

Summary of Question Period for Mon. Mar. 26, 2018

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MPP Smith (PC) to Minister McMahon and Minister Thibeault (Energy) re: the "Sunshine List"

>>MPP Smith: Mr. Speaker, my question this morning is to the **Premier**. **Premier** last week the list of Ontario's richest political insiders was released. Though call it the sunshine list. But for the hardworking people of Ontario there's not a whole lot sunny about it. People of Ontario are struggling to pay the bills and put food on the table. Speaker, Liberal insiders are continually getting richer and that's what we learned from last week's release of the sunshine list. It's getting hard for people in Ontario to understand. Just look at the C.E.O. Of Ontario power generation. He got a raise of \$400,000 this year. His salary is now \$1.5 million. \$1.5 million. The former head of ieso was the fifth highest individual on the list and worked for four months. Mr. Speaker, when an everyday person in Ontario can't pay their bills, why are the **Premier's** friends getting –

>>Minister McMahon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member opposite for his question, because it allows me to do a couple of things, Speaker. First of all I want to recognize that certainly on this side of the House, Speaker, we know that \$100,000 is a lot of money and the people of Ontario have a right to know how those dollars are being invested. I'm going to get to that in a moment. First of all I want to explain and just outline, Speaker, that our decision to release these salaries is in keeping with our openness and transparency on this side of the House, Speaker. We are being saluted internationally for our open government and that is why we're making and have made the 2017 public sector salary disclosure public as well as every disclosure dating back to 1996 starting this year, Speaker, available online and accessible in downloadable format. Again we're keeping that \$100,000 threshold and we're not going to change it, even though in today's dollars it would be 151,000, Speaker. We know that's a lot of money to the people of Ontario. We're proud of our public servants and the quality of service they deliver to Ontarians because that is exactly what Ontarians are asking for and we're delivering on that, Mr. Speaker .

>>MPP Smith: Mr. Speaker, we're talking about six-figure raises here on the sunshine list. \$400,000. That's acceptable to **Premier** Wynne and this Liberal government. Mr. Speaker, did you know that there's also a secret list of Hydro One millionaires out there? They've had their names hidden from the sunshine list this year. They sit around the boardroom table at Hydro One and give themselves raises. At the same time they're always asking to increase the hydro rates for the hardworking people of tomorrow. The

Premier doesn't seem to think the people of Ontario deserve to know how much these people are making. But voters need more transparency, **Speaker**, not less. They're getting less from this government. Mr. **Speaker**, why does the **Premier** continue to hide the salaries of the people at Hydro One and their millionaires club work interesting?

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. **Speaker**. So the first thing I should let the opposition know ISS that publicly traded company, meaning that the list of Hydro One's executive compensation can be found online, Mr. **Speaker**. You'd think a party that has a leader that's a self-proclaimed so-called businessman should know that very well, Mr. **Speaker**. On top of that, last week, Mr. **Speaker**, it's absurd that the member opposite is trying to criticize employees on the sunshine list but it came to light during the Ford administration's term running the city of Toronto the number of staff on the sunshine list doubled. This is contrary to what the Conservative leader Doug Ford said in the past. In 2010 the city of Toronto had over 5,400 employees on that list. In 2014, after leader Doug Ford had served on the budget committee, that list doubled to over 11,000, Mr. **Speaker**. Let's not forget Conservative candidate Ron Phillips was on that list. Christine Elliott is on that list and 24 hours later he was canvassing --

MPP Harris (PC) to Minister McGarry (Transportation) re: the salary of the Metrolinx CEO

>>MPP Harris My question is for the Minister of transportation. I'm hoping that the Minister can explain to hardworking Ontarians why according to the sunshine list, the former metrolinx C.E.O. Made \$100,000 more, yes \$800,000 more, working only four months in 2017 than he did working the entire year in 2016. I'm wondering how that makes sense.

>>Minister McGarry: Thank you very much, **Speaker**. I apologize for my voice and thank you for the question. So it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the earnings of an individual metrolinx employee. But, however, metrolinx has a vital role to play in our plan to deliver an integrated regional transit system right across the gtha. We need to have the right leadership in place to make sure that we can deliver on time and on budget. Bruce McQuaid left metrolinx a far stronger and more mature organization than he inherited and necessary work to make sure that the massive transit bill this side of the House is involved in is under way. Now our newer C.E.O. Phil Verser is overseeing the transformative bill. At the end of the day commuters in our region will see critical improvements -- improvements like new rapid transit lines, four times the number of weekly G.O. Trains and electrified service. Bring clean reliable service across the region. It would be good in that member would vote for some of the investments contained in our budget.

