

Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Tuesday, May 1, 2018

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Transcript of Provincial Question Period
41st Parliament, 3rd Session
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MPP Fedeli to Minister Thibeault Re: Trillium Power

>> MPP Vic Fedeli: Thank you and good morning, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Yesterday we learned disturbing new details about this government's deleted documents scandal in the trillium power lawsuit. We've learned that documents appear to have been destroyed or deleted by this Liberal government. Speaker, that's why on behalf of our leader Doug Ford the P.C. Paras written to the information and privacy commissioner seeking an investigation into what exactly happened to these lawsuit documents. This government has had six years, six years, Speaker, to find the documents we know exist. The lawyers against the government provided evidence these files were deliberately destroyed or deleted. This is the gas plant scandal all over. Speaker, I ask the Premier, are we really going to do this all

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. As said before and as the opposition well knows, we can't comment specifically on the lawsuit from trillium power as the matter is before the courts, Mr. Speaker. But with respect to record keeping, we are committed to being an open, accountable and transparent government. We have taken action, Mr. Speaker, to strengthen the laws related to record keeping and we ensured that there are good policies in place for document retention and staff training. As well, Mr. Speaker, we've worked closely with the information and privacy commissioner and the chief privacy officer. And the archivists of Ontario to ensure that our policies are appropriate, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Fedeli: Back to the Premier. I can tell you there was nothing appropriate about this. The former Liberal chief of staff to the Premier has been sentenced to jail for orchestrating the deletion of gas plant scandal documents, and this sounds absolutely identical to that. Let me read the court filing. In-house counsel for the government have refused to acknowledge or admit the destruction of incriminating energy documents, even though this has now been proven beyond a reasonable doubt in criminal proceedings. Who is this government trying to kid? The Liberals thought they were clever last time, and it ended up with jail doors smming. Speaker, Where are the documents that trillium power has demanded?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As said before and I'll say it again, Mr. Speaker, to the opposition, they know that we can't comment specifically on the lawsuits from trillium power as that matter is before the courts, Mr. Speaker. But in 2016, Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that trillium requested that the OPP investigate their allegations related to the moratorium on wind energy. Those allegations were thoroughly investigated and found to be unsubstantiated, Mr. Speaker. The investigation was promptly closed after the OPP found no evidence to support trillium's allegations, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before, when it comes to respect to record keeping, Mr. Speaker, we're committed to being an open accountable and transparent government. We've worked closely with the information and privacy commissioner and the chief privacy officer. And the archivists of Ontario to ensure that our policies, Mr. Speaker, are appropriate and they have said so.

>> MPP Fedeli: Thank you. Back to the Premier. Well, the reason there was no evidence is because it was destroyed by the Liberal we all know that Liberal insiders have lined their pockets from the energy file for years. That could explain this section of the trillium power court filing, referring to their competitor. Quote -- unknown publicly at the time, wind stream -- Windstream energy has hired Chris Benedetti, a senior government relations person, who had close and deep relationships into the office of the Premier, the Minister of energy and others at the time he was a campaign co-chair for the Ontario Liberal party in 2011. Quote. The Premier was also a campaign co-chair. Records of Benedetti's communications to and from the office of the Premier, on behalf of wind stream, have been wiped out, Speaker. Will the Premier tell us, are the Liberals destroying evidence in this case, too?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again we've taken action to strengthen the laws related to record keeping, and we, Mr. Speaker, this government has ensured that there are good

policies in place for document retention and staff training. We worked with the information and privacy commissioner on that, Mr. Speaker. We worked with the chief privacy officer and the archivists of Ontario, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that our policies are appropriate. And that decision, Mr. Speaker, that policy to place a moratorium on offshore wind is one that our government still believes is correct, Mr. Speaker. Ontario continues to take a cautious approach to offshore wind, which includes finalizing research to make sure that we are protective of both human health and the environment, Mr. Speaker. Because protecting the environment is something that we take very seriously. We're not going to pave over the greenbelt, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Fedeli to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Executive Salaries

>> MPP Vic Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. It turns out the Premier's \$6 million man has a price after all. It just happened to be a political price. After weeks of P.C. Leader Doug Ford sounding the siren call against outrageous executive compensation at hydro O, it's wonderful to see the per and this government now following Doug Ford's lead? Thank you, this Premier and this government, which is only interested in its own survival finally read the political tea leaves and told the Hydro One board what Doug Ford has been calling for all along, that we need a lid on fat-cat executive salaries. Speaker, to the Premier. Why did it take Doug Ford and the Ontario P.C. Party shedding a light on this scandalous deal for the T government to finally act?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, coming from that party where there was a video released meeting with fat-cat developers, Mr. Speaker? Coming from them? Unbelievable. Over the weekend, Mr. Speaker, our government urged Hydro One's board to revisit its executive compensation model. As Hydro One -- shareholder, Mr. Speaker, we welcome the decision to re-examine the compensation model, which will include independent advice. The board's decision to increase executive compensation was done without our involvement, Mr. Speaker. Changes to compensation and severance were adopted by the board late last year but were not raised with us before the release of the 2018 management information circular on March 29th. The board now acknowledges that its largest shareholder should be engaged on such material issues and that changes are needed. And I know, Mr. Speaker, while Doug Ford and the P.C.S. would take an erratic and reckless approach and fire Hydro One's board, which would do absolutely nothing to reduce customer rates -- We believe in a stable solution that exercises our authority as the largest shareholder. Our government continues to focus on fairness, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Fedeli: Back to the Premier. That lead response is only coming now because the Premier and her millionaires' club have been exposed just before the election. If this Liberal government truly had any respect for the taxpayers, the Premier would fire the \$6 million man and the entire board at hydro. The Premier told this legislature earlier she has the authority to do that. Then they said they don't. Now it appears they do. Instead the Premier and her Minister have stood here defending their insider friends, justifying this outrageous salary and continuing to line their pockets. Speaker, will the Premier just admit that this deathbed conversion is only because she admits Doug Ford is right?

