

Transcript: Premier Wynne's Interview with Hamilton Spectator's Editorial Board

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***as requested by Jennifer Beaudry**

PREMIER WYNNE'S INTERVIEW WITH HAMILTON SPECTATOR'S EDITORIAL BOARD

Date: August 14, 2017

Length: 58:49 minutes

Speaker(s): Premier Kathleen Wynne; Ted McMeekin, Liberal MPP Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale

Q: (Joined in progress)...more transparent. And do we need to do introductions again, or we've done that already – we might as well just start immediately.

PREMIER KATHLEEN WYNNE: Sure.

Q: We can start by having you start. Start us off and then we'll have a conversation.

PREMIER WYNNE: Okay. Well first of all, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to be here. I will just say right off the bat, I'm a little bit – I'm not time-lagged or jet-lagged but I've been on the Rainy River for the last few days with Métis Nation of Ontario Youth canoe trip. Jane and I did that, and then we went to the Human Rights Museum in Winnipeg yesterday. So I'm fresh off those experiences, which were fantastic. These kids, we joined them for their 80th and 81st and 82nd days, they started in Ottawa, and are heading up in Kenora at the end of this week. So it was a remarkable trip. And I had the opportunity, interestingly, to hear them and to learn from them on their ancestors' heritage but also to talk to them about some of the issues of the day, which was great. It was a like a three-day long focus group with 18 to 25-year-olds. So that was a real privilege. And we talked about a whole range of things, but they wanted to know why I and how I got into politics. I mean that is always the question that I'm asked and I think it's an important one to go back to because why I'm in politics is directly related to what we're doing today as a government, and what I want to do going forward. And that is why you hear me and us talking a lot about fairness. I think right now, given what's going on in the world, there is a lot of uncertainty, and I'm hearing that. I hear that from people in communities, I hear about, you know, kids, I hear from their parents and their grandparents about anxiety with what their kids are going to do, what their jobs are going to look like, what they should be studying at school in order to get the best job, and how they're going to, when I go to rural and northern communities, how those kids are going to be able find work in their own communities, and that is a real challenge. So many of the things that we are doing are designed to try to address those concerns. So whether it is free tuition which will start this fall for low-income kids in our colleges and universities, or whether it's the Fair Hydro Plan which acknowledged that we needed to lower hydro prices for people across the province, but particularly in rural and northern communities where the distribution charges were very, very high, or whether it's lowering the minimum wage and finding ways to make sure that if someone's working a full-time job that they're not going to – that they don't have to go to the food bank, that they can look after

themselves and look after their family. So the things that we are doing are direct – are directly related to why I got into politics in the first place, which is to address the issues of justice and fairness and all of that needs a strong economy, and the real contradiction (inaudible) this – because I know we'll have lots of time to talk about it – but the contradiction in terms that we have right now in Ontario is that Ontario is doing very, very well. You know we are leading economic growth in the country –

TED McMEEKIN, LIBERAL MPP ANCASTER-DUNDAS-FLAMBOROUGH-WESTDALE: G7.

PREMIER WYNNE: In the G7. We're outstripping the United States, but people aren't feeling that. And people almost don't believe it when they hear it because they don't see it in their own lives. So that's why it's even more important that government play a role. I believe government has an important role to play. You know one of the reasons that we're testing out the basic income is to see if there is another whole system that needs to be introduced in order to make that – make it a fairer – give people a fairer shot at a decent life. So those are the things that are on my mind, those are the things that we are doing. There are lots more. You know NAFTA IS obviously something that we're thinking about every day and I'm happy to talk about any of those things with you.

Q: I'm assuming that your trip here was by car today?

PREMIER WYNNE: It was.

Q: And relatively smooth was it?

PREMIER WYNNE: It was.

Q: Have you ever been down on a weekend?

PREMIER WYNNE: Yes.

Q: So you know then that the QEW is jammed on Saturdays and Sundays between Oakville Niagara.

PREMIER WYNNE: True.

Q: Does the government have a plan?

PREMIER WYNNE: So you will know that we have extended GO service to Niagara and that we're in the process of increasing that that GO service. I mean that's something that Jim Bradley has been good for many years and it's something that we we're very committed to doing.

Q: So it's working for sure for commuters on the way to work who are traveling alone but for probably multi-person vehicles on the highway on Sundays the road is still jammed.

PREMIER WYNNE: Fair enough. I mean are our initiatives have been to, yes, to put in place things like HOV lanes and to try to manage the traffic. There has been expansion of highways, but building transit and increasing GO service has been a real focus of our government and you know, that requires a culture change. I mean it does mean that we're saying you know there's a different way to get around the GTHA, and that will only happen – I recognize this – that will only happen when it's more convenient to take a train than it is to drive. And I think we're getting to that point, which is why increasing that service – and it won't work, you're right, on the weekend it won't work unless it's all-day and it goes both ways. So that's the objective and that's what we're working on.

