

Transcript of Provincial Question Period for October 6, 2016

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41st Parliament, 2nd Session
Thursday, October 6, 2016

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MPP Brown to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Rates

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of energy. Each and every day I hear another story from another family or senior that can't afford their hydro bills. Some parents have had to cancel their children's extracurricular activities. Long-term care homes are being put to the brink. Hospitals -- I've heard from hospitals that have to cut necessary medical staff to pay their hydro bills. Seniors will have to leave their heat off because they can't afford the bills. Why is this all happening? Because the auditor general this government overpaid for renewable energy \$9.2 billion. So my question to the Minister of energy is this. Tell me if the \$1.3 million in donations to the Ontario Liberal party was worth overpaying for hydro contacts by \$9.2 billion.

>> Min. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise and answer question from the leader of the opposition. He talked about hospitals, Mr. Speaker. I was very proud to be at my hospital in greater Sudbury health sciences north which actually worked with greater Sudbury utilities which is actually saving \$300,000 a year, Mr. Speaker, in electricity savings because they use one of the programs that we brought forward, Mr. Speaker. We've got so many programs out there to help small businesses, to help hospitals, to help long-term care centres, Mr. Speaker, that they can take advantage of this and many long-term health centres, Mr. Speaker, can save up to 34% if they get on the I.C.I. Program, Mr. Speaker. So we've got programs out there that are helping organizations right across the province. And in terms of fund-raising, Mr. Speaker, I want to know why you'd have to pay \$2,000 to golf with the leader of the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Minister of energy, and since the Minister does not want to talk about the donations to the Ontario Liberal party and the contracts that should not have been signed, we can try something else, Mr. Speaker. I want to read to you a quote from the Minister of community safety and social services and I quote -- he said the Ontario energy board certainly should not be justifying a rate increase based on the fact that they believe there was too much conservation because that sends the wrong message. Well, Mr. Speaker, it certainly does send the wrong message. It's absurd but hydro Ottawa is doing exactly that, trying to raise rates for those who conserve. So far the Minister of energy refuses to stand up for those people. Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of energy agree with the Minister of community and social services, and will his government, will the Liberal government finally condemn what hydro Ottawa's doing. And say very clearly it is unacceptable to charge more for conserving. Yes or no? Will you do it?

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very pleased to be with my Honourable Colleague in the sioux talking about all the great programs that we're bringing out, Mr. Speaker, to help the families in Sault Ste. Marie and area and to help families in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. In relation to the O.E.B. Has done a very good job at being a quasi-judicial organization and at arm's reach from the government, and they've made sure, Mr. Speaker, that they've actually seen rates go down when asked to come in place. Let me show you their strong record of reviewing rate applications with the consumer in mind, Mr. Speaker. When Hydro One asked for a rate increase for distribution, it received a 9% reduction for its capital request, Mr. Speaker. Hydro One once again asked for a rate increase for transmission received a 3% reduction for its capital request. 6.2 rate increase of 2011 O.E.B. Denied that request and lowered rates by 0.8%, Mr. Speaker. The O.E.B. Had two track records of consumers in mind, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of energy, the Minister of energy does not want to talk about the donations to the Ontario Liberal party for these renewable contracts. The Minister of energy does not want to talk about the fact that they're now charging people more for conservation. I don't think the Minister understands how this is affecting families. Let me tell you a letter I got from my own riding of Simcoe North from Don and Carolyn coming from Penetanguishene. They are two seniors 73 and 80. Don and Carolyn own their own home but they still have a mortgage. They have energy efficient bulbs and they use the air conditioner as little as possible. They even kept all their appliances off for 16 days this summer. But they still can't afford their hydro bill. Mr. Speaker, it's a significant amount of money. Seniors are being forced to the brink

and so my question, Mr. Speaker, is rather than window-dressing, will this government finally help Ontario seniors when it comes to the out of control hydro bills?

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I do hope that the Honourable member is telling that -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do hope that the Honourable member is telling that family about the oesp program in which seniors, Mr. Speaker, seniors can qualify for up to \$75 a month off their bill, Mr. Speaker. Come January 1st these families as well, Mr. Speaker, will be getting that 8% reduction once the legislation passes through this House. And also I'm hoping he's telling those families about that save on energy program to work with their utilities to make sure that they can find other ways, Mr. Speaker, of reducing their electricity bills because we do, Mr. Speaker, have many programs in place to help these families. But when it comes to fund-raising, Mr. Speaker, I know it costs \$2,000 to play as a person with the leader of the opposition but also to have a stake, Mr. Speaker, in Barberian's steak House \$5,000 a plate, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Jones to Minister Naidoo-Harris Re: Childcare-Youth Autism

>> MPP Sylvia Jones: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the acting Premier. I have an e-mail from a mother of young boy named Conrad. Conrad has autism and attend yes I can nursery school. Let me share what his mother had to say. Yes I can has been life changing. We don't say this lightly. It has changed the lives of us, Conrad's parents, and it's changed the life of his sisters, and most importantly it has had an enormous impact on the life of Conrad. Mr. Speaker, can the Liberals please explain to Conrad and his family why yes I can will be forced to close their doors?