>> Minister Thibeault: So, Mr. Speaker, the approach that the official opposition is taking is like letting a bull run through a China shop, Mr. Speaker. They want to fire the board of a publicly traded company, not a government entity. This is incredibly, Mr. Speaker, incredibly irresponsible and it's up to Doug Ford to explain how this would actually work, Mr. Speaker. Their gimmick will drag us down into the same mess that we've seen in the US and won't do anything to take a cent off anyone's bills, Mr. Speaker. And I know it's the member from Prince Edward-Hastings would say, Ford's scheme is chaotic and out of control. Instead of our government, we have taken a responsible approach. After hearing of the compensation changes, our government engaged in careful and necessary analysis and determined that these changes were unjustifiably generous. This weekend, Mr. Speaker, our government urged Hydro One to revisit its executive compensation model, and that's a responsible approach, Mr. Speaker. The other side of the chamber. The official opposition is

>> MPP Fedeli: Thank you. Back to the Premier. Let's remember what the Hydro One board did. They

doubled, they doubled the severance packages for Hydro One executives while this government stood idly by doing nothing, even though they could have taken action to prevent this. Instead they let Liberal friends line the pockets of other Liberal friends. They come first while Ontario families struggle with skyrocketing hydro bills, deciding whether to heat or eat, as the winter disconnection ban comes to an end today. Well, in 38 days the party with the taxpayers' money is over. Speaker, will the Premier stand with the people and not the millionaires and vote for our opposition day motion today?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So what we have on the other side is chaotic and out of control, Mr. Speaker. They're talking about firing people left and right, which would do absolutely nothing to reduce rates for people in this province. We believe, Mr. Speaker, in a stable solution that exercises our authority as the largest shareholder. That's what we did this weekend, Mr. Speaker. That's what we'll continue to do but we will not be voting in favour of the opposition motion, Mr. Speaker, because when it comes to doing something, Mr. Speaker, they actually stand up and vote against the fair hydro plan. They voted against giving families a 25% reduction, Mr. Speaker. You know what, Mr. Speaker? We did hear over the last few years that people were telling us that electricity prices were too high. So we acted, Mr. Speaker. We made sure that the fair hydro plan reduced rates by 25% for most families, all families across the province and those rural parts of our province, Mr. Speaker. On the northern parts they saw reductions anywhere between 35% to 50%. We acted, Mr. Speaker. The only thing they do is vote against.

MPP Gates to Minister Sousa Re: Auto Insurance Rates

>> MPP Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, my question's to the Premier. Earlier this morning, York University professor Dr. Fred Lazar published a report that confirmed what the NDP has been saying for years. Auto insurance companies are making huge excessive profits on the backs of Ontario families. In 2016, in just one year, auto insurance companies in Ontario have made \$1.5 billion in pre-tax profits. That's an increase of nearly 60% since 2012. Why did the Premier deliver a 60% increase in profits to the insurance companies instead of delivering 15% in savings for Ontario families?

>> Minister Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member's citing of the report by the Ontario trial lawyers association. In which they came forward talking about some of the alarming costs that do in fact exist in our system. It is why we've taken a comprehensive plan to increase consumer protection, combat fraud and ensure those injured in an accident get the care they need when they need it. It's about care, Mr. Speaker, and not cash, which is what we're trying to avoid in the abuse of the system. Through our auto -- Ontario's fair auto insurance plan we are creating independent medical examination centres, improving care by creating a standard treatment plan for those minor injuries. That way we avoid those whiplash and sprains and of course legal costs, which are of course adding to the costs in the system. The serious fraud office currently costs the system \$1.6 billion, Mr. Speaker. We've got to curb that cost as well. So we'll work with the law society on their contingency fees. Look on post-audit review and I'll have more to say on the supplementary.

>> MPP Gates: Again back to the Premier. The Premier said it was a stretch goal to keep her promise to reduce auto insurance rates by 15%. The Premier believes that auto insurance companies just couldn't afford to charge less. Now we know that auto insurance companies extracted an extra \$5 billion in overpayments from Ontario families. That's \$143 every year that could have stayed in the pockets of each Ontario driver. Why does this Premier care more about delivering profits for auto insurance companies that -- instead of delivering savings to Ontario families who are being gouged?

