

Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Tuesday, October 17, 2017

From: "Stinson, Jeffrey (CAB)" <jeffrey.stinson@ontario.ca>
To: "@CAB-ProvLegQP" <provlegqp@msgov.gov.on.ca>
Date: Tue, 17 Oct 2017 12:10:39 -0400
Attachments: 20171017 - Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript.doc (122.37 kB)

Transcript of Provincial Question Period
41st Parliament, 2nd Session
Tuesday, October 17, 2017

The following is a partially edited transcript of Question Period.

Table of Contents

MPP Brown (Bailey) to Premier Wynne (Ballard)
Re: Chemical Valley

MPP Brown to Premier Wynne
Re: College Strike

MPP Gelinas to Premier Wynne (Hoskins)
Re: Hospital Funding

MPP Horwath to Premier Wynne
Re: Hospital Funding

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

MPP Tabuns to Premier Wynne (Sandals)
Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

MPP Potts to Minister Moridi
Re: AI Funding

MPP Smith to Minister Duguid
Re: Manufacturing Investment

MPP French to Premier Wynne (Sousa)
Re: Sears Canada Liquidation

MPP Qaadri to Minister Ballard
Re: Waste Reduction

MPP Jones to Minister Flynn
Re: Healthcare Worker Safety

MPP Mantha to Minister Ballard
Re: Sarnia Air Quality

MPP Hoggarth to Minister Chan
Re: International Trade

MPP Harris to Minister Del Duca
Re: Drive Test Wait Times

MPP Brown (Bailey) to Premier Wynne (Ballard) Re: Chemical Valley

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Yesterday the Minister of the environment committed to funding a health study to understand the localized impact of air pollution on Sarnia residents, and thank you for the government to finally recognize the request from the member for Sarnia-Lambton. I want to make sure this isn't just another Liberal announcement. I would like to know if there's a time line for the study. We need to see a clearer commitment. Mr. Speaker, when can the residents of Sarnia expect the study to start, and what was the time line going to be for results?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister of the environment and climate change will want to speak to more of the specifics. But let me just say, Mr. Speaker, that we are absolutely committed to getting this study started. It makes perfect sense, Mr. Speaker, that we would undertake this with experts, Mr. Speaker, communities like Sarnia have been directly impacted by industry over the years and we need to make sure that we do everything we can to understand exactly what the challenges are, Mr. Speaker, and to understand what the mitigations must be. So I will ask the Minister of environment to speak to supplementary, Mr. Speaker, but we are committed to doing this and we are committed to starting immediately.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. And the Premier said she's absolutely committed to funding this, and that's good that that's finally happened. But since 2008 people have called for study on this environmental concern. For nine years studies have been stalled by this government. In fact the Landon community health study got as far as the third planned phase. Industry in Sarnia stepped up offering 1.4 million but the request made for similar funding for the province got rejected. This government refused for nine years. I'd like to know, specifically from the Premier, why did it take this media exposure? Why did it take global TV to finally get the government to accept the request from the member of Sarnia-Lambton?

>> Minister Chris Ballard: Thank you, Speaker. I'm delighted to be able to address this concern and the things that I heard and experienced when I was in Sarnia last to meet with first nations folks and in fact stopped in to meet with the local MPP for that riding to talk about concerns of the community. You know, Speaker, every Ontarian -- I'll start with the fundamentals. As I said yesterday every Ontarian deserves fresh air to breathe, clean water to drink and good land, clean land to walk upon. That is a fundamental foundation building block of a vibrant community. But, you know, we know that, at times, the balance between the different needs of business and the environment, you know they've tilted one way or the other. Communities like Sarnia have been directly impacted by this, Minister, Speaker. And I know -- I know that building on previous regulations to lower air pollution, we're committed, as I said, as the Premier said --

>> MPP Bob Bailey: Back to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. For nine years this government's ignored the health concerns of the people of Sarnia-Lambton. There was nothing but shocking indifference from the Liberals. Premier I personally raised this issue with your government in 2008 and 2010. They've now committed to the study only after being publicly embarrassed. The fact it took nine years to commit to this study still leaves me and the community with concerns. Saying they are doing the study will still leave me with concerns. Saying they're doing the study is one thing. Committing and introducing a time line is another. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier release the study time line today?

>> Minister Ballard: Thank you, Speaker. You know, as the Premier has said, as I've said we're committed to funding a health study to understand the localized impact of air pollution on Sarnia residents. We're going to be working with those communities in the coming weeks to determine how best to do that. We have to get a formal proposal put in front of us, Mr. Speaker, one that's updated in order to respond to it but I'm glad to say a couple of things, Speaker. When the leader of the opposition was in Ottawa with the Harper government, they refused to fund the study. Ten years ago. Ten years ago. Thank you, Speaker. I'll also say that when I was in Sarnia visiting with first

nations I stopped in to see the MPP For that area. We had a wonderful, casual conversation about what I've been hearing in the community, what he's been hearing in the community and I'll say, Speaker, not once, not once was it raised with me that we need to study the health --