>>MPP Harris: Well, Bruce McQuaid also left metrolinx \$100,000 richer than he did in 2016 and only worked four months. **Speaker**, neither the Minister nor anyone at metrolinx wants to answer because they know they can't make sense of it either. After being paid \$364,000 for an entire year's work in 2016, former metrolinx C.E.O. Bruce McQuaid walked away with \$486,000, plus another 12 grand in benefits, in April 2017. That's only four months into the fiscal year, for only four months' work. How do they add that up, **Speaker**? I'll give the Minister one more chance. Will the Minister please explain how the metrolinx C.E.O. Got to walk away from four months of work pocketing \$100,000 more than his previous year's entire salary? And I guess the follow-up question to that is. Resign on his own accord or was he fired? Which one?

>> Minister McMahon: Thank you, Speaker. Our government continues to strengthen Ontario's efforts to become the most open, transparent and digitally connected government in Canada, proactively releasing information on public sector salaries is an important part of Ontario's open government commitment. We recognize \$100,000 is a lot of money. People of Ontario have a right to know how their tax dollars are being spent but it is inappropriate for me to comment on the earnings of one individual at Metrolinx employee. Speaker, I find it interesting to hear this commentary from this member of the Ontario Conservatives. Under the Ford administration at city hall, the sunshine list doubled. Clearly, we have a double standard when it comes to criticizing employees on the sunshine list. That member, that party should vote for the investments contained in our budget for all of our transit programs in Ontario.

MPP Fedeli (PC) to the Premier and Minister Thibeault (Energy) re: Liberal government accounting and hydro

>> Vic Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Once again, the auditor general is blasting the Liberals' accounting, this time for their unfair hydro scheme. The auditor said she thinks, quote -- the accounting is bogus, quote. She highlights the fact that the financial and accounting structure was designed to avoid reporting the unfair hydro scheme's costs. She claims it was, quote, allowing the government to falsely claim their budget numbers. These numbers can't be trusted. This government can't be trusted. Mr. Speaker, if the auditor general can't trust this government, then how can anyone in Ontario do it?

>> Premier Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, families in this province asked for real and immediate relief on their electricity bills and that's what we delivered, Mr. Speaker. Our plan has been approved by some of Canada's top accounting firms including Ernst & Young, KPMG, Deloitte, Mr. Speaker. All of those organizations have looked at what we did, Mr. Speaker, and have reviewed it and have approved it, Mr. Speaker. And in fact the same accounting process is used by Toronto Hydro as well as it's used in Alberta, used in New England, in New York, Minnesota and Texas, Mr. Speaker. But we're very confident, Mr. Speaker, that what we have done to deliver real relief to families on their electricity bills, Mr. Speaker, is appropriate and people are seeing that relief right now, Mr. Speaker.

>> Vic Fedeli: Back to the Premier. Well, while she says one thing, the auditor general has the sole authority to audit the province's books. This government has fought her time and time again. They have attacked the auditor's credibility. They have attacked her expertise and they have attacked her character. This has gone too far. If the auditor general says we can't trust this government's numbers, it's clear Ontario can't trust this government's numbers. Mr. Speaker, will this government show an ounce of integrity, an ounce of accountability and own up to these questionable numbers?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pleased to rise and respond to the question. Mr. Speaker, we made a policy choice to ensure that we continue to have a clean and reliable and an affordable electricity system for ratepayers of today, Mr. Speaker, and ratepayers of tomorrow. The fair hydro plan keeps the cost of borrowing within the rate base, not the tax base, Mr. Speaker, because that's the logical thing to do. Electricity financing should remain within the electricity system, Mr. Speaker, not the tax

base. Officials from the treasury board, finance, O.P.G., the ieso, the Ontario financing authority along with external advisors that include Ernst & young, KPMG and deloitte worked on the accounting related to the fair hydro plan Mr. Speaker,. They along with the office of the provincial controller ensured should that this plan was in accordance with public-sector accounting.

>> Vic Fedeli: Back to the **Premier**. It's been reported that the auditor general has uncovered very troubling behaviour at the ieso. It seems there is a culture of untrustworthiness and a lack of integrity. The auditor's concerns, quote, included incorrect accounting, deceptive and obstructive behaviour by the ieso's board and management, and poor financial controls, quote. It's so bad, the auditor general warned that if improper accounting wasn't fixed, she may issue an adverse opinion on Ontario's books. Now, Speaker, that would be a first in Canadian history for any government's financial statements. So, Mr. Speaker, will this government be the first in Canadian history to have their numbers.