>> Minister Sousa: Mr. Speaker, so in continuation, I mean we have provided some regulatory framework, financial services regulatory authority. Provides oversight auto insurance and regulatory power, increasing consumer protection and greater supports to fight the very issues of fraud and curb those costs. Costs which now have reduced, on average, at one point as high as 11%. We know we've got to do better and it is an issue but we've also taken steps to put in constraints around the

profits that insurance companies make, taking the benchmark for profits down to 5% from 6%, Mr. Speaker. We've also created an expert panel reviewing all of these matters together so that we can work as one to ensure that we put consumers first and we address the issue of fraud, reduce the costs thereby reducing the premiums. Thank you, Mr. Speaker .

>> MPP Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again back to the Premier. Even after gouging Ontario families and Collecting an extra 60% in excess profits, auto insurance companies are still applying for higher auto insurance rates as they make \$1.5 billion in profit and they reduce benefits for injured in auto accidents. And this Liberal government is approving them. A few weeks ago the financial service commission of Ontario approved an auto insurance rate increase of 2.23%. This was the sixth increase in the last two years. After everything, how is it possible that the Premier is still allowing auto insurance companies to gouge Ontario families even more?

>> Minister Sousa: So, Mr. Speaker, we are instituting David Marshall' review of the auto insurance system much it's very comprehensive. Very detailed. And we know that, by taking these STE we are making long-term benefit changes to the reforms in the system. These are not just one-stopgap measures like the opposition has just proposed. Instead we're making structural changes to put consumers first and address fraud. Implementing measures that will provide timely care for victims of accidents that lead to savings for consumers. We recognize there's auto insurance company providers out there. Thompete against one another. We know that we can do better, and within the system costs can go down. Premiums should go down. We're going to continue to fight to do just that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Forster to Minister Malhi Re: Women's Support Funding

>> MPP Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker. My question's to the Minister of status of women. Why is the Liberal government denying funding to niagara women's enterprise centre and the welland heritage council and multicultural centre in my riding?

>> Minister Harinder Malhi: Thank you for your question. And I know that we have been funding a number of organizations across the province. There is a system that we use to fund the organizations, and it's done object the bureaucratic side where everything is graded according to the criteria. A number of those organizations you've referred to there were some programs approved. Others were not approved. From my understanding, and I can look into it for you if that's the case, but we do understand that a couple of the ones you are referencing, the ministry has -- and my staff has reachut T them to talk about why their application wasn'unded at this time. Thank you you.

>> MPP Forster: Both of these organizations have been in contact with me and they have been declined funding for delivering programs for newcomers, women who exp Erience domestic violence and those who are looking for employment. Mr. Speaker, this government talks about their gender-based violence strategy, but here they are doing exactly the opposite. They're cutting funding for two important organizations who have been divering programs in my riding for 12 years. Niagara women's enterprise services 100 to 120 women per year. They provide services to 60 women through the investing in futures, and a total of 1,200 women through that program and 370 women through the violence against women's program over the last 12 years. So, Speaker, I ask again, if the Liberals are committed to supporting women escaping domestic violence and new immigrants comingur country. Why are they cutting funding to these two important agencys in my riding

>> Minister Malhi: Mr. Speaker, again we have made up to \$242 million investment in our gender-based violence policy. Also through our women's economic empowerment strategy. We are -- investment in our women's centres. Now we have almost -- we've increased that investment that we're making in our women's centres now. Up until now some of them were not getting funding. We have induced the program where all women's centres will have access to this funding. And these are the organizations that are supporting women, our most vulnerable women, immigrant women and women from racialized groups, women from the lgbtq plus community. So we have done -- we are

working hard to ensure that women who are in vulnerable places who need our help and we are providing those supports and help to the programs we are offering whether it be our gender-based violence policy or – Strateg

>> MPP Forster: Well, Speaker, these were programs that were working. And in fact these two agencies, when they tendered their -- put their R.F.P. In, they had 16 endorsements from community partners. They were working with Colleges, with employment centres. They've been doing a fantastic job over the last 12 years. And now here they are, with no fair resources. Who is going to support the women in my riding and in my community? Why is the Liberal government actually cutting funding to these programs that actually were working? Programs that supported women escaping domestic violence, support women who actually experienced violence in their homelands, in our new immigrants to our communities. These are the women that need it most and I just can't understand why it is these two agencies were not approved the funding that they've had for many years.

>> Minister Malhi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again I want to say that there is a process, when applications are taken in. We have increased funding as we've said. We have increased our funding to up to \$242 million much we are increasing funding for sexual assault centres across Ontario by 35%. We're improving access to services including emergency shelters, crisis help line and indigenous shelters with the investment of up to \$84.2 million. We are ensuring that we're reaching out to our rural communities, indigenous communities and our most vulnerable communities. So, Mr. Speaker, we have done our best to ensure that we are reaching out to as many communities as possible through the funding that we have available but we do have to follow a process.