MPP Brown to Premier Wynne Re: College Strike

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. For the second day, College students are not in class. It also happens to be midterm exams for many of them. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier allow students to miss their midterms, or will the Premier get both sides back to the bargaining table so we can get students back in the classroom?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, you know I am very concerned about students not being affected negatively by this situation, Mr. Speaker. Of course I don't want students to lose this semester, Mr. Speaker. I want them in class but, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that the Collective bargaining process is one that has to be respected. We need to have the parties back at the table, Mr. Speaker. That is where the agreement is going to be finalized, and so both the Minister and I have encouraged both sides to get back to the table, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that that conversation is fruitful and that they can come to an agreement. That's where the agreement has to take place, Mr. Speaker. I am very concerned about it. We are paying very close attention to it, and I hope that in the very short future, we will see that the parties are at the table. And they can hammer out an agreement.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier. When this government was campaigning, they promised no more labour disruptions. They promised labour peace, and students would be in the classrooms. There have been three strikes at Colleges over the last 50 years. In 1984 it was for 18 days. In 1989 it was for 20 days. In 2006, it went for 20 days once again. They promised us labour peace. You promised that students would be in the classroom. Students can't afford, Mr. Speaker, not to be in class. They can't afford to miss their midterms. I know this is uncomfortable for -- Mr. Speaker, I get this is uncomfortable for the government. The label peace they promised has not been realized. But I want to see students in the classrooms. I want to see students back at Colleges. So my question, Mr. Speaker, is does the Premier -- Is the fromr going to do everything she can to get both sides back to the bargaining table?

>> Premier Wynne: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am, and so is the Minister. We're going to do everything we can to get both sides back to the bargaining table. And, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the history lesson from the leader of the opposition. But he missed 1995 to 2003. What happened in those years, Mr. Speaker? I think in those years from 1995 to 2003, there were 26 million student days lost in this province, Mr. Speaker. I think of high school kids and elementary school kids all over this province, Mr. Speaker, were out of school week after week after week because there was a government of the day that actually didn't support, didn't support the labour movement, didn't support Collective bargaining, Mr. Speaker, and actually didn't believe in publicly funded education. Mr. Speaker, we'll do everything we can to get both sides back to the table and make sure --

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier. When the Premier presented herself for public service, she said she was running to fight what she saw as school closures and labour disruptions. The reality is there's more school closures. Now we have labour disruptions, whether physicians or educators. What this government has now become is what they said they were running against. And what this all comes down to, Mr. Speaker, is how does this affect students? Let me share with you a quote from a student in Thunder Bay. I was very concerned. I have a scholarship and I'm just here for another month. If I lose classes that might affect my scholarship. You've got a student worried about their academic year, and right now we have the government trying to blame others. Yesterday we had the Deputy Premier saying we can't get involved. Now today we have the Premier saying they will get involved. I want to know what this government's going to do to get students back in the classrooms. Don't make us wait 20 days or 40 days. Students need to be in the classrooms.

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, look. My concern is for the students, Mr. Speaker, and that has always been my concern. You know the leader of the opposition in fact misinterprets what I have said about why I got into politics. Mr. Speaker, I got into politics because I believe so firmly in publicly funded education. And part of -- part of publicly funded education, Mr. Speaker, is the reality that we have -- we have labour unions, Mr. Speaker. We have federations. We have ongoing discussions among the partners in education. So, Mr. Speaker, will I do everything in my power to make sure that we encourage the parties to get back to the table? Yes, I will, Mr. Speaker. But will I undermine the Collective bargaining process? Will I -- will I take action -- It is always an uncomfortable position for everyone and a very, very distressing situation when people are not able to go to their classes, Mr. Speaker. I know that the instructors and the teachers who are out, they don't want to be out either, Mr. Speaker. They want to be in the classrooms. With their students. We'll do everything we can to get everyone back to --

MPP Gelinas to Premier Wynne (Hoskins) Re: Hospital Funding

>>MPP France Gelinas: try and keep up with the number of people needing hospital care. Unfunded beds, Speaker, are beds that are opening without any help from this Liberal government. According to the hospital, the money to operate those beds is being diverted from their reserve fund, a fund specifically earmarked for investment in capital and infrastructure. Does the Premier expect hospitals -- how does the Premier expect hospitals to plan for their future when she's forcing them to use their savings just to meet their current operational needs?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister 's going to want to spook to the specifics of this situation. But let me just say that we have injected billions of new dollars into the health care system including, Mr. Speaker, 500 million new dollars for hospitals as a result of our last budget, Mr. Speaker. I have a lot of faith in our local health integration networks, in our hospital administrations, Mr. Speaker, as they look at the specific situations in their communities and make decisions based on their circumstances. So as I say, Mr. Speaker, I don't know the specifics of the decisions that have been made by the administration at the hospital in Peterborough. What I do know is that there are intelligent decisions being made around the province, with the support of the government, with the support of new dollars, Mr. Speaker, to deal with the circumstances in each of those communities. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that, you know, it is our responsibility to continue to work with hospitals and other health care providers. To make sure that they can make those decisions based on the interests of the people in their communities, Mr. Speaker .

>> MPP Gelinas: Thank you, Speaker. Opening up these 24 unfunded beds will cost Peterborough hospital \$1.8 million just this fiscal year. The hospital will need \$4 million more year after year to keep those beds open. According to internal documents that we at the NDP Released today, occupancy rates in both mental health and acute care units have been consistently higher than what is considered safe. Will the Premier commit right now today to funding these additional beds so that the good people of Peterborough get the hospital care that they need?

