

Summary of Question Period for Tues. Dec. 12/17

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MPP Fedeli (PC) to Minister Sousa (Finance) re: Health of Ontario's economy

>>MPP Fedeli: Thank you and good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of finance. The financial accountability office showed us Ontario is working with three sets of books, Speaker. That is simply ridiculous. We need one set of books, one true set of numbers to guide us. There's a way to do this and that's for the government to follow the law, pass a regulation and release their pre-election finance report. The auditor general said, quote -- it's in the public interest for the government to if give us a pre-election report to examine as soon as possible, with sufficient time to do our work. This will give us one number, one set of books. Speaker, the government tell us when they will be bringing the regulation forward and when they will present the auditor with their pre-election finance reports?

>>Minister Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason there is a pre-election report is because this government mandated it, because of the -- the fact that they held and hid a deficit throughout their proposals when they were coming into a budget. We are balancing the books, Mr. Speaker. I thank the F.A.O. For the work they're doing around the city. Owe acknowledges that our economy is growing, that we have taken steps to balance the budget. In fact public accounts, which is the one that matters most what has happened to this day, illustrates we beat again our targets last year by over \$2 3 billion. Under .1 billion in terms of our actual results so I acknowledge the work being done by the F.A.O. And I recognize that the member opposite, with his whole promises are unable to keep it because his own analysis state that they are not going to be able to achieve it. I will say more in the supplementary, Mr. Speaker .

>>MPP Fedeli: Back to the Minister. Families need to be able to trust what the government says about our finances. They deserve a true fiscal picture. That's only fair. But the auditor general has refused to sign off on Ontario's books multiple times under this Liberal government. The auditor has one more opportunity, and that's to review a pre-election finance report. First the government must pass a regulation confirming it will release a pre-election report by a committed deadline. We want one set of books so we can truly assess the damage the Liberals have done to Ontario. Speaker, I'll ask again, will the government tell us when they will be bringing the regulation forward and when they will present. The auditor with their pre-election finance report?

>>Minister Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we are using the accounting principles that have been provided over the last 16 years. In fact an independent review the government's pension accounting and everything else commissioned illustrated by an expert panel, concluding

that the province's accounting treejts are correct. I'll leave those disputes to the accountants but I'll say this, Mr. Speaker. Kevin Paige, the individual that assessed the people's guarantee, says the following -- assessing the reasonableness of the estimates of the fiscal plan underline the 2018 election platform of the Progressive Conservative party he says this -- -- the we caution readers the reasonableness of the estimates underlined in the fiscal plan includes reliance on the third party for information. He says we do not currently or we're not currently in a position to pronounce on those expectations. We look forward to seeing more detailed plans of the future. Their numbers are based on analysis, Mr. Speaker, and they are estimating a deficit with what we're saying is --

MPP Horwath (NDP) to Minister Thibeault (Energy) re: potentially partisan advertising on hydro bills

>> Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaker, my question's to the Deputy **Premier**. Does the **Premier** of this province and the Liberal government believe that hydro bills should have partisan Liberal advertising and include partisan Liberal flyers?

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is important that all ratepayers in the province know what is on their bills, Mr. Speaker. And that's why Hydro One has a pilot project under way in which they're doing a new build redesign, Mr. Speaker, helping customers right across the province that are Hydro One customers understand their bills and some of the complexity of the bills, Mr. Speaker. Knowing that they're getting a 25% reduction on their bills is important, Mr. Speaker. It's the same thing like the debt retirement charge. The debt retirement charge has been eliminated for residential customers, Mr. Speaker, but hindsight being 20-20 we thought letting people know on their bills that it was no longer a cost on there but leaving it on so people could understand that was actually the opposite, Mr. Speaker. We believe making sure that we have a clear guideline for all residential custom others for all ratepayers across the province, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to work with Hydro One. continue to work with all the L.D.C.S to come up with a bill that is clear for all ratepayers right across the province.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, Ontarians deserve to know why their hydro bill now includes desperate Liberal party campaign advertising. I'm going to send an order in council across the aisle to the Deputy **Premier**, who's claiming this doesn't exist. If I can get a page, please. What this does is it forces hydro companies to include Liberal campaign messaging on people's hydro bills. And the order is personally signed by the Minister of energy and the Deputy **Premier**, who also happens to be the chair of the Ontario Liberal election campaign. Can she clarify for us, Speaker, exactly which hat she was wearing when she signed that order in council?

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is this Deputy **Premier**, this government who wears the hat that protects ratepayers, Mr. Speaker. It's that party over there, Mr. Speaker, that voted against the 25% reduction for every single family in this province. How can they look in the mirror, Mr. Speaker, and stand up every day and say that they're defend, the ratepayers in this province when they did absolutely nothing, Mr. Speaker ? Absolutely nothing. What they talk about right now is buying back Hydro One shares, Mr. Speaker. That's actually going to stop building hospitals, stop building schools, Mr. Speaker. That's what we're doing on this side of the House. When it comes to northern Ontario or rural customers or low-income individuals or first nations

individuals, you know what they did, Mr. Speaker ? They forgot about them. They actually didn't even put them into their plan. And they can wave their finger all they want, but the truth hurts, Mr. Speaker. It's this party that protected ratepayers.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Minister of energy and the chair of the Ontario Liberal election campaign personally signed the order for hydro utilities to include partisan messaging in Ontario's hydro bills. Who is paying for these Liberal flyers, Speaker ? The people of Ontario or the Liberal party?

