

Transcript: Premier Kathleen Wynne's Remarks & Avail At Central Technical School

From: "Tchakarov, Evelyn (CAB)" <evelyn.tchakarov@ontario.ca>
To: "@CAB-QPscrums" <cab-qpscrums@cab.gov.on.ca>
Date: Wed, 14 Sep 2016 11:40:54 -0400
Attachments: 20160914 - Premier Wynne's Remarks & Avail At Central Technical School.docx (29.53 kB)

PREMIER WYNNE'S REMARKS & AVAIL AT CENTRAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL

Date: September 14, 2016
Length: 21:03 minutes
Speaker(s):
Premier Kathleen Wynne
Minister Deb Matthews

PREMIER KATHLEEN WYNNE: This is not my first time at Central Tech. I have been at Central Tech many times. There are many community meetings that have been held here and, particularly I remember meetings about adult education And we met some of the adult students in the art program before we went into see the Grade 12 students. It's one of the great features of Toronto District School Board that their adult education programs are as robust as they are and the art program is nationally renowned. It's a terrific program. So thank you to the Central Tech team for all that you do.

Deb and Han and I had the opportunity to meet with extremely talented young people, some Grade 11 and 12 students who are in an art program here, who have gotten into that art program through a process whereby they have a portfolio and they actually choose that path. Each one of them, as we went around the table, has been either been doing art for a long time or they are very interested in going on to study art. And we talked about Sheridan and Ryerson and Seneca, and all of the choices they have for post-secondary. Some of them are interested in architecture and some interested in design, interior design. One young woman was interested in tattoo art. I don't know where you study tattoo art, but she's interested in doing that. So it's a really exciting time, the fall for Grade 12 students. Some of the students are Grade 11 students, so they have another year to think about what they are going to do. But for Grade 12 students, they are thinking right now about where they might apply and what the next Steps are going to but it can also be a stressful time for parents.

But it can also be a stressful time for parents. That's really what we want to talk about today. It's a stressful time for parents and kids if they are worried about how they're going to be able to afford to be at post-secondary or in the parents case how they are going to be able to support their young person to attend post-secondary. And so what we have done by putting in place the Ontario Student Grant that Deb is going to talk about is we've recognized that people are often struggling as their children get to the point where they're going to go to post-secondary. And we know that this province, Ontario, is better off if everyone can have access to post-secondary education who wants to go. You know, by levelling the playing field, it means that everyone who is prepared, everyone who wants to do that, that next step has the opportunity to go ahead. So what the Ontario Student Grant is, is that opportunity, to seize that next step. So we talked about it with the young people and I said, you know, make sure when you think about this – because some of them are at different points. But when do they think about it, asking them to talk with their guidance councillor so they get all the information about what it means, how they can apply to get the Ontario Student Grant.

[Speaking In French]

So the point of the Ontario Student Grant is to make college and university tuition free for low and middle-income students. Each situation is somewhat different and so that's why students need to apply and then go through an assessment process so that they know what they qualify for. But the bottom line is that we know that bright ambitious young people need to be part of the post-secondary system and then be able to go out and take the great jobs that are available to them or create great jobs. Some of the young students to there are thinking about their own businesses. And in order to get there, they know they have to go

through post-secondary. So that is what we are talking about today. I'm going to ask Deb to come up. The throne speech that we outlined on Monday, the ways in which we are working to help people in their lives every single day, this is one of the ways. This is one of the things we know weighs on families as they think about how to support their kids. And so our hope is that as the Ontario Student Grant rolls out for fall of 2017, that we will see kids who otherwise would not go to post-secondary able to do that. So I'm going to ask Deb Matthews to talk a little about the grant in detail.

PREMIER KATHLEEN WYNNE: Thank you very much. And anyone of us is happy to take your questions.

Q: [inaudible]

PREMIER WYNNE: I think that there has been a lot of conversation about whether the reviews are working and whether there needs to be changes, so I won't pre-empt the process. We're doing a comprehensive review and I look forward to the process and I look forward to the recommendations.

Q: [inaudible] elections finance bill with a bunch of amendments and promises of more amendments to come. Why have you so far been resistant to the changes the Auditor General and the oppositions are calling for in terms of government advertising [inaudible] Auditor General's previous powers [inaudible]

PREMIER WYNNE: So we're making huge changes to government advertising – the timeframe in which government advertising can take place, putting limits on the spending of government advertising. Those are on top of the changes that we are already made around, basically, banning partisan advertising, which is still in place. We have the toughest legislation in the country in terms of partisan advertising. And, you know, we're continuing to build on that work that we've done, because the third party advertising that – the changes were making to third party advertising, as I say, are changes you won't find anywhere else in the country.

