

Transcript of Provincial Question Period for September 15, 2016

From: "Stinson, Jeffrey (CAB)" <jeffrey.stinson@ontario.ca>
To: "@CAB-ProvLegQP" <provlegqp@cab.gov.on.ca>
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41st Parliament, 2nd Session
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MPP Brown to Minister Matthews Re: Energy Management

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the acting Premier. For the last two days, I have said that if the Liberals actually wanted to get hydro rates under control, they should stop signing ludicrous contracts. Ontario has a surplus of energy. Stop mining contracts for more. This government can't continue to sell it at a loss. So why won't the oh, right. It's because the wind and solar companies donated \$1.3 million to the Liberal party. So the Liberals keep on filling their coffers and in return offer the people of Ontario band-aid solutions for this hydro crisis. Mr. Speaker, for once will the government of Ontario think about the people of Ontario, not the Liberal party?

>> Min. Deb Matthews: Well, Speaker, that's an abrupt change of tone, isn't it? Speaker, I can tell you that, on this side, we have made choices that reflect the wishes of the public of Ontario. Comes to energy to shut down the coal-fired plants that were damaging the health of Ontarians every single day, Speaker. It was a deliberate choice to reduce our emissions and clean the air Ontarians breathe. Is there a cost to that? Yes, there is. Electricity system that existed in Ontario when we were elected, Speaker, had been badly -- poor maintenance. We were subject to blackouts and Brownouts. We now have a reliable source of electricity and we are taking steps --

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the acting Premier. Liberal math struck again yesterday. So let's see how the acting Premier will do on this math test. If the Minister of energy is correct in his claim that he says exporting power is reduced the cost by 230 million as he said in the legislature yesterday, how do they justify the fact that this government has given away \$3 billion in power in the last three years? So, Mr. Speaker, what I want to know, from the acting Premier, is how much have we actually -- how much have the people of Ontario lost? How much are they paying more because of your export of energy to Pennsylvania, to New York and Michigan?

>> Min. Matthews: Speaker, I would refer the leader of the opposition to a website called gridwatch.com. Some of you will know this website. I refer to it regularly. It usesieso data to on an hour-by-hour basis talk about where we're generating electricity, where we're exporting. And importing it. It's a really interesting look into our electricity system. The bottom line, Speaker, is we are part of a larger system. We import electricity when we need to. We export electricity when we have excess. And different parts of the province need to export and import at different times. It is part of a larger system, Speaker. And we have a clean, reliable source of electricity in this province. We've eliminated \$4 million in health care costs, Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the acting Premier. It's almost amusing to hear the government trying to reconcile 230 million in, 3 billion out, and try to spin that it's a profit. Let's talk some more fuzzy Liberal math. Cancelling a 10% discount and bringing in an 8% band-aid solution. The government is still oblivious to how they're hurting Ontario families. The Premier said we don't have a plan. I've been very clear. Stop signing these contracts. Stop this reckless fire sale of Hydro One. So, Mr. Speaker, my question to the acting Premier is will you actually act on energy? Will you stop signing these contracts? And will you stop the fire sale? Yes or no?

>> Min. Matthews: Well, Speaker, let's take a look back to 2002, Speaker. Ontario paid \$500 million to -- For 2002, when the Conservatives were in office, Ontario paid \$500 million to import electricity because we were not producing enough. In 2003, Ontario paid \$400 million to import electricity because we did not have the capacity to generate that electricity. Speaker, we have made -- Speaker, reliability was a real concern as was the environment. 127% increase in the use of coal. We have now eliminated coal.

MPP Brown to Minister Coteau Re: Youth Autism Services

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the acting Premier. On April 19th, the former Minister of children and youth services. The clinical expert committee report on autism services. On May 16th the former Minister said that they were continuing to listen to experts and that her plan was based, I quote, in large part on the clinical expert committee. But we just learned in the "Toronto star" that on April 18, before the Minister made those comments, the expert committee wrote to the Minister. They tried to caution the Minister that her plan was detrimental to vulnerable kids and that there was no evidence to support kicking kids off the wait list. So clearly

she had not read the report or listened to the experts. Mr. Speaker, if the Minister had read the report, was she intentionally misleading the House ?