>> Min. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member opposite for the question. Absolutely our government wants to give our kids the best start in life, and that's why we are making sure that we are moving more than \$1 billion towards child care in this province on a yearly basis. In addition to that, we are now transforming the way we deliver child care and what we are doing is moving our capacity to 100,000 new licensed spaces over the in connection five years. Thank you. When it comes to yes I can day care and ensuring that our children there get the best start in life, I want the member opposite to know that we are actually providing the city of Toronto \$351.7 million in order to ensure that the child care spaces and centres in the city are taken care of. 300,000 of that is being moved forward to yes I can child care. In addition to that there was one transitional funding that we moved forward to the centre. That funding was onetime transitional funding. And -- thank you very much

>> MPP Jones: Your transformation is leading to a closing of the doors of yes I can which has been doing exceptional work in the city of Toronto. Back to the acting Premier. The Liberals keep telling us yes I can can talk to the city but it won't do any good. There is no mechanism for the city of Toronto to provide. Funds. In fact a director of the city's children's services branch wrote exact that to the school. Quote -- there is no operating fund available to your agency outside of the current mechanism. I repeat no operating funds. Mr. Speaker, will the Liberals stop passing the buck and give yes I can the sustainable funding she promised nine years ago?

>> Min. Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, first of all \$351.7 million going to the city of Toronto to ensure that the child care spaces and centres in the city are getting the support they need I think is a lot of money. In addition to that as I mentioned earlier 300,000 is being moved forward, and in addition to that, in addition to that, this particular centre got onetime transitional funding of \$150,000. Actually it was moved forward more than once. It was onetime transitional funding in the end totalling \$450,000. \$450,000 that was only supposed to be onetime transitional funding to enable them and ensure that they were coming up with a plan that they needed in order to be able to take care of a financial, sustainable financial plan. But let me just tell you about our transforming of child care. That is going to be starting off from 2017 and over the next five years. We are working on that plan and --

>> MPP Jones: The Minister of ... just chirped this is a private operator. Is that really the issue? Is the problem that they're a private operator instead of a public one? That's wrong. Back to the acting

Premier. I want to share more of what Conrad's mum had to say. She asked that we quote -- imagine the immense feeling of relief we feel knowing our son with special needs is being taken care of as if he is a member of the school's family. She asks you to try and visualize the look of joy in Conrad's sisters eye as they heard him say his first words, sing his first song and best of all play with them. Conrad's mum added this school has changed all of our lives and we cannot imagine. Life without it. Mr. Speaker, will the acting Premier tell Conrad and Conrad's mum, dad and sisters why Conrad won't be able to attend this school any longer?

>> Min. Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I really look forward to the opportunity to talk about what we're doing in child care, because I really think that this is a historic initiative, and it really shows the vision -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And that's why we have committed to transforming the way we deliver child care in this province. We understand that that's a conversation that can't go one way. It has to happen with a number of the stakeholders out there and parents and people who are actually informed about what our child care system needs in this province. So we are getting ready to have consultations across the province and have those conversations to find out where we should be looking and concentrating our efforts. I want to you know that when we came into government in 2003, the party opposite had actually supplied parents in this province with 10% of the spaces that children needed when it came to child care. We immediately moved forward. To double that capacity. And now we're moving forward to double that to 40%.

MPP Horwath to Minister Thibeault Re: Toronto Hydro/Hydro One

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question's to the acting Premier -- rather the Deputy Premier, Speaker. The mayor of Toronto says he's discussing the sell-off of Toronto hydro with the Premier. My question is does the government think it's a good idea to sell off Toronto hydro?

>> Min. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the leader of the third party for that question. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, decisions on how to manage Toronto hydro are at the discretion of the mayor and council of the city of Toronto and the province will not interfere, Mr. Speaker, with what is an important decision under municipal jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker. In fact, you know what, Mr. Speaker, we at -- on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, are looking at broadening our decision with Hydro One. The decision is facilitating key investments, Mr. Speaker, and infrastructure priorities right across the province that is I proving lives and the quality of lives of people of Ontario and there's a few examples, Mr. Speaker, and I know I'll be able to get more in the supplemental but \$13.5 billion is being invested in the go regional, press rail in the gtha, Mr. Speaker, with quadruple the number of weekly trips. To 6,000. Mr. Speaker, there are so many great infrastructure projects going right across the province, Mr. Speaker. I'll get more to that in my supplemental. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this government is not only leaving the door wide open to selling Toronto hydro and it indeed is in fact willing to facilitate that sell-off with brand-new tax giveaways but there are more than 70 local hydro utilities in this province, Speaker. And so it begs the question which other local utilities, local hydro utilities that this government hopes will become private for-profit corporations.

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back in 2012, the L.B.C. Panel presented a report that talked about the Ontario distribution sector review panel, and it recommended that L.D.C.S merge to create 8 to 12 regional L.B.C.S through mandatory consolidations, Mr. Speaker, and the panel suggested that this would result in a net benefit of roughly \$1.2 billion, Mr. Speaker, in present value terms. And so after the consolidation report, Mr. Speaker, this is actually money that we can go and put back into the system to continue to put downward pressure on rates for ratepayers, Mr. Speaker. Consolidating is actually something that the panel is recommending and if you look at California for example, Mr. Speaker, with a population of 30 million people. They have four L.D.C.S, Mr. Speaker. We have 72. We (Ave voluntary consolidation out there, Mr. Speaker, and it's

something that would benefit the ratepayers.

>> Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the bottom line is that selling off Hydro One and selling local hydro companies might be good for Mr. -- Or rather the Minister's friend and people at the top that the Liberals tend to actually spend a lot of time helping out, but it's not good for everybody else. It's lousy for everybody else because it's families and businesses that pay the freight. To the very few people at the top with these privatization fees. Guess what? Families and businesses in this province simply cannot afford it, Speaker. While the Premier might like to pretend that she is saying no to the cost of hydro, it's simply not true. Rather that she has no say over the cost of hydro, it's simply not true. We know that these privatization schemes increase the price of our electricity across the province of Ontario. Selling off the hydro system absolutely means bills will go up. The cost of electricity is four times higher than it was when this government took over. Why is the government making things worse when they could be saving people of this province by stopping any further sell-off?

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I do have to say it's disappointing to hear that great work that was done by this panel with some great people that put a lot of time and effort into this to recommend this, Mr. Speaker. One person that's very well respected by all parties is Floyd Laughren who is on this committee who brought forward this report, Mr. Speaker. Now what, Mr. Speaker? We're finding ways and continuing to find ways to save billions of dollars for ratepayers. The voluntary consolidation, Speaker, is one way that this could happen. In terms of the broadening the sale of Hydro One, I was talking earlier about all of the great infrastructure projects that are happening across the province. I know I talked about you know the go regional express, the Eglinton Crosstown L.R.T., one billion being invested in the infrastructure for ring of fire, Mr. Speaker. The Ontario community infrastructure fund being tripled to \$300 million. Not only \$20 million coming to my community, 173 million dollars on highway 69, Mr. Speaker. I know I'm running out time but we keep having more and more infrastructure investments right across the province.

MPP Horwath to Minister Thibeault Re: Toronto Hydro/Hydro One

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Deputy Premier, Speaker. Yesterday the Liberals and the Conservatives once again voted in favour of privatizing Hydro One and helping to privatize local utilities, local hydro utilities. So can the government tell the people on what page of their platform did it say that they were going to dole out tax giveaways worth over \$100 million to help privatize even more hydro utility in this province including Toronto hydro?

>> Min. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'm very pleased to stand and rise to answer this question, because I know the platform talked about jobs and growth, Mr. Speaker, and the investments that we're making with you know the broadening of the sale of Hydro One, Mr. Speaker. I know I didn't have enough time last -- the last time so let me continue, Mr. Speaker. The Hurontario L.R.T. In Mississauga and Brampton will provide 20 kilometres of new modern reliable rapid transit beginning in 2022, Mr. Speaker. \$1.4 billion investment, Mr. Speaker, by this government. Another \$1 billion will support phase 2 of Ottawa's L.R.T. Expansion, Mr. Speaker. And I know, Mr. Speaker, I've talked about \$173 million coming to help expand highway 69 to four lanes. Mr. Speaker, that's doing great things for us in the north. Not only does making our highway safer much it's actually bringing more jobs and growth to our community because we have opportunities for businesses to see it's part of the 400's and 401's of highways, Mr. Speaker. I want to really thank the Minister from transportation for seeing the importance of that and investing in that, Mr. Speaker. Because we're doing great things right across the province, building jobs and building this province up, Mr. Speaker.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, everywhere I go in Ontario people tell me that they can't afford their hydro bills. This government is not understanding where the people of this province are at. They tell me that they are bitterly, bitterly disappointed in the Premier and her party because the hydro sell-off is making life harder for folks instead of making life better. And that is not what was promised to them during the last election, Speaker. When people tell me they can't afford privatized Hydro One

or the sell-off of local hydro, their local hydro company, it begs the question for me. Think these people are wrong? Does the government think Ontarians are wrong when they're saying we shouldn't be selling off our hydro system?

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only thing that's wrong, Mr. Speaker, is the understanding that the NDP has when it comes to the broadening of Hydro One. The O.E.B. sets the rates, Mr. Speaker. The sell-off and the broadening of the sale has nothing to do with it, Mr. Speaker. But we do, we do recognize, Mr. Speaker, that some families are having a difficult time with their electricity bills and so, Mr. Speaker, we have those six programs in place the O.E.S. D. program, Mr. Speaker, the leap program, you know, the -- we also have the northern Ontario tax credit, Mr. Speaker. We eliminated the debt retirement charge, Mr. Speaker, and on top of that, on top of that, Mr. Speaker, we actually brought forward our speech from the throne, which actually is having an 8% reduction for all families right across the province and for 330,000 families living in rural, remote and northern communities they will also see a 20% reduction, Mr. Speaker. So we've actually recognized that some families are having difficulty and we put in place programs to help, Mr. Speaker.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, what the Liberals don't understand is what 80% of the people of in province want and that is to maintain add public electricity system in the province of Ontario. For our generation and generations to come. That's what they don't understand. They want to know that there's going to be a good future for them, Speaker, a good future for them and their families right here in the province of Ontario. They know the Conservatives aren't the answer. They know that will lead to more cuts and more privatization but they feel that the Liberals have let them down, Speaker, in a very, very big way. Instead of stopping the sell-off of Hydro One the government is taking that bad idea and one upping it by clearing the way for the sell-off of local distribution companies, of local hydro companies. Speaker, people want hope for the future. Will this government stop the privatization of our electricity system. And do what 80% of the people in this province actually want?

