

Summary of Question Period for Thursday October 26, 2017

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Date: Thu, 26 Oct 2017 12:11:15 -0400
Attachments: 20171026- Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript.doc (121.86 kB)

A selection from today's Question Period.

MPP Fedeli (PC) to Minister Naqvi (Attorney General and Government House Leader) re: revelations in the gas plant trial

>> MPP Fedeli: Thank you and good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. The gas plant trial of two former Liberal aides heard testimony yesterday that was described as, quote, a bombshell. I.T. expert Rolf Git testified the province's chief information officer, **David Nicholl**, didn't seek access just to some computers in the Premier's office during her transition. He wanted broad and extraordinary access to all the computers in the Premier's office. Git's testimony contradicts the version given by **Nichol** earlier at trial and in sworn appearance at the justice policy hearings. Mr. Nicholls, to this day, remains the province's chief information officer. Speaker to the Premier. Should Ontarians be worried that our data is still at risk?

>> Minister Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. I just want to remind member that again we have to be very careful. This matter is very much as we know before the court and we have to respect the process. Speaker, our government takes our record keeping obligations very seriously. We are committed to being open, accountable and transparent. We promised to open up the government completely and we've done so in an unprecedented degree, Speaker. In our report -- in her report privacy commissioner has credited the government for improving record keeping. We sent a directive to all staff. We have developed mandatory training programs. We have appointed chiefs of staff accountable for record keeping. We have improved archiving requirements and we have passed the accountability act which prohibits the willful deletion of records and creates a penalty for doing so.

>> MPP Fedeli: Back to the Premier. Mr. Mick Kol asked for sweeping elevated rights that allowed -- Mr. Nicholls -- the wiping of data of all computers in the Premier's office. He left a, quote, erroneous impression with the secretary of Cabinet which led him to be granted that access. Speaker, there are still people here today working in Liberal offices who admitted deleting files. This was designed to deliberately thwart the public's right to information. Continuing with this pattern today, the energy Minister still hasn't turned over

all his emails due to the auditor general. Now we see the credibility of the chief information officer is in doubt. Speaker, to the Premier, why should anyone -- Believe a word you say with your history of dodge, deny and delete?

>> Minister Naqvi: Speaker, I just -- I -- I just want to say to the member he should be very careful in how he is trying to apply a set of proceedings that's taking place in a court of law, as we speak, to the Premier of the day today. Speaker, the case relates to the former Premier of the province of Ontario. It does not deal with the current Premier. To the member, he needs to be very careful when he uses the term "Premier" and poses his commentary in this House. Speaker, let me be very clear. This Premier, the current Premier of Ontario, have taken unprecedented steps in making sure that the government is transparent and accountable and, Speaker, the information the privacy commissioner has credited the government -- As I mentioned earlier in my question we have taken specific steps to insure that there is accurate record keeping in the government.

MPP Brown (PC) and MPP Smith (PC) to Minister Thibeault re: hydro rate reduction plan

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Since I can't get an answer on the government's cuts to autism services, let's try something different, Mr. Speaker. We just received copies of the long-term energy plan. And, Mr. Speaker, I can't find on what page includes the section on giving mega contracts to Liberal donors. We know that the auditor general said we overpaid by \$9.2 billion our renewable energy. Of these mega contracts the companies got, they donated \$1.3 million to the Ontario Liberal party. So was the section on giving mega contracts to Liberal friends and insiders, was that section -- could the Premier please enlighten us?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Very pleased to talk about the long-term energy plan that's talking about a plan that we've brought forward that's reducing rates for the people in this province by 25%, Mr. Speaker. This is the second plan that we have launched in like the last six months, Mr. Speaker, and I know we're still waiting for one from the opposition. But you know when we're talking about the benefits of this plan, it's actually bringing fairness and choice and innovation, Mr. Speaker. Innovation that's going to actually see ratepayers, both large and small, see their bills reduced, Mr. Speaker. See more jobs created in an innovative sector that's already created over 40,000 jobs. This plan, Mr. Speaker, is bringing forward prosperity for our province, making sure that we can continue to keep our G.H.G.S low, working with the ministry of environment and climate change to meet our climate change action plan goal. This plan, Mr. Speaker, is something that Ontarians should be proud of.