>> Min. Michael Coteau: Thanks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the leader opposite for the question, and I know he publicly recognized the work of this ministry for accommodating the children who were on the wait list for I.B.I. Services as we transition into a new program. Mr. Speaker, what we're trying to do here as a government is to establish a new program here in Ontario that will open up 16,000 new spots. We had a challenge here in Ontario with a long wait list. What we're planning to do is by June of next year to build a new system THAT will allow for children to be diagnosed earlier. We will open up new spots here in the province of Ontario and we'll put in a system that allows young people to reach their full potential. And that's what this government and I think all members of this House want to achieve. Give young people the ability to find success here in the province of Ontario regardless of their ability.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the acting Premier' let's look at what the experts actually told the Liberals. They clarified. The committee report cited by the ministry did not propose imposing an age cutoff. The letter went on to say the government was -- initiated action prematurely without sufficient consultation and that the services outlined in the new autism program last spring will fall short of the needs these children have. This government has put families with children with autism through unimaginable pain and stress. This government looked those parents in the eyes and told them they were following expert advice. This simply was categorically false. Mr. Speaker, how could this government turn their backs on these vulnerable children and their families? And how could they do that? How could they look them in the face and blatantly lie to them?

>> Min. Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the member opposite, the leader of the opposition has to recognize that this dedicated half a billion-dollar investment into our children is probably the most significant investment into any autism program here in this country, Mr. Speaker. In addition to this, Mr. Speaker, we are setting up a new autism program here in the province of Ontario that will allow young people to get the skills they need, the ability to access the programs and services they need so they can actually get out there and reach their potential. I think the member opposite should be -- And actually saying back to this government that we made the right decision. We're heading in the right direction and that the member will work with --

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the acting Premier. I appreciate that the government has finally realized that autism doesn't end at 5 and I realize I've been warned. Mr. Speaker, I've been so frustrated with how these families have been treated and I know the government is touting their new plan. They claim there's funding for children kicked off this wait list but I have parents tweeting, e-mailing me, calling almost every day. They told me they have not received a single cent to help cover the costs of I.B.I. Treatment despite this announcement happening. Not a single cent. So I have a very specific question for the government. And I would like a specific answer. Mr. Speaker, how many families that were kicked off the wait list have received the promised funding? Has there been any funding delivered to the families kicked off the wait list as of now?

>> Min. Coteau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when I became the Minister for this file, the first thing we did. 24,000 families here in the province of Ontario. A letter from the ministry from me as the Minister explaining. Take place. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, Nash to that, Mr. Speaker, we set up a 800 number where parents across the province and families could call in and get a real-time information about the transition that's taken place. Mr. Speaker, we've dedicated half a billion dollars over the five years to transition to a new program. And yes Mr. Speaker -- ask the leader of the opposition to do is. Rather than standing there and constantly complaining about this program, get behind parents. Show them the direction in which they can access programs. Each and every one of their offices --

MPP Horwath to Minister Matthews Re: Education Investments

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is for the acting Premier. The government promised that their throne speech would be a reset, Speaker. People were counting on the

government to make life a little bit easier, to make sure that they could get a good pay cheque and fair benefits, to fix our hospitals and schools, but instead the people of this province got a great big letdown on Monday. It wasn't a reset, Speaker. It was a disappointment. People know it's time for action in this province. Why doesn't the government?

>> Min. Deb Matthews: Well, Speaker, perhaps we could review some of the highlights of the throne speech that demonstrate we are committed to making life better for Ontarians, Speaker. 100,000 new child care spaces I think is something we can all applaud, Speaker. Child care spaces. A significant reduction in electricity bills, Speaker, is something we can all support. The third party's been calling for this action. We're now in a position to take that action, and we are reducing by 8% the electricity bills and a further reduction for those who live in the most rural part of our province, Speaker. We're also investing more to help companies reduce their consumption of electricity and they will save money as a result of that. So, Speaker, we have responded and will continue to respond to the wishes of the people of this province.

>> Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm sure new Democrats were not the only MPP S this past summer who were out talking to people, and more importantly listening to people, Speaker. Every backbencher on that side of the House, every Minister must have felt the disappointment from the people of Ontario as we did. Whether it was the decision to privatize Hydro One or the choice to ignore crumbling hospitals and schools, this is not what people hoped for, Speaker. And I'm sure that every Liberal Minister and every Liberal member must have heard that. Does this government understand that? Do they understand where the people of this province are? Do they understand how disappointed -- disappointed and in many, many parts of this province upset people are about the functioning or malfunctioning of this government?

