

Hansard: Brown to Premier (Sandals) (Naqvi)--Partisan Advertising

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the **Premier**. The **Premier** has forced the auditor general to essentially become a rubber stamp to allow clearly partisan government advertising to be approved. This is not acceptable. Mr. Speaker, will the **Premier** do the right thing and restore the auditor general's oversight of government advertising?

>> **Premier Wynne:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I would just say to the member opposite that Ontario was the first and remains the only jurisdiction in the entire country that had legislation to prevent partisan advertising, Mr. Speaker. That is the reality. And while partisan advertising is now banned, it is still mer miss -- permissible and continue to be permissible and important for the government to inform the people of Ontario about initiatives that impact their lives. So let me give some examples of the kind of things people need to know about. Getting the flu shot, updates to the sex-ed curriculum, consumer protection, sexual violence and harassment awareness. Organ donations, Mr. Speaker. And letting families know about our fair hydro plan is important, too, Mr. Speaker. There are aspects of the plan, the increases to the Ontario energy support program, that are application based, Mr. Speaker. **Premier Wynne:** It's important that they go to the website and that they understand what's available to them, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the **Premier**. The **Premier** says this government hasn't, hasn't taken away the a.g.'s oversight. Who do we believe? This Liberal government, under multiple OPP Investigations or the auditor general who has clearly said that the powers have been stripped, that there's partisan ads running on the air right now as we speak? What fantasy world are they living in? They're running ads right now. They're abusing taxpayer dollars right now. They know it's wrong, Mr. Speaker. But this is a government that's had a history of abusing taxpayer dollars. So rather than pretend you have not stripped the auditor general of that right to have oversight, will the **Premier** do the right thing --Patrick Brown: And stop running these partisan Liberal ads at the expense of taxpayer dollars?

>> **Premier Wynne:** Treasury board.

>>Minister Sandals: Yes, thank you very much. You know government advertising plays an important role in informing Ontarians, and I think we all know that sexual violence has a devastating impact on the lives of victims and their families, and it's far too prevalent in our society. If you look at the who will you help campaign launched in March 2015, it challenged existing attitudes, and what were the results? The who will you help campaign was viewed by over 7 million. Generated more than 85 million views worldwide. The important thing is there were results. Within six months. 55% strongly agreed that they had an obligation to intervene when witnessing sexual harassment.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the **Premier**. These are diversion tactics. They're mentioning

ads that the auditor general did not have problems with. What we're seeing right here is the auditor general has pointed back that the government took away oversight and has now taken advantage of that by running ads that are clearly partisan. That should be paid for by the Liberal party but instead they're charging the taxpayers. I don't want diversion tactics. I don't want talking points. They've stripped the powers from the auditor general to abuse taxpayer dollars for self-interest vanity ads. I'm asking the government to do the right thing. Mr. Speaker, to the **Premier**. Rather than talking points, yes or no? Will you restore the powers of oversight that you took away from the auditor general? Minister Naqvi:

>> Programs the leader of the opposition can explain why they did not do the right thing in 2004 and voted against the bill that introduced the most stringent limitations of partisan advertising in the province -- in our province. Why did, hypeaker, the member from Simcoe- Grey, the member from Renfrew- Nipissing- Pembroke, the member from York Simcoe, the member from Parry Sound- Muskoka, the member from Haldimand- Norfolk, the member from Oxford All these members I just named, Speaker, still serve in this legislature. Why they did not -- Why did the E.C.E. Members did the right thing in 2004, Speaker, and voted for a bill that put an end to Mike Harris-style partisan advertising? Speaker, we all remember that advertisement of Mike Harris whaif where he flicked the lights off on

N.B.: Transcripts are captured by a closed captioning system and may contain errors.