

Summary of Question Period for Wed. Nov. 29, 2017

From: "Flowers, Robert (TBS)" <robert.flowers@ontario.ca>
Date: Wed, 29 Nov 2017 11:50:24 -0500
Attachments: Q.P.SummaryNov29-17.docx (16.22 kB); 20171129 - Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript.doc (122.37 kB)

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

MPP Horwath (NDP) to Minister Hoskins (Health) - re: possible *private* hospital clinics

>> Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, my question's for the acting Premier. Members of the Ontario health coalition are joining us today in the galleries and I want to thank them for being here. Year after year we've seen this Liberal government and Conservatives before them cutting public hospitals and pushing health care services into private clinics. And now this Liberal government wants to open the doors even wider and roll out the red carpet for even more for-profit private clinics. Buried deep inside bill 160 the Premier's Harper style health omnibus bill is Schedule 9, a plan to clear the way for new, private clinics and make it harder for ordinary families to get the health care that they need. Why is this government, like the Conservatives before them, intent on privatizing even more of our health care system?

>> Minister Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. In fact I welcome the members of the Ontario health coalition that are here today. We've been over the past number of days working closely with the Ontario health coalition and other stakeholders for a common agenda and a common goal. One of the things that this act, if passed, will actually provide through schedule 9 is it will prevent any further private hospitals in this province. We currently have six private hospitals that were grandfathered into legislation from 1931, the previous government, Mr. Speaker, not our own. And what this legislation does is it actually -- it requires that those six entities transition out into a new regulatory and oversight regime. And no further private hospitals will be allowed in this province. Mr. Speaker, it is an important measure and I want to thank the Ontario health coalition for proposing additional language. We're going to introduce to make that crystal clear.

>> Andrea Horwath: The Ontario health coalition says, and I quote, this new act is essentially a new private hospital and clinic act. You know what? More privatization is absolutely the last thing we need in our health care system in the province of Ontario. Thanks to the Liberals and Conservatives, **there are over 1,000 for-profit private clinics in**

Ontario today taking scarce health care dollars out of our public system and handing that money right over to private corporate profits. The Premier's health care privatization bill allows private clinics to apply to open their doors at any time they wish, Speaker. And by repealing the private hospitals act, this omnibus bill actually removes the 44-year-old ban on future private hospitals in Ontario. Why is this government opening its arms to more private clinics when private clinics only make it harder for Ontario families to get the health care they need?

>> Minister Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, under this government and hopefully all future governments, there will be no more private hospitals in this province. There are six that exist that were grandfathered into legislation many, many decades ago, as the leader of the third party rightly points out. We are making it crystal clear that we are not going to allow any further private hospitals. We've got legislation that will require that. We're repealing an act that allows for private hospitals. We're requiring all the existing six to transition into say long-term care or others but with enhanced oversight and accountability and transparency that they currently don't have, Mr. Speaker. And we're working with the Ontario health coalition and other stakeholders to add additional language to make it crystal clear to all of us. That we not only share the same goal. We're going to attain that goal of no more private hospitals.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the first thing this government did after getting elected that last election is turn around and privatize Hydro One without a mandate. And now on their way out of office with no mandate, they're trying to privatize more of our public hospital services. Speaker, we will not let them get away with it. The national union of public and general employees says this bill will, quote, make it easier for private hospitals and clinics to expand and more difficult for the Minister to stop them. It allows anyone to apply to open a private clinic at any time, Speaker. It changes the name of private clinics to community health facilities, which would be laughable if it wasn't so offensive to not-for-profit community health care. And despite what the Minister says, the health privatization bill that they've introduced removes the 44-year-old ban on future private hospitals in Ontario. Why is this government doing exactly what we expect from the Conservatives and privatizing the health care people rely on?

>> Minister Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, once again the leader of the third party has it completely wrong. So we are -- there are six private hospitals in this province. I was surprised to learn that when I became health Minister. It was grandfathered in by a government, not our own, many decades ago. So we're taking measures and the current regime through the private hospitals act which is almost 100 years old, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't provide for accountability and transparency and oversight that we would expect of all our health care facilities in this province. So we're adding that oversight and transparency and accountability. We're making it Chris Cal clear that this government will not tolerate or allow any additional or future private hospitals. It will be crystal clear. And again I want to thank the Ontario health coalition and other partners because. Perhaps the NDP Hasn't been listening, we've been working together to make that crystal clear that that will be the case.

MPP Tabuns (NDP) to Minister Zimmer (Indigenous Relations) re: Grassy Narrows clean-up

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. My question to the acting Premier. Yesterday chief froblsher and members of grassy first nation travelled here with a simple request. Will this Liberal government build a Mercury poisoning treatment centre in grassy narrows so that the sick and dying can get care without being separated from their loved ones?

>> Minister Zimmer: Thank you for that question. Speaker, I can tell you today that, this morning, there was a very productive and effective meeting with Minister Philpott, with chief paetsch, with chief froblsher wmyself and various advisors representing the chief, federal government and province of Ontario. I'm quoting Minister Philpott at that meeting this morning. She said "We have turned a page on these issues." That is the Mercury issues. Speaker, that was met by a round of applause at all of those at this morning's meeting. Our technical staff is continuing with the meeting as I speak, and I can tell you, Speaker, that later today there will be further details released. It was a very productive. The issue has been advanced in a good way. Thank you.

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Again to the acting Premier. People of grassy narrows can't wait any longer to have the Mercury cleaned up from the English river system. They can't wait any longer for a Mercury poisoning treatment centre in their community. Why not green-light this project today, send a construction crew to grassy narrow this is week and just get the job done?

>> Minister Zimmer: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, as I've said, we had a very productive meeting this morning on a host of issues. As I've said previously in this House with regard to the cleanup of the English wabigoon river system, we have provided **\$5.2 million** to do remediation workup. That's a study that will look into how the remediation should be done. In addition to that, Speaker, **we have provided \$85 million for actual work on the remediation after the remediation workup has been done.** Speaker, we are serious about dealing with these issues in the English Wabigoon river system. We recognize that something has to be done and will be done on cleanup. In addition to that we had this meeting this morning on other issues. There will be more details later today. But it was a good meeting.