

Transcript: Premier Wynne's Media Avail at Bishop Marrocco Thomas Merton Catholic Secondary School (March 29)

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PREMIER WYNNE'S MEDIA AVAIL AT BISHOP MARROCCO THOMAS MERTON CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL IN TORONTO

Date: March 29, 2017

Length: 18:08 minutes

Speaker(s): Premier Kathleen Wynne; Deb Matthews, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development; Mitzie Hunter, Minister of Education

PREMIER KATHLEEN WYNNE: Good morning, it's great to be here with all of you. Let me first just do a shout out to Bishop Morocco Thomas Merton, the staff and the board members, and the administration from TCDSB for being here with us and providing this opportunity for the great students who were in the auditorium, grade 11 and 12 students. Principal Wilson, thank you very much, and Erica, for hosting us today. We talked with the students about the application process for the new OSAP and Minister Matthews demonstrated, with the calculator, how students will benefit from the new grant structure. Many students will be able to see free, or better than free, tuition going forward which is a huge change. It's a huge change for the post-secondary education system in Ontario. I think the most telling question Deb asked at the end was 'were there students who had come into the auditorium thinking that they really couldn't afford to go to post-secondary, and now having heard the information about the new Ontario Student Assistance Program, now believe they can go to college or university or take an apprenticeship?' So there were kids who put up their hands. There were students who felt, as a result of the announcement today that they are going to be able to go to post-secondary. That's exactly what this program is about. That's why we're doing this. We need everybody at our best in Ontario and that's what the new OSAP program is about. So I'm happy to take your questions. We're happy to take your questions.

Q: Earlier this week, the sunshine list is presumably going to come out. We visit it every year, but given the attention salaries have been drawing in the public now, Hydro One this week and other executive salaries, is it time to make changes to the sunshine list? To maybe raise the threshold, or do something about the creeping number of people in government that are making more and more money?

PREMIER WYNNE: You've asked two different questions there. You said "increase the amount" which would mean that there would be fewer people on the sunshine list. I'm not sure that that accomplishes the transparency that the sunshine list is intended to engender. You know \$100,000 is still a lot of money, so we're going to keep it at that level. I think that people have the right to know where those salaries set. So we'll leave it where it is.

Q: Do people have a right to know Hydro One salaries though? Since the government still owns 70 per cent of it.

PREMIER WYNNE: As you know, the publicly traded companies have a different set of rules, and there is disclosure that happens to stakeholders. That's the set of rules that Hydro One will be operating under.

Q: Premier, can you confirm that OPG sold [inaudible] generating station?

PREMIER WYNNE: I don't know the details of that. I will have to get back to you on that. I'll get the Minister of Energy to talk to you about that.

Q: Premier, on hydro advertising, how do you explain to the people of Ontario that you're essentially putting out the same advertising? In one case, you're paying for it with taxpayer money. In another case, you're paying for it with Liberal Party money. How do you explain that?

PREMIER WYNNE: The government advertising that is happening around the Fair Hydro Plan is to make sure that people know, for example, the Ontario electricity support program, which is a program to support low income Ontarians, is an application program. It's very important that people know how to apply, that they get that information, and there are other programs that that people want. Once you go to the website, once you look at the website, then it's not just the OESP. There are other programs as well. So we want to make sure that people have access to that information, and that, given how important an issue this is to the people of Ontario, that they understand that we are taking steps to reduce their electricity bills. That's what the advertising is about.

Q: Sorry, if I might, what percentage is coming to your hydro bill in the summer?

PREMIER WYNNE: There is already an 8 per cent cut in place, and on top of that 17 per cent. So a 25 per cent cut people will see on their electricity bills by summer.

Q: But that's not what's coming. Because your advertising says 25 per cent, but what's coming is what?

PREMIER WYNNE: There will be a 25 per cent reduction and for people who live in rural and remote areas they will see they will see a higher cut in their electricity costs because they will see removal of a portion of their distribution charge. So they could see a 40 to 50 per cent reduction on their electricity bill. So there's a range. And even the 25 per cent, it will be between 23 and 28 per cent. So there's a substantial reduction coming to people across the province.

