

REVISED - Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Wednesday, October 25, 2017

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Transcript of Provincial Question Period
41st Parliament, 2nd Session
Wednesday, October 25, 2017

The following is a partially edited transcript of Question Period.

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>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy. Yesterday the government had an opportunity to apologize for their latest attacks on -- Mr. Speaker, clearly the government doesn't like to talk about the auditor general's report. Now instead of doing the right thing and supporting our motion yesterday, they voted it down. I want to give the Liberals another chance. The Minister of energy, will the government apologize to the auditor general for what was a blatant attempt to discredit her office? It wasn't right. You know it wasn't right and they should apologize.

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We survived today -- thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy birthday. Thank you for the birthday wishes. Mr. Speaker, I remember March 2nd very well. That was - which has lowered electricity bills an average of 25% for all residential customers and half a million small businesses and farms. That was 237 days ago, Mr. Speaker. That was 237 days ago, Mr. Speaker. Shortly after that, the leader of the official opposition promised to release his own energy plan sometime in the coming weeks. But here we are, Mr. Speaker, over a half a year later -- Almost halfway through the fall session. In those 237 days a lot has happened, Mr. Speaker, but nothing has happened on that side. That's the party that should be apologizing for --

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister. The question was about the way this government has discredited the auditor general. The auditor general said the way they're doing this hydro scheme will cost Ontarians \$4 billion more than necessary. And I get that it's the Liberal talking points today to applaud the Minister of energy. But what we're talking about is \$4 billion that Ontario famous are going to have to pay because of this government. And rather than acknowledge the auditor general's report and say we're going to try to fix this, they discredit the auditor general. Mr. Speaker, ten times out of ten, if I choose who to believe, the auditor general or this Liberal government, I'm going to choose the auditor general. So I will ask the question again. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of energy apologize to the auditor general for the way -- His office, his ministry has discredited her office?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to work with the auditor general. As the president of the treasury board says, 99.9% of the time, we always agree with the auditor general and implement her recommendations. In this instance, Mr. Speaker, we agree this is an accounting dispute. We have KPMG. We have Ian wise. We have deloitte. All of these peers of the auditor general agree what we have brought forward, Mr. Speaker, is a plan that is going to actually reduce rates by 25% and meet the Canadian public sector accounting standards, Mr. Speaker. But I know the point is, Mr. Speaker, that the Conservatives are refusing or even unable to come up with any ideas or a plan of their own, Mr. Speaker. We've helped families by lowering their rates by 25%. We've helped families by raising the minimum wage to \$15. We protect tenants from unfair rent increases. What do they have on that side, Mr. Speaker ? Zero.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of energy. I'm glad that the Minister's now saying he agrees with the auditor general because the auditor general has said their energy policy is the House of cards, that after the election energy rates are going to skyrocket. The auditor general has said they make up their own rules. The auditor general has said they're going to blow \$4 billion unnecessarily. So if you all of a sudden agree with the auditor general, how are you going to fix that problem and not simply discredit her? Mr. Speaker, yesterday it was written in an article the Minister of energy went so far -- the ministry went so far as personally contact journalists the day before her report was released say the auditor general's interpretation is flawed. Calling the day before the report to the discredit the auditor general? That's not working with the auditor general. That's attacking the auditor general. So once again, will the government do the right thing and

apologize to the auditor general?

>> Minister Thibeault: Again, Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with the auditor general on an ongoing basis. We will continue as a government to be open and transparent with the auditor general and with all independent officers of the House, Mr. Speaker. It is important for us to continue to have that working dialogue as the president of the treasury board has said over and over again, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do so. This is an accounting dispute, Mr. Speaker. We believe -- and so do her peers and so do all of the bureaucracy accountants -- all believe that the way that we have done this, by keeping the assets of the electricity system in that sector, Mr. Speaker, meets with the Canadian public sector accounting standards. We'll continue to work forward, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to advocate for the people of this province unlike the opposition. That does nothing on offer and never will, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Brown to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of energy. The Liberals, according to the auditor general, have been accused of making up their own accounting rules. Let me repeat, making up their own accounting rules. What worries me is what else they may be hiding, Mr. Speaker. They seem to be making up their own recension rules -- retention rules on the play fly. They certainly don't seem to be keen to release emails to the auditor general. Since they don't want to apologize for this blatant attempt to discredit the independent legislative officer, at the very least, will they do what they said they'd do, be transparent, release the e-mails, stop hiding 99% of those emails? Will this dough the right thing and release the emails requested?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is our government's commitment to continue to work with the auditor general, to continue to be open and transparent. And we're going to continue to co-operate with her office. Now it's important for me to say, Mr. Speaker, that I've just been informed by my ministry that, as of Monday, October 23rd, the ministry has provided 30,126 records to the auditor general. That's in addition to the 1,200 from the ieso, the hundreds from O.P.G., the over 3,000 from the Ontario financing authority. The treasury board I know the president of the treasury board and the treasury board have provided thousands of records, Mr. Speaker. Additionally the ministry has told me we're continuing to release additional information to the auditor general, and we're doing this, Mr. Speaker, because we understand the importance of providing the auditor with everything that she's asked for and the ministry will continue to regularly provide. The auditor general with additional responsive documents each week until this process is finished, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of energy. Yesterday the Minister of energy said, I quote -- he doesn't expect a ticker tape parade for how the Liberals handled the hydro file. That's a stretch. That's certainly no surprise. They can't line up for a parade because they're lining up for food banks right now in Ontario and unemployment insurance. People can't afford to pay their hydro bills. People are living in energy poverty. Right now the Liberals -- Mr. Speaker, right now the Liberals laugh when I say people are living in energy poverty. The more I travel in this province the more I hear examples of people who are struggling, beyond struggling to pay their hydro bill. It's not a laughing matter. This latest \$4 billion is just the cherry on the top of their hydro crisis, a crisis that you created, a crisis this government created. So my question is when are we going to get meaningful hydro relief? Not more spin. When are we actually going to get meaningful hydro relief for the families that you're laughing at right now?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's obvious they'll never get any relief under that party that has no idea what to do and no man, Mr. Speaker. It is ee ridiculous they continue to come up and shake their fist and talk about doing something for the people of Ontario, but instead they vote against real relief. Real relief, Mr. Speaker, is 25% off every single House hold in this province. They voted against it. Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we announced \$100 million affordability fund. This is going to help tens of thousands of people in this province. Do you know who voted against that, Mr. Speaker? That member and that party. You know what, Mr. Speaker? We know that the only people