>> MPP Smith: Thank you, Speaker. This long-term energy plan confirms that whaef we've said all along. After the next election, the Liberal electricity borrowing scheme gets wiped out. But there's \$40 billion borrowing scheme is going to cost ratepayers an extra \$4 billion long term because it was never, ever intended to be an electricity plan, Mr.

Speaker. This is a re-election plan for Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals in Ontario. Speaker, the unfair hydro plan is yet another -- Speaker, the unfair hydro plan is another bad deal for Ontario that's going to drive up look trillsty costs even further. How much more does this Minister think Ontario ratepayers can afford on their electricity bills?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So when we look at the electricity price outlook, Mr. Speaker, we've brought down rates by 25%. That is actually clear, rates are down 25%. Then they come down a little bit more in 2018 and they're held to the cost of inflation for the three years after that, Mr. Speaker. Then as we sjd, just moments ago, Mr. Speaker, when we were talking about the long-term energy plan and talking about it through the media and to the people of Ontario, we're going to continue to take costs out of the system. We have examples of doing that, Mr. Speaker. Besides the 25% from the fair hydro plan, we actually did build new nuclear cutting out billions of costs. We didn't actually bring forward the lrp2 reducing billions of costs, Mr. Speaker, . We renegotiated the Samsung agreement. That's what you do, Mr. Speaker, is you find out. Ways to reduce costs when you have plans. On that side of the House, they don't have a plan and they don't have a clue either.

>> MPP Smith: Speaker, it took this government, it took this government almost a year to come up with this long-term energy plan. It was supposed to come out in December. Here we are, in late October, and we get a plan that really doesn't remove any costs from the system. This is a \$40 billion borrowing scheme. And the Liberals even managed to break a basic law of economics today. Demand is going to stay the same. Supply is going to stay the same. Prices, however, will shoot to new record highs after the next election. And that's even after they've cooked the books to make House holds smaller. Thank you, Speaker. Only in Liberal Ontario is this even possible. Mr. Speaker -- Speaker, everybody can see through the \$40 billion borrowing scam. They have to stop fudging the numbers. When are they going to get serious about --

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Very clearly, Mr. Speaker, the opposition has no idea on what to do with this file. All they can do, Mr. Speaker, is stand up and complain. This is a plan that is bringing fairness and choice. It is bringing -- This is a plan that is bringing forward choice, Mr. Speaker. It's bringing forward fairness, and it's a real plan, a realistic plan that the people of Ontario can actually look at and help them understand where the electricity system, where the energy system is going, Mr. Speaker. On the other side, they haven't brought a thing forward, Mr. Speaker, not one thing that would actually do anything to lower rates, but only increase rates. We've brought forward the 25% reduction through the fair hydro plan. We've taken costs out of the system. We'll continue to roll up our sleeves and do more for the people of Ontario through this plan.

MPP Tabuns (NDP) to Minister Thibeault (Energy) – re: paying for hydro

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, my question to the Premier. This

morning the Premier released her long-term energy plan, but the people of Ontario don't need a fancy report to know what the Premier and her Liberal government are planning for their hydro bills. We already know. They're going to skyrocket. The plan confirms it in black and white. Ten years from now people will be paying 42% more every single month just to keep the lights on. The Premier's \$40 billion borrowing scheme has seen to that. Even when House holds use less power, her long-term energy plans say they'll pay still more. Can the Premier tell us why she's sticking to her \$40 billion borrowing scheme when her own long-term energy plan tells us that Ontarians will pay more because of it?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Very pleased to talk about the long-term energy plan, the 25% reduction people are getting now, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to continue to see costs coming out of the system to lower that for our families and for our businesses even more, Mr. Speaker. I know the third party continues to make their numbers up, Mr. Speaker, and elevate what they're seeing as borrowing plans. They know those numbers are actually a lot lower than that, Mr. Speaker. It shows it directly in the long-term energy plan. But let's talk about some of the facts that this long-term energy plan is doing, Mr. Speaker. We're making sure that we're bringing forward lower costs for all businesses, for all families, for all farms in this province for that matter. That's being done through the fair hydro plan. We've already pulled costs out of the system. Not having to build new nukes, Mr. Speaker. Not having to bring forward procurement the second round of it. And renegotiating the Samsung contract are just three examples we can use of how we've taken costs out of the system. I'm looking forward to talking about market renewal in the supplementary.