>> Min. Thibeault: Speaker, what the people of Ontario want is actually jobs and growth, Mr. Speaker, and this government is delivering. We're building this province up, Mr. Speaker. You know what? Again they're not understanding the concept, Mr. Speaker, that we have a quasi-judicial organization called the O.E.B. Which is our regulator, Mr. Speaker, and the regulator is the one that sets the rates, Mr. Speaker. But what we've done, Mr. Speaker, by building infrastructure, we're making sure that we're creating jobs and growth right across the province but we've also invested, Mr. Speaker, heavily in renewables. We have 18,000 megawatts of renewable energy in this province, Mr. Speaker. You know what's really important is the 4.3 -- yes exactly but the \$4.3 billion, Mr. Speaker, that we're saving in health care costs and you know what? This year the Toronto vital signs report come out, Mr. Speaker, and let me quote. In Toronto premature deaths and hospitalizations as a result of air pollution have dropped. By 23 and 41% since 2004. That's a record, Mr. Speaker, that everyone should be proud of.

MPP Fedeli to Minister Sandals Re: Public Accounts

>> MPP Victor Fedeli: Thank you. Good morning, Speaker. My question is to the president of the treasury board. This week the government released unaudited financial statements without verification from the auditor general. This is unprecedented in Ontario's history. It's clear this government has something to hide. They refuse to co-operate with many independent legislative officers. They continue to break their legal obligations, and now they are viciously attacking the credibility of the auditor general. But the people of Ontario know better, Speaker. They trust the numbers of the independent nonpartisan auditor, not the numbers of a government mired in waste, scandal and mismanagement. I ask the Minister will you stop attacking the credibility of the auditor general?

>> Min. Liz Sandals: So -- may I go ahead? Thank you. So what I wanted to point out was I think you missed a comment yesterday that the auditor general made, which was to confirm that in fact our 2015/16 bottom line is accurate. Of course, Speaker, that is because Cabinet made a regulation. The purpose of the regulation being to resolve for this year at least the dispute between the auditor

general and the public servants who are our accountants, and we needed to resolve that. Cabinet made a regulation saying use the auditor's numbers, which is exactly what we did in the financial statements released. So in fact as I pointed out yesterday, our numbers agree with her numbers. And our current year is –

>> MPP Fedeli: Back to the Minister. Well, the auditor general has now confirmed a number of troubling revelations. The deficit is \$1.5 billion higher than the government's projections. Debt increased more than \$20 billion during last year. Taxes imposed by this government have increased to a record of \$91.8 billion this year. That's up more than 20% in the last five years. Under this government, Ontario is now boasts -- both the most indebted and the most taxed province in Canada. That just doesn't even make sense. It does not add up. Rather than address their financial waste and mismanagement, this government continues to attack the credibility of the auditor. I ask the Minister, will you come clean. And apologize to the auditor general for attacking her credibility?

>> Min. Sandals: Yes, thank you very much. I think one of the pieces of information that is missing in that little catalogue is the fact that Ontario has the lowest per-capita program spending of any province or territory in Canada, of any jurisdiction. So when you actually look at our per capita program spending, we have controlled that very, very successfully, which is why, Speaker, when you look at our deficit projection in the 2015 budget, you would see it was \$8.5 billion. When you look at the actual deficit we achieved in last year, according to the auditor general, our deficit is \$5 billion. That is \$3.5 billion improvement. On our position as a budget and it show that is we will be able to balance every promise.

MPP Armstrong to Minister Hoskins Re: PSWs

>> MPP Teresa Armstrong: Speaker, my question is the acting Premier. People deserve to have confidence in a health care system but all too often Ontarians are let down by this Liberal government. This morning we've learned the health ministry was spending \$2.5 million a year for an outsourced P.S.W. Registry that never did what Liberals promised. And for four years the Liberals failed to provide oversight to make sure the registry was working for the people of Ontario. Why did this government spend so much time and so much money on a P.S.W. That did not help home care patients and did not help families and did not live up to the Liberals' promises?

>> Min. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is true that following a review of the registry I made a decision to suspend that registry. We felt that on a go-forward basis we would work with our stakeholders and partners to actually improve what the registry is fundamentally set out to do and that's to protect the safety and security of Ontarians and to provide an important resource for both caregivers and those who might want to employ a P.S.W. And also organizations that are in the business of employing them. So we're working on that but I have to say I'm so proud of the efforts of this government, the success of this government in elevating our P.S.W.s across this province beginning with a \$4 an hour wage increase that that party voted against, Mr. Speaker. And also working to establish a common curriculum as well that is really about not only providing that confidence to Ontarians. But elevating this important profession, giving them the respect that they are due because of the hard work that they engage in each and every day.