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Peterborough hospital for the tremendous efforts that they're making not only in providing the highest quality of care to the residents in and around Peterborough, but for managing their health system effectively. And in fact this year alone, they were one of the hospitals in this province that received the biggest increase in their operating budget. So of course on average we increased the hospital operating budget by 3.1% this year, but Peterborough received a new injection to their base of \$9.4 million, which represents a 4.3 increase in their operating budget. Mr. Speaker, it continues to amaze me that every effort that we make, whether it's through a budget that they projected. Or through the consideration of the hummer finch site project proposal for A.L.C. For release of capacity challenges.

>> MPP Gelinas: Thank you, Speaker. The occupancy rate for Peterborough acute care beds reached 99% in may of this year. Both the mental health and the acute care units are also operating unconventional beds, Speaker. You know what that is? That's a fancy word to admit you admit

people into hallways, broom closets, waiting rooms. The list goes on, with no privacy or human dignity. How can the Premier continue to turn a blind eye to the overcrowding, to the hallway medicine crisis in our province when hospital after hospital are at overcapacity, and Ontario families needing hospital care are paying the price?

>> Minister Hoskins: Well, the member opposite knows that the vast majority of hospitals in this province operate well below capacity, Mr. Speaker, well, well less than the 100% capacity. And, Mr. Speaker, we are making those investments, that half a billion dollars that was referenced. In fact in Peterborough just last Friday, an important announcement by the member from Peterborough of \$2 million in brand-new capital for the creation of a new Peterborough hospice, Mr. Speaker, which is great news for that community. And it reflects the hard work that they're doing. But, Mr. Speaker, I have to go back again once more to the fact that, in their tenure as government, they closed 24% of all acute care beds in this province. They closed 13% of the mental

MPP Horwath to Premier Wynne Re: Hospital Funding

>> MPP France Gelinias: Peterborough is not the only hospital struggling right now, and it is not just acute care that is overcrowded either. We at the NDP Have released very shocking and disturbing internal statistics that shows mental health units are overcrowded in Sudbury, Kitchener, Oshawa, Etobicoke, mississauga, Toronto. The list goes on, Speaker. Mental health care has been ignored and underfunded by this Liberal government for years now. How does the Premier expect frontline health care workers, particularly those who work in mental health, to provide the quality care that patients need when they are constantly understaffed and running off their feet?

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Millimetre we are making unprecedented investments in mental health and addictions across this province. As recently as the spring budget where we made an announcement \$80 million investment that that member and that party voted against, Mr. Speaker, which represents cumulatively 140 million over three years. Unprecedented first of its kind in the entire country, a significant investment, Mr. Speaker, in cognitive behavioural therapy form of interventional therapy, which is highly proven as highly effective specifically particularly for individuals with anxiety disorders, with depression for example. So we were the first and are the first in the country to actually fund that program. We're funding more supportive housing, youth wellness hubs all in the spring budget that that member voted against.

>> MPP Gelinias: The Premier and her Minister seem completely unconcerned with the large number of Ontario hospitals operating way above safe capacity. She seems completely unconcerned that people struggling with their mental health have access to only a few scattered services in overcrowded hospitals. How can the Premier look at these numbers, how can she hear those horror stories that go to her office. And not realize the problems in our mental health system are real?

>> Minister Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think one thing we can all agree is that we need to make more and greater investments in mental health. I've said repeatedly that we need to look at mental health services the same way we do physical health services. They're two sides of the same coin and there's no health without mental health. But we are making those investments. This year's budget alone, again 13 million in new funding for the specialty mental health hospitals. We made investments for 1,000 more supportive housing spaces. \$48 million for specialized mental health services at St. Joseph's care group in Thunder Bay. \$5 million to youthdale treatment centre, a brand-new in-patient mental health program and unit at Royal Victoria in Barrie, specific for children and youth. In patient unit and outpatient unit. Georgian bay hospital. A new renovation for mental health that the member from Barrie announced just last week, Mr. Speaker. In Burlington, a new hospital, Mr. Speaker .

>> MPP Gelinias: Mr. Speaker, the Ontario hospital association has called for immediate and ongoing funding just to make it through the flu season. Opseu, mental health workers some of them with us today are calling for more frontline staff. The Premier and her Minister likes to tout her last budget

in response to those serious questions, but even that budget short changes our hospitals by over \$300 million. It seems to me, Speaker, that the Premier, her Minister, her entire government are completely out of touch on this issue. Why won't this Liberal government stop playing politics with people's health, with people's access to care. Admit that there is an overcrowding and halfway medicine crisis in our hospitals and do something right now to fix the mess they've created.

>> Minister Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, once again I don't deny that there aren't challenges in our health care system but we need to be careful that we represent the system effectively and transparently and authentically, Mr. Speaker. We have the Fraser institute, if you can believe it, that has consistently ranked Ontario's health care system as having some of the shortest wait times in Canada. The wait time alliance has given us straight As as well, Mr. Speaker. We've invested in the spring budget \$11.5 billion over the next three years into our health care system. I don't know how the member opposite can possibly characterize that as anything other than an unprecedented investment, which is even separate from the 20 billion in capital investments over the next ten years in our system. But perhaps it's because she's reflecting upon their time in government, where they made drastic cuts to the health care system. Where they cut \$20 million from our psychiatric hospitals, and they closed 13% of all mental health beds in the province, Mr. Speaker .

