

Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Tuesday, May 9, 2017

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Transcript of Provincial Question Period
41st Parliament, 2nd Session
Tuesday, May 9, 2017

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MPP Brown to Minister Lalonde Re: Probation System

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Attorney General. Last night's expose about Ontario's probation system by Carolyn Jarvis on "Global national" was shocking and appalling. If you didn't see, let me read you some of the report. Offenders think probation and parole in Ontario is a yolk. How do you think the public will react if they knew about what you know about how offenders are supervised in the community? I think they would be appalled. We are at a crisis, a breaking point. And we are failing the public badly on the public safety front. Mr. Speaker. How long has the government known about the state of Ontario's probation system and how long have the Liberals ignored this problem?

>> Minister Marie-France Lalonde: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the member for his question actually, his sudden interest into this because we know their history behind the members. Mr. Speaker, if I can say here, part of our efforts to transform correction in Ontario and my objective is very simple. I think we on this side of the House, our objective is very simple. It's definitely to rehabilitate the clients and support their reintegration back into our society. One thing that the member may be not know and I will share. Recidivism in Ontario has been trending downward, Mr. Speaker, over the past decade. And first, I want to say thank you to the fantastic work that our probation and parole officers do every single day for us to keep our community safe. We can do more. We can do more. And I have been the Minister since January, and I have not been satisfied with that. So Mr. Speaker, I have been the Minister since January, and I have to acknowledge that I have not been satisfied with the pace and we're working on this. Thank you.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Attorney General, the buck stops at the Attorney General on this file. Now, we have two private members' bill, multiple quells and they're saying a sudden interest. Multiple private members bills and there's a sudden issue, Mr. Speaker. Back to this shocking story. One convicted sex offender completed a conditional sentence. Not once did his probation officer go to his House to check on him. Nobody has ever come. No police, no probation officer. I could have done anything I want, anything, Mr. Speaker. How does that give us a sense of safety in our communities? Convicted sex offenders are running free in our streets. He added I could go back and do things because nobody watched. Nobody hit on the door. Mr. Speaker, dangerous offenders are walking our streets and Attorney General of our province is responsible. So once again, how long have you known this problem exists in Ontario and when will –

>> Minister Lalonde: Well, yeah, Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy actually to explain maybe how the ministry responsible in our system works in Ontario. Maybe he's forgotten this since he's in this House and at the federal level. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, one thing I'm going to be telling him, the parole and probation cases we know have become a lot more complex and can require more supervision. And our government recognizes this by hiring more parole and probation officers. And, in fact, over this last ten years, the average caseload has decreased from 79 cases for officers to 58 cases per officer. And that give ours officers more time to focus on the rehabilitation and the reintegration of the offenders. And, Mr. Speaker, this is I would say something that's very dear to me as a Minister because -- can I continue. Sorry. Okay. So, Mr. Speaker, I will continue on my supplemental. Thank you.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Attorney General, the Attorney General is the top legal officer in Ontario. That is a fact. And it's easy to pass the buck to a new Minister. But this is Attorney General 's mess. This is Attorney General 's responsibility. One probation officer that was interviewed said she wants to go out and check on offenders, but she was told we don't do home visits flat out. The Liberals deny that charge. But we are talking about violent serious offenders that aren't properly monitored in the community. It's unacceptable. There's nothing the government can say that makes this right. It's the Attorney General who ignored this problem for two years as Minister and he continues to ignore this problem. The top legal officer, the top person responsible is Attorney General. So my question, Mr. Speaker, is understanding this is his mess, his responsibility,

will he do the right thing and tender his resignation today?

>> Minister Lalonde: Well, I definitely don't think our Attorney General has to resign. Actually, I appreciate the effort that he's putting into our justice system in reforming, Mr. Speaker. I think that again the member would know about when it comes to termination and tough on punishment, Mr. Speaker. What I'm going to say is that our probation and parole officers do a very, very important role in our community. What they do is also the decision they make to ensure that the community is safe but also themselves are safe Mr. Speaker is equally as important. They follow the guidelines. They follow the procedure. They ensure that if there's a risk associated with their safety, their own safety, Speaker, they take that into consideration. I want to say how proud I am of the work of these individuals that keep our community safe.

MPP Brown to Minister Naqvi Re: Government Accountability

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the government House lead. Since he did not resign and would not take responsibility, let me ask him this: a few of Mr. Speaker, it comes as no surprise to the Liberals that some people over the last 14 years have questioned the integrity of this government. You know, gas plant scandal, e-health, orange spending scandal and now Canada goose. Mr. Speaker, that is why I ask, will the Liberals help cleaning up queen's park and the government of Ontario?