that are lining up to see something are their members to find out what they're going to do. They have no idea, Mr. Speaker. We have talked about things that we have been doing in the 237 days that they've offered nothing. We are introducing a minimum wage increase, Mr. Speaker. They voted against prescriptions. All prescriptions for people 25 and under, Mr. Speaker, they voted against. The only people that are waiting in line are –

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of energy. Deleting emails is not a plan. Borrowing is not a plan. Hiding debt is not a plan. The relief that Ontario families want, they are not getting, and the government spin about this latest \$4 billion they're wasting, that spin doesn't add up. The government continues to tout that accounting firms support this Liberal scheme. What they failed to mention is the government hired those firms. They contract out to get the answers they want. They are bee honed to the government. The auditor general is not. She isn't in the pocket of the Liberals. We get the truth from the auditor general. While the taxpayers foot the bill for millions for Liberal spin. So, Mr. Speaker, my question is very specific and hopefully I can get an answer. How much do the Liberals spend to fight the auditor general's report? How many dollars did you put into this fake spin?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What's appalling is the leader of the opposition will sully the names of world-class organizations like KPMG, like deloitte, like Ian wise. I know all Conservatives from the past are rolling over in their grave, Mr. Speaker, to hear that coming from that party. You know at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we've ensured that we've talked with world-class organizations that are slookd at our accounting standards, Mr. Speaker. The government standards are prepared in accordance with the public cycle tore accounting standards and will continue to follow these standards for the transactions resulting from the fair hydro plan in 2017 and 2018 and in future years, Mr. Speaker. In relation to regulated accounting, psac is silent and does not prohibit the use of rate regulated accounting. Maybe that party should actually do a little research and talk with some of these firms before they accuse them of what he just did, Mr. Speaker. That is shameful.

MPP Armstrong to Minister Hoskins Re: Long-Term Care Homes

>> MPP Armstrong: My question is to the acting Premier. Every day we hear horror stories from vulnerable seniors and their families about what they are going through in long-term care homes across the province. Conditions are putting our seniors at risk, and we have a wait list in Ontario that tops 32,000 people. Now we hear that there are as many as 14 homes in Toronto looking to pick up and move. Can the acting Premier tell us, since the Minister of health has to personally approve any proposal for a home to relocate, will she promise right now that none of these homes will be allowed to leave the city?

>> Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister Of Health and Long-Term Care: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We appreciate the hard work that the operators of our long-term care homes across this province do. The not-for-profit homes and municipal homes, for-profit homes, collectively they are absolutely committed to providing the highest quality of care for their residents. And that includes here in Toronto. Mr. Speaker, I can say categorically that we have not received any applications from the 20 long-term care homes that were referenced in the media over the past couple of days. We have not received -- the ministry has not received, I have not received any applications or proposals that entertain or suggest or would even imply that beds and homes in Toronto would be anywhere else but in Toronto, Mr. Speaker. And we have very good examples -- Of how successful redevelopment is happening in the city of Toronto and happy to speak to that in the supplementary.

>> MPP Armstrong: The well-being of 1,800 seniors is up in the air right now. Families are worried they may not be able to visit their parents or grandparents as often as they need. Seniors have loved ones, friends, doctors and many other ties to the cities. They need the Premier's word that no home in Toronto will be allowed to relocate away from their neighbourhoods under her watch. Will the acting Premier give residents of long-term care and their families that comfort?