>> MPP Tabuns: Again to the Premier, Speaker. Hydro rates have gone up 300% under the Liberals. They've gone up 50% under this Premier's watch alone. And now we know that in the next ten years people's bills will go from an already high average 127 bucks a month to an outrageous \$181 per month. The Premier's first two energy plans had no mention of her plan to sell off Hydro One, a disastrous decision. And this long-term plan is nothing more than a political document that sugar coats more bad news for Ontario ratepayers. The Premier didn't tell us she privatized Hydro One. People said no to privatization and she did it anyway. She let us down. What makes the Premier think that the people of Ontario give her any credibility on this file?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only thing that this Premier has done is brought rates down, Mr. Speaker. Brought them down by 25%. Unlike, Mr. Speaker, what that party would propose to do, which is to nationalize Hydro One, spend tens of billions of dollars doing so, Mr. Speaker, and not saving a single penny on anyone's bills. You want to talk about Hydro One, Mr. Speaker? Let's talk about the money that we've used, that we've been able to take and build infrastructure with, Mr. Speaker, thanks to the broadening of the ownership of Hydro One. \$13.5 billion in the gtha, go regional rail express. That's increasing transit, Mr. Speaker. I always thought the NDP Supported more transit. I guess they don't, Mr. Speaker. \$5.3 billion in the Eglinton crosstown L.R.T. Tripling the Ontario community infrastructure fund to \$300 million. \$1.4 billion in the Hurontario L.R.T. In Mississauga and and brampton. 1 billion in Ottawa's L.R.T. Of course the broadening and expansion of highway 69, Mr. Speaker, making sure that northern Ontario –

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Again to the Premier. Hydro bills have skyrocketed under this Premier, and nothing in their long-term energy plan is going to change that. The people of Ontario don't need to hear any more about stretch goals from the Liberal government. Right now families are being forced to choose between paying their hydro bills and paying for their groceries. And all the Premier seems to care about is spending an extra \$4 billion on an accounting trick to hide the impact of her \$40 billion borrowing scheme. I guess we all have our priorities, Speaker. Why is the Premier's priority her reelection and not the people of this province?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fair hydro plan took into consideration every single person in this province and brought forward relief for them, unlike their so-called pie-in-the-sky plan, Mr. Speaker, that didn't even include talking about reductions for first nations or talking about low-income individuals. Let's look at page 23 of the long-term energy plan, where it talks about distribution rate protection. The rrr, P program by rural and remote customers who face higher distribution costs compared to other areas. Mr. Speaker, that's a 40 to 50% reduction for people that live in the rural and northern parts of our province, again something that they didn't even address, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to a party that's actually bringing something for the people of Ontario, it's this government, not the two opposition parties that one doesn't have a plan. One makes it up as it goes along. We're actually bringing forward we will relief for all Ontarians, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Brown (PC) to the Premier and Minister Lalonde (Community Safety) re: plight of correctional officers

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. I've spoken with corrections officers, nurses and other frontline correction staff across the province. Mr. Speaker, this is what I have heard. Jails are overcrowded. Cell block violence is a -- violence is and constant problem. Inmates are held in maximum security without access to rehabilitation programs. Assaults on corrections officers and staff have more than doubled, doubled in seven years. I actually met one correctional officer in Thunder Bay who got held hostage. And I know the government's saying everything is fine now but we have correctional officers here today to say it's not fine. It's not adequate. So, Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is when are they going to get serious about the crisis in corrections?

>> Premier Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister of community safety and correctional services will want to speak to supplementary. But I wanted to take an opportunity to say, Mr. Speaker, that quite the contrary of what the leader of the opposition has said. We don't think everything's fine, Mr. Speaker. We believe that the work that is done by the people who are in the gallery today is very hard work. It's very important work, Mr. Speaker. And I would say that, for decades has not actually received the attention that it needed to. That is a nonpartisan comment, Mr. Speaker. I think governments of all stripes have not paid attention to corrections in the

way that we should, Mr. Speaker. I think there's a lot of work to be done. We have Howard safe who is already giving us advice, Mr. Speaker, on some of the directions that we should take. But I just want the people in this gallery to know that we understand that there is a lot to be done, that there are investments that need to be made. Interest there's attention to the working conditions of people in our corrections institutes that need to be –

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier. The Premier recognizes there's a crisis. Then fix it. If the Premier recognizes there's a problem, we need action. They've been in office for 14 years and they're having this awakening now that there's a crisis? It needs investment. There's a sense of urgency here and it's not just the crisis in corrections. In Ontario's probation and parole system. A joke, Mr. Speaker. Often the only contact between a criminal and a probation officer happens when the offender visits the probation office. We saw that smoking global TV exposé. So there's a broader crisis in – shocking global TV exposé. I want to know from the Premier does she think it's acceptable talking about dangerous violent criminals and sex offenders on the loose without supervision, how do they justify this neglect? It was a year ago we had that global TV exposé. So my question very specifically to the Premier is this. When are they going to get serious about the inadequate resources in the parole system?

