \$740 million to sand and renovate 79 schools across the province. Minister, can you please tell us more about the project in Kingston and how we are providing student achievement with investments in new and improved school facilities.

>> Minister Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, thanks to the member from Kingston for this important question. Mr. Speaker, we are committed to supporting school boards by providing modern learning environments for our students because we know these places put our kids on a path to success. That's why we recently announced \$24 million for the construction of new joint use facilities for ecole secondaire public --Voice of Translator: I was very happy to see everyone work together for the interest of our students Not only build schools but also build communities. This new facility includes 49 child care spaces and will accommodate 600 students. Is this total capital investment will support --These investments in new schools support student achievement, fairness and opportunity.

MPP Romano (Scott) to Minister Jaczek Re: Long-Term Care Overcrowding

>> MPP Ross Romano: Thank you Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Let me first off congratulate you in your new position. I do believe you find yourself within an unenviable position, give your challenges in long-term care. Currently in Sault Ste. Marie, we have over 1,000 people in long-term care beds, and there's about 700 people on waiting lists, waiting upwards of three years to secure a long-term care bed. Our local hospitals are constantly operating overcapacity and they lack the resources is and the space to be able to keep up with the demand. To say that our long-term care situation reaching a breaking point would be an understatement. Recently the C.E.O. Of our local hospital, Ron Gagnon, indicated that we need 750 new beds in Sault Ste. Marie now in order to relieve our future and current demand. My question is will you commit to building these beds immediately in Sault Ste. Marie?

>>Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and as we have announced, we will be opening 5,000 new long term care beds over the next four years. And we have now opened to the call for applications to understand the needs at the community level to determine where the new beds should be allocated and we certainly intend to continue to actively engage in further consultation with the public. Long-term care home providers and placement coordinators to establish a long-term plan to meet the growing and changing needs of Ontario seniors no matter where they are. We have recently announced, just before Christmas we announced 50 new long-term care beds in London and an additional 128 new beds for the havelock community. We are listening to communities and we're opening beds where they're needed.

>> MPP Laurie Scott: Thank you Mr. Speaker and back to the Minister of health-and-long-term care. Congratulations on your new post. For years, long-term care capacity issues have been one of my constituent's biggest concerns. That's because Haliburton Kawartha Lakes- Brock has the highest ratio of need-to-available beds in Ontario. There are currently 2,169 people on the wait list for long-term care beds in my riding, and on any given day, 30 to 40% of local hospital beds are occupied by people who should be receiving care in long-term care homes. This government self failing if our seniors, Mr. Speaker. It's unacceptable that our mothers, our fathers, our grandparents, waiting years to get the care they so desperately need. So my question to the Minister is how does he explain this government's failure on this file to the more than 2,000 people waiting for long-term care beds in my riding?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And of course we are addressing the capacity challenges that the member opposite is referencing and we are aware of different demographics in different communities, and certainly this is why the call for applications is being looked at so closely to make sure that we match the new beds with the need in the community. As she referenced some of the issues around hospital overcrowding as well, so I do want to remind her that we have created 503 transitional care spaces outside of hospital for up to 1,700 patients who don't require care in a hospital. So we're trying to address each piece of this issue of capacity and I believe that we're going exactly the right direction.

MPP Sattler to Minister Jaczek Re: Mental Health Care

>> MPP Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The mental health unit at London health sciences centre has been overcrowded for years, and it's getting worse, not better. Psychiatric beds have been forced to operate at 140, 150, even 165% occupancy, day after day. Which is far above the safe occupancy rate of 85%. Now we've learned that ten new psychiatric beds will finally be added but the beds won't come with funding for new doctors or health care workers to care for patients. Speaker, adding bed without adding staff will not fix the overcrowding crisis, it will only make the problems worse. Why is this Liberal government refusing to fund both the beds that are needed and the appropriate staff –

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And certainly the member opposite has referenced an issue that I think we all acknowledge is extremely important, and that's the care of those with mental health issues, addictions issues, and as a former member of the select committee on mental health and addiction, I certainly would like to see as much as we can possibly do to address this particular area. But our government has certainly been making major investments in this particular area, and so very proud to be part of a government that has increased mental health spending every year. We've now committed to putting forward more than \$1.9 billion over the next ten years. We've been building on our mental health strategy, healthy minds, and taking action on recent recommendations made by Ontario's mental health and addictions leadership advisory council.