MPP Smith to Minister Naqvi Re: Trillium Power

>> MPP Todd Smith: Thanks, Speaker. My question's for the Premier. Freedom of information requests to both the Premier's office and Cabinet office on the trillium power lawsuit turned up no relevant documents. We know that the ability to go back and retrieve some documents exists. Arned from the gas plant scandal hearings and we learned it from the OPP But after more than six years, we're still missing documents from this Liberal government in this court case. The Premier can't claim that it was before her time. From the court filings, quote, offshore wind and trillium power wind generated more than weekly updates after Premier Wynne had taken power. Once again this is completely consistent with the time line for the prior deletion of the gas P energy documents, end quote. So, Speaker, to the Premier, what are you doing today to find --These documents that you are required for the court proceedings?

>> Minister Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. I again remind the member opposite, who I know knows the rules quite well, that when there is an ongoing litigation, the legislature or the question period is not the appropriate place to debate what may be happening in that court process. I know there are political cheap shots to be made and that's why they continue to disregard our very fundamental rule that is in place. And so again I urge the member, Speaker, to respect the process. In terms of, Speaker, OPP I do want to mention that in 2016, trillium requested that the osts investigate the allegations related today moratorium on wind energy. Those allegations were thoroughly investigated and found to be unsubstantiated. The investigation was promptly closed after the OPP Found no evidence. To support trillium's allegations, Speaker. Speaker, let's talk about policy that's extremely important. This government has taken important steps. To provide information to the government.

>> MPP Smith: Speaker, that answer was eerily similar to the Premier's former chief of staff, who was just sentenced to time behind bars. This is the arrogance of this Liberal government when it comes to this issue, Mr. Speaker, and enough is enough. Ontarians have heard enough excuses about this government's email and document deletion to last a generation. In sentencing David Livingston last month for his role in orchestrating the gas plant cover-up, justice Lipton wrote he was, quote, a politically sophisticated government actor who committed this offence because of political expediency. In other words it was a Liberal covering up for his Liberal friends, doing what's best for

the Liberal party instead of the people of Ontario. No more, Mr. Speaker. The party's over. Speaker, to the Premier. How many more Liberals are we going to discover destroyed documents.

>> Minister Naqvi: Speaker, it's so interesting because, as we're leading to an election, instead of speaking big their policies, they're already running away from what their leader Doug Ford stands for, Speaker. Instead of talking about and embracing the fact that they are going to cut the minimum wage for hard working Ontarians or talk about how they're going to cut taxes for wealthy, large businesses, or, Speaker, to talk about how they're going to cut 45,000 hardworking Ontarians who work as teachers and personal support workers or nurses, Speaker Speaker, let's talk about the policies that they stand for versus policies that we stand for. Where we want to invest in people. We want to ensure that there is more care like health care, mental health care for people. We know what Doug Ford and the Conservative party stands for. And that is to bulldoze the greenbelt

MPP Mantha to Minister Jaczek Re: Long-Term Care

>> MPP Michael Mantha: Thank you. My question is to the Premier this morning. Has been diagnosed with dementia and his wife Linda has been taking care of him ever since. In March 2017, she took a six-month leave from her career to care for him. In September 2017, she chose to quit her job as being needed 24/7 care. There are programs in this rural area, which she has access. They had 14 hours a week for the personal support worker provided by LHINs. However being classified to be in crisis. They could have had 21 hours a week. The problem is that there was no staff available to fulfil this. They could have had 180 hours a month from VON but there were only ten spaces open which were already filled and they had no funding for extra spaces. Can the Premier tell me why this government is not investing in home care in northern Ontario?

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and of course we are trying to do everything we can to provide the care that individuals need. The care that they need where they need it, and in this particular case the question is providing home care in a rural setting. We are aware that there has been difficulty in ensuring that we have sufficient P.S.W. Staff, as an example. And so in our budget, we have made a concerted effort in the 2018 budget, proposed an additional 5,000 P.S.W. Workers across the province. There is an issue in terms of attracting people to this very valuable service that our residents need. We are also working. In terms with the association for P.S.W.S to ensure they have the appropriate training as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker .

>> MPP Mantha: Again to the Premier. Bane is now in a very good facility Centennial Manor little current, one that I regularly visit and enjoying seeing the smiling faces of those that are there. This is a 115-kilometre round-trip from her home in Mindemoya. Linda makes this trip four to five times a week. Linda chose to leave Bane in a long-term care because she was in crisis. She was burnt out and could not access VONs or LHINs because there was no P.S.W. To assist in giving her the little breathing space that she needed. When is this government going to invest to end the shortage of nurses and P.S.W.S, as well as properly help people who want to care for their loved one at their homes?