Q: [Inaudible] you know numbers are not good for TV people like me. Again, the Fair Hydro plan, what percentage on average cut is coming with the Fair Hydro Plan?

PREMIER WYNNE: On average between 23 and 28 per cent. So a 25 per cent reduction which is the 8 per cent that already is on people's electricity bills and on top of that, another on average 17 per cent. For people in rural communities it could be up to 40 or 50 per cent reduction.

Q: Premier, [inaudible] ask you about the controversy such as it was that your party was trying to stoke over Patrick Brown's speech to an audience of [inaudible]. Now you party was making a big deal [inaudible] but I mean you've spoken at events that were women's only or women only events in the past. I mean I don't think anyone has made a big deal about that. I mean I'm just wondering what was the thinking behind that? Are you guys trying to play the [inaudible] card against the Tories as we head into an election a--?

PREMIER WYNNE: Here's my concern; there have been a few incidents. Whether it's that or whether it's asking a highly-qualified woman who's being interviewed by a committee to, you know, fix the coffee in the kitchen or whether it's expressing doubt that zero tolerance on sexual assault is acceptable. What I'm concerned about is anything in our culture that would undermine the work that's been done for quite frankly decades. I mean 100 years we've been working as a culture to get rid of misogyny, to understand that women and men should have equal opportunities, that we should all be treated fairly and equally. And my concern is that given some of the rhetoric in the American election, given some of the things that are happening not just in Ontario but in other jurisdictions, there's a sort of whittling away at some of the advances that have been made and so you know we're going to call out anyone who-- whether it's, you know, whether it's someone who is in government or not we are going to be naming those incidents because we've worked way too

hard. We've worked way too hard. I've worked way too hard personally not to take not to take issue with someone who suggests that misogynist behaviour is okay. It's not okay. It's never okay. And we're going to continue to say that.

Q: So do you really think Conservatives have a sexism problem?

PREMIER WYNNE: You know what; I'm not going to make that sweeping statement. What I am going to say though is that wherever we see it, it's not okay.

Q: Are you trying to paint Patrick Brown with the Donald Trump brush? You mentioned [inaudible].

PREMIER WYNNE: I'm just saying that I am very worried as a woman of, you know the mother of two daughters, the grandmother of two granddaughters and my son and my grandson. I don't want, I don't want anyone in this province to live in an environment where misogyny is somehow accepted, that somehow the advances that we've made get taken away. I'm not going to be silent on that and nor do I think any of us should be. You know I think we should speak up. I think we should say it's not okay to categorize women, to denigrate women, to take us back in time. That's just not acceptable.

Q: The Finance Minister has indicated that there are going to be multiple measures in the budget to cool the housing market in the GTA and broader GTA. We've asked you quite a lot about the demand side, what you're going to do around the demand side of things. He's also indicating about the supply side. So that's got a lot of people kind of wondering, I mean are you going to open up the Greenbelt for more development? Are you going to be offering some sort of tax credit to builders? What are actual tangible things that you as a government can do to intervene to actually create more supply of--?

PREMIER WYNNE: So, let me be clear on the first point that you asked about in terms of the Greenbelt. We're, you know, we're committed to growing the Greenbelt not shrinking the Greenbelt. So that's not something that we're looking at. The Greenbelt is a hugely important swath of land that is like the lungs of this highly-populated part of the province. So that's not something that we're looking at. But we recognize that housing affordability is a huge, huge issue. It's a huge issue right here in this part of the city that we're talking about but it's also an issue outside of the core of the city. It's different in different parts of the province. You know it's not exactly the same. I mean I'm standing beside a member from London. It's not the same in London as it is in the GTHA. So we are looking-- the Finance Minister is looking at a whole range of supply and demand side issues but we're not yet ready to bring those forward. We will, we'll bring them forward and we're going to do our best to make decisions that are going to have a positive impact on the housing market and most, most importantly change the, change in some ways the ability of people to get into the market. Housing affordability is the challenge from our perspective.

Q: [Inaudible]

PREMIER WYNNE: To allow-- yeah, to make housing more affordable.