>> Minister Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, not only have I received no applications, but I personally, in writing, have to approve every new redevelopment, whether that is even within the same community, in the same location, Mr. Speaker, but certainly -- I need to approve it in writing. And certainly when it comes to moving or any proposals to moving beds from a location, the first step that I take upon review and with the advice of the ministry is to send it back to the community to have a fulsome community conversation and consultation overseen by the ministry and by the IHN so we can have a clear understanding of the importance of those beds of that home in that community. I have worked tirelessly across the province, not just in Toronto, to ensure that those beds -- And those homes do remain in the communities where they are, and I will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Armstrong: The fact that relocation is even a consideration for these homes just goes to show how much the government is willing to ignore the problems that face our long-term care home system. I'm sure the Premier and her Minister of health have had many, many meetings with home directors, staff, long-term care associations and families with loved ones in care. They must have heard many times, by many different people and not just the opposition members like myself, about the state of our long-term care system. Has the Premier just chosen to ignore these concerns or is she that out of touch with the needs of our vulnerable seniors in the province of Ontario?

>> Minister Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, here's who's out of touch. It's that party. Because, Mr. Speaker, here they go again. I was absolutely categorical yesterday in saying no applications whatsoever have come forward to the ministry or to me that suggest anything of what they are doing. They are fear mongering once again. They are instilling fear in the residents and the families of those long-term care homes, and I certainly hope, Mr. Speaker, that they are not suggesting that those homes should not be redeveloped, because those homes need to be redeveloped to provide that highest quality of care. I have to approve every single bed, transfer, home redevelopment. I am working tirelessly across the province including Toronto. But I am not fear mongering and I'm not suggesting that these individuals, these residents should be afraid because they can be assured that I will work to maintain those beds here.

MPP Armstrong to Minister Hoskins Re: Long-Term Care Homes

>> MPP Armstrong: When the health Minister gets that defensive, you know you've hit a nerve, Speaker. Long-term care homes -- I did, Speaker, but I'll speak up. To the acting Premier. Long-term care homes in Toronto and across the province are struggling partially because of the Liberal government's failure to keep its promise to redevelop 35,000 long-term care beds. Ten years ago the Liberals promised to update these beds, but in 2014, they have only completed 5,000. The Minister of health confirmed yesterday that 13,500 beds have now been redeveloped. Does the Premier plan to keep her Liberal government's promise and complete the other 21,500 by December 31st, or were the 35,000 beds just another stretch goal?

>> Minister Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely committed to redeveloping 30,000 beds across this province. We have already redeveloped 13,500 of those beds, and we're working with organizations such as ReKai here in Toronto to give that example of where they are redeveloping a Toronto long-term care home in downtown Toronto. In fact in the west don lands -- Not-for-profit in downtown Toronto, a new redevelopment, 220 beds. Specialized unit for those are Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. A whole host of supportive care surrounding that right across the road from the "Y", Mr. Speaker. It is a fantastic example of what can be done when proponents and operators work together with the IHN and the ministry of health for redevelopment. Including in downtown Toronto.

>> MPP Armstrong: The Premier's stubborn refusal to even consider expanding the scope of the Wettlaufer inquiry into long-term care means that broken promises, like this one, can be swept under the rug. I guess that convenience with -- for the Premier when an election is on the horizon,

but seniors in the province deserve better. Seniors deserve a government committed to finding and fixing each and every issue that threatens their well-being. When will the Premier show Ontario seniors and their loved ones the respect they deserve and agree to expand the scope of the Wettlaufer inquiry?

>> Minister Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, this -- let me do this. Redevelop beds, 13,500 in Ontario already, including 63 at chateau gardens in London, 170 at extendicare in London, 60 at versey care in London. -- Versacare. 2333 at Dierdre's home in London. 141 at McCormack home in London. In fact an additional 19 at mcar Mack home in London. 157 at mcgaro place in London. 32 at kensington village in London. An additional 80 at kensington in London and additional 16 and additional 32 at kensington, different phases, in London, Mr. Speaker. There is a long list here of 13,500 but I hope the member would agree -- I don't think she's suggesting -- We should redevelop or that we're not redeveloping in her city, because we are.

>> MPP Armstrong: Speaker, in the long list of numbers, the Minister forgot to add 32,000 people waiting on the waiting list for long-term care. 21,500 beds have yet to be redeveloped by this government. There is a severe shortage of frontline staff. We've heard horror stories of neglect and abuse regularly from every corner of this province, and there are 14 homes in Toronto that may leave the city. It's a broad inquiry that will find and fix the systemic issues in our long-term care homes -- what is her plan to make sure our parents, our grandparents are able to live their golden years with dignity?

>> Minister Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Toronto, 192 redeveloped beds at Kipling acres, Mr. Speaker. 98 redeveloped beds at true Davidson acres. 108 redeveloped beds at copernicus lodge. 89 redeveloped beds again at true Davidson acres. 88 redeveloped beds at Vermont square. 174 redeveloped beds at Chester village, and 29 additional beds at Chester village in Toronto. What the NDP is doing here is they're fear mongering. They're inciting fear among residents every our long-term care homes, and that's not to say we don't have specific instances where improvements need to be made, and we are addressing those through inspections and restrictions on admission and other important punitive measures. But to suggest the situation is anything close to what they are is reprehensible, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Brown to Minister Hoskins (Duguid) Re: Pharmaceutical Industry

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of health. According to life sciences Ontario, the innovative pharma sector insists over 1 billion in research and development each year. They contribute over \$3.8 billion to the Canadian economy each year and approximately 45% of that investment is directed within Ontario. Life sciences Ontario's sector report from 2015 noted the pharmaceutical sector contributes 12,800 indirect jobs and 7,700 direct jobs in Ontario. We understand these investments are currently at risk. There are impacts from the proposed federal changes to the patent and medicine's pricing review board that could directly impact the research investment in associated jobs in Ontario -- associated jobs. My question is, Mr. Speaker, what is the province doing to ensure these investments and jobs stay in Ontario? Have they contacted their federal counterparts, and what assurances do we have for these jobs in Ontario?

