

TRANSCRIPT – Patrick Brown Post Question Period Scrum – April 3, 2017

MPP: Patrick Brown

Media: Smith Cross, Nanji, Smith, Cruickshank, City TV, Morissette, Cohn, Benzie, Brule, Rath, Jones, Bliss, Ferguson, Crawley, Jeffords, Carter

[START TRANSCRIPT]

Nanji: --[King—Vaughan] riding association right now?

Brown:

- Well, Rick Dykstra's our party president so he's in charge of our organization around the province

Smith Cross: What's going on with the local board? Is there still a local board?

Brown:

- Well, I assume there's still a local board
- We had an exc-, exciting nomination and Stephen Lecce emerged victorious
- I think he's going to make a phenomenal candidate
- He's a, an impressive individual

Nanji: The riding association president had, you know, put out this release contending that, that you guys were, sort of, strong-handing the nomination and he's trying to get that overturned. I mean, what's your response?

Brown:

- Well, the party—first of all, I don't comment on, on internal party matters
- But I would say we do our due diligence in vetting candidates
- It's appropriate for political parties to do and we do it

Nanji: Did the party act legally, in your opinion?

Brown:

- The party conduct themselves [sic] appropriately and I've got confidence in our party president, Rick Dykstra, as he is managing this process

Cruickshank: Your rules—

Smith Cross: The riding association says the board voted to not hold the nomination meeting on April 2nd, but it went ahead anyway? How does that happen?

Brown:

- The party vets candidates—if there's anything that we find objectionable, a candidate will not be approved to run

- It's, it's an important practice to have and to make sure that candidates share our positive outlook for Ontario

Smith Cross: Can you hold a, a nomination meeting without the blessing of the riding association?

Brown:

- Sometimes there is [sic] riding associations that support a, a particular candidate and sometimes there, there aren't
- It, it's the party job to run and conduct the nomination meetings

Smith Cross: Is that what you're—

Cruikshank: The, the party rules say that you can unil- —the provincial nomination committee can—unilaterally schedule a nomination meeting if the association hasn't come forward with a date by October 2017. We haven't hit October yet.

Brown:

- The party can schedule a nomination meeting when it feels it, wh-, wh-, wh-, when it feels the riding association is—when the conditions have been met where there's a competitive race
- And the party will continue to schedule nomination—it's, it's, it's an exciting process for our party in the sense that where other parties are struggling to find people to run, we've never had this much interest in running under the Progressive Conservative banner
- There is [sic] candidates jumping over themselves to run in every single riding in the province and I think that excitement we're seeing in candidates speaks to there's [sic] a real desire for change

Cruikshank: Are you concerned that there will be a legal challenge to the nomination?

Brown:

- No, I, I, I think the nomination was run well by Rick Dykstra and Bob Stanley and I think we have a fantastic candidate in Stephen Lecce

Nanji: Will you fight the legal challenge?

Brown:

- The nomination was conducted according to the party rules, so we don't suspect there to be any concerns

*Cruikshank: Was Konstantin *crosstalk* his application rejected by the party?*

Brown:

- You'd have to speak to Rick Dykstra
- I'm, I'm not sure if that's—

Rebecca Thompson: Yeah, this is—Rick can answer a lot of these questions—

Brown:

- Yeah, yeah, yes, yeah, yeah—

Thompson: --it's better to ask him—

Brown:

- --yeah, yeah—

Thompson: --because there's some party stuff that he can—

*Smith: Patrick, when you were in Ottawa, did you know Stephen Lecce? Were you, like, what, when you were both under Harper together, were you *crosstalk*--*

Brown:

- I, I've, I actually, I know a lot of the candidates running for nominations just because I've been involved in the party for so long
- So I knew all the candidates running

Smith Cross: Just to take you back a couple of answers, are you alleging that the riding association was in favor of Konstantin Toubis and they were biased in that way?

Brown:

- Well, I would say th-, those matters I defer to the party

Smith Cross: How unusual is it to have the president of a riding association protest at the nomination meeting for the candidate at that riding association? Has that happened before?

Brown:

- *pause* we've never had this much interest
- And, and, obviously, when you had so many people wanting to run and be part of change, it means that, you know, typically in a, in, in a party there wouldn't be this much energy to, to be involved and, and, and it's a good thing, it's a good problem to have when you have more people wanting to run, more people wanting to participate
- But we do have to make sure that process is run fairly and that, frankly, the party does its due diligence on vetting and making sure candidates don't proceed who don't share our, our positive outlook for Ontario

Smith Cross: Do you vet riding association presidents?

