

Transcript: Premier Wynne Avail at Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa (April 19)

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PREMIER WYNNE AVAIL AT CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF EASTERN ONTARIO IN OTTAWA

Date: April 19, 2017
Length: 15:41 minutes
Speaker(s): Premier Kathleen Wynne

PREMIER KATHLEEN WYNNE: Hi everyone. Bonjour tout le monde. Thank you for being here. I had a great opportunity to interact with some of the folks here at CHEO which is just a wonderful organization and I guess it's CHEO OCTC and that is actually; that's an important point because one of the themes we talked about was coordination and collaboration within the healthcare system which is so important. Whether we're talking about children's health or whether we're talking about mental health, you know, in order to do the things that we know we need to do to focus on patient-centered care to reduce wait times and increase access, we need the coordination among all of the, all of the components of the healthcare system. And CHEO is a great example of an innovator in that area. So it was a pleasure to be here.

[Speaking French] It's always a pleasure to be here in Ottawa.

[Speaking English] I'm happy to take your questions.

Q: Premier you got some fairly prominent placement of this ongoing story about you and your popularity, and I've heard what you've said so far and I accept that you're in for the long-haul, but I guess at what point when you've got your own members of your own party, your own MPPs - some of them - talking to reporters about the fact that they can't get out from under your unpopularity and they're worried about the whole thing coming crashing down. I guess at what point do you reassess, or do you never reassess because you've said you're running?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well I think that, you know, the focus of our government is on delivering the services and the support to the people of Ontario that we've promised and that we know is necessary in order for this province to thrive. Of course there are political calculations along the way, there always are. And since I've been in office; I've been in this office since 2013. We won a majority in 2014 and we have been doing that work that we were elected to do. I've made a decision, and I will say I've made a decision with the support of my caucus. I've made a decision with the support of my caucus to go into the next election. We have important work still to do. We are on the on the verge of balancing a budget, bringing in a balanced budget for the first time in nearly a decade. That will allow us to do more of the things that we know are needed in this province whether it's in healthcare, whether it's in infrastructure. And so we're going to do those things. That is my focus and I understand that there is a political story around personal popularity but that's actually beside the point for me. I mean the point for me is to do the work that I was elected to do with the support of my colleagues.

Q: 25-per-cent hydro rate cut; maybe-- you say a balanced budget is coming. Shouldn't you get a kick in the numbers? Like shouldn't you get some kind of an uptick? What's wrong?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, you know I'm going to leave that to the pundits and to the press--

Q: The pundits are making this up. This is, this is, this is--

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, no, no, fair enough, fair enough, but I'm going to leave it to them to analyze. What's important to me is that come summer people will see a 25-per-cent reduction in their electricity bills. That's what they need. I was in, was it the Carlingview Mall, where was I yesterday? [Inaudible] Mall with

Bob Chiarelli yesterday and we were talking to folks and a number of them raised electricity prices as a challenge and I was able to say to them, look, you know you're going to see that extra 17-per-cent for a total of 25-per-cent reduction on your electricity bill. And that gives them some comfort because they know that they need that. So you know whether it moves the pundits or not is actually beside the point. If it helps those people then that is what its aim is.

Q: Premier, when you're talking about housing prices which is obviously an issue that's on the agenda, and you're talking about - let me make sure I get this right - a non-resident speculative tax, a speculation tax, what does that look like? Is that targeting non-Canadians, residents that are not from Ontario? Can you just explain what does that actually mean in practice?

PREMIER WYNNE: So let me just step back and say that again, I know there's been, if I can say, a lot of speculation in the press about what we are or are not going to do. There was a conversation yesterday between federal Finance Minister Morneau and our Finance Minister Charles Sousa and John Tory because this is-- you know when I talk about the frenzy in the housing market it is at its peak in the in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and so we are looking at a number of options. We're looking at a number of things that we might do to cool that frenzy down to give everyone some breathing space. But there are other housing issues across the province. So we're going to bring forward a package of initiatives before the budget, as we've said. And the budget is coming very soon so very soon we'll be bringing forward those initiatives and what we're aiming to do is to bring in some initiatives that will help people in that whole continuum of housing, right from rental through to purchasing a home, without having unintended consequences because that is my fear in a market. But I think that if we look at what economists are saying, look at what folks who are trying to buy a home are saying, it's really gotten to the point where it is out of control and we need to do something.

Q: So is there-- when the government starts regulating in the private market it's always a tightrope that it walks, so for you, from your perspective, what measures are too far? Or maybe to use the analogy; what doors would you not walk through?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well you know what; I think it would be much better if we had that conversation once we bring the package of initiatives forward. Then you could.

Q: [Inaudible]

PREMIER WYNNE: You just want the scoop. I know, I know. But really it's going to be very soon and then you can ask me well why didn't you do this or why did you do that?

Q: [Inaudible] for a number of people in the housing market who are just wondering what policy options would not be considered? What policy options are too far into regulating--

PREMIER WYNNE: So let's have that conversation once we bring our package forward okay. I'll be happy to do that.

Q: Conceptually then, how do you dampen speculative [Inaudible] overheating in one big market without peoples' investments in their homes like [Inaudible]

PREMIER WYNNE: Well I think that's a very good question and I think that's, you know, that is one of the things that we have talked about within caucus is you know what is the interaction between the housing market in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and in Ottawa or London. The circumstances are different. Just as when this conversation began and we looked at what was happening in Vancouver, it was a different situation than in Toronto. Now I think there are maybe some more similarities there than there were but we have to look at the evidence. We have to look at what's actually happening in each of the communities and make a determination. And as I say, right now in terms of the purchasing a home, the really hot, frantic market is in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and we, you know, we have to consistently assess what happens when we bring in the package of initiatives and what happens going forward.

