

Hansard: Fedeli to Sousa (Thibeault) -- Fall Economic Statement

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> MPP Fedeli: Thank you and good morning, Speaker. My question's for the acting Premier. Under the fiscal transparency and accountability act, the finance Minister is required to provide a fall economic statement. Over the last 30 days we've all heard the warnings made about this government's documents. The legislature's financial accountability office says the budget will not balance because the numbers are based on, quote, unlikely assumptions. Last month the auditor general said this government has, quote, significantly misstated the numbers for two years running. Last week the A.G. Said, quote, the government is making up its own accounting rules. Speaker, to the acting Premier, is there even a remote chance we're going to see any numbers we can believe?

>> Minister Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I reject the premise of this question -- Individual is trying to also reflect the fact that Ontario, by all accounts, is leading in can -- Canada in the lowest unemployment in 1 years. Almost 800,000 net new jobs from the depth of the recession. Mr. Speaker, we've been very open and transparent and we've beaten our targets consistently year over year as attested by public accounts, which the auditor general does confirm. So, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite may talk about expectations and exaggerations. We deal with the facts, Mr. Speaker, and we are exceeding and delivering for the people of Ontario.

>> MPP Fedeli: Thank you. Back to the acting Premier. That's certainly not what the auditor general told us last week. The transparency act also requires the finance Minister to release August and February reports every year but sadly this Minister has missed issuing almost all of them since his appointment. Considering the lack of trust in this government's numbers, we can see why they choose to snub their nose at our laws. The Minister 's also required to publish a pre-election finance report to be reviewed by the auditor general. The government must provide detailed accounts, the very numbers that the financial accountability officer says would be, quote, not be achieved. The very numbers the auditor general says, quote, we cannot rely on. Speaker, will the government produce a pre-election report? And will there be any numbers in it we can actually believe?

>> Minister Sousa: Mr. Speaker, this is a good question, and I'll tell you why. That party, when they were in power -- They gave -- that would contain five and a half -- In the past, Mr. Speaker. We passed the law requiring that all governments going forward must be open and transparent and deliver those very opportunities for the entire province to see before the next election. We are doing that, Mr. Speaker. The fall economic statement is going to be delivered very shortly, as will the future report that is being questioned here, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

>> MPP Fedeli: Again to the acting Premier. The two reports aren't the only documents the members of the House are waiting for, Speaker. The government has withheld thousands of emails from the auditor general and spent \$500,000 on hiring lawyers to stall their release. The auditor general and this legislature are entitled to those documents, not some of them, Speaker. All of them. And we want them now. Not only that, but the media, we're told, in a response to freedom of information request. That no documents on consultants exist when clearly they do. Speaker, to the acting Premier, the last Liberals that said there were no documents are now in a courtroom down the street. Is that where this one is heading?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government remains committed to being open and transparent and continues to co-operate -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to co-operate with the office of the auditor general. For example, the independent electricity system operator has so far provided 1,200 records to the auditor general. O.P.G. Has provided hundreds of records. The Ontario financing authority has provided -- Treasury board has provided thousands of records. We've provided 13,212, and in this process, Mr. Speaker, and throughout every day -- We're adhering to all document retention standards. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the ministry has informed me that we're continuing to release additional information to the auditor general, and we're doing this because we understand the importance of providing the auditor. With everything that she's asked for, Mr. Speaker. The ministry has been regularly providing the auditor general with additional responsive documents each week and we'll continue to adhere to this process.

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