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

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Tabled just minutes ago as another damning report by the auditor general. The unfair hydro plan will cost Ontario up to \$4 billion more than necessary. \$4 billion. That means Ontario families will have to pay an additional \$4 billion just for the Liberals' reelection campaign. Mr. Speaker, this scheme, unfair hydro plan is about one thing and only one thing and that's the Liberals' reelection. It's not about paying hydro bills. It's not about helping Ontario families. This is just about the partisan interests of the Liberal party of Ontario. The auditor general makes that abundantly clear. What I want to know, Mr. Speaker, from the Premier is how can she justify blowing \$4 billion to help the Liberal party?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the work that the auditor general has done. Mr. Speaker, you know the reality is that families across this province, individuals across this province were saying that the cost of their electricity prices were going up too high, Mr. Speaker, and going up too quickly. Mr. Speaker, I have acknowledged many times in this legislature and outside this legislature that the investments that had to be made, because we had a degraded electricity system in this province, Mr. Speaker, that we needed to rebuild, that there was a cost associated with that. I've been quite open about that, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I hear heckling from the other side that this is partisan. This is not partisan. This is about people needing to have reliability of turning on the lights, Mr. Speaker, and the lights coming on. In 2003, we had blackouts and Brownouts. The lights weren't coming on, Mr. Speaker. We've rebuilt the system and people needed a break.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. The way this government chose to do their unfair hydro plan cost Ontario families \$4 billion. This is your decision. This is the path you picked. The auditor general makes that unequivocally clear. It also confirms another thing, that the Liberal party and the way they're doing this cooks the books. You know, you read the direct quote, Mr. Speaker. This is a direct quote. They're making up their own accounting rules.

[Interjections] Can you package that? A direct quote making up your own accounting rules? She also unearthed the fact that ratepayers will be charged more than the actual cost of electricity being produced in order to pay back borrowing. This is cynical politics at its worst. Making up your own rules, charging Ontario families more to serve the partisan interests of the Liberal party. Mr. Speaker, my question for the Premier --Why won't she just come clean and admit to Ontario families that she's --

>> The Speaker: Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Be seated, please. I am -- I'm not prepared to accept the terminology that was used so I'll ask the member to withdraw.

>> Patrick Brown: Withdraw the direct quote.

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government thanks the auditor general for her review of our plan to reduce electricity bills for all residential consumers by an average of 25%, Mr. Speaker. Families in this province have asked for real and immediate relief on their electricity bills. That's why we have delivered, Mr. Speaker, the largest rate reduction in Ontario's history. Since 2003, nearly \$70 billion have been invested in the electricity system, including more than 37 billion in electricity generation to ensure that our system is clean and reliable. Mr. Speaker, as we all are aware the auditor general's report is particular Cal in nature and I understand she will be discussing it with the media and members of the legislature at 12:00 PM Today. We've also been addressing some of these points that the standing committee on estimates, Mr. Speaker, so, in respecting the Independence of the --Officers of the legislature, including the auditor general, our government will respond to the report following the Premier's conference.

MPP Tabuns to Premier Wynne (Sandals) Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> MPP Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. My question to the Premier. Last may the financial accountability officer revealed that the Premier's so-called fair hydro plan will not reduce hydro costs but merely postpone payment of those costs until after the next election. In the long run, Ontario families will pay billions more under the government's scheme than they would have paid without that scheme. And today the auditor general revealed that the government is wasting, wasting \$4 billion on an enron-style accounting scheme whose sole purpose is to hide this truth from the public. Why is the Premier forcing Ontario consumers to pay \$4 billion --Just so she can mislead the public about her hydro borrowing scheme?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Were going up quickly and they were going up to a very high rate, particularly in some parts of the province in some of the rural and northern communities, Mr. Speaker. So we responded by putting in place a plan that, again, I have said publicly we knew that over the long term was going to have a cost associated with it, Mr. Speaker. But we also know that the asset that has been built --And rebuilt, Mr. Speaker, will last for a number of generations and that we spread that cost over a longer period of time.

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. That was not a satisfactory answer. The Premier spending \$5.5 million in public money to tell Ontarians that hydro costs are going down when we know they're actually going up. And now the auditor general's revealed that the Premier's forcing ratepayers to pay \$4 billion in an enron style accounting scheme designed to conceal this truth from Ontarians. Instead of adding billions in needless costs onto the hydro bills of Ontario families, will the Premier finally admit her misguided hydro borrowing scheme will make everyone worse off in the long run?

>> Minister Liz Sandals: Thank you very much, Speaker. You know, when I think back to 2003 and I think of my own riding of Guelph, I think about part of Ontario that never used to have smog days. The reason we had smog days was because of coal generation. We have invested a lot of money into the Ontario hydro system to make sure we get rid of coal-fired generation. You know what? We don't have smog days -- But we also know that consumers have been struggling with the cost of electricity bills, and that is why we brought in the fair hydro plan is to reduce the cost of hydro for our -- for people throughout Ontario, for average families. What we also know is that the auditor has tabled her fair hydro plan today. We appreciate her work. We'll respect the auditor going forward --With the conference at noon

MPP Potts to Minister Moridi Re: AI Funding

>> MPP Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of research, innovation and science. Speaker, I understand the Minister was recently in Québec with a number of his Colleagues to strengthen Ontario and Québec relations, and it's my further understanding that the business went very, very well. It was quite successful -- the visit. Now, Speaker, more than ever it is important for all provinces to come together, collaborate and share initiatives and innovative ideas that will improve the lives of Ontarians and Canadians. And during the visit, Speaker, I understand the Minister signed a memorandum of understanding for Ontario, Québec, collaboration on artificial intelligence. Speaker, could the Minister tell the members of this legislature a little bit more about the memorandum of understanding that was signed and how we are promoting the development of artificial intelligence in the province of Ontario?