>> Minister Lalonde: Where do you begin? I'll begin with saying thank you. Thank you to the men and women who work every day in our -- In our communities. But let's take a look at what the party opposite did in Ontario's correction system -- When they were -- Mr. Speaker, they looked at privatization of our correction system and I have to say visiting eight institutions over the past ten months, this is what I hear in our institutions, Mr. Speaker. And you know what? It was a cell privatization experiment in one of our jails. It was negotiated in bad faith with the public sector which resulted in strikes. Just in case it doesn't know in our jail and riots all over, Mr. Speaker. They left a system in need of infrastructure investment -- So, Mr. Speaker, we would think that the leader of the opposition would learn from the countless mistakes his party made in Ontario's correction system, but think again. Conservative --

MPP Natyshak (NDP) to Minister Lalonde re: Correctional Services

>> MPP Natyshak: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Speaker, today we're joined by some of the 5,000 dedicated correction and probation and parole professionals that are here today in the gallery. I want to thank them for the work that they do. Speaker, they're here to keep the Liberal government to its word. Last year the Liberal government spent \$50 million to prevent a strike in our province's jails that never happened. You essentially created a crisis on top of an ongoing crisis. \$50 million later, Speaker, and this Liberal government made a promise to recognize that frontline correctional staff are essential and valued members of our public service. Yet despite these promises to hire new staff, the daily staffing complement has not increased at all. Speaker, what will the Premier tell correctional services professionals today? In the thoe

did -- -- and the thousands at that they represent. About what they should expect about how they're valued and essential to solving the crisis in corrections?

>> Minister Lalonde: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question, because again gives me an opportunity to thank our wonderful correctional staff who are here and across Ontario for all their hard work and dedication. We had a very productive meeting this morning and I look forward actually to continuing these important discussions. As I've said, Mr. Speaker, I visited eight jails, eight of our institutions in the past ten months as Minister and I've seen firsthand the high calibre of the individuals who actually work in our correctional facilities. And I also attended -- Mr. Speaker I had the great privilege of attending the latest graduation of our correctional officers in Hamilton, 211 new recruits coming to our work force every day in our institutions. And oh, man are they eager to start working and taking care and caring for our inmates. You know, our government is committed -- To the transformation of our correction system and we will continue to work with frontline staff, Mr. Speaker, and our correction partners to ensure lasting change.

>> MPP Natyshak: Speaker, what these professionals need and deserve is not more platitudes from the government. They need action today, Speaker. Speaker, understaffing, overcrowding, broken and badly planned facilities procured from private sector deals, mothballed nursing stations and only in the case of the south block detention centre 1 nurses of a complement of 21 that they need to operate that facility. \$50 million to avoid a strike. One report and nearly daily headlines about jail deaths, violence, and this government is no closer to addressing the problem. Speaker, I have heard that those that are closest to the problem are the closest to the solution. Is this Premier as committed today to listen to the frontline staff in our correction and community safety systems, the people that deal with it every day, as she was to throwing \$50 million to the wind hoping that the problem would go away?

>> Minister Lalonde: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Definitely we are listening to our frontline staff. And, Mr. Speaker, are there issues within our system? Yes. I think we -- our government is not shying away and certainly as a Minister I'm not shying away from that. But this is exactly why we are implementing the greatest change to corrections in generations, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Howard safer fully recognized our firm commitment correctional reform and will continue to work closely with our front line staff and other partners as this government brings forward real change. Whether it is he through enhanced mental health training to all staff or 27 hours 7 day a week nursing to oversight provision of health care services to the ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, or through new correctional legislation this fall. To further -- our correctional reform, Mr. Speaker, .. We are committed to working with our frontline staff. I committed today and we will continue.