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When talking about the A.G. And our system operator, our system operator, the ieso, has assured the ministry of energy that they have made every effort to be forthright and fully responsive to the auditor general's request for information. So for example, Mr. Speaker, the ieso has accommodated the auditor's requests by making accommodations to extend the duration of the auditor general's staff on the ieso's premises to the initial two weeks requested to seven weeks. During this time, the ieso received and responded to over 200 information requests from the auditor general's staff. The ieso accommodated every meeting request, about 40 meetings took place between the ieso and the auditor's staff. The ieso accommodated the a.g.'s request to meet with their board in audit committee, and throughout their audit. The auditor general's staff had direct access to the ieso's staff, Mr. Speaker .

**MPP Fedeli (PC) to the Premier and Minister Del Duca (Economic Dev. and Growth)
Re: the proposed carbon tax.**

>> Vic Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. My question's for the **Premier**. With the budget just days away, people want a better path forward for Ontario. Only Doug Ford and the Ontario P.C. Party --Only Doug Ford and the Ontario P.C. Party will bring jobs back to the province of Ontario. An important step to make Ontario open for business is to scrap the carbon tax cash grab, Speaker. The P.C. Party will stop sending families hard-earned money to California. The auditor general has confirmed that this government is doing exactly that. So, Mr. Speaker, will the **Premier** axe the tax? Will she --Scrap the carbon tax and bring jobs back to the province of Ontario?

>> **Premier Wynne**: Well, Mr. Speaker, we know this question from a party and a member who has decided to turn its back, their backs on climate change, Mr. Speaker, not recognizing the single greatest threat to humanity. But, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about jobs. Let's talk about what's actually happening in Ontario, Mr. Speaker, because we're seeing economic growth that's -- in one of the leading jurisdictions in the country, Mr. Speaker. We're outstripping the growth of the g-7 countries. The United States, Mr. Speaker, and on jobs, there have been 810,000 new jobs, net new jobs created in this province since the recession, and over 400,000 jobs created since I became the **Premier**, Mr. Speaker.

So the reality is --That there are jobs being created in Ontario, Mr. Speaker. Our unemployment rate has dropped to 5.5% and been below the national average for 34 months.

>> Vic Fedeli: Back to the **Premier**. Nobody believes this government's spin. When the **Premier** slipped up a few weeks ago, she admitted her carbon tax was used to line the government's pockets, not reduce emissions. She claims scrapping the carbon tax would impact the public service. Why would money that she claims to be solely dedicated to the environment affect the public service? Her carbon tax has nothing to do with reducing emissions. It's all about grabbing cash. Well, the party with the taxpayers' money is over. Mr. Speaker, will the **Premier** admit her carbon tax has nothing to do with the environment but has everything to do with taking more money out of the taxpayers' pockets?

>> **Premier Wynne**: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are on track to meet our pollution reduction targets, Mr. Speaker, and I know that the Minister of the environment will want to speak to that in the final supplementary. But, Mr. Speaker, let me just -- in terms of the go-forward in this province, and the member opposite acknowledged that we're bringing the budget in in a couple of days. Mr. Speaker, we know that, across this province, we've balanced this budget this year, Mr. Speaker. We know -- we know, however, that having done that, having seen economic growth and those jobs that I said have been created, Mr. Speaker, those 400,000 jobs since I've been the **Premier**, the low unemployment rate, even with all of that, Mr. Speaker, not everyone is feeling that benefit. Not everyone is feeling that evenly, Mr. Speaker, which is why we are making a very conscious and deliberate decision to invest in people. Invest in their mental health, invest in their education, invest in their health care, Mr. Speaker. I understand that's not what the party opposites sit wants to do but we believe that is actually what people --

>> Vic Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. Back to the **Premier**. Well, scrapping the carbon tax cash grab is just one step for job creation in the province of Ontario. We have lost more than 300,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs because of this government and their policy. When we talk to company owners large or small, one top issue is the cycling bureaucracy, red tape and reputation. We need to let business grow, Mr. Speaker, and bring jobs back to Ontario. We need companies to know that Ontario is open for business again. Mr. Speaker, will the Liberals scrap the red tape they have wrapped all around Ontario's businesses?

>>Minister Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. I thank the member for the question. I've said on many occasions in this legislature that over the last decade, since the depth of the recession that engulfed Ontario and most of the world, we have created more than 800,000 jobs, Speaker, in this province. That's in part because our government made the decision to invest in our people, to invest in infrastructure and to make sure that we kept focus on the importance of supporting families in need at all times, Speaker. Specifically the member -- the leader asked a question regarding reducing red tape, Speaker. I should note that the 2017 burden reduction report specifically showed Ontario surpassing the target that had been set regarding burden reduction by 50% and, Speaker, two years ahead of schedule. This report also found an estimated savings of over \$150 million and 5.4 million hours to business but we removed 08,000 regulatory burdens, Speaker. There's more to this story. I would say to the member opposite it's important to focus on the facts and not dispel myths to the people of Ontario. Thanks very much.