>> Minister Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for that question. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure my Colleagues have heard me say this time and time again that the key to innovation is collaboration. And that's exactly why I was in Québec city, signing a memorandum of understanding with Of the Québec government. Mr. Speaker, Québec will allow each province to build on its existing In the field of artificial intelligence and the multisector collaboration. Ontario and Québec, Mr. Speaker, are being presented with an incredible opportunity to work together in creating expertise in the field of artificial intelligencement expertise that will achieve both jurisdictions competitive around the world for years to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Potts: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you of course to the Minister for his answer and for the great leadership he's showing on building capacity in artificial intelligence. Ontario, Speaker, is well regarded as a leading jurisdiction in A.I. Research. Now last week I read that the Minister signed another memorandum of understanding between Ontario and the British high commissioner in Ottawa and I'm pleased to see the Minister is doing everything in his power to build these important relationships with other jurisdictions around the world. As I said earlier, it's a time when the world is increasingly becoming closed off and isolationist. It's wonderful to see that this government and our representatives are pushing for collaboration on issues of importance to all Canadians. So, Speaker, could the Minister please elaborate on the memorandum of understanding that was signed with the British high commission?

>> Minister Moridi: Mr. Speaker, again I want to thank my Colleague for that question. As I want to thank him for sharing my opinion on collaboration as key for innovation, Mr. Speaker. Last week I signed memorandum of understanding with the British high commissioner to enhance and strengthen our efforts common goals in the field of transformative technologies. Mr. Speaker, past investment by the government of Ontario in transformative technologys include \$130 million for next-generation networks. \$18 million for automotive vehicles. \$50 million for vector institute for artificial intelligence. \$50 million for perimeter institute for fundamental physics and \$20 million for quantum value ideas lab. Collaboration between Ontario and the U.K., Mr. Speaker, will yield sustained. Economic relations, encourage industrial relations, foster development and help us both harness best scientific practices, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Smith to Minister Duguid Re: Manufacturing Investment

>> MPP Todd Smith: Thanks, Speaker. Thanks to the auditor general for her report today, we know that the Premier and the Liberal government blew \$1 billion in the gas plant scandal to get reelected. Now we know they're going to double down as a result of the report. They're not even going to double down, Mr. Speaker. They're quadrupling down to \$4 billion annually -- We know that the Premier was responsible for the billion-dollar scandal with the gas plants. We now know that this scandal that's been uncovered today by the auditor general is a \$4 billion scandal. This government is doubling down. It's quadrupling down using taxpayers' dollars for its reelection ploy. And if the auditor general's report isn't scathing enough we have a report from the financial post this morning that released stats on the loss of manufacturing jobs as a result of the green energy act which got us into this mess in the first place. The report states -- That we have lost 75,000 jobs in Ontario in the manufacturing sector, a direct result. Why is the Premier continuing to defend

>> Minister Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I just came from the Canadian manufacture and exporters annual general meeting and, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you one thing. Our exporters, our manufacturers are tired of opposition members talking down --The incredible progress they have made. Through the global recession, Mr. Speaker. 12,000 net jobs in the manufacturing sector alone in the last year alone. It's not fair, Mr. Speaker, to talk down that hardworking sector leading the country in growth, helping us create 800,000 net new jobs, Mr. Speaker, across this province. It's time for that party to start supporting our manufacturers, Mr. Speaker, rather than denigrating them.

>> MPP Smith: Speaker, back to the Premier. We're getting a very, very different story on this side of the House when it comes to job losses in Ontario and companies that are hanging on by a thread in Ontario because of the policies of this government. The green energy act in this study, done by "The financial post" shows, shows that 75,000 manufacturing jobs left Ontario as a result direct result of the green energy act. It's a mess, Mr. Speaker. It's a mess forur employers over there. It's a mess for our manufacturers. And the auditor general has pointed out today that this government is willing to blow another \$4 billion. That's \$800 per House hold in Ontario for their reelection platform. It's unheard of. It's disrespectful and it has to stop. But there's no sign of them stopping. They got away with once at the gas plant. They're going to do four times the damage with this unfair Liberal hydro plan. Will they stop it now?