>> Min. Matthews: I think the leader of the third party hasn't been listening to one of the things that we are doing on this side of the House, Speaker, including 100,000 new child care spaces, including reducing the cost electricity in this province. Speaker, what I heard a lot about is the impact of free tuition for Ontarians with incomes, family in connection -- I met with a mom who told me that, because of this, her children will now be able to go on to College or to university, Speaker. I've met with young people in grade 11 and grade 12 who looked at me and said "Really" when I said tuition would be those with incomes of \$50,000 or less. In fact, Speaker, the middle class and up to \$150,000 income will benefit from the changes we're making on tuition.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, we're listening to the people of Ontario and what they're telling us is that they want something better, and they deserve something better, Speaker. They are worried about their future, but more than that they're worried about whether there will be a future for the next generation in this province. Instead of hope, the people of this province are feeling extremely let down. Privatization, flat wages, robbing schools and hospitals of the resources they need. That's not what people voted for, Speaker. Is this government ready to acknowledge that they have gone off course and commit to making big changes in direction today?

>> Min. Matthews: Mr. Speaker, there are many items I would like to highlight, but we are -- steps we are taking to make life easier for people. Let me focus on investments we're making in young people our youth, Speaker. An extra \$250 million over two years to help 150,000 young Ontarians focus on skills development, on labour market connections, on entrepreneurship, on innovation. We're investing in these young people because we know that if we make the investments, that will be repaid many, many times over as they enter the work force and make a real why, to this province, Speaker. When it comes to child care as I've said, 100,000 new spaces, which means more people will be able to get that solid foundation so that when they go into full-day kindergarten, which is another initiative that we're very, very proud of on this side, Speaker. Young people will be able to. To their absolute maximum, Speaker. And we will allow those parents of those children to participate as well.

MPP Horwath to Minister Matthews Re: Throne Speech

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my next question's also for the acting Premier. You know, I

was hopeful. I was hopeful that today -- yesterday -- sorry Monday's throne speech would have been one that was indicating a session of action that we were going to have here in Ontario. But instead what we have is the Premier that remains dead set on privatizing Hydro One. The government is defending an \$11 minimum wage instead of taking action on a \$15 minimum wage. There is no plan whatsoever to improve the quality of jobs in Ontario, or to fix the schools and hospitals in this province. Child care. Talk about a lot remains far too expensive for far too many families, and that's not changing, Speaker. It is not a reset. It is yet another disappointment. Why is this government letting people down yet again?

>> Min. Deb Matthews: Well, you know, Speaker, we on this side acknowledge there is always more to do and we always work hard to make things better. But I think the leader of the third party has a kind of -- I don't know what the opposite of rose-coloured glasses is but they are dark glasses she's looking at this great province through, Speaker. What we see is an economy is growing. 6.1% growth over the past two years leading the country, Speaker. When it comes to unemployment, our unemployment rate has dropped to 6.7%. It's been lower than the national average for 16 straight months, Speaker. Our kids are graduating. There was a graduation rate 68% when we were elected in 2003. It's now 85.5% graduation, Speaker. High school who are moving on to postsecondary education.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people in this province need hope, not another letdown by their government. This province, Speaker, is at a key moment in time. Without big changes, things are going to get a heck of a lot worse for the people of this province. Instead of getting to work, the government is making things harder, making life harder for folks. Will this Wynne government finally change course and start taking real steps that make a real difference in people's lives?

