

Summary of Question Period for Wed. Dec. 06, 2017

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Please see the attached select or full summary of today's Question Period.

MPP Gates (NDP) to Minister Duguid (Economic Development and Growth) – re: political messages on hydro bills

>> MPP Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question's to the acting Premier. Yesterday a publicly owned **Niagara-on-the-Lake** hydro issued a simple and straight straightforward request, keep your political message off our residents' bill. Nobody likes to receive a bill but right now the Ontario energy board forces local distributors to print local messages on their bill. They're forcing utilities to include lines that refer to savings from their hydro scheme, savings that aren't actually there. The so-called savings this government is forcing them to print is nothing more than costs they kick down the road. A plan which won't lower bills and won't bring hydro back into public hands. My question is simple, Mr. Speaker. Local distributors are asking the Liberals to stop forcing them to produce bills that contain their political advertising for a plan they don't believe is actually creating savings. Will the acting Premier listen to local distributors?

>> Minister Duguid: Speaker, I think the only people in this province that don't want ratepayers to know they're getting a 25% cut on their energy rate are the NDP And maybe the P.C.S, Mr. Speaker. So I understand why the member would be upset that ratepayers are being informed that their bills are going down by 25%. Mr. Speaker, this government doesn't design the energy bills. In fact we've heard -- and I'm sitting beside a previous energy Minister. We've heard time and time again from ratepayers, Mr. Speaker, that they want to see ways to ensure that the bills are easier for ratepayers to understand. That's what the O.E.B. Is looking at, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of ratepayers. I think they're doing some good work in that respect. But I do understand why the member would want them to be aware of their 25% cuts to their energy rates, Mr. Speaker .

>> MPP Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the acting Premier. Locate me quote Jim Ryan, the chair of the publicly owned **Niagara-on-the-Lake** hydro utility. He said -- putting political messages on invoices is simply wrong, and frankly we agree with him. Keep your political spin off our people's hydro bills. Residents -- to answer his response -- residents are smart enough to know their bills have gone up 300%, they aren't seeing saiflgs no matter how many times you write it on their bill. Will the acting Premier stop insulting people whose bills have skyrocketed because of bad decisions and remove and remove the political messages from the hydro bills as requested by local distributors? Thank you.

>> Minister Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are no political messages on the bills

at all, Mr. Speaker. Informing ratepayers that they're getting 25% off their energy costs is information. Information that they deserve to have, in spite of the efforts of the NDP To ensure that they don't know that they're getting 25% off. Why would the member not want his constituents to know, Mr. Speaker, that their energy rates have gone down by 25%? The only reason I can think of, Mr. Speaker, is the political reason on their part that they don't want their members to know that we've brought energy rates down in the province of Ontario by 25%. We're very proud of that. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, he ought to let his constituents know that we've also built a clean, reliable and affordable energy system in the province of Ontario, Mr. Speaker. It hasn't been easy. A lot of investment. It's taken a lot of time but, Mr. Speaker, Ontarians have a clean, reliable affordable energy system that they can be proud of.

MPP Smith (PC) to Minister Duguid (Economic Development) re: Goreway gas plant

>> MPP Smith: Thanks, Speaker. My question this morning is for the acting Premier. It's about the Liberals' latest gas plant scandal. The Ontario energy board warned the government in 2009 -- this was back in 2009, that ratepayers could be bilked out of millions and the Liberals did nothing about it. They warned the Liberals again in 2011 and again the Liberal government did nothing. Now we know that Goreway wasn't the only gas plant that decided to treat Ontario ratepayers like their own piggy banks. This government tried to hide that for years. Mr. Speaker, this looks like a smoke screen on the part of the government and it's happened under a succession of energy Minister s. Both the members from Scarborough Centre and Ottawa West Nepean were Minister s of energy during this misappropriation. So, Mr. Speaker, how many Liberals does it take -- to cover up a \$100 million scandal?

>> Minister Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Handling another Minister 's file like this is kind of like being a grandparent in some ways. I get to handle the file and work with you on this today, and after the weekend I probably get to hand it back to the Minister when I probably had enough of it. So I'm pleased to be acting on behalf of the Minister of energy today. Again, Mr. Speaker, let's put this all back into perspective. The ieso was made aware of some potential ineligible costs going on within the system. They fully investigated those costs. They recovered the vast majority of those costs, Mr. Speaker. They levied a \$10 million fine, the biggest ever levied in these kind of circumstances. They posted the report and the record on the O.E.B. Website, Mr. Speaker, so it's there for all to see. They've taken steps to insure -- That the system's been strengthened so it won't occur again. And, Mr. Speaker, I'll continue more about what some future actions are going to be.

>> MPP Smith: Speaker, the member opposite was the Minister of energy when some of this gaming was going on and his seat mate was also a Minister of energy while this gaming was going on at Goreway. Speaker, this Goreway natural gas plant got the final draft of the report from the E.O. -- O.E.B. In July. The government got the report in September. It was made public November 2nd but amazingly the Goreway executive that was helping write the new electricity market rules didn't resign until last Friday. That was after the Cabinet office received their advance copy of today's report by the auditor general. Speaker, if we pull the phone records for the energy ministry and the Cabinet office for the end of last week, would we find calls to Goreway power or the ieso pressuring them for a resignation?