>> Minister Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm very glad to respond to the question that the member opposite has raised. Speaker, we are very proud of the work we have done in strengthening accountability when it comes to government and government of Ontario. Speaker, you may recall when we came into office in 2003, that party, the opposition party, left almost a \$6 billion deficit. That was hidden. That was hidden from the eyes of Ontarians. They told everybody the books are balanced. When we came in office and we -- Speaker, when we came in office in 2003 and asked the auditor general at that time to look at the books, what we found was a huge billion dollar deficit that the Conservative party under Mike Harris and this leader left behind.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the government House leader, I asked a serious question about ethics and accountability and the government is talking about 2003. This is a government that faced five Opp investigations and they are proud of their record on ethics and accountability. It's unbelievable. They're that out to lunch. Now, Mr. Speaker. There are loopholes out there. New rules stop Ministers and staff from attending fundraisers, there are no rules that Ministers and their staff can't elicit personal donations. There's still cash for access in the province of Ontario. Mr. Speaker, will the Liberals commit today -- Will the government House leader commit that this Liberal government will ensure that there will be no more soliciting donations from their own Ministerial stakeholders, yes or no? It's a very clear question.

>> Minister Naqvi: Well, Speaker, it is important to remember what happened in 2003 when the opposition were in government hit a \$6 billion deficit. As a result of that, Speaker, we made sure that we brought in very specific important accountable measures in place so that that type of behaviour never takes place. As a result, Speaker, one of the things we did was to require the auditor general to look at -- As a result of that, Speaker, we changed the law and we required the auditor general to ensure that before any election, the public books are audited by the auditor general so that the numbers are provided in clarity in full rights to all parties, Mr. Speaker. That was a very important step. Not to mention, Mr. Speaker -- And, Speaker, as a result, we also brought in regulation on government advertising in which the opposition, the Conservatives voted against.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the government House leader, once again, I ask a serious question about ethics and accountability ensuring that Ministers do not fundraise off their own stakeholders. And I got an answer that was completely irrelevant. The government should be ashamed of the record on ethics and kbility. Accountability. Five open investigations. We talk about criminal investigations. We have to ask, which one? Mr. Speaker, I will ask again, right now, there are

big loopholes in this cash for access reform. Minister s had fundraising targets to raise off jheir stakeholders. And so if I can't get a commitment from the government House leader to stop fundraising off stakeholders, will he work with us to make sure that having these fundraising targets for Minister s becomes illegal in the province of Ontario, yes or no? Please answer the question for the first time today.

>> Minister Naqvi: Well, Mr. Speaker, this feels like the member opposite, the leader of the opposition is making things as he's going along because I think he's totally forgotten bill 2, the extensive work we did in reforming fundraising in the province of Ontario, making it one of the most accountable and stringent rules around fundraising. I think he's forgotten that we have banned corporate and union donations, that we have required all MPP s and other candidates from attending fundraising events, Speaker. We have limited donations, donation limits significantly by 90%, Speaker, and then we are opposed to third party advertising. Somehow he's forgotten. He's choosing to forget. He's trying to distract. He's trying to distract from a very positive budget that we have put forward that's going to build a strong and healthy Ontario. Mr. Speaker, he's trying to distract from the fact he has no policy.

MPP Horwath to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro One Privatization

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, my question is for the acting Premier. Yesterday we learned the Premier is selling off another batch of shares from Hydro One. They're still refusing to listen to the majority of Ontarians who say no to privatization of our electricity system. When will the Premier actually start listening to the people that she's supposed to be serving, Speaker ?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise to say that yesterday's ranch of broadening the ownership of Hydro One brought in an additional \$2.8 billion for the province, Mr. Speaker. That \$2.8 billion exceeds, Mr. Speaker, the \$9 billion target that we had, 5 billion to pay down debit, 4 billion to go into infrastructure. Well, guess what, Mr. Speaker ? That number is now \$9.6 billion, Mr. Speaker, with more money going into infrastructure. And where is that infrastructure going, Mr. Speaker ? Well, let me talk about this. Right across our province, we're going to have infrastructure built. And I can start off and look at the one here. Hamilton lrt, the Hamilton go bus facility on Wentworth, Mr. Speaker, that's in the leader of the third party's own riding, Mr. Speaker. We're making sure that we're going to invest billions of dollars right now, Mr. Speaker, across the province building Ontario up.

>> Andrea Horwath: Nobody buys that nonsense for a minute, Speaker. 80% of Ontarians oppose the privatization of Hydro One. And it's really sad that this is the only government in the history of Ontario that can't figure out how to build infrastructure without selling off a treasured revenue generating public asset when the vast majority of Ontarians don't want it sold off. Families, business owners, municipalities, ngos, they have all told the Premier loud and clear to stop this wrong headed selloff. People need relief from their soaring energy bills, not to hear that the Premier is going to do even more damage to our already broken system. Why does the Premier insist on moving ahead with this ridiculous selloff when what the people of Ontario need is for her to finally admit that she is wrong and abandon this scheme once and for all? Thank you.