>> Minister Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister for economic development and growth will want to take the supplementary. But on this issue of pharma, I want to say that we had last week our federal provincial territorial health Minister s' meeting and due to the leadership of our Premier and the leadership of Ontario, we were able to have discussions, fulsome discussions on the Thursday and on the Friday. In fact breakfast as well on the Friday morning, that were wholly about the issue of pharma and about creating a strong pharmaceutical industry. But most importantly steps to take for national pharmacare. And in fact all health Minister s, every province, every territory and the federal health Minister agreed now to get down to the work, to scope out what a national pharmacare program would look like. In terms of time lines and costs in the framework, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of that work.

>> Patrick Brown: Speaker, my hope was that the question I asked would be answered. A different question was clearly -- maybe someone misheard what I said. But, Mr. Speaker, what I was asking about is the proposed federal changes to pad in medicines pricing review board. 7,700 direct jobs in Ontario. This is significant investments. These are important well-paying jobs we want to protect in the province of Ontario. So again to the Minister. During these discussions they had with the health Minister s and the federal government, did you get assurances that these proposals, what accommodation is there going to be for Ontario? How do we protect the jobs here? And, Mr. Speaker, if you're not concerned about the new federal regulations, explain to this House why these changes are going to affect the province of Ontario? These are jobs we have to protect here.

>> Minister Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We agree that we need to protect those jobs here. We agree that we need to stand up for jobs in our innovation economy, Mr. Speaker. That's why this government worked so hard when Mars was having challenges to invest in Mars. What kind of help did we have from the other side? They tried to shake down every effort we ever made to build up our innovation economy in this province at mavrments, Mr. Speaker, just last week we announced something very, very important to this sector. The most important thing we can do for our innovation sector, Mr. Speaker, is to build that pipe line of young talent that we're providing in this province. We're providing those companies with the best talent anywhere in north America today. Last week we announced we're going to be extending by 25% the talent available to this sector in the stem area, Mr. Speaker. What have we heard from the party opposite? Absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker. They're nowhere on energy. They're nowhere on minimum wage and nowhere when it comes to renewing --

MPP Tabuns to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. My question to the acting Premier. This government keeps insisting that it must spend an extra \$4 billion on a complicated alternative financing scheme because it is the only way to keep ratepayer and taxpayer costs separate. But nearly 20 years ago, the governments established the Ontario electricity financial corporation. It was established as a way to separate taxpayer and ratepayer funds. The province -- or this government, oeft stays on the government's books. And this government wants to keep deficits and debt off the books to make the Liberal party look better. Will the government admit that it is wasting \$4 billion in ratepayer money for no other purpose than to help the Liberal party?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise and talk about the policy decision that we made as a government. Mr. Speaker, we all know that the fair hydro plan is actually reducing the rates by 25% for every single House hold in this province and for 500,000 small businesses and farms. Mr. Speaker, that policy decision made sure that we actually looked at where the assets, where the borrowing was coming from and then make sure that the borrowing stayed within the electricity system. We actually did pull costs from the rate base and put it on to the tax base, Mr. Speaker. Those were the social programs. The affordability fund which we announced yesterday, Mr. Speaker, which is a \$100 million fund, which is going to help tens of thousands of more people in this province. With their electricity bills, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to work for the people of Ontario and continue to provide the relief that we know that they wanted and asked for.

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Again to the acting Premier. Speaker, the government could have used normal public sector accounting to achieve exactly the same policy goals, and it would have cost ratepayers \$4 billion less. It could have used the Oest to administer the programs and keep ratepayer and taxpayer funds separate. The only reason to use this \$4 billion alternative financing trick is to hide the true cost of the government's hydro borrowing scheme from the public, the only reason. Will the government help ratepayers instead of the Liberal party and stop this needless waste of \$4 billion today?

>> Minister Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regards to the ODSP, it is still involved. As the member may or may not know during our recent transaction to broaden the ownership of Hydro One it paid down oesp dead. Furthermore we inherited debt of almost \$28 billion from the opposition, which was not a marketable opportunity, unlike what is happening here in this instance. Mr. Speaker, as we proceed forward, we're taking the proportionate amount off the tax base and we've taken a proportionate amount off the rate base as is normal under this circumstance, Mr. Speaker. Oefcabout is engaged and doing its part.