>> MPP Armstrong: Speaker, back to the acting Premier. P.S.W.s do extraordinary work every day and families deserve to have total confidence that their government is looking out for them. But the failure of the P.S.W. Registry shows that the Liberals are more interested in making big flashy announcements than actually helping people. In 2011, five years ago, it was the acting Premier who promised that the P.S.W. Registry, quote, would promote greater accountability and transparency. But it never did that. In fact the government's secret report found that home care clients and family caregivers could not rely on the registry to actually help them. Why did this Liberal government fail to keep their promise to frontline workers, families and hundreds of thousands of people who rely on home care across the province of Ontario?

>> Min. Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are keeping our promise. They have no promise to our

P.S.W.S, Mr. Speaker. And it's only when we introduced important measures of \$4 an hour wage increase for our P.S.W.S a \$10 million training fund which is rolled out and is providing support to allow our p.s.ws which to further enhance their training, a common curriculum, Mr. Speaker. We're working across the board with our P.S.W.S, which they have never done, Mr. Speaker, and we've made those commitments and we're following through, and Ontarians are better off as a result and our health care system is better off as a result of the hard work our P.S.W.S do every day, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Vernile to Minister Chan Re: International Trade

>> MPP Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for Minister of international trade. In June of this year the Premier unveiled a new Cabinet and a number of new ministries, notably the portfolio of international trade became a stand-alone ministry for the first time in the history of Ontario. Now in my riding of Kitchener Centre we have a number of businesses that currently export -- export or are looking at growing internationally. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I have ongoing conversations with many stakeholders who are looking forward to this. They couldn't be more excited with the creation of this new ministry. Speaker, cot Minister please tell us how his new ministry is going to better serve businesses in Ontario?

>> Min. Michael Chan: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity. And I want to thank the Honourable member from Kitchener Centre for asking and also for her really business outreach in her area. Speaker, was so pleased when I heard that the Premier will be creating a stand-alone international trade ministry. Since then, Speaker -- I had trouble -- municipalities in the province. Het with countless businesses and foreign dignitaries, and everyone I have spoken will share that excitement. Speaker, international markets play a critical role in the growth of Ontario's economy. This new ministry will allow me to focus on bringing jobs and investment back to Ontario as part of our commitment to grow our economy, whether it be convincing overseas companies to invest in Ontario or assisting Ontario companies in going global. Our ministry will help connect Ontario to the world. Thank you, Speaker.

>> MPP Vernile: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank Minister for his answer and I've invited him to come to Kitchener Centre to speak to my stakeholders about this new ministry of international trade. The Premier and the Minister have said they have very big plans for the new ministry of international trade as part our promise to grow our economy. Specifically this government's commitment to trade missions was noted in both the 2016 budget and in the throne speech that was brought forward just a few weeks ago. I know that the Minister has participated in a number of trade missions over the past couple of years. Speaker, could the Minister please explain why these trade missions are so important to growing our economy here in the province of Ontario?

>> Min. Chan: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the Honourable member for asking the question again. Speaker, in business, relationships are key. Trade missions allow our government to meet with business counterparts in person. We can prove to them why Ontario is where they need to invest in a way we never can do it over e-mail or telephone. In just two years trade missions have succeed \$3.7 billion in investment to the province. Speaker, we have connected Ontario businesses with opportunities abroad, brought jobs to municipalities like Cambridge, Waterloo, Kitchener and promote Ontario worldwide. Speaker, we will continue to participate in missions to keep our -- abroad and will continue to build on the success. We are living in a highly globalized world. We must make our mark worldwide, Speaker. Thank you.

MPP Bailey to Minister Flynn Re: First Responders & PTSD

>> MPP Bob Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaker, to you and through you to the acting Premier. Last Friday I received a call from Lonny cope, a constituent of mine in pedroia. First responder with more than two decades of exp Erience responding whenever and wherever he was needed. Lonny

told me that the workplace traumatic stress program at London health science centre which he has been utilizing to deal with symptoms of PTSD is being cancelled effective December 2nd. There's no support from your government to keep this program running. Lonnie is being told that the next closest place that he can access the same services now offered by the workplace traumatic stress program is in Toronto. Hundreds of kilometres away from our community. The acting Premier, Speaker, the workplace traumatic stress program at London health science centre closes for good in eight weeks. Will your government commit today to stepping up and support this program before December 2nd deadline?

>> Min. Kevin Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the question. Certainly I think the interest the province has now on posttraumatic stress disorder, the impact it's had on first responders in this province has really accelerated over the years. W.sib now has a program in place. Those people that are first responders in our province, Speaker, now have presumptive legislation. The ease of obtaining that treatment, Speaker, has been accelerated over the years. One of the centres we have used, Speaker, at the wsib is the London health sciences centre. As we take a look at services that are made available to our first responders, we'd like to see them obviously provided on a province-wide basis, Speaker. I will take the question from the -- I will take the question from the Minister, talk to the wsib again, Speaker, and see if these changes are indeed in the best interests of the province.

>> MPP Bailey: Back to the acting Premier. Premier, earlier this week the CTV news London station in your town reported workplace stress program at science centre was closing because of a \$500,000 annual shortfall in program funding from your government. First responders and clients of the workplace traumatic stress program have called this news devastating. Mr. Speaker, it takes a special type of person to risk their own health and safety to rush to the aid of others in an emergency. Of community in Ontario depends on these brave individuals in a time of crisis. Mr. Speaker, to the acting Premier. Will you commit today to fully funding the workplace stress program at London health science centre so first responders in our province have access to treatments and services where they need them?