Brown:

- There is not a vetting process for riding presidents

- They're elected by the association members

Smith: Why did Todd Smith cancel his news conference this morning about hydro prices or hydro plan?

Brown:

- You'd have to speak to Todd about that

Smith: You have no idea?

Nanji: So you weren't going to reveal your hydro plan this morning?

Brown:

- I was not involved in Todd's press conference this morning

Rath: Todd have his own plan?

Brown:

- I'm not sure what Todd--you'd have to speak to Todd about whatever that booking was

Smith Cross: When's your hydro plan going out?

Brown:

- We will certainly have our hydro plan out before the next election
- And it'll be in our, our platform
- But frankly we continue to be frustrated that this government has not listened to the structural concerns we've had with the hydro mess we're in
- We've raised numerous structural challenges, and we don't want to simply borrow money for temporary solutions
- We want the government to fix the structural mess they've created

Smith Cross: Is it in the coming days, weeks or months? When is your hydro plan coming out?

Brown:

- Before the next election
- *Pause*
- But, but, but I would make a point that we have made it very clear, ugh, some of the structural fixes that are required
- And the government has completely ignored them
- I'm going to continue to talk about the bad contracts, the surplus generation, the offensive executive salaries
- The fact that frankly we've set up a system when were subsidize our competitors in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York

Benzie: Patrick, do you guys want to wait until, did you, I know you're not going to do a hydro plan imminently, a PC hydro plan imminently. Is it because you wanted to wait until the November policy convention to talk to grassroots members or is it something that you don't want to unveil it until closer to the June 8th election next years? June 7th election next year?

Brown:

- Well, timelines in which we release policy will not be on the NDP's timeline or the Liberal timeline
- It'll be based on collecting good ideas, good evidence, analyzing some of the real structural challenges
- And, and frankly one of the challenges we have is that we're dealing with a government that's the most secretive government in Ontario's history
- And a lot of their statements and facts don't stand up to, to scrutiny
- You know, I want to talk about the bad contracts, that's a good example
- Of the bad contracts they won't share the actual copies of the contracts signed
- The only evidence we have of one contract is the Samsung one which they accidentally released to us on an FOI and that had an exit clause of a billion and a half
- And I guess my question is, why does the government continue to hide these bad contracts?
- We know the liberals took in \$1.3 million in donations for these mega 30 contracts
- I believe taxpayers, Ontarians, the opposition deserve the right to see those contracts

Rath: So it's really just easier to criticize than to come up with your own plan? That's why you're waiting? It's politically expedient not to--

Brown:

- Our, our timeline for, releasing policy will be well in advance of the, of the next election
- But frankly the, the government's plan does not stand to scrutiny
- And, you know I have to say, it might have been convenient for the media to hear the opposition parties, and the government last time talk about, a, an imaginary number on reducing insurance out of thin air
- But it wasn't based on fact, it wasn't based on reality
- Where is that insurance cut that we were promised? It's not there and I can tell you, the, the challenge with the liberal and NDP plan is that it does not address the structural challenges in hydro
- No one is talking about the fact that we continue to have these horrible contracts
- And the fact that we're borrowing money to pay for some of these contracts, and then more contracts are proceeding
- We had 1100, 1100 more continue a day after the Liberal was released, it's wrong

Bliss: Patrick, this afternoon we're going to get some information about the cap-and-trade auction, Ontario's first. Even if the results are positive, let's say, for Ontario, is this still something that you're prepared to oppose and what is your main criticism of the plan?

Brown:

- My main criticism of cap-and-trade is first of all it's a 2 billion dollar revenue grab for the government of Ontario
- I don't trust Kathleen Wynne taking 2 billion dollars more from the people of Ontario
- Frankly, if this was really about the environment why does Kathleen Wynne and Charles Sousa and the liberal party need to get 2 billion dollars more for their pet projects?
- Um the other thing I'd mention is I still have not got an explanation from this government why they think it's appropriate that we're going to be sending hundreds of millions in green credits from Cali—to California and Quebec
- By 2020 200 million dollars, by 2030 3 billion and the government you know chooses to attack me rather than actually defend why they set up this, this this scheme
- I don't think it's right that Ontario businesses are going to be subsidizing those in California

Carter: So how do you reduce greenhouse gas emissions on the corporate level without having some sort of you know punishment and incentive?

Brown:

- Well you can have a punishment and a incentive without having it to be to the beneficiary of the government
- If it was really about the environment why does Kathleen Wynne need to take in 1.9 billion?
- Why do we need to be a part of a climate initiative that only subsidises California and Quebec?
- Why not keep every cent in the province of Ontario?
- Why does this need to be an economic development strategy for Beverley Hills?