MPP Hoggarth to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> MPP Hoggarth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister of energy. This spring our government took a big step forward in ensuring our clean and reliable electricity is affordable to everyone in Ontario. The cost of electricity has become a concern for many communities and I know the people in Ontario were eager to see the government take action. The fair hydro plan passed last session is a 25% reduction, on average, for all Households in this province. No loopholes, no exceptions, just a significant relief pour this important House hold expense. But that wasn't all. The government also included new and expanded support programs for low-income Ontarians, as well as a program to help those with the highest delivery charges in Ontario. Additionally we introduced a new policy. Affordability fund. Could the Minister please update us on what this program does and when it will begin to support Ontario families?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member from Barrie for that question, and of course, Mr. Speaker, for her tireless work for her constituents in that area, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to update the members on the lines of the affordability, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I was in Hamilton to announce this exciting new program. The affordability fund is designed to help people improve in energy efficiency of their homes while reducing their bills and their carbon footprint, Mr. Speaker. The new \$100 million fund will support the free installation of energy-saving L.E.D. Light bulbs, power bars, improved energy efficient air conditioners, refrigerators and many more pieces of equipment, Mr. Speaker. The affordability fund is designed to help people who do not qualify for low-income conservation programs and who are unable to undertake energy efficiency improvements without support. This fund managed by the independent trust is being supported by Hydro One and I want to thank that leadership team. We're going to continue to focus helping the people of Ontario.

>> MPP Hoggarth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for the answer. This program is welcomed news for the families in my riding who need extra help with their electricity bills. I'm pleased our government is taking action to support those that don't have the means to pay for House hold upgrades. In addition to cutting residential hydro bills by 25% on average through the fair hydro plan, we are delivering even more savings to Ontario families through the affordability fund. I heard you say many times in this House that for every dollar spent on conservation programs we save \$2. That's a very wise investment. By providing electricity customers with the tools to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, we're helping reduce pressure on their pocketbooks and protecting the environment. Minister, can you please explain how electricity consumers can sign up for this program?

>> Minister Thibeault: The good question. Electricity consumers can find out if they are eligible for the program by going to affordabilitiesfund.org. On this website electricity consumers can see what support they may be eligible for and to sign up for this program, Mr. Speaker. Whether you rent or own, live in a House or an apartment, you may qualify for more savings on your electricity bill. Electricity bill savings for Households participating in the program will obviously depend, Mr. Speaker, on the types of measures installed but a home energy kit with two L.E.D. Light bulbs and power bar can help save 10 bucks, Mr. Speaker. Energy efficient refrigerator can save help about \$90 in annual electricity costs. I encourage all members constituents who are looking to make energy efficiency upgrades at home who might not have the disposable income to afford these upgrades to check out the website and see if they're eligible. Our government has a plan to make sure everybody in Ontario has the opportunity to share in the growth of our economy and measures like this plan

and the fair hydro plan make it more fair, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Barrett to Minister McGarry Re: Well Capping

>> MPP Barrett: To the Minister of natural resources and forestry. Two years ago I contacted your office and the petroleum division regarding ministry of natural resources and forestry natural gas relief well along vic creek. Steve and Tim grant from silver hill here in the gallery today, and they were notified this relief well was releasing hydrogen sulphide and toxic water into the creek and had to be capped. Apparently the well was capped in the 1960s, so the ramifications of this goes back five decades. Now, pressure buildup over two years with another well erupting this June on the grants' property. Plus another well down the road after M.N.R. Assured the grant and my office that they would be monitoring the problem. The grants have suffered damage to their business, their property, possibly their health. Minister -- Why has it taken so long to act?

>> Minister McGarry: Thank you very much, Speaker. And thank you to the member for the question. And I want to start off by saying that public health and public safety is real our government's and our ministry's sole focus in this area. We know that there are abandoned wells along the shores of Lake Erie for instance and in the other areas that need recapping. So I know that the place that the member is talking about, we were notified early on. We expedited the process to ensure that ministry officials were there to provide advice to the municipality and ensure that the well was being capped. The ministry of natural resources and forestry always can provide technical advice to support any municipality will be continuing to work with the municipal control group to assess the situation. And determine the next steps. We again want to ensure the public that public safety is my ministry's top priority.

>> MPP Barrett: Back to the Minister. It was two years going on five decades really -- action. In August Norfolk county and Haldimand-Norfolk health unit stepped in. They closed roads. They evacuated the grants. They evacuated five other families in the area. Finally the wells have been capped. But the question is what is the Minister doing to ensure history does not repeat itself again? What about these environmental impacts, possible health effects? Will you compensate Norfolk county -- importantly and again for loss of business and damage to plant and equipment, hell. Why won't you compensate Kim and Ian grant?

>> Minister McGarry: Thank you very much, Speaker. Again thank you for the question. We continue to work with the municipality and local health units. But I do understand how distressing it is for individuals to have to be either evacuated from their homes or have impacts to their businesses or their homes because of that. Recently we continued to look at areas across -- areas where there are potential wells that will need to be capped. In the coming months, my ministry will be reaching out to municipalities to discuss the planning and the emergency management scenarios related to petroleum hazards and risks. This is a multi-government approach, and we continue to provide technical advice in these situations. The education and outreach work will help to clarify roles and responsibilities to allow municipalities to plan ahead by better understanding the risks so we will continue to provide that advice.

