

CO Provincial Legislature Question Period Transcript for Wednesday, November 29, 2017

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Please see attached Cabinet Office's Transcript of Provincial Question Period for Wednesday, November 29, 2017.

MCI did not receive any questions of interest.

MSA did not receive any questions of interest.

Official opposition questions included the following topics: the hydro rate reduction plan, the Ontario budget and victim relief services. NDP Questions included the following topics: hydro prepay metres, healthcare and Grassy Narrows.

The official Hansard will be available later today by clicking on the link below.

http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/house-proceedings/house_proceedings_home.do?locale=en

From: Stinson, Jeffrey (CAB)
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Transcript of Provincial Question Period

41st Parliament, 2nd Session

Wednesday, November 29, 2017

The following is a partially edited transcript of Question Period.

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MPP Smith to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> MPP Todd Smith: Thanks, Speaker. Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of energy. The people's guarantee lays out Patrick Brown and the P.C.S' plan for hydro in Ontario. Under Premier Wynne and the Liberals, we know that hydro rates have tripled. In fact families are paying on average \$1,000 more a year than when the Liberal government was first elected back in 2003. The people's guarantee is a plan to get hydro back on track. It provides an additional 12% off hydro bills. That means the average House hold will save \$173 per year on their hydro bill under Patrick Brown and the Ontario P.C.S. So, Mr. Speaker, isn't that a plan that even the Liberals can get behind?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's becoming quite clear that, you know, the P.C.S and their leader can't be trusted. They've now decided to say anything to anybody to make sure that they can get elected. Months after trying to deny, Mr. Speaker, that our 25% reduction on bills for families and as many as half a million small businesses and farms by voting against our fair hydro plan, they're now sneakily, Mr. Speaker, including it in their own platform. Worse than that claim about reducing further rates is reckless and only opens up an even larger hole, Mr. Speaker, in their already gaping fiscal plan. I believe the proof is in the fine print at the back of their platform. Over \$12 billion, Mr. Speaker, in cuts. This includes over \$6 billion of across-the-board unspecified cuts and shifting of course, Mr. Speaker, conservation programs, cost from taxpayers, again making sure their fiscal hole continues to grow, Mr. Speaker. We've –

>> MPP Smith: Speaker, more Liberal spin. They're just hoping that something actually sticks but it's not. Just look at what our leader said this morning. He wanted you to consider this. Premier Wynne and the Liberals accepted \$1.3 million in donations from companies who receive the biggest contracts for energy that we don't need any longer in Ontario. That meant these insider contracts resulted in families overpaying on their electricity bills by \$9.2 billion. That's the biggest reasonable why our electricity bills are

skyrocketing. Then to make matters worse, the Wynne Liberals sold off Hydro One. It was a fire sale to reward her donors, insiders and fat-cat friends. That's why this government can't be trusted after 14 long years. Mr. Speaker, I do wonder, when did the Liberals decide -- They were going to be for the insiders and not for the people that were paying the hydro bills?

>> Minister Thibeault: It makes you wonder, Mr. Speaker, actually who is defending families? And on this side of the House we're defending families, Mr. Speaker. We brought forward a 25% reduction that all families are seeing. But it begs the question, Mr. Speaker, because, under their plan, costs are going to rise. Let's look at their carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. The truth is that under their carbon tax scheme, you'll pay more and get less. Independent expert analysis from the C.D. Howe institute, for example, confirms this, Mr. Speaker, showing their carbon tax would add \$1,200 in annual costs per family. And this is more than any of the tax cuts that the Conservatives claims to be offering as well, Mr. Speaker. The "National post" has called it a shell game noting that any tax cut will be paid for by an 81% increase in the existing provincial tax on gasoline, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to energy, it is this government that has brought forward serious reductions for families from right across this province, Mr. Speaker .

>> MPP Smith: Mr. Speaker, I can understand why the Minister would rather talk about cap and trade than talk about hydro, because their record over the last 13 years is repugnant when it comes to the hydro plan. Our electricity plan, our hydro plan, unlike the Liberals', isn't a risky borrowing scheme. We're not going to spend billions of dollars in interest just to get through the next election, Mr. Speaker. Our plan, the people's guarantee, offers real lasting relief for the people of Ontario and their hydro bills. 12% more off hydro bills is the people's guarantee. We think families in Ontario deserve that after paying the fastest rising rates in North America thanks to this government. Mr. Speaker, don't the Liberals realize Ontario deserves long-lasting hydro relief?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only thing that that party is guaranteeing is that everything is going to go up in Ontario. That's their guarantee, Mr. Speaker. They're actually even talking about our fair hydro plan, the 25% that we actually brought forward, and they voted against, Mr. Speaker. They talk about it all the time but they have nothing, Mr. Speaker, that is actually going to do anything that will actually help the families like the way we have done on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. And given the gap that we know that is in their plan, Mr. Speaker, we know that across-the-board cuts are coming, just like the Harris years, putting both existing and future programs at riskment we already know investments like the \$300 million in home and school retrofits, the \$575 million in social housing repairs will be scrapped once the Conservatives drop cap and trade and create a more expensive carbon tax. But what else, Mr. Speaker ? Are they going to cancel the oesp program? Are they going to cancel the first nation delivery credit? Are they going to make sure they eliminate the \$100 million affordability fund? Mr. speaker, all they know how to do is cut.