>> Minister Duguid: Mr. Speaker, where was the opposition when we invested \$1.9 billion in our manufacturing sector to leverage \$18 billion to private sector investment and support 90,000 jobs? Mr. Speaker, they were nowhere. They were opposing those investments. Where was the opposition when we were reducing regular regulatory burdens on the manufacturing sector, when we brought the industrial exemption, Mr. Speaker, they were absolutely silent. Where was the opposition, Mr. Speaker, when the finance Minister This sector saving them hundreds of millions of dollars. Where were they, Mr. Speaker, when we brought in the smart green program run by our Canadian manufacturers and experts. Nowhere, Mr. Speaker. Where were they when we brought in three different initiatives in the I.C.I., industrial conservation initiative --To save our manufacturers billionsful dollars, Mr. Speaker. Nowhere, Mr. Speaker. They're all talk, no action. We stand up for our manufacturing sector. And that's why this province is up --

MPP French to Premier Wynne (Sousa) Re: Sears Canada Liquidation

>> MPP Jennifer French: Thank you, Speaker. My question's to the Premier. On Friday, an Ontario superior court approved a motion permitting sears Canada to shut down operations leaving 12,000 people with no jobs and no severance and thousands of pensioners with a total pension shortfall of more than 260 million. This will have a devastating impact on families in my community of Oshawa and across the province that have worked their whole lives counting on their pension being there when they require. Last year I introduced a motion to ensure that pensioners are given top priority ahead of large corporations during bankruptcy proceedings. This government supported my motion unanimously but I against they changed their mind or gone back on their word. Will the Premier do the right thing, honour the commitment she made and stand up for Ontario's pensioners?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of finance is going to speak to the specifics of the financial situation but let me just first say that it is -- it is obviously very, very hard on families when a business of this magnitude shuts down, Mr. Speaker. You know, my heart goes out to all of the people who are affected. We are working with the situation, Mr. Speaker. We are working with all of the players and we will do everything that we can but, Mr. Speaker, in the first instance the economy is shifting. There's no doubt about that. You know, there was just a lively exchange with the Minister of economic development and growth and the opposition. The reality is that the nature of our economy is changing. Jobs are changing. There are jobs coming to Ontario. There are new jobs that are opening. We talked about an investment in artificial intelligence, Mr. Speaker. But there are jobs, there are jobs that are no longer, Mr. Speaker, because of the nature of the economy, the nature of retail.

>> MPP French: Thank you, Speaker. And again to the Premier. It's lovely that her heart goes out to them but we hope that help would go out to them as well. For pensioners, this isn't just an outstanding debt on a balance sheet. It's about keeping food on the table and a roof over their families. New Democrats have called for any revenue from liquidation sales to be used to fund sears employees' pensions first not more executive bonuses and we'll continue to fight for laws that make this the case for all workers. Does the Premier think that big corporations and executive bonuses should be the priorities over pensioners.

>> Minister Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question and the concern. And I know that members of the Canadian federation of pensioners are here today. One of them is a pensioner from sears who's being affected by it as we speak today. And only in Ontario will he have the benefit of a pension guarantee fund. Nowhere else in Canada is that available. Furthermore, we are looking at making reforms and providing greater support for pensioners going forward. Put forward. I not member opposite is talking about the changes that should be enacted by the laws of Canada and we recognize that and support that. But right now we need to help pensioners today as it affects them today and we are doing just that by the reports we're making working alongside the members' other pensioners and knowing that we must do our utmost to protect those pensioners. I can assure members of sears over 80 to 90% of them will get their full pension because of Ontario's guarantee. Furthermore their pension habits are not affected by the bankrupt Sitt and we'll fight for them all the way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Qaadri to Minister Ballard Re: Waste Reduction

>>MPP Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker. My question's to the Minister of environment and climate change. Speaker, as you may know today marks the second day of waste reduction week in Canada. And over the course of this week Canada -- Canadians will be holding events to the challenge themselves and encourage others to reduce wastement and just to be clear, Speaker, we're talking about solid waste, not time. Speaker, in 2014 alone, 11.5 million tonnes every waste was generated in the province of Ontario. That means on average every person in Ontario generated approximately one tonne of waste per year. The event this week serve as opportunities for Ontarians to learn how they can reduce waste in their homes and communities and businesses and through the waste free Ontario act we're making it easier for Ontarians to do just that. Speaker in recognition of waste reduction week can the Minister please explain to this House what the government is doing to help Ontarians reduce waste?

>> Minister Chris Ballard: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the member for that very important question. You know, we're happy here to recognize waste reduction week today. It really is an opportunity for all Ontarians to take the challenge to reduce waste in their daily lives. As the member mentioned, Ontario generates millions of tonnes of waste each year. Currently, only 28% of that waste is being diverted from landfills. The result is -- this results in \$1 billion in valuable resources lost each year to landfill. However it's estimated that for every 1,000 tonnes of waste diverted from landfill, we could create seven jobs, \$360,000 in wages and \$700,000 in additional G.D.P., Speaker. Our government recognizes the value of investing these resources in the economy, olympic. Speaker. Ontario act so that Ontarians could be proud of the work being done to reduce waste across the province.

>> MPP Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to thank the Minister for his response. Speaker, as you know climate change is of course becoming an increasingly apparent global threat. We also know that managing waste and reusing our resources is a critical part of achieving our goals through reduced greenhouse gas emissions and moving towards a prosperous low carbon economy. Our climate change action plan commits to reducing emissions from waste and moving Ontario towards a circular economy. We recognize that diverting waste from landfills is not just about protecting our land environment. It is also, Speaker, central to fighting climate change and creating a better future for Ontarians and our planet. That's why we're transitioning towards this circular economy. Reusing and reinvesting resources allows us to keep resources within the economy, benefitting both the environment

and economic productivity of Ontarians. Speaker, account Minister please tell the House how the circular economy will improve Ontario's economy and the lives of Ontarians?