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the people of Ontario need is infrastructure investment, Mr. Speaker. That's what this party is doing. That's what this government is doing, Mr. Speaker, investing in infrastructure right across the province. In Kitchener- Waterloo, the ion regional lrt, in welland the niagara health region is actually getting significant investments, in Oshawa, and, of course, Mr. Speaker the list continues to go on and on with investments. And that's what we can do, Mr. Speaker, when we actually make \$2.8 billion, a total of \$9.6 billion, Mr. Speaker. And, yes, Mr. Speaker, this was a difficult decision. But doing the right thing for the province, Mr. Speaker, takes difficult decisions. Mr. Speaker, we're very happy to make sure that we're investing in infrastructure from Kenora to Ottawa to Sudbury to Toronto and Windsor and everywhere else in between, Mr. Speaker, unlike that party.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, you know, the people of Ontario know numbers better than the people that are sitting across the aisle here. \$9 billion doesn't come close to the \$190 billion that they claim that they're going to be spending on infrastructure. The bottom line is the figures don't match, Speaker. They didn't need to sell off Hydro One to build infrastructure in the province and they darn well know it. And you know what, Speaker? Ontarians did not vote for this. The Premier has no mandate to sell off our public hydro utility. Ontarians have been very, very clear that they don't want this selloff to continue. Why does this Premier think that her opinion matters more than the opinion of millions and millions of Ontarians?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, the billions and billions of dollars that we're investing in infrastructure, paying down debt, Mr. Speaker, is actually going to have a benefit for this province for decades to come, Mr. Speaker, unlike that party over there, Mr. Speaker, that once again has no understanding of how this system works or even the energy system, Mr. Speaker. A firm commitment offering means, Mr. Speaker, that we get that money from the investors right away and we're able to take that money, Mr. Speaker, and invest that in Irt in Hamilton. And I know she doesn't like the Irt investment in Hamilton, Mr. Speaker, which makes you scratch your head, Mr. Speaker. What kind of investment in infrastructure do they like? Obviously none, Mr. Speaker, because all they do is stand up and complain, Mr. Speaker. They have no plan on any of this. As I said, I recognize, Mr. Speaker, that this was a tough decision. I recognize it was the right decision, Mr. Speaker. And when you make the right decision, you invest that in the people of Ontario and that's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker. We're building Ontario up.

MPP Horwath to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Length of time isn't a luxury and it should not be priced like a luxury, Mr. Speaker, by giving up the province's majority stake in Hydro One. The Premier is guaranteeing that Ontario families will continue to see their hydro bills rise. Why does not Premier want to drive up hydro bills for families? Why does the Premier want to drive up hydro bills for families, businesses and municipalities?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, very pleased to rise and talk about the Ontario fair hydro plan today. On average, a 25% reduction for families, for small businesses and farms, and guess what, Mr. Speaker? Those families that live in the Hydro One area, they're actually going to see a 40 to 50% reduction, Mr. Speaker, thanks to our government's plan, Mr. Speaker, bringing forward our fair hydro plan is going to have significant reductions for families and businesses right across the province. Unlike that party, Mr. Speaker, which is telling unnecessarily wrong facts, Mr. Speaker, because when they talk about Hydro One and the broadening of ownership, everybody knows, Mr. Speaker, from the media to folks on the street that the Ontario energy board sets rates, not Hydro One, Mr. Speaker. If they go to their website, they can actually learn about how the Ontario energy board sets rates for the province. Mr. Speaker, we have brought forward a very comprehensive plan that will reduce for every family.

>> Andrea Horwath: How arrogant and out of touch do you have to be to completely ignore 80% of the people of this province? 80% of your constituents. Can the acting Premier explain to this House why with no mandate at all and just a year away from being thrown out of office, the Premier insists on giving up majority control of our most valuable public asset.

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, understanding the system would be important for that party over there, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to the electricity system, the oeb sets rates. And I know they have a hard time understanding that Mr. Speaker. I know it's very difficult for them, Mr. Speaker. But Hydro One does not set rates. We, Mr. Speaker, have brought forward a plan that is going to reduce rates, Mr. Speaker, by 25% on average. And I know they can laugh about it, Mr. Speaker, but what we have made sure that families will see this reduction, that we can see families in our remote parts of our province in our northern parts of our province seeing their rates reduced by 40, 50%. I know they're laughing on that side, Mr. Speaker, because one party

has no plan for electricity, has to plan for the province and on that side, Mr. Speaker, they have a plan that is pie in the sky and has no acts of taking one cent off a bill, Mr. Speaker.

>> All this government is doing is kicking their mess down to the next generation to pay for. That's all they're doing. But you know what? It's the same old story on repeat with this Premier. She puts the interest of her party and her powerful Liberal friends and insiders ahead of the interests of the people of this province. Every single time, Speaker, every single time. Why won't this Premier stop looking out for the people at the top? Stop her wrong headed selloff of Hydro One and finally show the people of Ontario the respect that they deserve.