Q: And when might all-day GO come to Hamilton?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well I don't think we've got a firm first date but what I know is that over the next five years we're going to be increasing the train service. So it will be incremental adding of adding of trains, in the same way that we're increasing the service to Kitchener-Waterloo. We will continue to increase the train service.

MPP MCMEKIN: (Inaudible) tracking problems with CN (inaudible).

PREMIER WYNNE: Yeah, yeah, we have to negotiate CN.

Q: So CN doesn't want to give up any more track.

PREMIER WYNNE: I get that, I get that.

Q: Is that the issue?

PREMIER WYNNE: We have to negotiate with CN in a number of places in the province. We have to negotiate with them track, and either determine whether we need to build new track which is happening in some places or we can find a way to share.

Q: And then – sorry back to highways there – you have been reluctant to allow tolls on highways, is that likely to change?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well we actually have implemented and are implementing high occupancy toll lanes, so we are not philosophically opposed to tolls.

But there needs to be there needs to be options for people. So that's why if, you know, if you're referring to the reluctance around the Toronto proposal –

Q: Yes.

PREMIER WYNNE: – there was no choice for people in those situations and so that wasn't acceptable and there had been no regional discussion about it.

Q: So we have two highways here in Hamilton as you may know that provincial motorists use to cut through the city rather than using the provincially own 403 or QEW, the Lincoln Alexander Parkway and the Red Hill Parkway, is there any chance that the government would one, take them over or two, allow us to toll them.

PREMIER WYNNE: So I have seen a proposal on neither of those at this point. I don't have any idea whether council is thinking about that or whether there has been a proposal that's come to the Minister of Transportation or whether there's even been a full discussion about it at council. So I have to know more about it and we have to have that conversation. But you know fundamentally I'm open to, and we're open to, looking at options to find ways of helping people move around. At the same time we're building \$190 billion worth of infrastructure around the province. So it's not that we haven't committed to new build. We absolutely have and we will continue to build, and within that find ways to resolve particular bottlenecks or particular issues in communities.

Q: And just before we get off this topic what about photo radar? Can you see that being allowed on Ontario highways?

PREMIER WYNNE: We have no plan to do that. Right now what we've done is we're allowing municipalities, because we were asked, allowing municipalities to put photo radar in place in community safety zones and around schools. That's what was asked for and from my perspective it's a safety issue. And so again I'm not philosophically opposed but we don't have a plan to put it on provincial highways at this point.

Q: Premier, an LRT question. Recently city council has asked Metrolinx to basically change the procurement process for a bidder. They want – and Metrolinx has to discuss this with the province – they want to basically leave the operation and maintenance in the hands of the city transit agency. Is your government open to that?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well again I know that – I know that this has been discussed and I think it's going

to council for another vote.

Q: It will be ratified on Friday. I mean there's no question where that vote's going to go.

PREMIER WYNNE: Right. So Metrolinx will need to look at that. And again, I think we need to be open to what makes sense in communities and so we'll – Metrolinx will look at that and we'll have that conversation. But I have no philosophical opposition to that.

Q: Do you have a sense of when we might get an answer to that, then?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, I would hope sooner rather than later. Again, I don't know what the timeline of the council resolution is, but it's something that Metrolinx would have to look at right away.

MPP MCMEEKIN: That issue was raised, for clarification, for the city councillors (inaudible) voted on the acceptance of the LRT model. You know there was some discussion prior to that and I was intrigued that city council in their infinite wisdom or folly didn't choose to raise that and make that part of the package before they voted on the approval. So now we're into a situation, Premier, as you know where –

PREMIER WYNNE: After the fact.

MPP MCMEEKIN: After the fact. Changing the bidding system to sever (inaudible) operate and maintain. What's the cost of that to the city? Would there be a new cost the city would pick up? If the cost were, say, \$400 million over 30, 40 years, that might very well change the dynamic in the city around whether (inaudible) would want to approve that. So those are the kinds of things that digging a little deeper into the council (inaudible) deal with.

PREMIER WYNNE: Yeah, and again I don't – I mean Ted; you're closer to it than I am. I don't know what the motivation is or what the outcome is that the city is looking for. Obviously we want these infrastructure capital dollars to go as far as possible and we want to be able to build as much as we can. So anything that is going to undermine that is going to be a challenge, but again, I'm not philosophically opposed to looking at a different option.

Q: I would like to ask at least one question about health care. In particular, we've had a situation here – you've probably heard something about (inaudible) in the last month or two where the overcrowding problem and the unfunded bed problem and the lack of long-term care bed crisis, I might actually say has – it's not getting any better. It's actually getting worse. I mean there's absolutely no question about the number of people who can't get rooms, who are waiting in ER, and the number of people waiting for long-term care beds is just astronomical and the wait times. So what I hear from a lot of people, people who write letters to the editor and comment on the website and that sort of thing is, what we've heard Minister Hoskins and others say is, (inaudible) says this, we're working on it, we're trying things, we're planning this, we're doing that. And I have no reason to believe any of that but what I often hear from people is it doesn't look like anything is really working. It only looks like people are saying it's getting better and the situation actually is getting worse. It will only get worse in the next couple of years. So what reassurance can you offer to people who live in a place like Hamilton which has an older average population; that yeah we are actually going to make this better because it doesn't seem like that to them. It seems like it is getting worse.