>> Min. Matthews: Well, Speaker, I've been -- my caucus mate said maybe Orange coloured glasses that they are wearing. Everything's dark and gloomy, Speaker. Because I can tell you any objective only would say that things are better in Ontario now than they've been in time, and it's because on this side we've made our choices. We made choices to invest in infrastructure, to invest in our young people, to our education, to invest in our health care system. We are continuing, our economy is continuing to grow and expand. We are attracting immigrants from all over the world, Speaker, who are choosing to make Ontario their home. We're number one in foreign direct investment, Speaker. Yes, there's always more work to do, and our focus is always on making things better for those who are facing tough times, Speaker. But to make the suggestion that all is doom and gloom in Ontario, Speaker. Is just not a reflection of reality.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, perhaps I was a bit presumptive to think the Liberal MPP S actually listened to people over the course of the summer, because I certainly have a whole different story from the people of Ontario than the Liberals seem to have. People didn't want Hydro One sold off. That's what they told me. 80% of people don't want Hydro One privatized. Jobs. Jobs without benefits and wages that you can't live on. Schools and hospitals that need billions of dollars in repair. That is not what the Premier of this province promised when she ran her election campaign a couple of years ago. But government isn't just ignoring the problems, Speaker. They are making the problems worse here in Ontario. Now will this Wynne government stop making things worse and start taking action. On the priorities that matter to the people of Ontario?

>> Min. Matthews: Well, speaker, certainly the priorities of the people of Ontario were indeed reflected in the throne speech. We heard loud and clear that people want some relief on their electricity costs and that's why we're moving forward with a rebate in the amount of the provincial portion of the H.S.T., an 8% reduction in their hydro bills and more for those in our most rural parts of the province, speaker. We heard loud and clear that people with young children are really looking for more child care options, speaker, and that's why we're committed to 100,000 new child care spaces, starting in 2017, speaker. We are taking action on infrastructure, because we hear from people that the daily commute is really preventing people from spending good quality time. With their families. Speaker, we are making the priorities of the people of Ontario our priorities, and we are acting on those priorities.

MPP MacLeod to Minister Hoskins Re: Mayor Hector MacMillan & OHIP

>> MPP Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is also to the acting Premier. I'm sure you're very familiar with his worship Hector McMillan, the mayor of Trentville who's joining us in the gallery today. He has pancreatic cancer but, like one of my constituents who is suffering from breast and brain cancer, OHIP won't fund the potentially lifesaving procedure. He said that he has been, quote, essentially murdered and quote sentenced to die by the government. And what happens when he spoke out? He was told by the government to sit down and shut up, and now they're threatening to delay his OHIP panel. He was scolded for trying to save his life and for speaking out on behalf of the thousands of Ontarians every year who are candidates for the same potentially life threatening treatment. Mr. Speaker, we all know that this government doesn't like its critics, but they can really defend trying to muzzle a dying man?

>> Min. Eric Hoskins: Mayor McMillan, sir, thank you for joining us here today. I want to start by saying how very, very sorry I am that you're facing this diagnosis, this challenge, the biggest challenge of your life and your family and your loved ones are facing that challenge with you. I also want to say how very sorry I am that you have lost confidence in health care in this province. And it's my job, and I want to do everything I can to restore that confidence, sir. I can't begin to imagine what you're going through, the experience that you've faced yourself and your family, your friends, your loved ones, and, sir, I can only hope that were I to face a similar challenge, that I would demonstrate the courage and the fortitude that you have.

>> MPP MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. And I appreciate the compassion from the Minister of health. But this is happening far too often. We've seen billions wasted, literally throughout the health care system and other ministries in the government. And at a time when Hector and other people are facing life threatening diseases, sometimes they made only have a couple of months. It's the health care system that we need to work within that has to open up and limit the barriers that he faces. My father died of cancer and it was the worst six months of my life. I know what Hector's going through. I spent the morning with him. We've spoken many times. I didn't hear that you were going to help, and I think we have to recognize that we do have two tiers of health care in the province, and that it is limiting for people like Hector. He's courageously taking a stand. But I want to know, will you help him? Will you look within your department? Will you make sure he gets that lifesaving -- surgery? And we hope other patients across Ontario who are fund-raising for basic health care.