Q: [Inaudible] something more than what you did in [inaudible] in terms of the land transfer tax [inaudible]?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well I mean I think that's been clear from what the Finance Minister is saying, is that we believe that there are some other things that we should be looking at, and we're doing that and we'll be bringing forward some proposals on top of what's already been done. Sorry?

Q: [Inaudible]

PREMIER WYNNE: You know what; I know you want me to say all the things that we're looking at. I'm not going to do that. The Minister of Finance is -- you know we're working with the federal government. We've been working with the officials from British Columbia. All the markets are not exactly the same so we want to make sure that we do things that are good for Ontario and that we

don't do anything that's going to have you know, really problematic, unintended consequences and I've said that before.

Q: [Inaudible]

PREMIER WYNNE: Can you just hold on one second.

Q: [Speaking French]

PREMIER WYNNE: [Speaking French]

UNIDENTIFIED: [Inaudible]

Q: Alright the PCs are tabling a private member's bill. Now it's calling the government to make changes again to advertising rules because they are upset about the way you are promoting your advertising for the hydro cuts. So in anticipation that a TV ad campaign may soon come and more radio would you consider making any more changes to the advertising rules?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well here's the thing. We will be reminding the opposition that we actually were the government and the only government in the country that has legislation in place to prevent partisan advertising. The government previous to ours before we came into office under my predecessor, there were no rules about partisan advertising and there was a huge amount of partisan advertising that was going on with the members, the Premier's face on advertising that was paid for by government, that does not, that does not happen. That does not happen. We introduced new legislation that prevents partisan advertising and the legislation that is in place still prevents partisan advertising. It's the only legislation in the country that does that and we're going to stand behind it.

UNIDENTIFIED: So last question with Giorgio.

Q: Hi.

PREMIER WYNNE: Sorry, your name is?

Q: Giorgio.

PREMIER WYNNE: Giorgio.

Q: So you mentioned in the assembly that it is important for students going into post-secondary for the number to grow, in your conversation with [inaudible]. How important in your eyes is it for students going into post-secondary to increase [inaudible]?

PREMIER WYNNE: I think it's very important. I'm going to let my ministers speak to that.

DEB MATTHEWS, MINISTER OF ADVANCED EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: Well, thank you and thank you for asking the question about free tuition. Much appreciated. Thank you for that. What we think is really important, our economy is changing. We need to have a highly educated workforce and a highly educated population. Throw a whole lot of students in high school now who have all of the ability to go onto post-secondary education but they haven't had the opportunity because money has stood in the way. So these changes to OSAP remove that financial barrier. People can go to post-secondary education. They've got to get the marks, they got to work hard, they got to get accepted but then they don't have to worry about the money anymore. The monkey will be off their back and that's a really important thing for individuals but also for our whole economy.

MITZIE HUNTER, MINISTER OF EDUCATION: So Giorgio thank you for your question and you know one of the things that we noticed -- so 85.5 per cent of students in Ontario are graduating high school and we're really proud of that and our students and our educators are all working hard to support our students to succeed. What we noticed was that families that had a lower income were applying

less to post-secondary opportunities. So that was a barrier and with the changes that have been made to OSAP it's now removing that financial barrier so anyone who wants to move forward and get a post-secondary degree or diploma they can do so without finances being a barrier and preventing them even from thinking about it, right. So we actually even want younger students to start thinking about what are their career paths, what are the things that they want to do in life and we don't want them to feel that they can't afford to get the education that they want to get.

MINISTER MATTHEWS: Let me just add one thing and we can make these changes, we have made these changes but if people don't know about them we may as well not have made them. So that's why it's really important -- and I'm speaking now to other members of the gallery, that they actually talk about this. It is absolutely transformational for students and too many students still don't know about it. So we're doing everything we can to make sure people do understand they've got opportunities they've never dreamed they had.

PREMIER WYNNE: And you know what Giorgio, when I go to other countries and I talk about -- I talk to businesses about coming to Ontario, investing in Ontario, I talk to businesses here about expanding their businesses here, the number one thing they talk to me about is educated workforces; making sure that they have people coming out of college, coming out of universities, coming out of apprenticeships so that they can staff their businesses. And we do pretty well at that but we can do better. Okay. Thanks everybody. Merci.