>> Min. Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. Thanks again to the member. I know that he's asking the question in a sincere manner because I think all members of this House understand what we haven't done in the past, Speaker, when it comes to our first responders and treatment for PTSD is something we should do in the future, something we can get better at, Speaker. As we examine the services that are available to first responders around the province, obviously we try to make those services as localized as possible. The wsib, Speaker, which is an independent agency, strives as hard as it can to make sure people don't have to travel long distances to obtain those services. I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I think it's a sincere question and as I said I will interact with the wsib, the board of directors and the people that are running that organization. To make sure we're providing services in the way we should, Speaker.

MPP Fife to Minister Sandals (Flynn) Re: Public Accounts & WSIB

>> MPP Catherine Fife: Thank you very much. My question's to the acting Premier. Never before has a provincial government released unaudited financial statements. What's more astonishing is that several sections from these statements were missing such as the financial statements from the wsib. The Ontario clean water agency. The O.E.S. B. and the former Hydro One Brampton. Yesterday I asked the Premier to explain why these sections were missing. She could not. During the public accounts committee yesterday, I was repeatedly told by government members that the wsib statements had been posted but I checked again this morning. They are still not there. What is the government hiding by withholding the wsib statements?

>> Min. Liz Sandals: Thank you very much. And I do want to assure the member opposite that the wsib economic statement for 2016 is available online, as is the 2016 sufficiency plan update. All of the material related to the wsib will in fact be included when we are able to table the public accounts. So I do want to assure the House that that that. What I also want to assure the House is that while we are obviously in the process of collecting documents and preparing to have them -- in

the process of having them printed, that all of the finances these various agencies have been accounted for in the financial statements that were made available earlier this week.

>> MPP Fife: It is my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that the chair of the wsib signed off on the financial statements weeks ago but they are still not posted. The statements are complete. The government refuses to publish them. It refuses to explain why. There have been growing calls for an Ombudsman investigation of the wsib by injured workers who say that they were denied benefits that they are entitled to. I raised this yesterday at public accounts. There is great interest in the accountability of the wsib to the public and certainly from injured workers. Why is the Premier withholding the wsib statements? Publish them now.

>> Min. Kevin Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the member for that question. The statements have been available online, Speaker, for quite some time. In addition the numbers that are in those statements I think is something we should all be proud of in this House. The wsib I think has been an organization that all parties, when they've been in government, have tried to arrange and tried to run in a better manner. I think what we're seeing coming out of the wsib with the figures and with the numbers the member's talking about is a very good news story. We passed historic legislation last year that's included in these numbers reinstating for the first time full indexation of wsib benefits, Speaker. Something, something that the opposition and NDP Took away from injured workers, Speaker. So when you look at this you see full C.P.I. Applied in a way that it should be. By 2018, Speaker. All injured workers both partially and fully disabled are going to receive their full C.P.I.. That's what's contained in the figures. Those figures have been available online, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Martins to Minister Hoskins Re: Workforce Training Support

>> MPP Cristina Martins: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, in the spring you introduced a patients first act to further improve patient access and exp Erience. This bill formerly known as bill 210 included a plan to transform the health care system into one that puts the needs of the patient at its centre. I often heard from my constituents in Davenport about their concerns and really about concerns from many Ontarians about access and the ability of our health care system to meet the growing needs of Ontarians for today and into the future. So I'm pleased that our government was introducing a bill that would help modernize our health care system to better respond to patient needs. Speaker, can the Minister of health please update this House on the government's plan to put patients first?

>> Min. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member from Davenport for this important question, and I want to once again acknowledge the abundance of talent that's represented by our health care sector partners in the gallery today that have joined us. It's an important day, Mr. Speaker. We've listened to Ontarians and we've heard their concerns. I want this province to to know that this government is committed to making sure our health care system directly reflects patients' needs, Mr. Speaker. And later today I will reintroduce the patients first act, which would, if passed, put patients at the absolute centre of a truly integrated health care system. It would give Ontario's 14 lhins the ability to connect all parts of the health care system including primary care and home and community care to improve the planning and delivery of frontline services to patients. This will mean. Easier and more equitable access to care and better coordination and continuity of care, Mr. Speaker .

>> MPP Martins: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for that response. I know our government has worked hard to ensure that patients are at the centre of Ontario's health care system and I understand that the proposed system changes would strengthen local health care planning and increase efficiency to allow for more funding to be directed to patient care. I'm also please today hear that our government is recognizing the importance of French language in the provision of health care services in honouring our commitments to meaningful engagement with our in -- indigenous partners. Speaker, can the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care please tell this House about what this proposed legislation could mean for Ontarians?