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In talking about dealing with messes, it was this government, it was this party that had to deal with the mess that was left by that party and that party, Mr. Speaker, when they were actually in power, decades ago, Mr. Speaker, they left the system in a mess. We had to rebuild it, Mr. Speaker. We spent \$50 billion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And that's why when we're bringing forward \$2.8 billion from yesterday's broadening ownership of Hydro One, we're making sure that that \$9.6 billion that exceeded our targets, that we're going to make sure that we spend this money on paying down debt and investing in infrastructure in every part of the province or this province, Mr. Speaker. That's what the people of Ontario asked for and that's what they're getting, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Clark to Minister Naqvi Re: Government Accountability

>> MPP Steve Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the government House leader. There's a one-year cooling off period for Ministerial staffers that leave government that doesn't go far enough. Staffers should not be permitted to lobby for any companies or organizations. They had direct dealings with while in government. That's regardless of whichever ministry the lobbying is directed at. We saw what happened in the Minister of environment's chief of staff went motoring over to Tesla. In the same month, the government announced lucrative subsidies for buyers. Mr. Speaker, will the government House leader help us close that loophole. Does he want the Liberal revolving door to continue?

>> Minister Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Speaker, we have very strict rules when it comes to the requirements for lobbyists. Speaker will know under the lobby registration, we have enhanced those rules to ensure that any staff that works here, when they go in private sector, the restriction that's placed upon them to lobby the same ministry, Speaker, those rules remain. And if there is any opportunity for us to ensure that there are stricter rules in place, we always look at them. Speaker, but the fact of the matter is we have done a tremendous amount of work in making sure that our government is transparent and our government is accountable. In fact, Speaker, what we have seen most of those times, the opposition has opposed those initiatives. They have not supported those initiatives. Where focus remains on serving the people of Ontario. We're not interested in the partisan game they continue to play.

>> MPP Clark: The saddest thing about the Liberal lobbyist revolving door is a lack of accountability. Integrity commissioner investigations involving Ministerial staff are publicly unavailable. These investigations which review cases such as conflicts of interest should be transparent and made public. It's unacceptable that the commissioner's report currently can be stuffed away on a Minister's desk. Ministers shouldn't decide if the information is made public. It should be a legislative requirement. So, Mr. Speaker, will the government House leader commit to ending the secrecy by making the results of those investigations public, yes or no? Thank you.

>> Minister Naqvi: I think our integrity commissioner does a very good and thorough job when it comes to investigating matters. Tiff opportunity to sit on the board of internal economy. I have had the chance to meet with the integrity commissioner as members from all parties on that board as well. And he continues to talk about how he is investing more resources in ensuring that lobbyist register extradition and all the accountability associated within the legislation is fully met. Clearly, Speaker, you know, this line of questioning is nothing but a distraction tactic from the opposition because they don't want to talk about a very good budget that is going to build a stronger and

healthier Ontario. They don't want to talk about -- Speaker, the Conservatives do not want to talk about -- How we're making medicine free for children under 25 years old and under, we're lowering the electricity bill by 5%, we have a fair housing plan that is going to make housing more affordable.

MPP Tabuns to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> MPP Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. My question to the acting Premier, last year, the Premier admitted her hydro policies were a mistake. She refused to do anything to correct those mistakes. In fact, she's now doubling down on her biggest mistake. She's ignoring the people of Ontario and selling off a final piece of Hydro One. Ontario's oldest and most important public asset. Why does the Premier care more about serving the interests of her friends on bay street and not the interests of the people of Ontario?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's go back to November when the people did stand up and apologize for decades of mistakes made by all governments, Mr. Speaker. That kicked the electricity file to the curb. We had to act, Mr. Speaker. We had to rebuild the system. It cost us \$50 billion to do that. But you know what we have now, Mr. Speaker ? A system that is clean. A system that is reliable. And a system that doesn't rely on coal, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So we rebuilt that system and we recognize that it came with a cost, Mr. Speaker. What we did is we brought forward the fair hydro plan which actually reduces everyone's rates in this province by up to 25% on average, Mr. Speaker. That is something that is a benefit for everyone.

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, after this final sale, the people of Ontario will no longer have majority ownership of Hydro One. The Premier has sold off the ability of the people of this province to control their hydro system. From now on, Hydro One will focus on private profit, not on the public interest. Speaker, through you to the Deputy Premier, how does it feel to be part of a government that has finally killed off through Adam beck's legacy of public power in Ontario.

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Adam beck's legacy is alive and well with opg, Mr. Speaker. And you know what? We're continuing to make sure that the beck generating station produces significant power for this province. But again, Mr. Speaker, it shows that this party has no - - They have no idea how the system works, Mr. Speaker. And you know what? For making sure that the investment that we're getting for the broadening of ownership of Hydro One will be going into infrastructure investments right across the province now, Mr. Speaker. You know what also is happening now? A 17% reduction on electricity bills right across the province thanks to Ontario fair hydro plan. We have more coming Mr. Speaker. That will help those families, businesses and farms right across our great province.