>> Min. Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I am doing absolutely everything it's important I think for all of us to understand that this difficult decision such as this are governed by the health insurance act and the associated regulations. I have absolutely no discretion or ability to approve or reject an application that comes forward in that context. To do so would be a violation of that act by myself. I do understand, having spoken with mayor McMillan, that his prognosis may have in fact changed for the better in terms of the staging of his illness, and I believe it's important that as a society, from the bureaucrats to the highest level of clinical experts, that we demonstrate the flexibility that if a condition changes, if a prognosis changes, that we have the ability. To provide the appropriate and best course of care in that case. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MPP French to Minister Duguid Re: Auto Manufacturing

>> MPP Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question's to the acting Premier on behalf of the people of Oshawa. People in Oshawa are coming to a tipping point. We are going to keep building -- if we are going to keep building vehicles in Oshawa, this Liberal government needs to step up and get behind Oshawa's auto workers. Today it's Oshawa, but the negotiations between General Motors and Unifor will set the tone for the future of good auto jobs across the province. People haven't heard from the auto czar, Ray Tanguay, and people know that Minister's crossing their fingers and hoping for the best is not a strategy. Will the government commit right here today to make auto jobs a real priority for this government?

>> Min. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for the question. I don't think we could be any more clear than we've been as a government with regard to support to the auto sector. There is not a sub

national government anywhere in north America that's been a stronger champion of the auto sector than the province of Ontario. In fact -- At the Oshawa plant, be there today had it not been for this government, with support from the NDP And absolutely no support from the P.C., when we make billion-dollar investments in the auto sector including Oshawa. Both parties are negotiating hard. The negotiations appear to be going well. We wish them well in that Collective bargaining process. We have an obligation not to get in the middle of that. At the same time both parties know how supportive we've been in the past. Both parties know that we will continue to be supportive. In the future. Getting that plant amended for the future is our number one priority and we'll do everything we can and need to do to do that.

>> MPP French: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the summer, over the summer I spent a lot of time speaking with people in Oshawa who were very concerned about the future of our city. Some of them work directly in the auto sector but lots of them don't. Whether it's people working for G.M., in any of the industry spin-off jobs or all of the jobs supported by the sector, people know how important G.M. Is to Oshawa. They're worried about what losing these good jobs could mean for the next generation. Ontarians new Democrats are in full support to keep jobs in Ontario's sector not just for today but for future generations of Ontarians. Government commitment to automotive should be ongoing, unwavering and unshakable. Will the government get off the sidelines and commit to doing its part to keep these jobs in Oshawa and in Ontario?

>> Min. Duguid: This government has never, ever been on the sidelines. In fact we've always been in the playing field. Mr. Speaker, we've been running harder and more aggressively than any government in North America when it comes to support for this very important sector. It is important to the people of Oshawa. It's also important to all the people in Ontario in our entire economy that we do everything we can to ensure that future mandate for the plant in Oshawa, that there's a future mandate for Chrysler in brampton, that there's a future mandate. Plants in Windsor and all -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So this government will continue to be a champion for this sector. I'll ask the members. The leader, because they still propose a tax hike that would put -- a corporate tax hike on Oshawa and all other future investment that is would hurt us not help us. It's something she really should look into with her own policies.

MPP Kiwala to Minister Ballard Re: Affordable Housing

>> MPP Sophie Kiwala: My question is to the minister of housing and minister responsible for Ontario's poverty reduction strategy. Firstly I have to say congratulations on your new position, and anyone who digs a hole in the snow, in -35° weather in the winter to truly understand homelessness deserves to be the minister of housing and poverty reduction. As Ontario continues to grow, we have to make sure that not only my riding of Kingston and the islands but all of our communities remain affordable and accessible to people of all income levels. Ontario's updated long-term affordable housing strategy will develop a new portable housing benefit -- benefit that will transform the housing system. Will the minister explain what this is, how it will make the social housing. More efficient for ontarians seeking housing assistance?

>> Min. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the member from Kingston and the islands for that great question, and I'd like to thank her for her continued advocacy and focus on Ontario's social issues. Ensuring -- Mr. Speaker ensuring that people have stable and secure housing is very important to our government and to me. The member's right about the affordable housing benefit. Once developed, the benefit will have a major effect on improving the efficiency of social housing in Ontario. Currently ontarians in need of rental assistance rely on various programs across the province, many of which are tied to specific units at a specific address. The affordable housing benefit would give people more flexibility to choose where they live. This means that when a person moves, the benefit moves with them. Mr. Speaker, this will mean more -- More choice for people in need, as well as more flexibility for those who deliver the service.