Q: What is the hesitation in restoring the Auditor General's power to objectively decide what is partisan? She has listed a number of ads she says are partisan. So the Auditor General has said -

PREMIER WYNNE: The intention of the legislation that was brought in under the previous government, and we have amended, was to make sure there was a clear line between partisan and non-partisan. And that's what our legislation does and we're very comfortable with where it is. I don't know --

MINISTER MATTHEWS: So the problem we were trying to fix was the problem that Mike Harris was on TV in government-paid ads dumping on teachers – clearly partisan ads. That was the problem we were trying to fix. We introduced legislation. After years of working with it, we realized we could solve that problem in a different way that still gives the Auditor General oversight, but doesn't go so far that we were prevented from actually giving people information. You'll recall that ads were rejected because the apples were too red or the brick was red. I mean, the application of the legislation was not in accordance with the problem we were trying to solve. The new legislation continues to solve the problem. The Premier, politicians cannot appear in ads. There are restrictions on that, but it gives the creative people more opportunity to actually communicate with the public, which I think is a responsible government.

Q: [inaudible]

MINISTER MATTHEWS: I am very pleased with what we're able to do now. I think it's the right approach.

Q: Premier, the Ontario Chief of Commerce has written an open letter to you today about marijuana. They are concerned about legalization, federal legalization, as you are. One of the things that they would like to see is that private sector delivery, but government licensing of those delivering this product. And they would like the municipalities to be a willing host, or have a veto over having either the retail outlets or the production facilities in their communities. Just wondering your thoughts on that? They aren't crazy about LCBO model. I know you like the LCBO distribution, but not retail.

PREMIER WYNNE: So you know what, there are going to be all sorts of models that come forward. I think that – as I said yesterday – we need to get some clarity from the federal government on timeline and process. But I'm not going to go any further in terms of what I think should happen or not. As I say there will be lots of input over the coming months on how this should be done.

Q: What about municipalities having a say. I know you brought this issue to the forefront with you expressing [inaudible] about all the illegal dispensaries -

PREMIER WYNNE: Let me just say that I think on this file, as on so many others, all of the orders of government need to work together because there are impacts – Whatever the decisions are, there will be impacts on every level government and on our jurisdiction, so I think that there needs to be that conversation that includes everybody as we could move forward.

Q: If we could get back to hydro rate for one moment. Your rebate is being introduced at the same time as the Ontario Energy Board is moving to a fixed rate for distribution. That could very well be a factor in seeing an increase for rural customers in the province across the board by as much as 25 per cent. How does the rebate help them say money when in fact they are going to see an increase as a result?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, so, let me just start where we have started with this challenge, you know, we have recognized that there are costs that are being born by people in urban and rural and remote communities that are a challenge for many people. And so we have taken a number of steps up until this point to put programs in place to help people who are live living on low income, to give them relief but we realized that there was more that we needed to do. And so we've introduced the HST, provisional version of the HST, relief on that for everyone. In addition to that, recognizing the distribution costs outside of the urban centres can be onerous, we're putting in place a reduction of up to 20 per cent. Now in terms of the long-term impacts of that, I think that obviously having a reduction will help. Does it solve the entire problem? No. And so we have to continue to work with communities to acknowledge that there are continued burdens. But to do nothing, it would not be consistent with our government's perspective. Our government's initiatives have been about trying to help people deal with costs. You know, the investments that we've made in electricity, the fact that we have a reliable, clean electricity grid, we're leaders in North America in terms of the changes we've made around coal, for example, but there's a cost associated with that. We recognize that and we recognize need to help people to deal with the costs and that's what the initiatives and the throne speech were about.

Q: [inaudible] managed to help perhaps the majority in this province by doing what you've done. But you still got a minority that is going to end up paying more. What more can your government do as a result of what the OEB is doing with the fix rate program that is going at least get those people back to a point where it's not going to [inaudible]

PREMIER WYNNE: So the Minister of Energy – We're in school. Is this photo day today? There you go. So as I said, the Minister of Energy understands that this is a challenge and it's why he's brought forward this package of changes but that doesn't mean he won't look at where there are impacts that are disproportionate – so he will continue to do that work.