MPP Hoggarth to Minister Chiarelli Re: Infrastructure Investments

>> MPP Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of infrastructure. On this side of the House, we know that infrastructure is about improving the lives of every day Ontarians by investing in their future. I'm proud that our government is making the largest investment in critical public infrastructure in this province's history. For the first time in ten years, our prof's budget is balanced. More money is available to build schools, hospitals, transit and childcare spaces. I know that the long-term infrastructure plan will help manage our historic investment is coming later this year. Why we double down on our commitment to build Ontario up, the leader of the option continues to make down right irresponsible statements about how he would manage our infrastructure. My question for the Minister is, can he please explain the attempts of making smart long-term investments in infrastructure?

>> Minister Bob Chiarelli: Thank the member for the question. Speaker, we have demonstrated that our government sasound infrastructure manager and a balanced budget gives us even more opportunity to invest in Ontario. And we are doing just that by investing \$190 billion over 13 years.

We have shovels in the ground building \$14 billion worth of major projects and are procuring an additional \$12 billion worth. But, Speaker, this is all lost on the leader of the opposition who has stated repeatedly that he does not believe government should be planning projects beyond their mandate. His ill informed policy means no proper asset management, no planning for the needs of our kids and our grand kids. Speaker, this is not what any government should want for its people and it's not what Ontarians deserve.

>> MPP Hoggarth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and my thanks total Minister for his response. It is baffling to me how anyone putting themselves forward to shape the future of our province could pedal an approach to infrastructure that ignores best practice. It's incredibly short sighted and would be a disservice to future generations that need government to make smart long-term decisions, not ones that are politically expedient. Unlike the parties opposite, our government knows the value of strategic planning and unlike the leader of the opposition, we have a plan to build those \$12 billion worth of projects in the pipeline. Critical healthcare and transportation projects he may very well ignore if he were elected. Speaker, the facts clearly demonstrate our investments are working sustaining real growth in the economy. My question to the Minister is can he share the impacts a long-term responsible plan has on our province.

>> Minister Chiarelli: Thank you, Speaker. And the leader of the opposition incorrectly criticizes us for not getting shovels in the ground. The facts speak for themselves, Speaker. We have undertaken a hundred major hospital projects and expanded our Colleges and universities. Our investments support over 100,000 jobs per year. And every dollar invested improves quality of life and creates up to \$6 in gdp, Speaker. So when the leader of the opposition states that we shouldn't be investing in projects outside of our mandate, he is saying that we shouldn't be planning for hospitals in Fergus, Brockville and Toronto. When he makes statements like that, he demonstrates his lack of understanding and inability to manage the province's infrastructure. And frankly, Speaker, if he doesn't understand that, then at the shouldn't be in the running to manage \$190 billion investment fund of Ontario's future.

MPP Smith to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro One Privatization

>> MPP Todd Smith: My question for the Minister of energy this morning. Liberal after Liberal has said in this House that rates won't go up after Hydro One was sold. The Minister knows that Hydro One has a major rate increase planned for its distribution company. So what did he do? The Minister decided to sell the biggest stake in the company yet last night. Was the job of managing Hydro One too difficult for the Minister ? Was he just trying to escape blame for all the new rate increases that are on the way?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we are doing on this side of the House is making sure that we invest \$2.8 billion in infrastructure and paying off debt, Mr. Speaker. That's what we're doing on this side of the House. That's what governments do, Mr. Speaker, unlike on that side of the House where they actually -- On that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, they talk about plans. I know we're -- They talk about plans, Mr. Speaker, that's all they do. They don't write one. They don't promote one. What they did do, Mr. Speaker, in 2012 was to write a white paper. Their white paper on energy policy specifically suggests opening Hydro One to investment. The goal is to create more efficient companies that are not directly reliant on public money. The wind is changing today. I wonder where they're going to be later on.

>> MPP Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can see the Premier hasn't taught her parrot any new lines today. Back to the Minister -- I will withdraw. What we have, Mr. Speaker, is massive compensation increases at Hydro One, we have brand new rate hikes on the way and big bay street bonanzas that went ahead last night. The Minister is once again more interested in making money for the people sending the hydro bills than he is in protecting the people who are receiving the hydro bills. What he's done with his plan is add an extra \$25 billion in interest onto the ratepayer for electricity customers in Ontario. So, Speaker, will the Minister do the right thing for once and cancel the final sale of Hydro One shares.