>>Minister Thibeault: An easy answer, Mr. Speaker. It's the people of Ontario, unlike the opposition. The people of Ontario is the one that we actually stand up for and --Again, Mr. Speaker, it's the people of Ontario, the 25% reduction that is this government that brought forward to help them with the relief, Mr. Speaker, because we invested \$70 billion in rebuilding the system, Mr. Speaker. We made sure that we have a supply that can actually be relied on, Mr. Speaker, bringing forward clean power, and that is something that we should all be proud of in this province. But when it comes to defending the interests of the people of Ontario, it is this government. We are building up our province and we're making sure that our electricity rates are as affordable as possible.

MPP Horwath (NDP) to Minister Thibeault re: potential partisan advertising

>> Andrea Horwath: My next question's also for the Deputy Premier. The Minister of energy and the Deputy Premier, chair of Ontario east Liberal election campaign, personally signed a government order forcing hydro utilities to mail out partisan flyers from July 2017 through to July 2018. That's a month after election day, Speaker. That means that partisan Liberal flyers are going to be mailed to homes across Ontario from now through to election day and beyond. So let's agree to call these flyers what they are, desperate Liberal campaign advertising. I don't think that's right, Speaker. New Democrats don't think that's right. Does the Deputy Premier think that's right?

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the NDP Didn't think giving people in Ontario a 25% reduction was right. They voted against it, Mr. Speaker. I guess they didn't think giving low-income individuals a break by an enhanced Ontario electricity support program, Mr. Speaker, was right because they voted against it, Mr. Speaker. I guess they didn't think giving first nations a delivery charge credit, Mr. Speaker, was a good thing because they voted against that as well, Mr. Speaker. The list goes on and on. They vote against everything, Mr. Speaker. They vote against things that actually help people in this province. Mr. Speaker, they voted against making sure people that live in rural and northern parts of our province seen a 40 to 50% reduction. That is significant for those customers, Mr. Speaker, that are living in those parts of the province, making sure that they can actually see their bills lowered significantly, because again, Mr. Speaker, some of them don't have a choice between natural gas or electricity so they're using electricity and we're working on that as well with the Minister of infrastructure rolling out a plan to get natural gas to these communities as well, Mr. Speaker .

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, what isn't right is using public money for partisan purposes. That's what's not right. You know, Speaker, there isn't a single person in Ontario whose bill will be lowered because they receive Liberal campaign ads in their hydro bill. No business and no family. There is zero public good that comes from this advertising campaign. In fact local distributors are against the politicization of penal's bills. Jim Ryan, chair of niagara-on-the-lake hydro said this recently and I quote -- putting political messaging on the invoice is simply wrong. I agree. It is wrong. The only benefit

from mailing out these partisan flyers is the Liberal party. Is the Liberal party paying for these flyers? Or is it the people and businesses of Ontario?

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So we have an L.D.C. Working group again, Mr. Speaker, with the electricity distributor association part of that group, which represents all local utilities across the province and they're working with us, Mr. Speaker, as part of the long-term energy plan to create a bill redesign, Mr. Speaker, so they understand what needs to be done and how we need to ensure that we make it as clear as possible for people to understand how our electricity system works and how our electricity bills work as well, Mr. Speaker. So we work with the L.D.C.S. We make sure that we work with all stakeholders in this sector, low-income individuals, ch, first nations groups, Mr. Speaker, to bring forward a 25% reduction that they've been seeing on their bills now for almost six months, Mr. Speaker, and that is, Mr. Speaker, thanks to us, thanks to this government, unlike the opposition who voted against it over and over again.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, he's got a working group of the L.D.C.S together so that they can figure out how they're going to put the forced partisan advertising Ontario hydro bills in Ontario. That's what's going on-speaker. Ontarians should not be paying for desperate partisan Liberal flyers to be printed and then mailed to them in their hydro bills. It's bad enough that people have to open their bill and see the costs that come from decades of Conservative and Liberal privatization in our electricity system. They shouldn't have to get Liberal party campaign ads as well. Will this Liberal government do the right thing by the people of this province and stop this practice immediately?

>>Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When people open their bills in this province, what they see is a 25% reduction, thanks to this government, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When low-income individuals open their bill, they see further reduction on their bills thanks to the enhanced Ontario electricity support program. When first nations open their bill when they live on a reserve, Mr. Speaker, they will see that there's no longer a delivery charge on their bill, and that's thanks to this government working with many first nations right across the province, Mr. Speaker, and hearing and listening to their needs and acting on that, Mr. Speaker. We have made sure that Hydro One has come forward with some changes, especially with their distribution charge as well, Mr. Speaker. They're going to see the rrrp decrease their bills between 40 and 50%, Mr. Speaker. And that is something that the opposition parties voted against. That is shameful, Mr. Speaker, because we listen to the people of Ontario and acted on their request, Mr. Speaker .