>> Minister Ballard: Well, thank you to the member for Etobicoke North for that follow-up question, Speaker. You know, our government is committed to moving beyond the linear make use dispose model to a new model we refer to as the circular economy where we make productive use of material for as long as possible. We're also lowering the cost of recycling for Ontarians and providing them with more convenient recycling options by increasing, significantly increasing diversion efforts, Ontario will be supporting 13,000 jobs and adding \$1.5 billion to the province's G.D.P. We've also committed, Speaker, to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases from landfills which account for about 5% of our total greenhouse gas emissions here in Ontario. However not everyone has joined the movement to reduce waste here in Ontario in fact --The members every both parties opposite, Speaker, vote against the waste free Ontario act in 2016: During waste reduction week, Speaker, I urge all members to consider waste reduction.

MPP Jones to Minister Flynn Re: Healthcare Worker Safety

>> MPP Sylvia Jones: This question is for the Minister of infrastructure. Today opseu members join us at queen's park to highlight the important issue of mental health in the workplace. I'd like to highlight one of your so-called state-of-the-art provincial facilities, a facility that itself has been used as a weapon. One resident made a homemade sword out of the wall at waypoint centre. The provincial investigator found that, quote, the patient was able to destroy their room to the point of accessing metal supports from behind the drywall, including the removal of a towel rack, and proceeded to construct weapons out of these materials. No worker in this province should fear being attacked by home made weaponry in any provincial facility, let alone home made represent weaponry fashioned from the facility itself. Account Minister explain how the government allowed this to happen?

>> Minister Kevin Flynn: Speaker, thank you to the member for this very, very important question. Speaker, as we learn more about mental health in our society, some of the treatments have to be provided in secure facilities, Speaker. And we trust the care of those individuals to some of the people that have joined us here today, some of the people that have joined us for breakfast this morning from opseu, Speaker. Let me tell you I visited waypoint myself personally. I plan to return in the fall. Some of the things we were hearing, some of the complaints we were hearing out of the institution, Speaker, were ones that we didn't want to hear at the ministry of labour. We sent our inspectors in. We realized there was some changes that needed to be made, Speaker. What I've done is I've talked to the heads of all four hospitals in the province, Speaker, at camh, Brockville, Ottawa and waypoint. What I've asked them to do, what I've asked waypoint specifically to do is to come back with a plan that deals with these issues, Speaker. Once that plan is in place. I understand it will be very shortly, I will return to waypoint, Speaker and take a look at the facility myself.

>> MPP Jones: Back to the inminister of infrastructure. Frontline workers know that the Minister 's not done enough. The ministry fail today provide a facility that would keep our workers safe. Our frontline workers and our nurses are not being put first by this government. This government is prioritizing the interests of Liberal insiders over the best interests of Ontarians. Will the Minister promise that any facility will be putting people first, not Liberal insiders?

>> Minister Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you for the follow-you and thank you for the concern, Speaker. Because nobody should go to work in the province of Ontario, Speaker, no matter what job they do. Nobody should go to work in the province of Ontario thinking that they may be in danger. There's some unique hazards that are associated with these institutions, with this environment, Speaker. In the past it was accepted for our nurses, for people that looked after patients in these facilities. It was accepted that there would be a certain risk. There was a tolerance to that risk. There was almost an expectation you would get hurt. Speaker, that is simply not good enough. It's not good enough for me, not good enough for the ministry of labour, not good enough for this

government, Speaker. We're working towards rectifying. Some of the people that have come forward today, Speaker, they are right. They're telling us about things that need to be corrected. We should be proud of the work we've done to date. Not satisfied but proud of the progress we've made to date on this issue.

MPP Mantha to Minister Ballard Re: Sarnia Air Quality

>> MPP Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of environment and climate change. Yesterday we heard the Minister promise a study on air pollution for chemical valley. Unfortunately his government promised a similar study back in 2009 and it remains nowhere to be seen. The government also promised to update its sulphur dioxide standard by the end of 2016. The current standard dates back to 1970 and is nearly four times higher than the Canadian ambient air quality standard. Sulphur dioxide has been blamed for increased rates of asthma and other health problems in south Sarnia and Ojibwa first nation. It's now 2017. Why has the Minister failed to implement the new standards?

>> Minister Chris Ballard: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the member opposite for that very important question. Because we do know that sulphur dioxide, SO₂, is not something that in any concentration above about 40 parts per billion, Ontarians should be breathing on a regular basis. So that's why we continue to emphasize, Speaker, that clean air is critical for human health and to the environment. You know, Speaker, I want to say that Ontario's actions have improved significantly air quality across Ontario over the past ten years. With significant decreases and harmful pollutants like nitrogen dioxide, fine particulate matter, the closing of coal plants is one of the main reasons we don't have the smog across much of southern Ontario and all of the ensuing positive health benefits that come with that. So, Speaker, we are looking at SO₂ standards, new SO₂ standards.

>> MPP Mantha: Again to the Minister. Flaring is a relatively common occurrence. It releases sulphur dioxide. Unregulated flaring along with the weak sulphur dioxide standard is putting the health of Sarnia and Ojibwa families at risk. The Anishinabe Nations Grand Nation and the Assembly of First Nations has called on the Minister to update the sulphur dioxide standards. The government promised a new standard by the end of 2016. This government broke their promise. When will the Minister stop breaking this promise and finally update the sulphur dioxide standard?