>> Minister Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, this is exactly why in our budget we have put so much emphasis on health care, and not just the issue of P.S.W.S. I also -- that I just recently referenced in the first question, but also all the interconnecting pieces. This is precisely why we announced that we are opening 5,000 new long-term-care beds over the next couple of years. All the pieces in the health care system are very interconnected, and we are addressing each one of these pieces in a methodical and careful way, in consideration of the demographics of each particular area in each LHIN, we're looking at what the needs are, and we are addressing them through our various budgetary commitments that we have made. And so we will continue to invest in our health care system. It is a world-class health care system. There's always more to do and we intend to do it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker

MPP McMeekin (Sandals) to Minister Ballard Re: Ontario Greenbelt

>> MPP Ted McMeekin: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of the environment and climate change. Back in 2003, Speaker, our urban communities were sprawling at a dangerous rate. And every year, tens of thousands of acres of farm land, wild lands and wetlands including ravines and rivers were being encroached by new development. Ontarians were rightly concerned for both economic and environmental reasons. The great majority of people agree that to keep our communities liveable, we cannot pave over every square inch of farm land and wetlands in Ontario. That's why we promised them we would take action, and we did.] We created the largest permanent greenbelt anywhere in the world that protects nearly 2 million acres of valuable --To protecting the greenbelt?

>> Minister Chris Ballard: Thank you, Speaker thank you to the member for Ancaster- Dundas-Flamborough and westdale for a very, very important question and a hardworking member he is. Speaker, our government knows how critically important it is to protect green spaces in this province. That's why we've created and are committed to protecting the greenbelt. This is an area, Speaker, that is larger than Prince Edward island. This is an area of some 595,000 acres of water, of Lakes, rivers, streams. This is an area that protects 78 species at risk. This is an area that provides some \$9. Billion in economic activity, Mr. Speaker. This is an area that grows food for Ontarians to eat. It needs to be protected.

>> MPP Liz Sandals: Thank you, Speaker. Yesterday a video emerged of Doug Ford discussing his promise to open up a big chunk of Ontario's greenbelt for development. On the tape, you can clearly hear Doug for promise that he will open up the greenbelt. Asked how much, Ford emphasized that he told developers he's going to open up a big chunk of it. Just like the lyrics to that famous song, Doug Ford wants to pave paradise and put up a parking lot. Right over Ontario's greenbelt. Paving over -- Paving over the greenbelt is recklessly shortsighted. Opening up the greenbelt will only make rich developers rich early and remove pristine farm and Greenfield lands forever. The result will be endless sprawl with no green spaces in between. We'll only get one chance at this. Speaker, account Minister please explain our government's efforts to protect the greenbelt and natural green space for-

>> Minister Ballard: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the member from Guelph for another very important question. You know, one that deals with protecting important, critical green space in Ontario, land that feeds us. Speaker, you know after that video emerged yesterday where Doug Ford said that anything they look at within the greenbelt will be replaced, it clearly shows, Speaker, that the P.C. Leader doesn't understand. He doesn't understand the greenbelt. He doesn't understand the importance of farmland within the greenbelt. He just doesn't understand. The greenbelt, Speaker, is a natural ecosystem that is connected. It's intertwined. You cannot simply remove pieces of it and replace it with a piece of land from some other part of Ontario, Mr. Speaker. It is all connected. Mr. Ford, he doesn't understand that, you know. Worse, Speaker, the leader of the Progressive Conservative party. Has already apparently made deals with big developers to pave over the greenbelt --

MPP Martow to Minister Naidoo-Harris Re: Math Scores

>> MPP Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of education. A new report has found that grade 8 math scores improved in all areas in Canada, except for Ontario. Comparing levels between 2010 and 2016, the council of Minister s every education Canada pan-canadian program this week and confirmed what we already knew. Math Ontario in Ontario is sufficient. Parents tried to remedy the situation with tutors but it clearly is not how taxpayers expect our education system to be run. Mr. Speaker, there has been nothing but promises and disappointments on this Liberal government when it comes to our kids. Does the Minister think

that it's fair that she short changing our students out of a quality mathematics education?

>> Minister Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member opposite for this question, because really it gives me a chance to make sure that I'm explaining to people what is actually happening with the pan-canadian assessment progr it's of course important to have a review. It's also important to know that our educators and our education system is working well and our partners are working tirelessly every day to give our kids the best start in life. And I want you to know that our government has invested more in Ontario's publicly funded education system. No one has actually funded more than us. 40,000 more teachers were added, educators were added to this since 2003. But let me just tell you this. This is actually a snapshot of what happened in 2016. It is actually not telling us where we are today. And I want to point out that that snapshot is before we moved funding into the mass strategy. So the \$60 million in our renewed math strategy. 60 minutes of math instruction that happens in the day, this is measuring what happened before those investments were made, and I'm happy to speak to what we're doing today.

>> MPP Martow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll just say that math made tutors for math are popping up all across the province including next-door to my constituency office in Thornhill and we see a pattern here. In 2008-9, 63% of grade 6 students met the minimum proficiency level for math. 2009-10, 61%. 2010-12, 58%. 2012-13, 57%. 2013-14, 54% and in 2017, we're at 50%. Half of Ontario's students are not at the level that the province says they should be at. And despite the alarm bells, over the years, the Canadian math society eqao and now the council of Minister s of education in Canada are telling us that grade 8 students are also at a 50-percent level. Is the Minister of education going to stand you and take responsibility --For this crisis in math education.