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And let's finish what that white paper said. The white paper even goes as far to recognize that consumer prices would continue to be regulated by, guess who, Speaker, the Ontario energy board. So obviously, Mr. Speaker, they know it or they try to forget it like their plan, Mr. Speaker. You know what, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to find ways to reduce rates. 25% is coming, Mr. Speaker. We have 17% now. They have no plans. They have no idea what to do with electricity, no idea what to do with our province, Mr. Speaker. And when asked by the media, he laughs. He thought it was funny, Mr. Speaker. The only thing that's a joke in this province is that party, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Horwath to Minister Hoskins Re: Toronto Community Housing

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the acting Premier. Yesterday I toured Toronto community housing on bleaker streak, what I saw was nothing short of heartbreaking. Mold and damage from one end of the apartments to the other. The Toronto community housing said that it will take until January for this particular apartment to be made livable again. Yet in this year's budget, the Liberals offered a grand total of zero dollars for urgent repairs to units like this one. Does the Premier not care about families struggling to find a place to live, Speaker ?

>> Minister Chris Ballard: Well, thank you, Speaker. You know, Ontarians expect their government to work hard for them to build vibrant and safe and affordable neighbourhoods where they can raise their families and put down their roots. And that's why this government, Speaker, has increased funding year over year demonstrating our commitment to building and preserving a fair society where everyone benefits. You know, Speaker, over the next three years, Ontario will invest \$600 million in affordable and sustainable housing in the city of Toronto. Speaker, this includes \$340 million alone for homelessness prevention, \$130 million to expand affordable housing. And today, we announced a hundred million dollars in land. Mr. Speaker, we get it. We're investing in housing in Toronto.

>> Andrea Horwath: What the Minister has just knowledge is that this government has no intention whatsoever of helping municipalities to deal with the repair backlog that is are crippling them and preventing people from living in those desperately needed homes, Mr. Speaker ? In my hometown of Hamilton, there are 6,000 families waiting. In Durham region, it's 5,400 families waiting. Even with the staggering wait lists, cities and municipalities are forced to shutter, to shutter, affordable housing units because they have no money to make the repairs needed for them to be livable again. Can the acting Premier explain then how the Liberal government has allowed the repair backlog to get so bad and why they have abandoned families who are desperate for a safe and affordable roof over their heads?

>> Minister Ballard: Well, thank you, Speaker, again, and let me just continue on to demonstrate how seriously this province takes its investment in city housing, Mr. Speaker. We have spent -- the investments that I outlined in my initial statement build on the \$1.4 billion that Ontario has already invested towards housing and homeless programs in the city of Toronto. This year, Ontario has also contributed \$43 million to the city of Toronto for those repairs and retrofits that I'm hearing so much about. Mr. Speaker, it's as if the leader of the third party doesn't get it or doesn't want to get the fact that this province is investing billions of dollars in housing across Ontario and billions in the city of Toronto.

MPP Vernile to Minister Hoskins Re: Nursing Week

>> MPP Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Mr. Speaker, we know that nurses play a very valuable role in Ontario's healthcare system. In my riding of Kitchener Centre we see this every day, the dedicated nursing staff working at grand river hospital, St. Mary's general hospital, at long-term care facilities and community health

centres dedicate their lives to helping others. Every day nurses support patients right across the province by providing high quality care in hospitals, long-term care homes, hospices and in homes and in care centres. Their knowledge, work ethic and dedication to this profession is exemplified every day through the high quality compassionate care that they provide. Speaker, this week is nursing week in Ontario. And this week, we celebrate all of the hardworking nurses across the province of Ontario. Could the Minister please join me in acknowledging all of the nurses right across Ontario during nursing week.

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member from Kitchener Centre for this important question. Yesterday, I had the opportunity to thank the more than 140,000 nurses that work day in and day out to the best of their abilities providing the highest quality of care. I thanked them yesterday. Since it is nursing week, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank them again today. In fact, we can never thank our nurses enough for the work that they do. Thank you from the member opposite. But, Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right that nurses across this province work so hard every single day to provide high quality care to patients across this province. And today I am so proud to stand and thank all nurses in Ontario for the critically important work that they do. Together with nurses and the associations that represent them -- We have made great progress, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Vernile: I would like to thank the Minister for his response and for his dedication to working with nurses across the province. In fact, on this side of the House, I believe we have two nurses among their ranks. I would like to thank them for the work they do. As part of nursing week, I will be taking part in take your MPP to work day. Since 2001 the registered nurses association of Ontario has reached out to MPPs across the province to give us an up close and personal view of the skills required to take care of patients in a variety of work environments. For the past 17 years, MPPs have visited registered nurses in diverse settings such as hospitals, family health teams, community health centres, and postsecondary institutions. I look forward to working with the hardworking staff at the long-term care facility at the end of the month. Speaker, could the Minister please speak to the investments our government is making to support Ontario nurses.