PREMIER WYNNE: So I think the thing that is most important is that people know that what the specifics are that we are trying and you know; what are the practical things that we think might help. I think for some time people know that we've been putting more resources into home care and trying to help people to stay home. I think that there are more people who are getting more service at home than they would have 10 years ago for example. But the building of long term care beds as opposed to other solutions, that really is a challenge because we've got people in (inaudible) ALC. So the people who are in acute care beds who need to be somewhere else and we don't have enough long term care beds to put them into. And so one of the things that we're looking at right now and is being piloted in some places, is can we work with retirement homes; can we work with private providers to put basically a subsidy in place that would allow some of that space to be used for long

term care. Because I think that it's not realistic for us to actually believe that we can build enough long term care beds distributed in the right way for all of the needs that we have in the population, particularly in smaller communities; particularly rural communities. At the same time we know we need to build more hospices for example. We need to have places where people can go for end of life care. So there is a whole raft of things; home care, other models of partnership with retirement homes, hospice, palliative that will start to and are starting to in some places deal with the challenges that you're talking about because all of that backs up into the emergency room.

MPP MCMEEKIN: One model that the minister is looking at -- I only know this because I formally served as Minister of Housing would be to look at small transition units, say 100 square feet. And one of the things we were musing about was perhaps building something on campus, very small but let it have a formal affiliation with the hospital but not a \$112 a day affiliation. If there was an emergency situation where you would have someone checking in whether it be you know, (inaudible) related to that and we would deliberately place that as a transition kind of period while we did some of the other planning around either enhanced community care that would release some of the pressure or alternatively building some of those smaller units and (inaudible) access. Hoskins is looking at that.

PREMIER WYNNE: Yeah and there's another model that we are not just looking at but we are actually funding and that is where there are concentrated groups of seniors who may already live in a small apartment building that we actually provide some sort of collective care for those people as opposed to necessarily their individual caregivers; that there is a PSW or other support in that unit which isn't built by the government; which isn't built by the private sector but is -- it's a housing development but we provide the care. So we're doing a number of those things to address the concerns.

MPP MCMEEKIN: What makes it difficult are there are a lot of places that are not long term care homes; they are retirement homes. But the challenges people going there are closer to -- more akin to needing long term care than just wanting to retire; not cutting the lawn, right. So that's why it is even deeper.

Q: It's very deepened but increasingly to people -- not to invalidate anything you have said. I read most of that. I know it is all true. But it just seems that people -- if I were to say to you, "So do you think in two years it is going to be better for people?" I don't think you could answer that. I am talking about people who are dealing with ER problems and the ambulance bypass problems. And that's a frustration because it's one thing to say we are doing a lot of important work; the LHINs are, the province is, the whole hospitals are, (inaudible) institutions are doing work (inaudible) and yet we are not really making much of a dent. And people say, "When are we going to see something (inaudible)?"

PREMIER WYNNE: I think the other thing -- and I don't know how many of you around the table are dealing with senior parents. I am. My mother is going to be 89 in October and my dad is 91 and they're both at home. We have care for them at home. But one of the things my sisters and I are finding; and this is something that I have heard from other people, is that the navigation of the system; the coordination is really challenging. So our patient's first transformation is really geared at that. How do we help people to find their way through a system that often feels completely unsystematic? And people don't know where to turn and they don't know when they have turned to one person who isn't connected to the other caregiver that they need; how do they make that connection? So I hope that in a couple of years at least we'll be able to say, you know what, people are telling us that they are feeling that it's a more rational system; that they actually are able to get information in a better way and that their primary caregivers are more connected to all of the other services that they need. That would be a good benchmark for me.

Q: With respect though Premier, we have been hearing that for years now. Weren't the LHINs supposed to coordinate that?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well the LHINs were supposed to identify the gaps. The LHINs didn't have primary care as part of their responsibility and that is a refinement; you know, that is a change that actually

needed to happen. And I think there are some other things. You know, we have put a lot of money into family health needs for example. One of the things that frustrates me about family health teams, and I -- you know, I have a lot of respect for the caregivers; the practitioners who work in our system but we haven't always gotten the 24/7 care that we thought we were getting when we funded family health teams. We need to make sure that that actually happens so that someone who is looking for a doctor in the middle of the night doesn't end up in the emergency room. You know, I say that advisedly because I know that the stats show that most of the people who go to the emergency room need to be in the emergency room. But there are people who end up there and end up waiting a very long time because they're not at the top of the triage list. And so if they had either an urgent care centre or if they had access to a doc in the middle of the night that would help them a lot. So yes, we have been saying this for a long time and some of the things we tried have worked better than others.