>> Minister Duguid: Mr. Speaker, this entire process is conducted as appropriately it

should be by the IESO, the independent electricity supplier for Ontario systems operator for Ontario. I say that because I think a lot of people don't know what the IESO is. Mr. Speaker, their job is to ensure that our electricity system is regulated -- Mr. Speaker, their job is to ensure that the electricity system is properly regulated. They've done that. They're doing that job. They found shiner eligible costs that a company and in fact there were some other companies, as the member indicated -- That they have been here. They've taken action. They've cleaned up the system, Mr. Speaker, strengthened the system to ensure it can't occur in the future and they've recovered the vast majority of funds, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Smith: Thanks, Speaker. The member opposite can try and distance himself from this all he wants. But again he was the Minister of energy when this gaming was brought to light by the energy board, and so was his seat mate. Speaker, these Liberal scandals have a pattern. First there's the mind-numbing incompetence. Then there's the lack of oversight. We wonder who's minding the store over there when hundreds of millions of dollars are being wasted in this sector. Then there's the clumsy smoke screen that comes up. Then like a child called into the principal's office the government Minister hangs their head and tells Ontarians how sorry they are. But because no one's ever held accountable over there by the Premier or anyone in that government, no one actually learns anything. So the same mistakes continue to occur over and over again. There are two former energy Ministers in Cabinet who both fell asleep -- At the switch. No one's minding the store. To the acting Premier, why are those Ministers still in Cabinet?

>> Minister Duguid: Speaker, I've been pretty forthright in my responses to the member on two consecutive questions, and the member persists on trying to get political with this. So, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should respond in kind. Let me remind that member, Mr. Speaker, that he's part of a party that better be very careful when they're making allegations of exploitation and gaming. When you look at the tabloid, Mr. Speaker, that they recently put out, talk about gaming people, Mr. Speaker. Claiming a 22% income tax cut when it's nothing of the sort, Mr. Speaker. You look at the Bogus claim. You look further Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, and you see \$12 billion cuts, none of which are transparent, none of which are defined. Mr. Speaker, what kind of energy programs are they going to cut? What kind of education programs are they going to cut? What kind of health care programs? Mr. Speaker, they're on pretty thin ice over there. To make these political allegations if you ask me.

MPP Thompson (PC) to Minister Flynn (Labour) – re: minimum wage increase

>> MPP Thompson: Thanks very much, Speaker. Speaker, the Russian Olympic team were not the only hosts to receive a ban yesterday. Last night CTV London reported port Albert general store is closing this winter for the first time in 150 years. A direct result of this government's bad policies. Six employees will be out of work this winter just before Christmas. When it reopens this spring, Speaker, the Deputy Premier, a summer client, will no longer be welcome there. Can the Deputy Premier explain to the House why she has been banned from the port Albert general store and tell us how many other Liberal caucus members have been banned from small pises throughout the province because of the bad decisions?

>> Minister Flynn: Speaker, perhaps the member opposite can explain, when you had the chance to stand up for working people. In the province of Ontario, because you've turned your back on them. Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, a third of people in the province of

Ontario currently make less than \$15 an hour. Half of those people, more than half of those people, Speaker, are between the ages of 25 and 64. These the time when they're trying to raise families, pay rent, buy clothes for if their kids, put the kids through school, put food on the table, Speaker. This party opposite has denied these families the opportunity to do that and now they pull out a gimmicky question like this, Speaker ? Speaker, we all had an opportunity -- To stand up for working people in Ontario. These guys turned their backs on them, Speaker .

>> MPP Thompson: Mr. Speaker, again back to the Deputy **Premier**. This party, this government just doesn't get it, because these six people will be earning zero dollars per hour, because they're losing their incomes through the winter months, because this owner has no other options but to close. And, Speaker, I am sure this is just one example of many more to come and the peep's guarantee, we will still move forward with minimum Wage increases, just more slowly. This is an approach that the Ontario chamber of commerce said would mitigate job impacts by 74%. So, Speaker, will the Deputy **Premier** sign on to the people's guarantee and help us fix the mess that her government has made and save jobs and small businesses throughout Ontario?

>> Minister Flynn: Speaker, quite the contrary to what the member's asserting, when the opportunity was given to this House to support working people -- Thank you, Speaker. To support working people in the province of Ontario, these guys refused to stand up and be counted, Speaker. The Ontario economy is leading the G-7 in economic growth. We've got unemployment numbers so low, Speaker, that we haven't seen in decades, Speaker. The Ontario economy is doing well, Speaker, and when this party had an opportunity to vote just last week, they voted against paid sick days for Ontario workers. They voted against child death leave, crime related leave, disappearance leave, pregnancy leave, domestic violence and sexual violence leave, Speaker. These folks had an opportunity to stand up for working people in the province of Ontario -- Speaker, and then they put out the glossy magazine. To tell us they lost \$12 billion in cuts. At the don't know what to do with it, Speaker. Then they tell us they're going to roll back the minimum wage, Speaker --