>> Min. Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks again to the member. The patients first act if passed will be the next step in our government's efforts to build a better Ontario for patients, Mr. Speaker. Our plan includes priority initiatives that we know are important to Ontarians including expanding access to home and community care and ensuring that every Ontarian has access to a primary care provider. These proposed legislative changes reflect our vision for creating a truly integrated system that facilitates local health care planning to ensure that patients receive more equitable access to care that meets their needs, establishes a formal relationship importantly, Mr. Speaker, between our regions and our local boards of health to support joint health services planning. And most importantly ensures that patient voices are at the heart of a system that is accountable to patients and connects them with the care that --

MPP Scott to Minister MacCharles Re: Combatting Human Trafficking

>> MPP Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question's to the Attorney General. Over the last few months I've travelled across the province meeting with police and front line service providers to express frustration on human sex traffic and the government's lack of action. Last Friday I was in Hamilton meeting with the local police and victim organizations who expressed the same frustration. They told the story of a girl at a local university who was pursued by a fellow student, convince today go on a date with him but he proved to have other motivations and manipulated her into a situation where she was trafficked. What this shows is this is happening -- can happen to anyone and it is happening across the province as we speak. The government may say they've taken action, but to date no one on the front lines is clear on the details. So my question is to the Attorney General -- is the government ready to admit that they can't keep up on the human sex trafficking and that they are failing the children and all the other victims of this evil, evil crime?

>> Min. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I thank the member for the important question. We know human trafficking is a complex issue, and our message to those who engage in this horrible crime is very, very clear it will not be tolerated in Ontario. And none of -- that's where we launched our strategy in June up to \$72 million committed to this initiative. And action is under way, Speaker. There's many actions under way across a number of different ministries. We are setting up the provincial anti-trafficking coordination office with community and social services. We're establishing a provincial human trafficking prosecution team. We're establishing a quick victim response team and enhancing victim crisis assistance Ontario program. Many other initiatives under way, Speaker.

>> MPP Scott: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is just a message because there is no action, and I'm going to go back to the Attorney General. I'll remind the Attorney General that his own predecessor is on record as saying, quote. We don't know enough about human trafficking. Frontline service providers and workers do know and they are exasperated there's still nothing advancing the law to support them in fighting this ... crime. In fact the legislative measures in my private member's bill as a protection order could have directly protect the victim in Hamilton that I just mentioned. Legal changes and awareness efforts are part of the solution. So my question to the government is simple. Will you bring the saving the girl next door up for debate at committee and will you support it through to the end?

>> Min. MacCharles: Speaker, this member was part of the roundtable on sexual violence and harassment and she was very active, and I acknowledge her efforts for that but she also knows that our strategy is comprehensive. It's multi-ministry, involves a lot of different investments and there's dedicated resources, Speaker, and according to the planning process so our strategy is much, much broader than creating a task force or the legislative changes in her bill 158, a cornerstone of the strategy as I mentioned is the antihuman trafficking office. It requires a lot of work by different ministries, different levels of government, police forces. This is complicated. It will take time to solve but we've already taken steps. We're investing across the system. I hope she joins me in supporting the investments that we're making to end this horrible crime.

MPP Horwath to Minister Murray Re: Water Management

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question's for the Deputy Speaker. Water should be a public trust. Last week I met with people from Guelph including two city councillor who are very concerned about the government's rubber stamping of permits to take water. It's we are we need an Ontario water strategy to ensure there's enough clean water for people today and for generations to come. We need to see change now. The president of the treasury board thinks concerns about water are based on misinformation. Does the rest of the government feel the same way, Speaker ?

>> Min. Glen Murray: Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, very much and thank you to the Honourable member opposite for the question. We have been doing a lot of work on zero waste and climate change and probably have the heaviest environmental agenda just about of any government in many, many years, Mr. Speaker. This is intersection of all of those problems. There's waste issues. There's environmental issues and with the terrible drought that we're having and climate change we know these are going to become acute. We've been working very hard over the last year, Mr. Speaker, with environmental groups with industry. We will soon be bringing forward a very aggressive program to protect groundwater, to insure issues of water pricing. I am very interested in hearing from the party opposite and member opposite, would be happy to sit down with her to ensure the input of her party is reflected in the actions of the government.

>> Andrea Horwath: Well, what seems worrisome to myself and others, Speaker, is that the government seems to think that the way to protect water for generations to come is to simply charge more. Well, that's not good enough, Speaker, because that simply means it goes to the highest bidder and instead of insuring that there's good clean water for drinking, growing food and sanitation, it's just going to be about who can pay a higher price? People deserve a real strategy that puts the public interests first. That's based on the idea that all Ontarians should be able to access clean water, that has sustainable long-term planning and that isn't based on commodifying one of our most precious resources. It's time for a full review absolutely of the permit to take water system and a comprehensive evidence-based Ontario water strategy to ensure access to clean water for all Ontarians. In this generation and generations to come. Does this government agree?

>> Min. Murray: Yes, we agree. And to go further than that, I take that as very constructive criticism from the leader of the opposition and I appreciate it. I share her concern. She is quite correct as far as I'm concerned that simply charging for water is not the solution. It is more complex. As the member for Guelph has expressed, we have a complex farm and allege cultural and food community here, Mr. Speaker, and we know our good security and water security and the great work farmers do and the great work that's being done by OMAFRA at University of Guelph is also important. We don't see the agri-food industry here as the problem. We see them as important part. I think the member from Guelph has articulated that. She's articulated to me the importance of water conservation because she is very aware in her area, as in the Cambridge area. Some of the most water stressed areas in the province and we have to look at this through the lens of water stress and the role of municipalities in being able to manage regional water. The member opposite will be happy to see all those things reflected in our actions.