>> Minister Naidoo-Harris: You know what, Mr. Speaker ? I want to say that I have full confidence in our publicly funded education system in Ontario. We are absolutely a leader when it comes to education, not just in this province or country but around the world. And we are recognized as being a leader. When you were in power, 68% of the students were graduating. One third were not finishing school. Today, 86.5% on average are graduating. Let me tell you a little bit about what we've been doing. It sounds to me that the member opposite is actually suggesting we should be looking at privately funded schools, Mr. Speaker. It sounds to me that she has no faith in the publicly funded school system. Well, I have faith in it and I know we're on track. Ontario is one of only three provinces that scored at or above the Canadian average in all three domains. Reading, math and science. And in fact those results show once again that Ontario students are among the top performers in Canada. Our publicly funded education system.

MPP Gelinis to Minister Chiarelli Re: Cellphone and Internet Services Northern Ontario

>> MPP France Gelinis:: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Ontera used to provide cell phone and internet services to small isolated communities in northern Ontario like Nickel Belt. In 2014, this Liberal government sold those assets to bell Canada. Now bell is saying to the people of follow yett and ivanhoe lake and I quote -- we are seriously considering to dismantle our equipment. We are in 2018, Premier. Does the Premier believe that northern Ontario's students, families, businesses, outfitters or schools can go on with business as usual without access to the internet or cell phone networks?

>> Minister Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I spoke to the member yesterday when she raised this issue with me privately, and as I indicated to her yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we are looking into this particular issue to get the facts around it. The property that we own through infrastructure Ontario or the ministry of infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, we charge rent for it on the open market. We self-service properties Mr. Speaker --We sell surplus properties, Mr. Speaker. That's part of the business of government. But it goes without saying that the loss of an entire community's internet and cellular access to would not be an acceptable outcome. As I understand it bell is disputing the market but has not provided comparables to justify their current lease. Infrastructure Ontario. Service provider cbre, are working closely with bell to land on a number that is mutually agreeable. And I'm confident that this issue will be resolved, Speaker .

>> MPP Gelinis: Thank you, Speaker. Well, it is no surprise to anyone from the NDP That the sell-off of Ontario will bring us trouble to communities in the northeast like foleyet, like ivanhoe. We warned the government that that would happen and guess what? It did. Bell is not able to make money in follyet and ivanhoe. They are facing a 700% increase for the infrastructure used. Bell is planning to dismantle the whole thing. We in northern Ontario need internet and self service like everybody -- cell service like everybody else. What is this Premier going to do to protect the people, the business, the school, T outfitters and the residents of follyet and ivanhoe lake so that they maintain their access to the internet and cell service now and into the future?

>> Minister Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member should know that we've already spent \$500 million on broadband and digital connection in the province of Ontario. The recent budget has added another \$500 million. We have a plan in place, Mr. Speaker, before the end of this year we're going to be implementing for rural --Mr. Speaker, we have the most aggressive broadband digital connection investments of any of the provinces in Canada. We have invested as I said half a billion dollars. We have another half a billion dollars in place, and I am sure that before the end of this calendar year, the member will see that we are delivering on this issue. More than any other party has promised or as any other party has been able to deliver to date.

MPP Potts to Minister Milczyn Re: Affordable Housing

>> MPP Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of housing and the Minister responsible for the poverty reduction strategy. In my riding of Beaches- East York and in places across Ontario, we know there is just not enough purpose-built rental housing. Whether that be high-rise, mid rise, low-rise or town House s built for rental, there just isn't enough. To help solve the housing affordability and supply crisis, Speaker, we'll have to build more purpose built rental. That is key. Now we know that the leader -- members opposite under their leader will simply pave over the greenbelt in order to provide more affordable housing. And incredibly, the leader dismissed the greenbelt saying it's just farmers' field, Speaker. Insult to agriculture workers across the province. So, Speaker, the pressures on buying and renting affordable homes could be one of the biggest challenges and weights on the shoulders of young families. In my riding we are building purpose built housing with options for homes, 360 units and building with the carpenters units made completely out of wood. So Speaker, will the Minister please share with the House the measures this government is taking to build affordable housing?

>> Minister Peter Milczyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for Beaches- East York for this very important question. My focus as Minister is to ensure that every Ontarians has -- ev Ontarian has access to a safe and affordable home. As the member said there's a huge demand out there for purpose-built rental housing. Last week, Mr. Speaker, I announced the allocation of \$125 million in development rebates for Ontario municipalities to incent purpose-built rental housing. Those 13 communities with low vacancy rates. Mr. Speaker, this incentiviing develops to build affordable rental homes is good policy. Paving over the greenbelt will not create affordable homes, will just increase our infrastructure costs so the precious infrastructure dollars will not solve our affordable housing. Situation, Mr. Speaker. We need to spend money wisely and efficiently so actually deliver the homes for people who need them.

>> MPP Potts: Thank you, Speaker. Thanks to the Minister for that response and for his intelligent approach to improving affordable housing in the province of Ontario. Speaker, over the past two decades, only 6% of all housing has been built with purpose built housing in mind. The availability of rental housing is an acute issue especially here in Toronto. The Minister knows well that at last count there was a vacancy rate of about 1%. While there is a nal -- while this is a signal of a booming and successful and vi Brant economy, it also means we have a lot of work to do to build more housing for people that's affordable. And that's why initiatives like the Minister just announced on development charges are so important. I'd like to con great Grat late our government for advancing this investment on top of the 5 billion we're already investing in the creation of affordable housing

since 2003. And I know the Minister with mayor Tory, Deputy mayor -- announcement on Friday. So would the Minister expand on the other things and details of this announcement?