Q: You mentioned yourself that when you went for the tour of northern Ontario, you heard a lot of concern about hydro. The by-election, major issue in the by-election was hydro rates. You got a lawsuit that's been launched against you that is trying to stop or stall the Hydro One sale. Given that it is such an unpopular issue, is there a rethink in the plans or is there anything – [inaudible]

PREMIER WYNNE: One of those things is not like the other, Jamie. In terms of what we heard in the by-election, what I heard on my modern tour, what that feedback did for me was confirm what we knew, which this was people across the province struggling with electricity rates and so that's why we've made the changes that we've made. Because we had heard that before – We had a confirmation over the summer, but we didn't start in the summer to listen to people. We knew and that's why we had put other programs in place long before the throne speech. So that is an acknowledgement that people need support in the costs that they're bearing every single day. In terms of the asset of Hydro One and the changes that we're making there in order to invest in transit and transportation infrastructure across the province, that is a very different issue. And I know that the opposition parties want to suggest that by doing that, by making the changes in Hydro One, we're going to be increasing electricity costs. That is not the case. What we are doing is we are recycling an asset, we're using an asset to leverage funding for a new asset that will be owned by the people of Ontario. And so from my perspective, that is the responsible thing to do. Because we're in a part of the city that is a prime example of where we need to make sure there's transit for people to get in and out of this part of the city. We need to make sure that the transit system works for the downtown core of Toronto, but for the 905, for the greater GTA and for every community in the province, whether it's London or whether Thunder Bay. So those investments have to come from somewhere and that's why we are making the changes on Hydro One.

Q: [Inaudible] with the lawsuit, the lawsuit.

PREMIER WYNNE: Well you know—I mean I'm not going to comment on a lawsuit. The government hasn't received anything yet and you know that will take its course. In the meantime we are going to continue building infrastructure in the province.

Q: [Inaudible] drag it through the courts. Like what—

PREMIER WYNNE: Well again, we'll have to let the judicial process unfold. I haven't received anything. I haven't been given any information to suggest that we have any clarity on exactly what the lawsuit is. I think the announcement is just being made today by the people who are bringing the lawsuit, but I would just say that many of the people who are agitated about this are also agitated about not having new, modern infrastructure in the province. And so we had to make a decision; governing is about making choices. It's about making choices that are sometimes very difficult and if we are going to be able to build as we have committed; \$160-billion over 12-years in this province – roads, bridges, hospitals, schools, transit – then we need to have the resources to do that and you know all of that infrastructure, that building, helps people move around cities, between cities, helps them to spend more time with their families. And so that's the choice that we made and it was a difficult one but I believe that for the future prosperity of the province as well as immediate job creation, it was the right thing to do.

Q: [Inaudible] My first question is, do you expect to have to stand up to a Charter challenge and also how do you expect the nomination contestant to raise money [Inaudible]

PREMIER WYNNE: Well because having events is not the only way that politicians have raised money for decades and decades. You know there are many other ways of raising money and what we know is we're going into a world where there's much more direct engagement of people as individuals, not necessarily at events, but people who become engaged in the party and make donations because of that. So that's the kind of fundraising that we're moving into.

Q: [Inaudible]

PREMIER WYNNE: Again, I can't control those processes. You know we're doing what we're doing and making changes with the best advice that we have, including legal advice, and we'll move forward with that, and if there are changes that have to be made we will make them. But I know that this is the way to modernize the system. Quickly--

Q: Just to go back to the lawsuit question; I understand you don't know the specifics but there are groups – powerful groups – out there who aren't happy. Isn't that a bit of a concern to you that they're trying to halt this--?

PREMIER WYNNE: We made a difficult decision because we know that investing in infrastructure in this province—you know there's been a lot of talk about having money to invest in infrastructure. Whether its schools, roads, bridges, transit, we know that our economic prosperity depends on that. The head of the International Monetary Fund was talking about governments using their fiscal space to invest in infrastructure. Well we're doing that in Ontario. We're creating that space. Part of the way we're creating that space is by taking assets that have been owned by the people of Ontario for a long time, leveraging those – obviously keeping regulation in place and keeping control – but leveraging those so that we can invest in new assets and that's the kind of invest that is helping people right now. Our economic growth in Ontario is one of the leading in the country; 6.1-per-cent over the last two years. We're projected to continue to lead the country. That means job creation. It means wealth that is being created for people in this province. So we want to make sure that everybody shares in that and part of the way we do that is by building infrastructure. Thank everybody. Merci.