MPP Fife to Minister Naidoo-Harris Re: Funding for Child Care Services

>> MPP Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the acting Premier. The government talks a lot about investing in child care. However current policy and promises are not backed up by actions. Case in point, organizations like Al's child care services in Waterloo region are left asking where's the money? Al is opening a new child care centre and the government of Ontario promised to pay for the capital costs, including furniture and equipment. Al has now been told by this government that there isn't enough money for the furniture or the equipment. Child care spaces

in my community are at risk because of chronic underfunding, and families are left to pay the price through higher fees, child care fees. Will the acting Premier commit to providing the promised funding to Al's child care services in Waterloo region?

>> Minister Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the member opposite for this important question. Speaker, I want to you know that absolutely we are doing everything we can to make sure that we are transforming the way we deliver child care, and part of that promise and that pledge is to make sure we're moving funding forward. So right now we have increased funding. We are now moving funding forward to \$1.4 billion when it comes to operating costs. In addition we've moved forward with an extra \$200 million. We have also moved forward and are taking applications right now for \$1.6 billion in capital expenditures and costs. So we are building actual spaces. But what I'm trying to say is that money is moving forward. We don't directly fund child care centres. What we do is fund municipalities, and we leave those decisions to the local district service managers to decide where that money goes and -- So I would be more than happy to look into this incidence of what is going on, but I think it would be advisable for the -- Local district manager.

>> MPP Fife: Again to the acting Premier. People in this province, whether they are College faculty or early childhood educators, deserve equal pay for equal work. In Ontario two E.C.E.S with the same education and same qualifications can receive vastly different wages. If they work for a school board, they can make up to \$30 an hour, but if they choose to work in a licensed community child care they may make as little as \$11.25 an hour. Many E.C.E.S don't make enough money in the system to put their own children into the child care centres that they work in. In Ontario we need good jobs. We need fair wages for everyone including E.C.E.S which is I must point out a predominantly female oriented field. Why won't the government commit to providing early childhood educators with equal pay for equal work in the province of Ontario?

>> Minister Naidoo-Harris: Speaker, I'm proud to rise today and speak about this issue, especially since it is child care worker and E.C. He felt appreciation day. And I want to thank the workers -- E.C.E.. I want to thank the workers who are here with us. Child care workers and E.C.E.S play a critical role in our child child care system. They provide children across Ontario with a strong foundation in learning to help them get the best possible start in life. And absolutely the need for better wages and compensation for these early years and child care work force is something that we heard throughout our consultations and is a priority for this government. And so that's why we're doing so many things, Speaker, on so many different levels. So absolutely we've raised the minimum wage from 11 to going to \$14 an hour starting in January. Many of the child care workers out there are making minimum wage. We also are bringing in a workforce strategy which is looking to do a deeper dive. We also have a wage enhancement of \$188 million. To take up the --

MPP MacLaren to Minister Thibeault Re: Green Energy Act

>> MPP MacLaren: My question is for the Minister of energy. Minister, Ontario electricity costs are the highest in almost all of North America. The unfair green energy act provides massive subsidy payments from Ontario ratepayers to out of province wind and solar electricity producers for electricity that we do not even need. We do this while we shut down Ontario water and nuclear produced electricity that costs 6 cents per kilowatt hour. The green energy act is impoverishing Ontario homeowners. It is driving businesses and jobs out of Ontario. The green energy act has reduced the once prosperous Ontario to a have-not province. Minister, it is time to show respect for the people of Ontario. Will you do the right thing and repeal the green energy act?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for the question. When it comes to the first part of his question, Mr. Speaker, we have dropped rates by 25%. And I know the Honourable member knows that because the constituents in his riding will have seen a reduction of 25% on their bills. Mr. Speaker, when it comes to renewable energy, this sector has created tens of thousands of jobs in our province, creating economic benefits for communities from Windsor to Ottawa to Sudbury to Sault Ste. Marie all the way up into the northern part of our province, Thunder

Bay and right across up there, Mr. Speaker, into Kenora and elsewhere. The green energy act, Mr. Speaker, has brought forward about 18,000 megawatts of renewable power to our province, Mr. Speaker. These megawatts are actually making sure that we have a diverse supply mix, a supply mix. That has made sure that we no longer have to worry about smog days in this province, which is a savings again to our health care system and to the benefits of all people in this province.

>> MPP MacLaren: Again to the Minister of energy. The green energy act has cost Ontario people billions of dollars. First with the sole-sourced contract for \$7 billion with Samsung, and then with countless out of province subsidized wind and solar contracts. Could you have chosen -- you could have chosen to buy water-powered electricity from Québec. It would have been cheap. It would have been as required instead of as produced. It would have been Canadian. It would have been a good deal. If your objective was to redistribute Ontario wealth to other nations and to lower our standard of living in order to reduce consumption of resources as preached by Maurice strong and his agenda 21, then I applaud you. You have been successful. Why did you choose the most expensive plan possible?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And again pleased to rise and talk about the system that we've built in Ontario. It now benefits from a 90% emissions-free electricity system. It is clean and it is green, Mr. Speaker. It will allow the trillium flowers to grow in this province from the Honourable member on that side, Mr. Speaker. You know, since 2003 Ontario's clean energy initiatives have attracted billions of dollars in private sector investment, generating over 42,000 jobs at over 30 solar and wind manufacturers operating in communities across the province. Ontario ranked first for installed wind capacity in this country, Mr. Speaker, and renewables were an important element of our government's plan to close all of Ontario's coal plants by 2014, Mr. Speaker. That year Ontario became the first jurisdiction in North America to fully eliminate coal fired electricity generation, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Martins to Minister Naidoo-Harris Re: Early Childhood Educators