>> Minister Milczyn: Tnks, Mr. Speaker. Thanks for the supplementary question. Yes, indeed last week I announced the allocation of funds for Ontario municipalities to rebate development charges to incent more rental housing but, Mr. Speaker, I also announced the results of the competi to develop provincial surplus lands. List donlands and Grosvenor lands which are in the city of Toronto will be home did to 2150 new homes30% of which will be affordable. Mr. Speaker, there's another site in north Etobicoke which we will be releasing with this. And I hope tomorrow perhaps to have another announcement about another site in another municipality. While we're releasing surplus provincial lands in urban communities. Mr. Ford wants to pave over our greenbelt.

MPP MacLeod to Minister Chiarelli Re: Highways Ottawa Area

>> MPP Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. 400 s Eries highways are intended to be people movers and in the budget the Liberals say that they will widen the 401 at the base of the 416. The 416 which by the way runs through Nepean- Carleton. But there is no mention of the one ask from the city of Ottawa at Amo, notably an additional exit to the 416 from barrhaven at barnsdale. It's estimated this will be a \$24 million project and I'm asking the Premier will there be an announcement on this before the writ?

>> Minister Peter Milczyn: Mr. Speaker, the member may know that I've already had some discussions with the city of Ottawa that there are studies that are under way with respect to that particular site. I agree with the member that there's a need in that particular location in nepea Mr. Speaker. Really we are doing a lot of infrastructure. We've put a lot in place now, Mr. Speaker. We're planning a lot more. But the other side has nothing planned, Mr. Speaker, for any kind of roads or transit, make any kind of sense, Mr. Speaker. I'm waiting for the sentary, Speaker .

>> MPP MacLeod: Really Minister shouldn't embarrass himself and he should just answer the question. He knows as well as I do that 29% of the growth in the last four years has happened in barrhaven. It's accounted for the highest growth in Ottawa. We are now 90,000 people strong with only one exit onto the 416. Think of kemptville on the same highway or cities of smaller or similar size like frostdale or Kingston or Belleville on the 401. They all have multiple exits. The 416 could be maximized as a people mover if only we had this additional exit. Inside of barrhaven, we have six rail crossings that we would love to divert traffic from by encouraging an accessible and convenient entry westward onto the 416. So the Minister can spare me with his antics and he can answer the question. I have a clear ask from the city of Ottawa. Can we expect an announcement this week or will you just

>> Minister Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'd ask the member not to hold her breath for Doug Ford to do any of that work. When asked about support for local transit and highway projects in London, Doug Ford said, we'd never leave any commitment. We're going to review everything, and nothing is going untouched, Mr. Speaker. Including the plans we have in place for Nepean, Mr. Speaker. Similarly, when he was in Cornwall, Mr. Speaker, last week, he said -- and this is recorded from the "Cornwall standard." Doug Ford said he would be willing to help the city of Cornwall with its infrastructure deficit if he's elected Premier in June but only if municipalities across the province start cutting what a P.C. Government would deem as wasteful spending. Speaker. He wants the municipalities to cut. It's a disease, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Fife to Premier Wynne (Chiarelli) Re: TTC Funding

>> MPP Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questioto the Premier. When the TTC

Is properly funded, it actually works. I don't know if you have ever been on a streetcar or subway lately but they are very overcrowded. When the provincial government funded 50% of TTC's net operating cost, it was the envy of the world. But the Conservative government cut this funding in 1998, and in fact today the TTC is the least funded major transit agency in North America, and as a result transit service keeps getting worse while fares keep getting higher. The Liberal government has had 15 years to reverse these Conservative cuts. Why have you not done so?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think I first went on the subway in 1958. So I've been on the subway for many, many years, have ridden the subway and I know what a terrific and important service it is. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately in this province, you know, if we had built transit every year since '47, '49 when the subway was first opened, Mr. Speaker, we'd be in a very different position. It took until now, Mr. Speaker, for our government to actually make investments in transit, Mr. Speaker, to actually have a long-term infrastructure plan that includes transit. The department -- the ministry of transportation, Mr. Speaker, you know, used to be called the department of highways in 1916. That's the only place there was long-term planning. That's the world that Doug Ford wants to go back to where we just pave over the province, Mr. Speaker. What we have done is we have changed the trajectory of infrastructure in this province. Transit -- is a part of our long-term plan, Mr. Speaker. We're in the process of building transit more than any government in the history of Ontario.

>> MPP Fife: Mr. Speaker, provincial funding for TTC Operations was cut by the Conservatives in 1998 and it has stayed cut under the Liberal party. And now the Liberals are borrowing another bad conservative idea. They have proposed to break up the TTC and take over the subways. Riders don't want fragmented transit service with different fares and operators for buses, streetcars and subways. The TTC needs proper funding, not a change in ownership. Will the government listen to transit riders who want the provincial government to properly fund the TTC, not break it up? And will the government restore the province's 50% funding for municipal transit operations like the NDP has committed to because it's not 1958 any more, Premier.