Q: So we've been saying this for a long time and we all know in our hearts that the prices are going up and the numbers of people who are going to require more care because of our ages are going up. And you are hopeful that we're going to make improvements but really is that realistic or do we need to sort of recalibrate it; our expectations for health care in the future?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well yeah, I mean I would answer that question in a couple of ways. One is that the provincial governments are not in this alone. This is a national challenge. And so when I sit at the table with my colleague premiers, as I did earlier in the summer, this is something that we're all grappling with across the country. And so the reason that we were all -- every one of the premiers was distressed by the latest round of talks with the federal government on health care was that we don't feel that the challenges were actually recognized in the way that they need to be. Having said that, we did get extra funding for home care and extra funding for mental health. And we will continue to work with the federal government to make the case. You know, the federal government is paying about 23 per cent of overall health care costs. The original deal was 50/50. The current agreement will take us over the 10 years down to 20 per cent. I don't think that's good enough and I think we need to continue to press the federal government on paying a fairer share of health care costs. That's on the one hand. But that is not by way of abdicating responsibility. So the other way I would answer the question is we don't have any choice on this. You know, we have to figure this out. We have to figure out how to manage ourselves. You know as the baby boom ages we are we are putting pressure on the system and you're right. We're going to be more expensive and it's going to be and it's going to be a challenge. We also we also are going to be a generation I think that's going to demand more preventative care that's going to demand that we do things differently. I mean I already have had many conversations with doctors about why do you not prescribe going for a walk? Why do we not have better pain management? You know and that's related to the opioid crisis as well. Why are we not doing a lot of the things that we know will actually help people to avoid getting into the hospital in the first place? And that's a different tack than we have been on I would say over the last 20 years. So I think that will you see those things change. I think you will see people opting for different kinds of care. I think you will see people opting for different kinds of end of life care and I mentioned hospice and palliative care. And so we don't know what those numbers will be and we don't know what all those changes will be. But I'm not as an Ontarian and as a Canadian, I'm not going to throw up my hands and say you know what, too many people coming at us. We just can't do this we have to. We have to start cutting the things that we will do and that we will cover with OHIP. That's not the direction that we will go. For example, the OHIP Plus that we're putting in place; so the coverage of drugs for kids from zero to their 25th birthday, that's an expensive thing. But it's also preventative. It's also preventive medicine because if we can make sure that all those kids who don't take their medication because their parents can't afford to pay for it actually do they're going to be healthier later on. That's why we started with young kids. So we're going to increasingly find ways to make better decisions about prevention; better decisions about care and is it expensive? Yes it is. But is it part of the fabric of a fair and compassionate society? Yes it is.

Q: Premier could you just talk a little bit about how the Pharmacare Plus; is a shot across the canal (inaudible).

PREMIER WYNNE: (Inaudible) yeah I mean again it came up -- I brought it up (inaudible) birthday and

I was quite upfront with my colleagues and asked all the time about why we didn't make the program across the board. It is universal for that age group but why we didn't cover the whole population, I was quite honest that we need a federal partner on this. We need a federal partner to work with us and there is a strong consensus across the country that Pharmacare is the missing piece of medicare. And so, each province has dealt with it somewhat differently. Quebec, probably, has the most comprehensive provincial approach if we look across the country. But there isn't a province where this isn't a discussion and there isn't a premier that isn't looking to the federal government to say 'Let's take this to the next step.'

Q: Premier, opinion polls suggest that you, personally, and the Liberal Party, politically, are in a distant third place to the Conservatives and the NDP. Why is that?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, there are polls and there are polls. There are polls that show different numbers, and you know, you'll have to ask the pollsters. You'll have to look at the research. My focus is on making sure that we do what we can, as I said, to make people's lives fair, to support people as they need to be supported. And whether people like me today, or don't like me today is actually beside the point. It's more about, are the kids going to be able to go to school, whether they're going to be able to get the healthcare that they need as we were just talking about, whether their community is going to get the infrastructure that they need. That's the focus of our plan and that's what I've been working on. We'll have an election in June next year, and the people of the province will have an opportunity to pass their judgement and I respect and always do respect that.

Q: I don't suppose you'd like to reflect on some of the things you might have done differently if given another chance.

PREMIER WYNNE: I mean.

Q: (Inaudible).