MPP Malhi to Minister MacCharles Re: Combatting Human Trafficking

>> MPP Harinder Malhi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for women's issues. Mr. Speaker, the media has been reporting Ontario has become a hub for human trafficking. Of day more victims are being forced into the sex trade industry and trafficked across the province and the country. Human trafficking is a deplorable crime that has long lasting sociological and psychological impact on survivors. It overwhelmingly targets young women, girls, boys and particularly those in indigenous communities. I know our government takes this issue very seriously and recognizes the devastating impacts human trafficking has on victims and their families. Minister, could you tell me what steps you are taking towards combating the heinous crime of human

trafficking in our province?

>> Min. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, speaker. I want to thank the member from brampton-springdale. Again an important question on this very serious issue of human trafficking. We know some of the most vulnerable people in our society are at the greatest risk of being trafficked. And it's our duty to act decisively and effectively to protect them from exploitation. Human trafficking in all of its forms cannot be tolerated and that's why we are making the investment of up to \$72 million. I want to say two things about that, speaker. It's focus on supporting survivors and it's focused on holding offenders accountable for their horrific actions, and we will not tolerate them so we will have more support for survivors and more mechanisms in place to hold offenders accountable. I'll speak more in the supplementary, speaker, about the different aspects.

>> MPP Malhi: I'd like to thank the minister for her answer and for the hard work she's been doing to make our province safer for human traffickers. [Applause] The minister's been working with other members of cabinet on various initiatives that will make Ontario a safer province. These collaborations across ministries are important to insuring that our most vulnerable members of society are protected from traffickers and that human traffickers are caught and that we have strong supports in place for survivors. Can the minister please describe some of her work across government to address these important issues?

>> Min. MacCharles: Thank you. Again I appreciate the opportunity to talk about some of the measures we're putting in place to combat this horrific crime. So for example, speaker, with the ministry of attorney general we're working on enhanced justice initiatives to support effective prosecution of human trafficking crimes. We've already begun, speaker, to hire crown prosecutors for provincial human trafficking prosecution team and with our ministry of children and youth services we are strengthening support for youth leaving children's aid societies and we are enhancing protocols between children's aid societies and police services. These are just a few of our initiatives, speaker, that we are undertaking to address this crime and to create a strategy that again is focused on supporting survivors and holding offenders accountable. Very serious issue, speaker, and we are very committed to --

MPP Nicholls to Minister Orazietti Re: Mental Health Services & Policing

>> MPP Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker. My question is to the acting Premier. Mr. Speaker, the London police estimate that they handle over 2,000 mental health calls in 2014. These calls could be better dealt with by the medical community. This problem's gotten progressively worse under the Liberal government. Police services have reported that the number of mental health calls have skyrocketed over the last decade. The average wait for funded counselling and treatment is measured in months, not days, and this forces people to call 9-1-1 instead. So, Speaker, to the acting Premier, why does Ontario force those experiencing mental health issues to call the police instead of providing medical help?

>> Min. David Orazietti: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate the question from the member opposite. First of all I want to commend our police services right across this province for the incredible job that they do. Day in and day out dealing with very challenging circumstances. The member's quite right. And there are a number of exemplary enforcement detachments that we can talk about. In particular the example in Hamilton and the work that is being done with the mental health experts who are participating with police in calls where there's a belief that an individual may have mental health issues. And so recently through our proceeds to crime we've also supported projects across the province for various municipal police forces? So they can engage in mental health partners in their communities to bring them along on calls to address these types of issues.

>> MPP Nicholls: Thank you, Speaker. Minister, I won't disagree with you on the fact that our police do do exemplary work. The Liberal government's status quo is inefficient use of public dollars and an unfair burden to place on emergency responders. Speaker the London police service estimates that mental health calls account for roughly 15% of its budget, costing them more than \$14 million. But

worst of all is the human cost. The status quo is a tragic disservice to Ontarians suffering from mental health issues. Police have called this government time and time again to step up and to address the issue. But to date the Liberal government has a failing grade. All talk, no action. So, Speaker, to the Minister. When will the government start to take mental health seriously instead of leaving frontline officers and emergency responders to deal with the fallout?

>> Min. Orazietti: Speaker, the characterization is completely unfair. You know I was at the Ontario police College a couple of weeks ago meeting with folks at the Ontario police College about the training that they're getting to address individuals with mental health. I had an opportunity to speak to a class in fact a new class of recruits and they were in the middle of de-escalation training related to mental health. We know there's an Ombudsman report with 22 recommendations that is our government has committed to implementing, Speaker. I'll have more to say on that at the end of the month. But our police forces across the province are being ... equipped and supported with mental health resources so that they can deal with the exact types of calls and issues that they are increasingly facing in our communities today. This is very, very important, Speaker, to policing across Ontario. I will have more to say about our strategy for safer Ontario that we want to implement? Which also has tremendous benefit for individuals with mental illness. Thank you, Speaker.