>> Minister Bob Chiarelli: Ok. Thank you. Well, Mr. Speaker, for a party that is looking to govern this province, they have on so many significant issues no plan whatsoever, Mr. Speaker. Item after item after item in terms of transit, transportation has come before this House. They have voted against virtually every one of them, Mr. Speaker. And still today they have no plan. After years of voting against the largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history, the NDP have finally realized that government needs to invest in schools, hospitals and public transit that people rely on, Mr. Speaker. Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, we have another four and five weeks to go before election day. And hopefully the people of Ontario will see something realistic and practical from that party, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Kiwala to Minister Malhi Re: Gender Based Violence and Sexual Assault

>> MPP Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of the status of. Mr. Speaker, this month is sexual assault prevention month. It's an important time to raise awareness about the devastating impact of sexual assault and focus on what we can all do to stop violence and support survivors. We must also recognize that sexual assault is far too widespread in our society and our communities, and we must pledge to do better. I know that this government has done extraordinary work to prevent and address sexual assault by introducing "It's never ok" an action plan to stop sexual violence and harassment in 2015. And most recently we promised in the first strategy we launched part 2 "It's never ok" Ontario's strategy to end gender-based violence, with an investment of up to \$242 million, as the Minister stated earlier this morning. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister please update the House on the ongoing work- being done to shift the norms around consent and sexual violence and harassment?

>> Minister Harinder Malhi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank my Colleague for this important question. Sexual violence is far more common than most people think. One in three women will experience some form of sexual violence in her lifetime. We know that gender-based violence is a result of normalized misogyny, race culture and toxic masculinity. Speaker, as long as women and girls face

the threat of violence in this province, our work will continue. We must do better and we will. This year women stood up with great courage and resilience to say me too and time's up and we have responded to this call for action with our newest strategy "It's never ok Ontario's gender-based violence strategy". We are improving services and supports for survivors. In fact our government is expanding access to counselling, crisis telephone lines, emergency shelters, transitional housing, sexual assault centres and legal support. Victim services programs that provide trauma and formed supports to survivors of sexual assault and human trafficking.

>> MPP Kiwala: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for that response. It is certainly very clear that gender-based violence is a result of normalized misogyny and I ask that each member of this House consider that term carefully. We need to move beyond, and I am so glad that we are, wearing purple to bring awareness to violence against women. I'm pleased to hear that our new gender-based violence strategy invests in so many critical supports for survivors. But, Speaker, we know that more needs to be done to promote the conversation and shift attitudes and biases around sexual violence and harassment. We all have an important role to play and we need to bring partners to work with us to raise awareness and bring about change. Many survivors have told us that they've faced Barriers in accessing the help that Y need. And this is unacceptable. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister please tell us what the government is doing to address these needs

>>.Minister Malhi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank my Colleague again for her question and her advocacy on this important issue. Our gender based violence strategy is based on the advice of frontline workers and experts. In particular I'd like to thank the violence against women roundtable for their tireless efforts and their leadership. Our strategy is going to get programs and funding out into communities that need it. As a part of our up to \$242 million strategy to end gender-based violence we are expanding our creative engagement fund to support artistic projects that raise awareness. We're investing in professional development through new bystander and community training. We're extending and expanding our free independent legal advice with survivors of sexual assault provincewide so that survivors can get the advice on their options at any point. And we recognize that certain groups are at greater risk of violence. That's why we are piloting Canada's first ever dedicated lgbtq plus community legal clinic and facilitating training for more than 70 community legal clinics across the province. When it comes to the well-being of women and girls in the province, this government has always been there and we will be there to continue to do the work necessary.

MPP Wilson to Minister Leal Re: Wildlife Compensation Program

>> MPP Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, my Colleagues and I have been raising concerns with this government about the Ontario wildlife damage compensation program since it was created over one year ago. The Minister has said he would review and fix the program, but farmers in my riding and right across the province continue to tell us that they face huge livestock losses and that they're receiving no compensation. 20% or one in five claims for predation kills are rejected by the program. Mr. Speaker, the inaction by this government is inexcusable. I ask the Minister when will he fix this program and give farmers the compensation they're entitled to? And will that compensation be retroactive as the program hasn't been working for the last year and a half?

>> Minister Jeff Leal: Thanks so much, Mr. Speaker. From my Colleague Simcoe- Grey. Indeed it was brought to my attention there were in the challenges with the wildlife compensation program. I actually went in-field to many farmers across the province of Ontario. I've been right there when I've seen sheep and cattle that have been attacked by predators, and it was based on that information that we decided to review the program. We engaged the Ontario federation of agriculture, Christian farmers union, other people. We've now come up with a plan that we're going to be implementing shortly. We're going to have consistent training standards right across the province of Ontario so there's no deviation. When an evaluator goes out we'll say from a community in the county of Peterborough will be exactly the same as someone from the county of Simcoe. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, now we know the true aim. Etobicoke paving over the greenbelt