PREMIER WYNNE: There will be lots of analysis. There is a lot of analysis as we go along. At every juncture, I try to look at the evidence. I try to look at the options in front of me. The Hydro One decision was a very hard decision for me. It was a hard decision for us, but I had promised that we were going to make major investments in infrastructure across this province and we needed to realize some cash to do that. We could borrow a certain amount, and we obviously are to invest \$190 billion, but we also needed to realize cash and we needed to take an asset that had served the province well, hold onto 40 per cent of that, but buy new assets that are going to serve the people of the province for generations. But that was a difficult decision, and it was a politically costly decision, I know that. I understand that but I believe that in the long run, having infrastructure that works for people in the province – much of which had been built four years ago is actually the responsibility of government. It is hard to make long-term decisions. It is hard to make decisions about things that are going to be built or policies or programs that we're not going to cut the ribbon on, we're not going to see the results of, we're not going to be able to see the fruits of until years hence. But that's exactly why they need to be done because if governments punt those decisions down the road for too long which has happened with infrastructure in this province –

MPP MCMEEKIN: Especially hydro.

PREMIER WYNNE: Yeah. Then we end up in a mess. So that's not a decision that I would do differently but it was a hard decision and I know it was costly. But that was the decision that all the evidence demonstrated we should talk.

MPP MCMEEKIN: Let me pick up – since you raised it, Premier – (inaudible) the hydro file, for example, has been a problem child of every government for the last four years, if you remember the previous government that tried to privatize. They let let the system run down, (inaudible) the private sector would (inaudible) and fix everything. That didn't happen. You know, the \$26 billion (inaudible) in debt and the government (inaudible) and a new government coming in with (inaudible) to fix things. (Inaudible) broken how you're going to fix it. Could put it with (inaudible). \$50 billion later, people are wondering why they're costs are going up. I think the new Minister has

creatively found a way of sharing that out. You know, the assets are going to last four years, why should people solely in this generation pay for the past mismanagement perhaps of every government? Pay for all of it at once when it could be spread out and more equitably shared and in the process more (inaudible).

PREMIER WYNNE: And we shut down coal and we jump started the green industry. That is part of this story.

MPP MCMEEKIN: Good expensive things to do.

Q: I want to ask you about the green industry part of that because, with the closing of the – again, pending closing of the places – plant in Tilsonburg?

PREMIER WYNNE: Tilsonburg. Yeah, I was just talking to the Mayor.

Q: A lot of people are saying, see, this is evident that the “green promise” if you’d like, isn’t living up to its (inaudible) and in fact, if you look at some of the costs that have been incurred because of some of the contracts and (inaudible) and that sort of thing that are coming out that are being paid – it’s a pretty fair point to say that this doesn’t look like it’s working as well as it should – maybe you disagree with that, but assuming that there’s some truth to that, what you doing to make visible change so that there’s – or is it all fine and this is just a matter of perception?

PREMIER WYNNE: I think it’s a dynamic industry. There’s new technology being developed. There’s storage technology being developed right now, for example. Cost of solar has come way down. That plant closed because the blades that were being built are not the size of the blades that were being used internationally so it was a business decision that Siemens made. It’s unfortunate but it’s interesting. I just talked to the Mayor, actually. I’m going to be seeing him also at AMO but what he said is that the people who worked in that plant are so highly trained that they’re going to find other jobs. It’s transition and it’s a challenge but they had a job fair and there were over 50 companies that were there that were looking for highly skilled workers. So there are industries that have developed because of the decisions that we made that will become export industries. There are skills that are being learned by people here in Ontario that will be transferable and we’ve got clean air. So, do I think it was worth it? Absolutely. Is it going to continue to be a dynamic industry? For sure. You’ll see in our long-term energy plan that we – which has to be adjusted every four years – you’ll see that we are, for example, going to be including more storage capacity because there is more technology being developed. So I think – and that, of course, will make renewable energy more efficient because we’ll be able to store the energy and use it, not just when the wind is blowing or when the sun is shining.

MPP MCMEEKIN: (Inaudible) people in the (inaudible) sector who are screaming, “Natural gas. Natural gas, natural gas, natural gas.” Fair ball. We’re doing what we can to prop up – my hunch, down the road 20 years from now, (inaudible) natural gas is going to get very, very expensive (inaudible) in low density areas of Ontario.

Q: Do you think that Ontario has paid a fair price for energy?

PREMIER WYNNE: Yes, I do, but to Ted’s point, the price of energy went up too fast and too high because of the investments that we had to make and so –

MPP MCMEEKIN: And the delivery charges.

PREMIER WYNNE: And the delivery charges. So that’s why the Fair Hydro Plan takes those costs down by 25 per cent and –

MPP MCMEEKIN: 28 in Hamilton.

PREMIER WYNNE: 23 to 28 per cent and helps people in rural and northern communities. So it was a spike that went up too fast and too high.

Q: Do you think that Ontarians do enough to conserve energy? I'm not talking about government; I'm talking about individual Ontarians.

PREMIER WYNNE: I think that we are learning as a community. As a people, we are learning. I think that we have assumed that electricity was infinite and free and we could use it with impunity but I think we are doing much, much better. There's more that we can do. I lived in Western Europe for three years and that was 35 years ago and we know we're behind in terms of what our other jurisdictions do in terms of conservation but we're learning, whether it's in our (inaudible) buildings, whether it's in –

MPP MCMEEKIN: (Inaudible) conservation in those countries (inaudible).