>> MPP Martins: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister responsible for early years and child care. As the members of this House know today marks the 17th annual child care worker and early childhood educator appreciation day and I want to welcome all the E.C.E. Workers that have joined us here today. It is important that we recognize the hard work and value of those who are shaving and caring for our youngest learners. As a mother of two young boys I know how important this is. It's equally as important to make sure we retain the hard working professionals who are already doing this crucial job and, Speaker, let me give a shout out to all the great E.C.E. Workers in Davenport. They are the front of our children's path through education. Account Minister tell me more about what she is doing to help recruit and retain early childhood educators in Ontario?

>> Minister Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the hardworking member from Davenport for this very important question. Speaker, we are creating a strong foundation for our young children so they can thrive and we're investing in the people who work hard every day to provide high-quality licensed child care programs for Ontario kids. Included in that framework to build quality affordable accessible child care is our commitment to develop a work force strategy to support Ontario's early years and child care professionals. It's so important, Speaker. Support in key areas like compensation, professional development, hiring retention and education. That work is under way. We also announced that the government is going to host two professional development events, a year starting in 2018, and we're creating regional centres of excellence for early years and child care educators. Speaker, with our five-year expansion plan. It's estimated we're going to need 20,000 more E.C.E.S. The work is under way and we're doing everything we can to recruit.

>> MPP Martins: Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for that answer. And I've heard from many E.C.E.S that they are concerned about the low wages in this field and worried they may not be able to pay for their expenses including their own family's child care needs. It is true that average salaries for E.C.E.S have increased over the past five years but they are still lower than the average salary, making recruitment and retention of E.C.E.S difficult for child care operators. For someone who is

pursuing a passion of being an E.C.E., this can be discouraging. As we just heard from the Minister, we plan to increase the number of E.C.E.S here in Ontario. Account Minister tell me what is being done to address wage concerns and ensure we remain those who are pursuing this important career choice?

>> Minister Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to answer the member's question, Speaker. I've heard about the challenges E.C.E.S face when it comes to low wages. That's why we're investing in the professionals who work tirelessly to deliver high quality child care programs. In fact our government is supporting a wage enhancement for eligible professionals working in licensed child care, because this help is vital for these workers. So for 2017 we allocated more than 1 -- \$188 million to support the wage enhancement and the home child care enhancement grant. Just think about that. Eligible staff and home child care providers can now receive a wage enhancement of up to \$2 an hour, plus 17.5% in benefits. And eligible home child care provider could receive a grant of up to \$20 a day. Through the wage enhancement this new job creation, we can help close the wage gap. Between R.C.E.S, E.C. E.s and other child care program staff. Speaker, these invest manys are parts of Ontario east plan to modernize child care.

MPP Walker (Martow) to Minister Hoskins Re: Access To Cancer Drugs

>> MPP Walker: Thank you very much. My question's to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Today at queen's park we have three large organizations advocating together on behalf of cancer patients. Can certainty and Canadian cancer society. They are upset about Ontario's two-tiered cancer care system that forces patients to pay for lifesaving medications once they leave a hospital. The unaffordability and lack of access to drugs leaves patients like Daniel glazerman worried that his cancer may return. Mr. Speaker, you may be surprised or even outraged to hear Ontario's lagging behind other provinces in funding cancer therapy. Would the Minister please explain why he discriminates against cancer patients while Alberta, Manitoba, B.C. And Saskatchewan do not?

>> Minister Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And of course our government is absolutely committed to creating a world-class evidence-based cancer system. In fact Ontario is a leader in cancer care and I want to welcome can certainty and Canadian cancer society and others here to queen's park today. In fact Ontarians -- and they know that Ontarians who get cancer, they have one of the best chances of survival anywhere in the world, Mr. Speaker, according to the cancer system quality index. But we've recognized absolutely that access to cancer drugs is a critically important issue. In the last five years, we've added 68 new cancer medications, 28 of those under O.D.B. Are oral cancer drugs. And it's important to know, Mr. Speaker, that 89% of people, individuals in this province who access, to require cancer medications, are seniors. 9% of the population is already covered by our O.D.B. Program, Mr. Speaker ,.

>> MPP Martow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And again to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Mark Silverstein lives in York region and asked me to share his story. He is fighting lymphoma for the third time and now trike -- -- the doctor wants to add retucksa to improve his chances yesterday it is only funded for one treatment in Ontario. He was already on retucksen on an earlier regimen so mark is forced to pay tens of thousands of dollars for medication because this government has decided to only fund it once. Mr. Speaker, we are joined today by the renowned oncologist Dr. George kerviela. He wants to share his frustration with Ontario's woefully deficient cancer funding. The doctor speaks at conferences across Canada and sees firsthand the far more comprehensive cancer funding in other provinces. Will the Minister please explain. Why Ontario's cancer patients are forced to pay out of pocket?

