

QUESTIONS FOR FIRESIDE CHAT WITH MINISTERS SOUSA, MAY 2, 2017

1. TO ITS CREDIT, THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT HAS BALANCED THE BUDGET BUT ONTARIO STILL HAS A LARGE **DEBT**. HOW DOES THE GOVERNMENT PROPOSE TACKLING THAT DEBT AND HAS IT CONSIDERED CREATING A PROSPERITY FUND (AS IN BC) OR A GENERATION FUND (AS IN PQ) TO SET ASIDE SURPLUS MONEY AND GENERATE INCOME TO PAY DOWN THE DEBT?
2. THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION POSES SEVERAL CHALLENGES FOR PROSPERITY IN ONTARIO. WE HAVE COMPETITIVE **CORPORATE TAX RATES** IN ONTARIO – BUT THEY WILL BECOME LESS COMPETITIVE (PARTICULARLY WHEN YOU CONSIDER OTHER TAXES) IF THE US LOWERS CORPORATE RATES TO 15%. IF THAT HAPPENS, WHAT CAN ONTARIO DO TO CONTINUE TO REMAIN COMPETITIVE AND ATTRACT TALENT?
3. THE OTHER THREAT WE FACE IS A RENEGOTIATION OF **NAFTA**. WHILE TRADE DEALS ARE LARGELY A FEDERAL RESPONSIBILITY, HOW CAN THE PROVINCE CONTRIBUTE TO ENSURING THAT INDUSTRIES (SUCH AS AUTO AND AGRICULTURE) REMAIN COMPETITIVE IN AN ERA OF PROTECTIONISM?

4. FAIR HOUSING PLAN:

WHAT EVIDENCE OR DATA DOES THE GOVERNMENT HAVE TO SUPPORT ITS 15% NON-RESIDENT **SPECULATION TAX**?

IS THE GOVERNMENT WORRIED THAT RENT CONTROL MIGHT LED TO UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES, AND THAT DEVELOPER WILL NOT BUILD THE RENTAL UNITS THE MARKET SO CLEARLY NEEDS? WHAT EFFECT WILL RENT CONTROL HAVE ON THE 20,00+ UNITS CURRENTLY BEING PROPOSED OR BUILT BY DEVELOPERS?

5. ENERGY:

THE FAIR HYDRO PLAN PROMISES SIGNIFICANT RATE REDUCTIONS FOR RESIDENTS AND SMALL BUSINESS, BUT PROVIDES LIMITED RELIEF FOR LARGE BUSINESSES. (THOUGH WORTHY, THE CAP AND TRADE PROGRAM ALSO INCREASES COST FOR BUSINESS.). HAS THE GOVERNMENT CONSIDERED DOING SOMETHING TO HELP BIG BUSINESS DEAL WITH SOARING HYDRO COSTS?

- The government is continuing to lower electricity costs for businesses to help maintain a competitive environment.
- Through the Fair Hydro Plan, Ontario is further expanding the Industrial Conservation Initiative (ICI) program by reducing the eligibility threshold from one megawatt (MW) to 500 kilowatts (kW) for targeted manufacturing and industrial sectors, including greenhouses.
- The ICI program helps consumers lower their electricity bills by providing an incentive to reduce consumption during peak hours.

- Ontario remains committed to ongoing support for northern industrial facilities, with continued investment of up to \$120 million annually in the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program.
 - The government is also ending the debt retirement charge (DRC) for commercial, industrial and all other electricity users as of April 1, 2018.
6. WHAT DID TORONTO/TORONTO REGION GAIN FROM THE BUDGET (APART FROM THE HOTEL TAX AND VACANCY TAX)? MAYOR TORY ASKED FOR FUNDS FOR TORONTO COMMUNITY HOUSING, BUT TORONTO DID NOT RECEIVE ANY PROVINCIAL SUPPORT. (TORONTO IS THE ONLY MAJOR CITY WITH A RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNITY HOUSING AND IT NEEDS SUPPORT FROM OTHER LEVELS OF GOVT TO FUND IT.)
 7. PHARMACARE. IS THE PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE NO-CO-PAY, NO DEDUCTIBLE PHARMACARE TO THOSE UNDER 25 THE PRECURSOR TO UNIVERSAL PHARMACARE? WHAT EFFECT DO YOU THINK THIS INITIATIVE WILL HAVE ON EMPLOYERS?
 8. BASIC INCOME PILOT. ARE YOU MODELLING YOUR INITIATIVES ON OTHER JURISDICTIONS AND – IF YOU WERE A BETTING PERSON – WHAT DO YOU THINK THE RESULTS OF THE PILOT WILL SHOW?
 9. POLITICS: WITH A LITTLE MORE THAN A YEAR BEFORE A PROVINCIAL ELECTION, IS THE POLITICAL AIM OF THIS BUDGET – WITH ITS EMPHASIS UPON HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION -- TO WIN OVER NDP SUPPORTERS?