>> Minister Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since this government took office in 2003, there are almost 30,000 more nurses employed in this province. And in fact, the number of nurses employed has increased every single year for 12 years in a row. In the budget, the 2017 budget we're proposing, we're proposing an additional \$170 million over the next three years to help with the recruitment and retention of nurses, Mr. Speaker. That's in addition to another \$15 million to expand interprofessional care teams across Ontario. I'm so pleased with this investment. As are our nursing organizations, the registered nurses association of Ontario speaks to the \$15 million for interprofessional teams saying it's welcome news, as is the pledge to increase by \$155 million compensation for primary care professionals including nurse practitioners and rns, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Brown to Minister Flynn Re: Labour Relations

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of labour. Ontario workers have the right to decide which union they belong to. Recently members of a local 113 tried to exercise that right. What happened when they did? He had a US-based foreign union put their Canadian union into trusteeship, seize Canadian assets in order to quell dissent. Why isn't this government acting to prevent foreign takeovers of Ontario unions?

>> Minister Kevin Flynn: Mr. Speaker -- needless to say I'm surprised by the question, Speaker. I will clearly admit that, Speaker. I think there must be pigs flying out there as well, Speaker. Certainly, Speaker, standing up for the people of Ontario -- Speaker, the question I know is a good question and I understand the circumstances. The labour relations regime, Speaker, in the province of Ontario is second to none, Speaker. We have organized labour that works with government. We have business that works with government, Speaker. And these rules have come about because of the efforts of organized labour and people working out their issues in the workplace together. Speaker, we're taking a look at the labour relations regime in the province of Ontario under the changing

workplaces review, Speaker. And I'm expecting to get some excellent advice and be able to share that advice. Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, the labour relations regime in the province of Ontario, it's healthy. Speaker, and I expect as a result of the changing workplaces review of, it's going to get even —

>> Patrick Brown: My question was about foreign backed takeovers. I did not get an answer. Local 115 was locked out of their office. Their leadership put it this way, this is an outright attack. It's an invasion on our autonomy as Canadians and Canadian workers. Where has this government stood while 11,000 local 113 members are in turmoil? They have been absent. They have been silent and removed themselves from this debate. Mr. Speaker, when will this government stick up for Ontario and Canadian union members against foreign-backed attacks? Will they help? Will they stand up? Yes or no?

>> Minister Flynn: Speaker, this government has an excellent relationship with organized labour in the province of Ontario. It's a two-way street. They bring information forward. They bring ideas forward, Speaker, they're listened to. This is coming from a party that on the order docket, Speaker, in this House has a private members bill that wants to band card-based certifications in the province of Ontario. And they stand up, they stand up here and try to lecture us on labour relations, Speaker. The member should be ashamed of himself.

MPP Gretzky to Minister Coteau (Jaczek) Re: Autism Support Services

>> MPP Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the acting Premier. Today community living Ontario is here lobbying on behalf of thousands of Ontario families and their support workers who have needed help desperately from this government for years. They are still waiting. Abdula, for instance, Abdula is 16 from my community of Windsor. Abdullah has severe autism. He has been excluded from school. His parents with their own health issues struggle with his care. They don't receive support or respite during school hours even though he's not allowed to attend school. What funding, direct programming or direct support does the Wynne government have in place for Abdullah and his parents?

>> Minister Michael Coteau: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I want to talk a little bit about the new Ontario autism program that we'll be bringing forward quite shortly. This is a year before it was initially planned. And we're going to go into full implementation in 2018. This plan will create 16,000 new spots. It will create the amount of spaces for aba during that transition, reduce wait times to 6 months or less, increase access to early diagnosis, and also it will provide children and young people regardless of age, Mr. Speaker, with more flexible services based on their unique needs. We're investing over half a billion dollars over the next five years for services to deliver programs that I think parents and young people here in the province can be proud of.

>> MPP Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. Back to the acting Premier. Speaker, according to community living Ontario, the money announced in this budget will only work towards stabilizing workforce funding. Badly neglected and in need of fixing but was actually promised back in 2012. Millions of increases are needed. It's not just Abdullah, Speaker. Thousands of desperate parents of ageing children fast becoming adults with developmental disabilities need supportive housing and programs. What does the Wynne government have to say to Abdullah's mom and Mary Beth and Michelle and Shirley knight and the House s of other parents in this province who are not receiving the services that this he need for their children? What are you doing for other Ontario families in this province.

>> Minister Helena Jaczek: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I am so glad to have this opportunity to thank all the members of the community living agencies who are here with us today because we know that they are a very important partner with our government in terms of delivering services. They are very valuable partners. If we transform the system that we have currently in Ontario to serve those with developmental disabilities. And, of course, we had our unprecedented \$810 million increase to the budget over the

last three years. This is why I'm so pleased and I'm sure the member opposite will be supporting our proposed budget this year written we will be providing \$667 million.

MPP Qaadri to Minister Flynn Re: PTSD Support for First Responders

>> MPP Shafiq Qaadri: Minister, as you will know, posttraumatic stress disorder known, of course, to physicians as PTSD is a significant risk to the health and well-being of people working in certain occupations and, of course, regularly face or are affected by traumatic situations. I understand we have a number of our first responders and our security forces here. I would like to welcome them in advance. Speaker, mental health in the workplace is an issue that demands the attention of everyone. Government, the stewards of our legislature, of employers, employees, unions, and so on. This is especially important issue for our first responders who, as I said, Speaker, have to deal with these daily stresses. Can the Minister please describe what we have done to offer PTSD support for our first responders?