>> MPP Kiwala: Thank you, minister. , Mr. Speaker, last Friday I was honoured to announce that the community of Kingston, located in my riding of Kingston and the islands, is receiving over \$330,000 in new funding for the survivors of domestic violence portable housing benefit pilot program. I know

Sheldon Langmann of the city of Kingston was very pleased that there were sufficient funds to cover all 30 families on the waiting list in this category. Kingston interval house provides emergency shelter and second-stage housing for women, children and youth who are fleeing violent circumstances. Last year the centre received over 2,500 crisis calls from women suffering from domestic violence looking for emergency support, safe shelter and counselling. In the same year, 250 women and their children were living at Kingston interval house. Through you, Mr. Speaker, can minister explain to the house how this benefit will help the survivors of domestic violence, such as those at Kingston interval house, find safe and affordable housing?

>> Min. Ballard: Thank you to the member from Kingston and the islands for a second great question. Mr. Speaker, domestic violence is a very serious problem that crosses every social and economic boundary. It will not be tolerated in Ontario. That's why, together with our federal government counterparts, we're investing more than \$20 million over two years. Survivor -- affordable housing benefit pilot. The pilot will provide ongoing assistance to approximately 1,000 survivors of domestic violence each year. Through the pilot project, survivors of domestic violence will have the option to receive a portable housing benefit so that they can immediately find housing in their community instead of having to wait for social -- until a social housing unit becomes available. Mr. Speaker, ensuring that housing assistance is flexible and not tied to one particular resident. Will help keep those fleeing domestic abuse safe and support --

MPP Gelinis to Minister Matthews (Murray) Re: Grassy Narrows

>> MPP France Gelinis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the assistant Premier. Contamination in Grassy Narrows in part by your government said that it is possible to clean up the Wabigoon River. Great news. Yes, the Premier producing no evidence whatsoever said no to cleaning the river. Now government scientists are saying clear-cutting around Grassy Narrows territory will disturb the Mercury and no one is tracking the implications. Why is your government so quick to jump and say yes to logging and no to cleaning?

>> Min. Deb Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. I can assure the member opposite and the people of this province that our government is absolutely committed to working with Grassy Narrows First Nation and the federal government on this very important issue, Speaker. I understand and I am sympathetic with the concerns of Grassy Narrows First Nation. We feel already taken action on the recommendations of the recently released report from Grassy Narrows First Nation. We're spending \$300,000 to support water, sediment and fish sampling, Speaker, and this includes fieldwork to determine the current levels of Mercury and provide critical information needed to develop options to remediate the English Wabigoon River. We look forward to working and meeting regularly to assure progress is being made.

>> MPP Gelinis: Thank you, Speaker. It is rather interesting that you have committed in May to fund the fieldwork recommended by the scientists, but soon the river will freeze up and to conduct the fieldwork will be gone for another year. Why is it that, after you've made the commitment, there has been no fieldwork going on at Grassy Narrows? When is the government going to come through with their commitment? But really when are you going to clean up the river? Speaker, water is life.

>> Min. Glen Murray: As a matter of fact Minister Deborah the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and I have a former political committee, of which Chief Fobister is a member, and we meet every month for several hours and review the entire implementation. Over \$600,000 is currently being invested in the First Nation to run their own testing, and our scientists run alongside. This is one of the most comprehensive studies and Chief Fobister has been very pleased of the progress. I and Minister Zimmer make regular visits to Grassy Narrows and the Premier met recently with Chief Fobister. Our scientists are working alongside. And there's third-party science verification and development of an implementation plan to remediate the rivers. I can't imagine we could be doing more.

MPP Wong to Minister Chan Re: International Trade Missions

>> MPP Soo Wong: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the member from Agincourt for asking. I was really excited when I learned that the Premier would be creating the first ever ministry of international trade....

>> Min. Michael Chan: Speaker, over the last two years, we have been working hard to identify opportunities for Ontario. We have had many missions. Supervised signing of many business agreements and nearly 4 billion in investment for the province. As a new ministry, we can deepen our And dedicated time and resources to further this effect. Speaker, I want to continue to target key markets abroad, where Ontario businesses can profit and I want to continue engaging our business sector. To identify ways our government can help. Thank you, Speaker.