PREMIER WYNNE: It has been, historically, absolutely.

Q: Speaking of the –

PREMIER WYNNE: We've lived in a different reality here and that's why it's taking time for us to adjust.

Q: Speaking of the hydro rate cuts, the Auditor General says that had the old rules governing government advertising been in place, the current ads that your government's (inaudible) province's money probably wouldn't be approved because the ads are so partisan. So why did you change the rules (inaudible).

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, let me just – when we say the “old rules,” if the old rules – the old rules as of 2002, before we came into office, there were no rules, right? There was no legislation that governed government advertising and partisanship. We actually brought in the rules and then we modified them. We did not take away the notion that partisanship should not be part of government advertising. You may remember when the previous Conservative government was in place there was government advertising that actually had politicians' faces on the ads and we are not in any way interested in that kind of advertising. So yes, we changed the rules somewhat but we did not take away the core principle which is that government advertising should not be partisan.

Q: Well why did you change them? The first ones you implemented seemed to be tougher. The Auditor General certainly thinks so. They certainly had her approval. Why did you water them down?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, we changed them because there was a – the way that they had been originally written, they were actually constraining the ability of government to give information so the advertising that you see now sends someone to a website or gives information about a new program or gives people information about a new policy and that is fair. The government should be able to tell people what it is doing so that people understand when they either do or do not read the news. And so, that's why we made the changes that we made, but the core principle, as I said, of partisanship not having a place in government advertising is absolutely still in place.

Q: The current ad says “we have heard you.” Who is “we”? Who is that referring to, is it the province or is it the governing party, “we have heard you”?

PREMIER WYNNE: It's the government. The government is –

Q: So it's a partisan ad.

PREMIER WYNNE: Government is broader than the governing party. Government is also the civil service and the people who implement the policies of government and there's a lot of input that goes into those policies that are drafted, that are worked on by people in civil service. It's a very important partnership. It's a very important part of our democratic system that we have the governing party, the Legislature and the civil service all working together.

MPP MCMEEKIN: (Inaudible) we used to have ads come back that were submitted for approval before some of the changes where –

PREMIER WYNNE: (Inaudible).

MPP MCMEEKIN: Foodland Ontario (inaudible) can't use red apples because that's considered partisan. We had commercials around bicycle lanes that need to be better (inaudible) so even though the bikes were different colours there were too many red ones in the ad and that was – somebody somewhere thought this is some kind of conspiracy to get more Liberal – Honest to god, we're not making this up. You can't make this up.

PREMIER WYNNE: No you can't.

Q: Sticking with energy for a minute, (inaudible) the green energy program the Auditor General was critical of the management of the system. Do you agree with some of those criticisms or...

PREMIER WYNNE: I think there's lots of room for improvement in terms of management of the system. I think that, just to use Hydro One as an example, I mean one of the things that is interesting about the situation is that before we made the changes around Hydro One, before we announced the changes around broadening the ownership of Hydro One, there was a (inaudible) pride in this province about what a badly run company Hydro One was and you know, you couldn't get through to them and there was no customer service, and so there's been a dramatic improvement in terms of the way Hydro One (inaudible). It's not perfect but – is there room for improvement? Absolutely. I think that management of the system can always improve and we take the Auditor's suggestions and we take the Auditor's opinion very seriously on all matters, but that matter in particular.

Q: I got to change the subject a little bit because I promised my wife I would ask this question and you don't want to mess around with promises with her. I'm kidding of course, but I asked what she wanted me to ask and she manages a relatively small non-profit agency and she and we – our editorial board and the (inaudible) table, we're all big fans of the \$15 an hour minimum wage but she was telling me about the impact on her bottom line. It's a fairly small place, I won't give you the details but pretty considerable considering it's a non-profit. And I talked to a couple of small business people as well. I'm not talking about (inaudible). I'm not talking about the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (inaudible). What I'd like to say is that, some of these small cases, like they really are pretty legitimate concerns there. So what sorts of things do you think you are going to be doing or are on the table or started talking about?

PREMIER WYNNE: So we have started talking about it, in fact, Jeff Leal all summer has been going around the province talking to (inaudible) small businesses (inaudible). And we sent the bill out for consultation with the Standing Committee at the first reading as opposed to the second reading so we're getting lots of input.

MPP MCMEEKIN: That's only been done about twice in Ontario history (inaudible) after first reading. That's how important (inaudible).

PREMIER WYNNE: So we are going to bring forward a package of suggestions, proposals in the fall that we hope will address some of the – you're right. It's the really small businesses. It's not the large enterprises that may not have a lot of minimum wage earners in their employ. So we're going to bring forward some proposals. The things that we've heard are things like training: if we're paying \$15 an hour and we're paying training on top of that it makes it prohibitive so there have been questions about training dollars. Other parts of Bill 148 like scheduling – certainly the farm community has – small farm communities has raised the issue around scheduling because you can't schedule the weather and so how do we make sure we accommodate that. And as Ted said, seasonal workers who are earning minimum wage but who also getting a little (inaudible) how do we factor that in? So we are looking at what we can do to help those businesses with their pay checks. On non-for-profits and government-supported businesses – I mean we're also looking for (inaudible) for child care and how do we make sure that those organizations can adjust to minimum wage increase as well.