>> MPP Peggy Sattler: Mr. Speaker since this Premier came to office in 2013 London health sciences centre has seen \$141 million cut from its budget. That's the equivalent of nearly 500 full-time health care workers. As a result, we've seen chronic hospital overcrowding, especially for mental health beds and not enough staff to care for patients. Currently, the hospital is staffed for 71 psychiatric beds but there are 28 extra beds in operation every day. There are mental health patients lining the emergency room hallway on a daily basis, waiting for a bed. It's gotten so bad that people in mental health crisis who should be in hospital won't go to the E.R. For the help they need. Why is this Liberal government refusing to fix the hospital overcrowding crisis that Liberal cuts have created in London.

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I have just been informed that apparently five psychiatrists and one nurse practitioner are being hired now at the London health science centre. And to continue on the number of investments that we're making, we're developing a province-wide publicly funded, structured psychotherapy program that will help people with things

like mood disorders, anxiety and depression and other supports to manage their needs. And we will be the first province in Canada to do this. We're creating along with the ministry of children and youth services a network of integrated service hubs that will provide one stop access to health services as well as other health, peer-to-peer, employment and housing support.

MPP Matthews to Minister Zimmer Re: Aboriginal Community Support Reconciliation

>> MPP Deb Matthews: Well, thank you, Speaker, and my question also is not for our superstar, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, it is for the Minister of indigenous relations and reconciliation. Speaker, our government is committed to creating fairness and opportunity for all Ontarians, however, Barriers to economic participation are continuing in equality in income and employment rates are major challenges for indigenous peoples in Ontario, particularly in northern Ontario. Over the past 15 years, the Liberal governments have taken many actions in close collaboration with our indigenous partners to drive economic development and build a better future for indigenous communities after years of inaction, neglect, and worse, under the Harris Conservatives. Can the Minister tell us more about how our government is supporting the indigenous communities to fully participate in our economy.

>> Minister David Zimmer: Thank you, Speaker. Speak, since 2008 we have provided \$136 million through our new relationship fund to close the socio-economic gap and support indigenous economic participation, including nearly \$25 million for first nations. Our \$95 million indigenous economic development fund, which the P.C.S voted against in 2014, has provided \$25 million in funding to date. It will provide another \$70 million in additional funding over the next seven years. Our indigenous community exam grants programme has provided \$34 million in funding to key infrastructure projects and through our \$650 million Aboriginal loan guarantee programme, a major initiative under the green energy act, which the P.C.S say they will repeal -- We have continued to support meaningful participation in renewable energy projects for indigenous communities in Ontario.

>> MPP Deb Matthews: Well, thank you Speaker. The PCs say they support economic development for indigenous communities but actions speak louder than words, Speaker. The truth is they consistently voted against the key investments we're making to support Ontario first nations. Education is key to indigenous economic development and to reconciliation and it's a shame that to the Conservatives voted against our landmark osap overhaul which has helped drive a 35% increase in one year, Speaker, a 35% increase in hot number of indigenous students receiving osap over the past year. What's more, just in December they voted against the historic \$56 million investment in indigenous institutes, allowing indigenous learners to gain the skills --Is actively supporting.

>> Minister David Zimmer: Speaker, the fact is the PCs have no real plan for indigenous economic development. They voted against our fair hydro plan and the first nations delivery credits which were commanded by non-other than Ontario regional chief Isidore day as an important step to reduce poverty and economic development. They voted against our landmark \$1 billion commitment to the ring of fire infrastructure in the tribal council area. Speaker, reconciliation is more than words! Speaker, it's about action. By voting against key actions we were taking, the PCs made it clear they are not -- On Ontarians journey towards reconciliation. Cuts are coming if the PCs form the next --

MPP Jones (Coe) to Minister Jaczek Re: Long-Term Care Overcrowding

>> MPP Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Welcome top day one. I would like to share a heartbreaking story from a family in Dufferin-caledon who were struggling to find care for their father. 93-year-old dad from bell fountain, he was forced to go to London, three hours away, to find a long-term care placement. Three hours away from friends and family. To quote his daughter, something needs to be done to help the seniors of Ontario to live out the rest of their lives in dignity in a facility that is able to deal with their needs.