Zochodne: If this cap-and-trade auction isn't a sellout is it all your fault for making the comments before the auction that you would pull Ontario out of the Western Climate Initiative dismantle cap-and-trade?

Brown:

- Well I've been saying that for months now and I'm going to continue to point out my legitimate concerns that frankly are concerns across the province of Ontario
- That Kathleen Wynne's cap-and-trade benefits California

- It was bad enough the Green Energy Act has really helped create jobs in the Northern United States but now we're doing it again all over again with cap-and-trade where we'll be sending 200 million by 2020 in green credits to California
- Almost 2 billion by 2030
- Why are we subsidizing our competitors in Quebec and California?
- Why is Kathleen Wynne doing this all over again?
- You'd think they would've learnt this liberal government would've learnt from their disastrous Green Energy Act

Brule: [Question in French]

Brown:

- [Response in French]

Smith-Cross: What's changed? You were recently saying the hydro plan would be coming out soon in weeks and days and now you're saying potentially months?

Brown:

- I haven't mentioned a timeline
- We're going to release details on how we can fix the Ontario liberal hydro mess on our timeline
- Well in advance of the next election not in Kathleen Wynne's timeline
- I realize right now they'd prefer to attack someone else
- They're trying to they're struggling to defend their own hydro plan so it's easy to try to bait and attack the opposition than defend their own plan
- The reality is they have not addressed the structural challenges in hydro rates
- They have not addressed the structural problems we have in hydro in Ontario
- And right now this temporary 17 percent reduction for some hydro rate payers does nothing to the fact- doesn't change the fact that they raised hydro rates 400 percent and they need to own this mess, they need to be responsible
- They need to apologize to Ontarians and say no more of these bad contracts are going to continue

Smith Cross: Are, are you hamstrung—can you release your plan without seeing the contracts?

Brown:

- Certainly we are concerned about how secretive the government has been
- We are concerned that there is no transparency in this government
- They are trying to hide their own mistakes
- They've done that for a long time

- But, we're certainly going to continue to point out some of the structural fixes

Brulé: What happened in King—Vaughan?

Brown:

- King—Vaughan?
- We don't normally comment on internal party measures, you've have to speak to our party president Rick Dykstra
- But our party does extensive vetting of candidates to make sure that any candidate who chooses to run—he or she who chooses to run on the Progressive Conservative banner—don't share values that I can't support

Thompson: By the way I can get you Rick's phone number or whatever if you need it.

Carter: Just quickly on assisted dying- should all Ontario hospitals regardless of religious affiliation provide assisted dying services?

Brown:

- Well, I understand there is a mandate from the federal government and the mandate from – not only the Supreme Court but the federal Parliament
- But what I do believe is that we should have conscience rights embedded in how that's implemented in Ontario

Carter: for individual physicians or for institutions?

Brown:

- Well, I think for individual physicians
- But if there was – that's getting into the weeds and details and we're, we've—

Carter: But it's, it's not, because if you live near a religious-affiliated hospital, you cannot get those services that are supposed to be publicly funded.

Brown:

- So our push and Jeff Yurek—our health critic—raised this issue today
- Our push is to make sure that there are physician conscience rights in this, in this legislation
- The government has said that they will be open to amendments
- We are hoping that a solution will be found
- But our, our concern is that there is not adequate protections for physician conscience rights

Carter: But I come back to this central question: should hospitals with religious affiliations be forced to provide services that are publicly funded and available elsewhere?

Brown:

- Well, I think the general practice is that services are available otherwise
- My bone of contention is not with hospitals, it's with physicians having those rights

Smith Cross: What do you mean by services are provided otherwise? I don't understand
**inaudible* --*

Brown:

- My concern is that there has to be physician conscience rights as we implement this legislation
- I'm concerned that's not there today

Crawley: There's a number of police officers on the sunshine list who are suspended from duty because they are charged with criminal offenses and at various points in the, in the trial process and the way it currently works in Ontario is even if you are convicted, unless you are sentenced to go to jail, cops continue to get paid through public tax dollars. Government is considering changing this, do you think they should change the rules so that chiefs have the ability to suspend cops without pay in certain situations?

Brown:

- Well I certainly expect that to be addressed in the review that the government's coming out with shortly
- I think that is – even you find a lot of police officers saying that that's something they expect to be changed and should be changed
- Certainly I believe that needs to be addressed as well

Crawley: Addressed but as in changed?

Brown:

- Yes

[END TRANSCRIPT]