Q: Going back to something you mentioned in healthcare, you were talking about family health teams. I think it was either last month or the month before we were talking to the position recruiter here in Hamilton –
UNIDENTIFIED: (Inaudible).

Q: Yes, exactly, despite a decade of work, we're sort of breaking even. You know, she's bringing more doctors here and then some are retiring or going off elsewhere and she mentioned that family health teams are a huge issue because of some of the restrictions that were put in place, including in cities like Hamilton because, new graduates, that's the way they're being trained. They're being trained in crude models so to kind of have to work in that way is counterintuitive, so is there anything that's being done—

PREMIER WYNNE: It's counterintuitive for them to work in a family health team?

Q: To not. She's saying they're being trained in these group environments but most of them aren't able to practice this way in the majority of communities. So is there anything that's being done either to relook at these restrictions that were put in place or to somehow reconcile the training that these doctors are receiving for them to enter the (inaudible).

PREMIER WYNNE: The Minister is looking at the family health teams, for sure. I think what's interesting is we're in a transition between that more sole-practitioner team model and I think that you articulated it, where young graduates are actually looking for something that isn't in place everywhere and they're actually being asked to replace a sole-practitioner who had practiced a different way for many years. So I do believe we're in a transition and I think that we will see those changes and (inaudible) some of those changes will address the issue.

MPP MCMEEKIN: You are talking about some of the restrictions that appear to be in place –

Q: Right.

MPP MCMEEKIN: I did a recent (inaudible) in the Ancaster, Westmount (inaudible) those working in what they call a home. A different (inaudible). A home. My wife's a member of a family home too.

PREMIER WYNNE: Yeah there are (inaudible).

MPP MCMEEKIN: Bits and (inaudible) and particularly on the Westmount and the Ancaster, south Westmount- Ancaster area there. Jane has acknowledged that as an issue. The minister has as well. And I said that point and squarely to the Minister; we need to find a way to enable and empower young doctors particularly those that want to work collaboratively so they are not on-call every night.

PREMIER WYNNE: Yeah.

MPP MCMEEKIN: The other problem that (inaudible) we have is sometimes people say, well an urgent care centre will solve the problem. In some ways it does but it also makes it easier for family doctors, even in family (inaudible), not to be as reliably connected (inaudible) on-call stuff. So it is complex. There is no easy answer to it. But I do know Eric (inaudible) graduate and handles very well.

Q: I was going to say next June is not only provincial elections but marijuana is slated to become legalized. Initially I think you had suggested you'd like to see it sold out of LCBO? What's your thinking now?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well we are looking at everything. It is interesting. This was a very urgent topic around the table with the premiers and there is a lot of consternation about unanswered questions and how much support we were going to get from the federal government on the (inaudible) and in fact we sent a letter to the federal government saying you know, these are the questions that we

need answers like things around highway traffic issues and technology that's available and support for provinces that would flow through to municipalities to actually implement. So we've asked for responses on all of those things. But we're already doing the work here in Ontario to be ready for July 1st, 2018. I still am supportive of a government role whether it's the LCBO or whether it is some other entity through the (inaudible). You know, I think that we need to have controls around this. And I think there needs to be public education, not just as in a campaign but actually ongoing public education for people who are consumers so that there is a heightened understanding of what the impact and frequency of use; the strength of the product that is being used, all of that needs to be part of the work that gets done. So that implies that there would be restrictions on who could sell.

Q: So you would prefer a government-controlled outlet then?

PREMIER WYNNE: Yeah I think there needs to be the government control around this. And it is interesting. I have had a number of conversations with young people about this and there isn't disagreement about that. I mean they -- it is young people who have said to me, you know, we know that in the medicinal marijuana dispensaries there are people who really understand cannabis and can give information. We think that kind of thing should be in place even for the recreational marijuana. And I was impressed that that was the attitude. So I think there does need to be a government framework around that.

Q: So just to pick up on that then if we can go to about 25 years ago or more. One of your predecessors promised us beer (inaudible) can be (inaudible) corner stores?

PREMIER WYNNE: Corner stores.

Q: And you've made a very, very, very, very timely step in that direction. How is that going?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well I take exception to the minimization of that -- owning of our liquor (inaudible). You know as we looked at -- because this all -- this started with the beer store and how we could make that a more rational entity -- distribution more rational. And there's a strong sense that having control; I mean we talk about cannabis, people in Ontario like that there is control around the sale of alcohol. That is a widely held belief that the LCBO, the Beer Store do -- would work. Do they want more convenience? Yes. People were very happy with the idea that they could get beer and cider and wine now in some grocery stores. But we have not had a lot of calls for opening up the liquor laws more widely than that.