>> MPP Wong: Thank you, Speaker. On Monday's throne speech, the government reaffirmed its commitment to international trade, particularly trade missions, Mr. Speaker. Having heard the Minister's plan from his ministry, I'm confident that his work -- he's working diligently to increase Ontario's presence abroad and bring jobs and investment to the province. And I witnessed, Mr. Speaker, first hand last fall how hard the Minister worked in organizing the China trade mission, which was a great success. I understand the value of trade missions. One cannot create business relationship without face-to-face contact. Despite this, Mr. Speaker, some people continue to criticize the value of trade missions. Speaker, through you to the Minister, can he kindly please explain to the House how trade missions benefits the people of Ontario?

>> Min. Chan: Speaker, trade missions give us an opportunity to meet people face to face, to forge new relationships, strengthen old ones and strengthen Ontario. But what does that mean for Ontario? Speaker, it means convincing forest companies to open operations in our province, where Ontarians will be employed. It means 200 jobs from our Israel mission, 150 from India, 1,700 from the 2015 mission to China and 1,400 from another mission to China in 2014. Speaker, it means increased business at hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions when -- pick up our invitation to visit Ontario, foreign delegations. Speaker, and it means working with companies in northern Ontario that have challenges. Over such long distances. Speaker, trade missions make a difference. Thank you.

MPP Scott to Minister Matthews Re: Hydro Rebate

>> MPP Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question's for the Deputy Premier. We now know that the reality of your electricity rebate is 36 cents a day. In my riding, this is what your hydro crisis looks like. Thousands of cases dealing with people who can't cope with the stress of making their hydro payments and they're desperately begging for help. People defaulting adding to the growing list of those in arrears. People destitute and needing my office to seek bridge funding. People on load -- like we're in a third world country. Residents and businesses crushed by delivery charges in rural areas. Residents and businesses forms today pay massive balloon payments because of an inept billing system. Residents and businesses struck with broken or dysfunctional meters from the failed smart meter program. Farms collapsing because of stray voltage. Businesses creating jobs that are shutting down all together. Mr. Speaker, can the Deputy Premier tell us how she came up with 36 cents as the answer?

>> Min. Deb Matthews: Speaker, I wait with great anticipation for the supplementary of which the P.C. Party will outline their plan to reduce electricity costs. Speaker, I will tell you what our plans are. They are reducing... We are taking 8%. We're cutting delivery charges for the most rural customers by 20%, Speaker. And we're empowering investor businesses to reduce their bills by one third through the industrial conservation initiative, Speaker. But I do want to highlight other programs that are there. For people facing real financial challenges. Particularly the Ontario electricity support program, Speaker. Eligible low to moderate income House holds. An average of \$430 per month.

>> MPP Scott: Well, Mr. Speaker, to the Deputy Premier, you were not the one in the grocery line counting out your last coins to try and cover food purchases. You are not the one burning your staircase to heat your home. Oh. Through you, Mr. Speaker. The Liberal government is not the one hitchhiking to work because you can't afford a car that you need to get to your job in order to pay

your electricity bill. These are real stories from my riding. So, Mr. Speaker, will the Deputy Premier finally admit that they have lost all control of the electricity situation in the province of Ontario?

>> Min. Matthews: So, Speaker, I do want to go back to the Ontario electricity support program, say that I correct my record. An average of \$430 per year. Now one of your caucus mates suggested that it wasn't. To inform constituents of their program, Speaker. But I think it is your responsibility as MPPs of all the people to inform people about the Ontario electricity support program that is therefore people in low and moderate income families, Speaker, to give them. This is in addition to the Ontario energy and property tax credits for qualifying individuals and families up to \$1008 per year with a maximum of \$1,148 per year for qualifying seniors, Speaker. Our reductions are on top of these initiatives. Those with the lowest income.

MPP Taylor (Mantha) to Minister Matthews (Lalonde) Re: AODA, Franco-Ontarian University

>> MPP Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the acting Premier. The throne speech was called the plan to build Ontario up for everyone but there's nothing to build up over 1.8 million Ontarians with disabilities, who still face barriers when trying to get a job, an education, adequate housing or even basic health care services. According to the alliance, working on behalf of Ontarians with disabilities, nothing in the speech will help a quarter of a million students with special education needs in Ontario schools. There is nothing to ensure that they will get an equal shot at the education they deserve. If this speech is about the Wynne government's priorities and building everyone up, why wasn't there anything in the throne speech about them?