>> Minister Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, 89% of the individuals that regrettably get cancer in this province are seniors and they're already covered for both injectable and oral cancer drugs. The other 11% of the population, I'm proud to say that as of January the 1st, a significant number of those, so all children and youth up to their 25th birthday, will be absolutely and fully covered for access to oral and injectable, but oral cancer drugs, absolutely free of charge. No up-front fee. No annual co-

payment. No co-payment. No annual deductible. That's a significant improvement. That ability to provide child and youth pharmacare takes a significant movement forward to providing that coverage. But we're working closely with cancer care Ontario. We've established a pharmacy task force. Can certainty is a member of that pharmacy task force which among other things is informing us on how to further enhance -- The take-home cancer drug delivery model in Ontario so we're working on this, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Gelinias to Minister Hoskins Re: Access To Cancer Drugs

>> MPP Gelinias: [Speaking in French] Voice of Translator: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. [End of Translation] Coalition and Canadian cancer society are with us at queen's park today. And their message is quite simple. Take home cancer drugs have emerged as a standard treatment option for many cancers but, outside of hospitals, working adults have to pay for those take home cancer drugs, the very medication that they need to get better and sometimes to stay alive. Those people are here today and they want to know what is this government going to do to help work trg yans with cancer access the lifesaving cancer drugs that they need?

>> Minister Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is why it's so critically important to support Ontario's and the Premier's leadership on national pharmacare because it provides -- well, laugh at that but the NDP's plan for pharmacare didn't even include cancer drugs. Completely excludes them, Mr. Speaker. It was only 120 roughly essential medications. So, Mr. Speaker, it's important that we work on all fronts. We're adding more oral cancer drugs, 28. They're available to our seniors. They're available to those on Ontario works. They're available to those oral cancer drugs, to those on disability. And shortly, on January 1st, they're going to be available to 4 million more Ontarians who are between the age of 0 and 25, Mr. Speaker. So support us -- Support us at the national level of pharmacare, because universal national pharmacare will provide the answer that I believe we're all looking for.

>> MPP Gelinias: Thank you, Speaker. Ontario works in Ontario right now, Speaker. If a cancer treatment is given in a hospital or cancer treatment centre, it is free. It is publicly covered. But if the cancer treatment is given at home, people have to rely on private insurance, wait for months and get through the paperwork with trillium, or pay out of their own pocket. Worrying about how to pay for medication is the last thing that a person diagnosed with cancer and their family should have to go through. Dan glazerman, who was diagnosed with a rare form of lymphoma and Sharon Denis who was diagnosed with leukemia, are here today because they want answers from this government. When will this government do something to help cover the costs of take-home cancer drugs for adult Ontarians?

>> Minister Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned 89% of people in this province that get cancer are seniors. They have access to oral cancer drugs. The other 11% were taking a massive leap forward January 1st, where anyone 4 million more Ontarians between 0 and 25 will have ak sos to oral cancer drugs. I hope can certainty and Canadian cancer society and lymphoma society know the this. D.P's pharmacare proposal did not include cancer drugs. And so they're speaking for something that they themselves and their own experts completely ignored and excluded. We're adding more oral cancer drugs. We have the global task force that is looking at to provide us with important advice on how we can further add more eligibility and access. Of course we have the trillium program as well, and we made together with our partners. Including Canadian cancer society, important changes to trillium to streamline that so it's better for patients. And that trillium is available for the 11% of people inr ined it 65.

MPP Qaadri to Minister Hoskins Re: Long-Term Care Homes

>> MPP Qaadri: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Speaker, as I know in a parliamentary professional personal capacity, our government is committed to ensuring that all Ontarians have access to health care as close to home as possible. I want to thank the Minister of health and the Premier for the \$400 million expansion currently going on at Etobicoke general hospital with its new cardio respirology neurology dialysis wing, you're actually doubling the footprint of Etobicoke general hospital. And, Speaker, this is of course happening across the province of Ontario. Expansion and amelioration of hospitals, in-home and community care and long-term care. [Speaking in French] Voice of Translator: Our government announced \$140 million to improve our long-term care. [End of Translation] Will the Minister of health please inform this House that this \$140 million investment will improve –

>> Minister Hoskins: We worked very closely with the Ontario hospital association, with home care Ontario and all our stakeholders and partners in the health sector. Yes, two days ago I announced 40 million additional dollars to be injected into the homes and community care service, Mr. Speaker. This fiscal year. And importantly 100 million that will go to our hospitals to create more than 2,000 beds and spaces. So we're creating 1,200 new in-hospital acute-care beds across the province, Mr. Speaker. That's the equivalent of six medium sized hospitals that we're injecting into the hospital system but we are doing more than that. We're providing 503 transitional spaces including here in Toronto at the former humber river site at finch and hillcrest site here in downtown Toronto so that people can get out of hospital and be reactivated and make that important transition and rehabilitation. To get them back home quickly, and we're providing 207 affordable housing units for seniors. Together more than 2,000 new spaces, 1,200 hospital beds that will be -- Together with the hospitals.