Q: Is it a bubble? Is it a bubble?

PREMIER WYNNE: Again I'm not, you know, I'm not a real estate analyst, I'm not an economist, but what I have done over the last number of weeks is talk to economists, listened to what they're saying. There's lots of good advice that is coming. What I will say is that the advice isn't all consistent. So we've had to sort through some conflicting advice in order to bring forward a package. And as I said, trying to bring forward a balanced package that isn't going to tilt too much in one direction. You'll see it soon folks.

Q: What do you think about the decision to increase the rebate for first-time home buyers, which gave

them more money essentially to feed into the system?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, you know at that point we were dealing with a situation where that was, that was the really pressing issue, was first time home buyers, the market was not as hot as it is now, but first time home buyers were still feeling a real challenge. And so you know had I had a crystal ball would we have done all of it at once? Maybe but I didn't have that crystal ball and so we made a decision then and what we're trying to do now is make sure that we bring in a robust enough package that that we have some checks and balances within it.

Q: Premier you said that not all the advice you've received has been consistent. So how would you decide what advice to follow and what advice to ignore?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, we you know, we've worked with, we've worked with people who have, who know the Ontario market, who understand what's going on in the Ontario market and are able to work with us and do things that are consistent with our philosophy as well. I mean there's obviously, there's a set of values that we hold and you know one of them was manifested in us helping those first time home buyers. And so the package that you'll bring forward will you will see is consistent with our value system as well.

Q: Can you just maybe elaborate, what's your value system? You're talking about it. Like is it expanding supply...?

PREMIER WYNNE: You know what, again, I'll be happy to have that conversation with you once we bring the package, we bring the package forward ok.

Q: Okay. Premier Wynne, I would like to ask a question in French. In your meeting with Mr. [Inaudible] you discussed funding for health care in the budget, directly and indirectly, and even in joking. As funding for hospitals has been a concern for many years. Are you ready today to tell us about any the additional financing that will go to hospitals in this year's budget?

PREMIER WYNNE: We know that hospitals in Ontario need more financial support and in the budget, you will see this assistance. At this moment, I cannot give specific details on specific figures or areas of focus. But we have listened to the people of Ontario.

Q: Two things together, a little bit then. I mean housing prices and hospitals being over capacity. A bit of a sense you're solving problems that your own government's actions have created. You say you don't have a crystal ball and that's, well...

PREMIER WYNNE: I guess I would just. Yeah okay. You don't want me to answer before you ask it. Sorry.

Q: You talk about if you had a crystal ball last fall than might you have treated the housing situation differently, but you didn't have a crystal ball. You fed more money into the bottom of the housing market and now the bubble has expanded, my word not yours. You talked about having squeezed hospitals to the point where there's a capacity problem and they need to hire nurses and there's a need for more support from the Provincial government. Are you looking far enough into the future when you're dealing with these massive problems that are affecting virtually everybody in Ontario?

PREMIER WYNNE: So I think, you know I think it's a very it's a very interesting question that you're asking because sometimes I have been criticized because we think very long term. So the investments that we've made in infrastructure, the changes that we are bringing in to reduce climate change, the growth plans that we have put in place. You know there have been there have been some very big decisions, retirement security, there's been very big decisions that we've made that look far into the future and are very much about the next generation and the generation after that and the economic prosperity and well-being of this province. At the same time there are issues that develop as we go along. I, you know, in terms of in terms of the health care system every single year we have increased funding to the health care system. Year over year there has been an increase in health care funding. Now in in the last number of years a lot of that funding has gone into home care, has gone into community care, has been different in terms of maybe traditional supports for hospital for hospitals for example. At the same time we've put billions of dollars into capital development of hospitals. So there has been a real commitment to the health care system that will continue and the transformation that I talked about today has been necessary, you know, the hospitals in Ontario have made necessary changes to the way they care for patients and the kind of relationship that they have with community support. And there's more of that that will be necessary. But, we recognize that now we've come to the point it wasn't about it wasn't about intentionally squeezing hospitals. It was about working to transform a health care system that was in need of that. And will continue to be a need of change as the demographics change, as acuity changes, as the as the system needs to evolve. So we will we will now in this budget recognize that the current need is that we make sure that hospitals have the

resources that they need to take their evolution to the next step. I think if you talk to you talk to health care providers around the province many of them support and understand the changes that that we have had to make and that they have had that they've been part of we couldn't do that without health care providers being on side. At this point we recognize that hospitals need more funding.

Q: Do you have a normal number of MPP's returning and running for you? Or is there a higher turnover from what you heard so far?

PREMIER WYNNE: You're asking me to compare historical numbers. I don't, you know what, I can't I can't I can't tell you that because you know I haven't had that conversation with all our MPP's and I don't know the comparison from the past so again I will leave that to you to do that analysis.

Q: Premier, just really quickly, since you talked about money. Does the budget take into account or factor in any revenues that you expect to gain from the housing changes that you are going to bring in?

PREMIER WYNNE: Again we'll, we'll have that we'll have that conversation once we bring in the initiatives and you'll be able to see what it is we're proposing, but you know any budget, any budget has a revenue and expense side so we can we can talk about that when we bring the budget in. Okay. Thanks everybody. Merci beaucoup.