Why is this government failing to provide the care that Ontario seniors deserve?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and certainly when we hear of stories as the member of Dufferin-Caledon has related, we're obviously extremely sympathetic and we know that we need to ensure that people live out their lives in dignity and in safety, and that's precisely why we have announced the addition of some 5,000 more long-term care beds over the next four years. And this is something that will be tailored to individual communities through the application process. The first tronche of this is coming to a conclusion very, very shortly and I would simply of say to the member opposite that we are doing exactly what I think she is intending for her constituents, to have access to the kind of care that they require.

>> MPP Lorne Coe: Thank you, Speaker. Back to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. According to the Ontario ministry of finance, the number of seen years, Speaker, is expected to more than double by 2036. 200,000 seniors alone in Durham region. Speaker, the central east local health integration network, which includes the region of Durham has the highest number of patients waiting for long-term care placement in Ontario. Thousands and thousands of men and women waiting. Clearly the local government isn't meeting the long-term care needs of thousands of seniors in the region of Durham. Speaker, will the Liberal government commit today to address the long-term care crisis in the region of Durham?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and yes, the demographics of individual areas are certainly the subject of study. I know under a former Minister of health and long term care MPP Deb Matthews this was an area of intense concentration and that's precisely where we have issued the application process in the way this we have so that weekend sure that the beds go where they are needed to go. We are making substantial investments, just to reiterate, we've doubled the funding for long-term care over --

MPP Tabuns to Minister McGarry Re: GO Train Expansion

>> MPP Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. My question's to the acting Premier. Yesterday we received further confirmation that Ontario's \$23.1 billion go expansion programme has been reduced to little more than a Liberal re-election scheme. We already have evidence that the former Minister of transportation intervened after metrolinx rejected a proposed new station in his riding. Yesterday. We found out there was another, this time in the riding in the Minister of housing, is suddenly back on the table. Meanwhile, go riders --From Toronto who use existing patients are getting their Why is the Premier putting regional express rail at risk just to serve the short term political interests of the Liberal party?

>> Minister Kathryn McGarry: Thank you very much, Speaker and thank you to the member opposite for the question, but metrolinx's board of directors approved the addition of 12 new go stations in June 2016. As they've stated, this decision comes as a result of initial business case analysis, extensive consultation with municipal and regional representatives, community engagement and collaboration between the ministry of transportation and metrolinx on wider regional transit and transportation plans. All proposed new stations require additional technical and planning analysis which has been made very clear. Metrolinx has done substantial work on their business case analysis methodology. They've now committed to posting business cases prior to board decisions for all new go stations. The business cases and recommendations still need to be approved by metrolinx -- For its directors on March he will. I look forward to -- March 8th. I look forward to seeing the results. Thank you.

>>MPP Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker, again to the acting Premier the estimated cost of new go stations have skyrocketed. Coincidence with the decision to procure R.E.R. Via public private partnership. Not only is the Premier using metrolinx to help reelect her Minister, she's also offering up billions in public dollars to private investors while delivering less service to riders. Toronto area transit has been in a permanent state of chaos since the Premier, when she was transportation Minister, agreed to rip up transit city and the big move, and this Premier has aloud her Minister s to

rewrite evidence-based transit plans to suit their own political needs. How can the Premier expect the public to trust the government to invest transit dollars wisely when she keeps putting her political ambitions ahead of the public interest.

>> Minister Kathryn McGarry: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to express that our government's making the single largest investment in Ontario's history, much of which the NDP party has voted against. As parts of this investment, we're continuing to move forward with one of the largest transit builds in the world today, through our 31.5 billion moving Ontario forward plan, we're investing \$13.5 billion in go, regional express rail, to increase the transit ridership, reduce travel times, manage congestion, connect people to jobs and improve the economy, all of which the people across the way have voted against. This is part of our \$21.3 billion transformation of the go rail network. Making it the largest commuter rail programme in Canada. We continue to work closely with Metrolinx to bring regional express you rail to got network. We hope to have support of the opposition members in order to provide transit to the people of Ontario.