>> Minister Ballard: Well, thank you, Speaker. Again a very important question when it comes to air quality here in Ontario, and all of the positive things that this ministry, this government has been doing to reduce particulate matter and sulphur dioxide matters across Ontario. In fact, Speaker, you know, Sarnia itself has seen some substantial reductions in emissions in just recent years. Sulphur dioxide has been reduced by 64%. Nitrogen dioxide has been reduced by 23%. Particulate matter has been reduced by 43%. So clearly, Speaker, there's a lot of good things going on in Sarnia but we need to do more. Not only in Sarnia but right across Ontario. Not only with sulphur dioxide but with any chemical that is emitted by industry. Speaker, we're on it. We're going to get this done.

MPP Hoggarth to Minister Chan Re: International Trade

>> MPP Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of international trade. Our government, through its foresight and prioritization of building relations with the world's established in emergent global markets, created a dedicated ministry for international trade. The ministry has worked hard to firmly establish its roots and has placed great emphasis on diversification. Just as diversity is a staple of our culture in Ontario too has become a characteristic of the way in which we do trade. Upon the Minister's return from trade missions, I'm always amazed to hear not only of the significant amount and scale of agreements being generated, but also the

overwhelming interest in the growing amount of sectors that Ontario businesses have spent. Speaker, account Minister elaborate on the importance of trade diversification and the implications. It will have for Ontarians?

>> Minister Michael Chan: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the member for asking the question. Speaker, the member is correct. Our ministry recognizes the need for diversification and its important role in enhancing our economic success. We focus on diversification through two-prong approach. Speaker, first we must diversify our markets. Currently we have free trade agreement with E.U., nafta, South Korea among others. Speaker, Canada is also in Discussions with India, China, Japan with these agreements in place, Canada will have preference market access to over \$1 dng to over 1.2 billion customers. Secondly, Speaker, we must diversify the types of goods and services which to export. Sectors such as A.I. E., commerce. Financial technology landscape.

>> MPP Hoggarth: Speaker, it's wonderful to hear the ministry's strategic plan to Ed engage diverse markets, all regions that contributes to the economic growth of our province. Diversity in trade means nobody is left behind, foe business, no sector and no riding. This week we are celebrating small businesses. Small and medium size enterprises make up 99% of Canadian businesses, and that's supporting mess is integral to our economic prosperity. Through small business week, I continue to learn more about our government's efforts to support and help develop Ontario's small industry. I'm curious to learn of the contributions which the ministry of international trade makes to the overall growth of our smes. Speaker, could the Minister kindly expand on the array of supports his ministry provides to new and potential exporters looking to engage with the world's emerging markets?

>> Minister Chan: Speaker, I want to thank the member from Barrie for her advocacy. Speaker, new and potential exporters confirm the notion of engaging the export opportunities overwhelming. However, our ministry has implemented effective and reliable supports to these profits. Our ministry has stationed international trade and investment offices in 15 key markets such as Mexico, the E.U., China, Japan, India and others that work to intense Ontario's businesses internationally as part of Ontario's international operations, we also have strategically placed marketplace representatives in priority markets like Chile, the gulf region and southeast Asia. Speaker, we encourage business owners across Ontario to conduct our ministry, to contact our ministry to find out how they can take advantage of these resources. Thank you, Speaker .

MPP Harris to Minister Del Duca Re: Drive Test Wait Times

>> MPP Michael Harris: To the Minister of transportation. Ontario's drive test licensing services are governed by a ministry oversight program that expects 90% of customers to spend 20 minutes or less waiting for the testing services Require. Will the Minister tell us the average wait time Ontario motorists are currently forced to endure in line winding out the doors of our provincial drive test centres?

>> Minister Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much, Minister. I appreciate the question from the member. There are drive test centres pointed out in every corner of the province of Ontario. He is right if I heard correctly what he said with respect to the standards that exist for those drive test centres. I know that there are a number of communities, for example, Speaker, in the brampton area as one example, where there are some challenges with some of the wait times that exist. I also know and I've said this to media over the last number of weeks that have asked this question, that the ministry of transportation is working with our contractor to provide the service level that is expected in the contract, and frankly, Speaker, expected and deserved by the people who are using our drive test centres and I expect over the next few weeks that I will have an update to provide with respect to this specific issue but again I do appreciate the member asking the question and hope to have an update relatively soon with respect to some of the improvements or enhancements that we anticipate that we'll be making to the system.

>> MPP Harris: Speaker, it's this government and Minister that failed to ensure we're getting the

services that we're actually paying for. Visit any one of these centres, Speaker, and you'll see long winding lines and campout queues of young and old waiting hours or even days to book and take a test to require them to drive here in the province of Ontario. The cost of time off work, stress and frustration is mounting while driving school instructors I met with from the Minister 's only riding say his inaction has left their students in costly drive test gridlock. Speaker, the contract with serco provides the government auditing, performance, penalty and warning notice powers. As the wait times continue to grow will WHE Minister tell us when he will deliver those penalties to end the drive test gridlock we're all paying more and more for here in the province?

>> Minister Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. I appreciate the member's second question on this particular topic. As I said in my original answer, I anticipate that I'll have an update that can be provided publicly in the next number of weeks. In the meantime, I will say to people that are using our drive test centres that we are aware that, in some of those centres, there's a bit of an ongoing challenge. We're going to keep working hard to resolve that challenge. I look forward to providing that update and receiving support from that member when that update comes. Thanks very much, Speaker.