

Hansard: Fedeli to Premier (McMahon) -- AG Pre-Election Report

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INSTANT HANSARD

>> **Vic Fedeli:** Thank you and good morning, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the **Premier**. The response to yesterday's shocking revelations from the auditor general that this government has deliberately understated Ontario's deficit by \$5 billion this year has been swift. The Ontario chamber of commerce issued a statement yesterday after the auditor affirmed Ontario actually has an \$11.7 billion deficit. They wrote, quote -- the province of Ontario were a publicly held company, we as shareholders derive and demand clarity and accountability from our board and our auditors. This is similarly our right as Ontarians. Speaker, business confidence in this government is shaken. Is the **Premier's** reelection bid worth destabilizing investment confidence in Ontario?

>> **Premier Wynne:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister responsible for treasury board, president of the treasury board is going to want to comment on this. Mr. Speaker, in fact the only reason that we are having this conversation is that this government, Mr. Speaker, introduced the fiscal transparency and accountability act and, therefore, there is a pre-election report, Mr. Speaker. That's why we are having this conversation. So, you know, I think that, through the pre-election report, the office of the auditor general's analysis, Ontarians are given the information that they need to make an informed decision. Mr. Speaker. The fact is there is an ongoing dispute between professional accountants. That is a reality. It's been going on for a couple of years, Mr. Speaker. It is absolutely true that there is a disagreement between -- Just to say, Mr. Speaker, it is an ongoing dispute between professional accountants. We recognize that. Accept the perspectives of the auditor general but that dispute has been going on for a couple of years, Mr. Speaker.

>> **Vic Fedeli:** Back to the **Premier**. No, Speaker. We're having this conversation because the government continues to present an incorrect picture of the province's finances. The Ontario chamber had even more to say. They wrote, quote -- it is deeply concerning that the government of Ontario would be accused of not

following Canadian public sector accounting standards. Speaker, when the auditor general summed it up, she said, quote -- when expenses are understated, the perception is created that the government has more money available than it actually does. Just in time for a pre-election budget. How convenient. Speaker, the **Premier** needs to know the jig is up. Will she admit the government's numbers are wrong?

>> Minister McMahon: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member opposite for his question, because it provides me with the opportunity to provide some much-needed context to this discussion, Speaker. First of all I again want to thank the auditor general for her response to the pre-election report. We appreciate her work to ensure that the public received an independent assessment of our province's assessment. Let me remind the House of something critically important. We passed legislation to do this, Speaker. So the notion that we aren't being transparent is not only factually incorrect, it risks sending a negative and inappropriate message to the people of Ontario. And that is exactly what they're doing, Speaker. They're not -- The member's offices, Speaker, want to continue to undermine confidence in our province and our provincial institutions, that's up to them. But here's precisely what the auditor said. In case the member opposite missed it. The pre-election report provides a reasonable and St cautious uandi the medium-term fiscal forecast. He said we were reasonable and cautious and we stand by that.

>> Vic Fedeli: Back to the **Premier**. Actually, Speaker, we on this side of the House and the people of Ontario, they understand that it's the government hot puts the government at risk. Nobody else, Speaker. The auditor general's job is to state the true picture of Ontario's finances. Now based on the auditor's shocking revelation, here's more from the Ontario Cher of commerce. Quote -- the government of Ontario and through them the people of Ontario either respect our legislative officers or we do not. That is exactly why Ontario P.C. Leader Doug Ford has committed a full audit of the government's books to restore responsibility, accountability and trust in government. Speaker, can the **Premier** tell us today what is the government of Ontario -- Can the **Premier** tell ustoday exactly what is the government of Ontario's deficit for 2018/19?

>> Minister McMahon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Speaker, listening to the rhetoric from the opposite side, let me just respond to something very important that the member opposite just said. Implicitly, the leader of the P.C. Party Doug Ford, is now questioning the auditor general's competency and I'll tell you why. He says that he's going to provide independent audits. Guess what that discounts, Speaker ? Our professional and highly competent public servants. Our professional Deputy Minister of the treasury board and the Deputy Minister of finance that not only sign off on our fiscal plan, give us precisely the kind of advice and confidence in our books, Speaker, that we need. And by the way, when it comes to some of the -- the auditor general outlined in her report we also had independent advice, Mr. Speaker, by some of the most credible accounting firms in the world. We stand by that, Mr. Speaker. We respectfully remind the member opposite that we have a respectful disagreement with the auditor general and once again, we thank her for her work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker .

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