MPP Potts to Minister Coteau Re: Anti-Racism Directorate

>> MPP Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker, my question is to the Minister responsible for the anti-racism directorate. Last Thursday, Speaker, I co-hosted a meeting, a town hall about racism in my community with my M.P. Colleague Nathaniel erskine-smith, the Minister responsible for the anti-racism directive was in attendance as was M.P. Ikra Khalid who talked about the federal initiatives it going ton to fights racism in our community. We had approximately 200 people attend to discuss this very important issue, and conversations as we know about racism are often very difficult to have. At this particular meeting, the conversation got quite heated at times. The meeting was continually disrupted by a vocal few who question whether anti-racism existed and was necessary, or a strategy was necessary or warranted. So public discourse is difficult, Speaker, but I want to raise this issue in the House, because I think it's important for all of us to engage in a conversation. To better understand what happened I represent a great area of Beaches- East York and I wonder if the Minister could please initiate a dialogue with us here today about racism.

>> Minister Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to just take a quick second to thank the member from Beaches- East York for hosting the town hall. In fact I believe it was the first town hall hosted by an individual MPP here in Ontario specifically where I was invited to speak about racism and it is a difficult situation. You know, these types of conversations can get emotional, often ugly. But it is a conversation that we need to have in Ontario because like I always say, there is a cost to standing still. If we don't do something about racism today, it will continue to erode our values here in the province of Ontario and I want to thank the member for having the courage to have that conversation in this riding. Well, Mr. Speaker, just under two years ago we started the anti-racism directorate and it was the Premier's commitment to lack for ways to fight systemic racism here in Ontario. And in the supplement I'd like to talk some of the accomplishments we've able to accomplish.

>> MPP Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker and I want to thank the Minister as well for attending. His presence at that meeting was such a calming influence, would have become a very heated situation. He's to be commended for the incredible work he's doing with the directorate and bringing these issues to light in Ontario. These meetings are extremely important. At the town hall we heard very real concerns expressed about according, corrections issue, racial disparity and jury selection, appointments process, identity based data Collection and first nations child welfare. In Ontario alone, we have people from over 200 nations who speak over 130 different languages and with immigration driving population growth and racialized people making up a significant portion of our new population, it's essential for us to be ready to to be inclusive in Ontario. The conversations must continue and we need to work relentlessly to take what we learn from the people of Ontario. -- And put it into tangible actions. So Speaker, could the Minister please elaborate more on what the secretariat and others are doing.

>> Minister Michael Coteau: Thank you, thank you Mr. Speaker and thank you for the question. The

anti-racism directorate over the last two years has established a directive. We've moved forward with legislation to back up the directorate. In addition to that, we've held a conference, developed a three-year strategic plan and we've had conversations right across the province. And later this year we will do an awareness campaign to fight systemic racism here in Ontario but let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. When we talk about systemic racism, we know that there are thousands of people across this province that are affected by racism every single day and there's a moral imperative to fight racism but there's also an economic argument to be made. If we don't utilize our full potential as a province to ensure that people can reach their full potential without Barrier, it is not, it not only effects racialized people but it effects all of us here in this room and all of us across this province. Being the economic engine of this country, it affects Canada. So we need to continue to band together because there's more of us --

MPP Bailey to Minister Jaczek Re: Long-Term Care Spaces

>> MPP Bob Bailey: My question is to the Minister of health. Welcome. Minister, last pry I visited with the residents and staff of Ashton park long-term care home in Sarnia to discuss the state of long-term care in our community. In Sarnia and across the Erie St. Claire lhin there are more than 600 seniors on waiting lists for long-term care. There are 124 seniors waiting for a space at Ashton park alone. Many on that list will be forced to wait over 500 days for a basic bed. Minister, once someone gets a space they quickly realize the staff are run off their feet, trying to keep up with the work load. I hear this at my offers on a regular basis. In Sarnia Lambton, the demand for more beds and proper staffing levels is becoming an urgent matter. Minister, will you commit to creating beds and improving staffing levels in all of Sarnia and Lambton's long-term care homes.

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For a minute there I was feeling somewhat neglected. I want to assure the member from Sarnia that we will be opening new beds, we'll be looking very carefully at each community across the province. We will continue to support the work that our front line care workers do each and every day, and I look forward to being able to make some announcements on the new beds in the near future. Thank you.