>> Min. Deb Matthews: Speaker, I know that the Minister responsible for disabilities would like to answer that question, and I will certainly have her make sure she's aware that that question was asked and get that answer. But, Speaker, this government has been very focused on improve opportunities for people with disabilities. In fact I remember very fondly when we passed the aopa act, Speaker, the accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities. I remember so clearly the people that filled this chamber and supported our actions for people with disabilities, Speaker. When it comes to people on odsp, and I'm sure the Minister of community and social services would love to speak about initiatives designed to support people with disabilities to get back into the labour market, Speaker. There's a significant focus on this very important issue because we know that we are all stronger when all of us have the opportunity to contribute fully to our communities and to our economy.

>> MPP Michael Mantha: Thank you again. My question is to the Deputy Premier. I have listened to the speech from the throne, and there was absolutely nothing regarding franco-ontarians in Ontario. We need a francophone university that is clear, and after the speech, all media have been wondering where is that promise of a francophone university? We want a board of directors that was simple, that was clear. Why didn't the Minister -- why did the Minister leave behind 600 -- thousand franco-ontarians and didn't make any promises for them?

>> Min. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for this question. I'm very proud to be able to discuss this topic today and I would like to reaffirm that things are going forward. We are putting forward an application process. The bill tabled by the member, with an accelerated process, requires different settings if we want to be responsible. And I want to assure people here that the Wynne government is acting concretely. If we're looking at the speech from the throne, Mr. Speaker, I win everywhere -- I went everywhere in the province this summer and all I heard people talk about is actions that we put in place. Day care centres, electricity, balancing the budget. All the comments I heard were about those topics. And to be told that we've forgotten franco-ontarians, I do not -

MPP Dong to Minister Lalonde Re: Home Owner Protections

>> MPP Han Dong: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Minister of government and consumer services. First I would like to, through you, Speaker, congratulate her on her new responsibility. For

many Ontarians, finding a home is the largest investment they'll make in their life. By making such a purchase, especially one with this magnitude, is extremely important to ensure that there are no problems with the House or condo. Consumers often rely on home inspection report from a home inspector to make informed decisions when buying or selling a home. Can the Minister of government and consumer services please inform the House on how our government is ensuring that Ontarians who purchase a home are protected in making this very important investment.

>> Min. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the member, actually, from Trinity- Spadina for his question. My ministry has recognized the need to establish a new licensing program to provide better consumer protection when making a decision as important as buying a home. Just last month, we together announced our government's plan to introduce legislation that will take important steps towards increasing consumer protection in the field development section. We want to improve consistency and the quality of evaluation on sectors provide across the province. Consumers and home inspector should be able to count on a certain level of qualification and expertise, and our government intends to address these issues. Speaker, through this initiative and many others, I will continue. To work with Ontarians to ensure that they have the full confidence in the investments they make. I look forward to providing more information

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>> MPP Dong: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the Minister for her answer and I want to thank her working -- she's doing to protect home buyers and instill confidence into Ontarians. And I want to take this opportunity to thank her predecessor, Minister Orazietti and Minister maccharles for their hard work on this particular file. As you know it's very, very important to me. Buying a home is equally exciting and stressful, and it's important that consumers be careful -- it's important that consumers be careful and well informed when making this big investment. I'm happy to hear the Minister is committed to ensure quality service for consumers. Speaker, I know Ontario has a large -- largest real estate market in Canada. The process of buying a home, especially for new homeowners, can seem daunting and overwhelming. Can the Minister of government and consumer services inform this House how our government is helping Ontarians achieve home ownership?

>> Min. Lalonde: Thank you again for the member and for his question but also his advocacy on this file. Mr. Speaker, the real estate and business brokers act has been very effective at having accountability and enhancing consumer protections to the real estate industry. The act is administered by real estate council of Ontario referred as repo which -- rico, which sells for the people. As a result consumers have access to a more open and transparent real estate market. Real estate professionals are bound by a code of ethics and are registered with rico ensuring compliance across the industry. Our proposed legislation a licensing home inspector will ensure Ontarians feel greater ease in entering the housing market and purchasing the right home for themselves or their families. Speaker, I look forward to working with prospective home buyers as well as professionals in the industry, such as actually our out going Colleague Tim Hudak and the Ontario real estate association.