>> Minister Flynn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that very, very important question. It was about a year ago, Speaker, a little over a year ago that this House to its credit unanimously passed bill 163 Speaker. And it's a testament, I think, to the ability of this House to work together in order to honour the work that's done by some of the people that have joined us in the House today, Speaker. Posttraumatic stress disorder is an issue that hasn't been talked about in the past in the way it should have been. Hasn't been treated in the way that it should have been, Speaker, in the past. Some of the first responders today from the oppa, the Ontario provincial police association, were so instrumental in ensuring that government, the opposition parties and the third party listened to the concerns that they had about the membership, what their membership was going through. I want to thank them for their input. It certainly has worked. We have a bill that's working now, Speaker.

>> MPP Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker, and thanks to your Minister. Speaker, as a doctor, I can outline very briefly unfortunately individuals who did suffer from PTSD, whether it's kind of chronic anxiety or palpitations or sleepness night. They affect many, many Ontarians. They deserve the respect and management of stewards that appear at our legislature. PTSD is a serious and chronic injury. Unfortunately more than twice as likely to suffer from than the general population. They put themselves in harm's way each and every day to ensure our Collective safety. Speaker, can the Minister please describe supports and benefits these workers will receive according to to this new legislation.

>> Minister Flynn: Speaker, thanks very much. Thanks very much to the member for asking this question, again for the supplementary, Speaker, because I think, Speaker, with the people we have in the House today from the Ontario provincial police association, as I said they were very, very instrumental, Speaker. These are people that put themselves in harm's way so that our communities remain safe. These are people who run towards danger when the rest of us are running away. Perhaps something that wasn't talked about enough, we said every player in the province of Ontario has to prepare a PTSD prevention plan and has to submit it to me as the Minister of labour. Those plans started arriving about two weeks ago, Mr. Speaker. I plan to publish these plans so every first respond seniors able to avail themselves of the best practices being used by the entire first responder community in this province, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Martow to Minister Del Duca Re: Toronto Transit Funding

>> MPP Gila Martow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This -- my question is to the Minister of transportation. This morning, a city of Toronto report revealed and the mayor spoke out on the state of transit in Toronto. The report showed that the province must prioritize the downtown relief line. Mr. Speaker, the relief line is needed to support the Yonge subway extension to Richmond hill. Both are vital projects. But mayor Tory made it clear. If the province doesn't step up and match

funding for the downtown relief line, the Yonge subway expansion will be in jeopardy. Mr. Speaker, does the Minister ever intend on funding the Yonge subway and the downtown relief line? Or does he plan to sit idly by and watch both projects collapse?

>> Minister Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. I thank the member from Thornhill for her question this morning. I'm aware of the fact that the city of Toronto will be coming forward with a staff report regarding a couple of very important transit projects, Speaker, and I would encourage members on all sides of the House, including the member who's asking the question this morning to take a close read of the staff reports that are coming out of the city. Speaker, I have said this many times, both in this chamber and outside, that there has been no provincial government in history that has invested more in public transit in the city of Toronto, around the greater Toronto and Hamilton area and frankly Speaker in communities across the province like Waterloo, Ottawa, and so many others Speaker. This previous budget that the Minister of finance introduced for 2017 included, for example, an additional \$30 billion to fund infrastructure province-wide, Speaker. And, of course, every member will know, not that many weeks ago, the Premier announced over the next number of years, this government will be showing leadership on transit doubling the provincial gas tax program helping 990 communities across Ontario.

>> MPP Martow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the Minister. The last time I checked, every open and running subway station in the province of Ontario was opened by a PC government. Mr. Speaker, these are the Minister's constituents in the 905. The Liberals could be partnering with the city of Toronto. Yet, there is a lack of support and a lack of commitment for the 416 and the 905. Because the Liberals are picking a fight with mayor Tory -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I will say to people at home, I must be doing something right because they're heckling because the Liberals are picking a fight with mayortory. The Liberals are putting other transit projects at risk. Projects that affect the 905 and my constituents in York region. Is the Minister committed to projects?

>> Minister Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. Only because the number in her preamble to the supplementary question decided to try and give us a bit of a history lesson, Mr. Speaker, everybody in this province knows the last time that Conservatives ruled in the province of Ontario, they killed and filled the Eglinton subway Speaker, as we know. And so at the end of the day, whether we're talking about questions relating to standing up for workers' rights or talking about questions relating to public transit in the province or the city of Toronto, Mr. Speaker, really and truly the Conservative party here in Ontario should not be attempting to give our party lessons on any of these issues, Speaker. This is a government investing more on public transit than any government in history. This morning, I was in that member's riding, the Rutherford go station to announce they are significantly upgrading including adding 1,200 new go spaces to the station at Thornhill. She can thank me later, Speaker.