MPP MCMECKIN: Nothing bad has happened in places where you have put them in corner or supermarkets.

UNIDENTIFIED: Even (inaudible) markets.

MPP MCMECKIN: I mean even -- yeah or even in Northern Ontario where it is just a corner store with an LCBO store sign slapped on it to make us feel like it's all safe and all controlled.

PREMIER WYNNE: It is an agency store, right. Well you know, it's a model that has worked. It's a model that brings revenue into the provincial government that pays for many of the things that we talk about in terms of services and so -- and we can rely on, you know, the person who is selling that wine or that beer or that cider, as we will I hope with cannabis, having some information and having some responsibility to make sure that it is a safe interaction.

Q: We have five more minutes. We won't go over. One of the things that we hear a lot -- that at the Spectator we hear (inaudible) is that Hamilton is sent a ridiculous amount of mixed signals around (inaudible). Do you have that view that you have heard a lot of conflicting and mixed signals and people say we look stupid because we can't seem to tell one story. You think there is something to it?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well I would like to say I was the Minister of Transportation in 2010 so I've been paying attention to this discussion. It has gone on for some time. I understand that there are lots of

sides to these issues in a community. And so I think we just have to be patient. My fear has only been that the controversy would actually derail; if I could use that word, derail building the infrastructure. And that's the (inaudible) and that is something that we have tried to avoid. So I want to see the transit built. You know, I want to see Hamilton get what it needs in terms of upgraded transit.

Q: I have to ask you about the debt in some sense. I understand we (inaudible) \$311 billion now; costs almost a billion dollars a month to service it. That's the third highest expense that the province has. We spend more servicing the debt that you have built up than we do on post-secondary education. How are you going to sustain that? It is sustainable? What are you going to do to control it?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well we have to look at (inaudible) GDP. And our commitment has been that we will balance the budget, which we have done and that we would tackle the debt to GDP and that we would see that debt to GDP go down. And that has been our commitment. We want to see it go down to 27 per cent which is what it was pre-recession. There is no doubt that as a response to the recession we made huge investments in this province. That is why the economy is growing the way it is. It is why we see our unemployment numbers going down. And so when we look around at other jurisdictions and we recognize that our debt to GDP is not by any means the highest of many jurisdictions. We know we are tackling it. Balancing the budget was an important step and getting that debt to GDP down is our commitment.

Q: The Auditor General and other challenged your balanced budget. They say you were basically cooking the books?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well you know obviously I do not accept that. I reject that categorically. We have worked very hard to work with the auditor general and work with the financial accountability officer and follow all the rules that the (inaudible) have in place.

UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you very much Premier.

PREMIER WYNNE: Thank you.

Q: One quick question. How hard did you have to work to get Ted to run again?

PREMIER WYNNE: You know I was thrilled when Ted came in and said to me that he was going to run again.

Q: He didn't come and ask you should I run again or?

PREMIER WYNNE: No, no. Ted and I meet every week. You know, the thought of him not running again was pretty hard for me to deal with. But when he came in and told me he changed his mind and that Judy Partridge was going to run and we're going to have the opportunity to do those nominations today. I mean it's a validation for me of what we are (inaudible) because Ted, as you all know, has a very clear view of what is morally right. And so the fact that he believes in what we are doing and he is willing to stand again for election suggests to me that we are on the track that I want to me be on; we are on the track that I think is going to lead to that fair (inaudible).

UNIDENTIFIED: (inaudible).

MPP MCMEEKIN: My wife, Barb, went to, as she does every year, to Guatemala on a medical trip. And she sees hundreds of kids up in the mountains grottoes and they get vaccinations and all that stuff. And she came home, and I picked her up at the airport. I shared this story with you. I picked her up at the airport and suddenly she started crying. And I said, "Honey, what is the matter?" I know it's (inaudible) cultural stuff; you know, coming home to rich North America. And she said well -- between sniffles, she said I understand (inaudible) in a new way what public service is all about and that is why I fell in love with you and that is why I want you to know that if you decide to run again you got my blessing and my support. So I went in to see the Premier and I said you know, I told

her the story and I have more miles to walk and promises to keep. I seemed to be consumed by this income gap (inaudible) and the rest of us. And there are some other things I want to do on the housing front. (Inaudible) been helpful I think to the (inaudible) focus in on other things (inaudible). Now I can really hone and use all of whatever gift I have to focus on (inaudible) making Hamilton better.

PREMIER WYNNE: And there are voices in caucus that are -- and I mean all voices are important. Don't get me wrong. Every member of caucus is important but Ted has life experience and a world view that helps a lot of us to test what it is we are doing. You know, he provides us with a benchmark whether he is quoting Kennedy or he is telling us some other historical story, he gives us benchmarks against which to judge our actions. So that makes him extremely, extremely valuable.