MPP Smith to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Rate Reduction Plan

>> MPP Todd Smith: Thank you, Speaker. We'll try this again with the Minister of energy today. The people's guarantee lays out an additional 12% off families' hydro bills, but it doesn't stop there, Speaker. It will rein in ridiculous executive salaries like the ones at Hydro One. We know the Liberals won't because they're the ones who signed the contracts in the first place for \$4.5 million for the C.E.O. In Hydro One. Mr. Speaker, the P.C.S will rain in the \$4.5 million salaries that the Liberals are doling out. Will the Liberals keep handing out millions in salaries that Ontarians can't afford?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Liberal government will continue to act on behalf of the people of Ontario and keep electricity affordable as possible, as clean as possible and reliable as possible, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the opposition that has a plan to rip up contracts, Mr. Speaker. Rip up contracts that are signed. You know what, Mr. Speaker? At the end of the day, that really makes this province a banana republic so it actually makes you think about what they've done, Mr. Speaker, when they're putting in -- So, Mr. Speaker, again it begs the question, what are they going to continue to cut? Talked about the \$575 million for social housing repairs. Are they going to cut the Ontario electricity support program? Are they going to cut the triple R.P. Which helps hundreds of thousands of people right across our province especially in rural and northern parts of the province.

>> MPP Smith: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Liberal government keep fabricating these tales. They're just not believable. Withdraw. Mr. Speaker, they're making it up as they go along. It's a word that starts with "L" and ends with "S." They cannot continue to do this. They can't continue -- Thank you, sir. Withdraw. Withdraw. Referring to Liberals, Mr. Speaker. \$4.5 million salaries -- Thank you, Speaker. \$4.5 million salaries are the legacy of this Liberal government in Ontario. They're the reason, one of the reasons, one of the many reasons. Why Ontario has astronomical hydro prices. Speaker, dot Liberals not think Ontario need long-lasting relief on their hydro bills instead of their cynical borrowing schemes?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. 25% reduction is something that we've seen in this province, Mr. Speaker, over the last few months that they voted against, Mr. Speaker. When you're wanting to talk about how we're helping families, this this is significant savings for families but also begs the question as to how they're going to explain the \$12 billion in cuts, or what about the \$1,200 that families will see in annual costs thanks to their carbon tax scheme, Mr. Speaker? And that is more. That is absolutely more than any tax cut that they're proposing, Mr. Speaker, or even to be offering. Unlike our cap and trade on greenhouse gas solutions from business, their carbon tax would even not ensure that emissions would be reduced either, Mr. Speaker. So you know the Conservatives are also hiding the fact that -- Cut over \$6 billion in green projects that help fight climate change and the important thing about energy and environment, Mr. Speaker, is these two work hand in hand.

>> MPP Smith: Thanks, Speaker. Again I'm talking about electricity prices in Ontario. The Minister just doesn't understand or he wants to talk about something else. But if he wants to talk about cap and trade, we will keep hundreds of millions of dollars from leaving Ontario for Hollywood, California, and Québec city, Québec, keeping that money here in Ontario to provide tax relief in this province. Instead of spending money elsewhere. You know the government's own internal documents and the auditor general has confirmed that if the Wynne Liberals are reelected Ontario's electricity rates are going to skyrocket to the highest that they've ever been. They can't be trusted, Speaker. That's why the people's guarantee is a plan for long-lasting hydro relief here in Ontario. So, Mr. Speaker, the question is simple this morning. Why doesn't the government support real long-lasting relief for Ontario electricity customers?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Long lasting relief was brought to the people of Ontario and they voted against it, Mr. Speaker. Their record shows that they could care less about making sure that the people of Ontario actually get a break and actually worry about making sure that they can put a glossy magazine that people will recycle as quickly as they will when they read it, Mr. Speaker. We're making sure that we're helping families with a 25% reduction. We're making sure we're helping our first nations individuals. We're making sure that we help our individuals who live in northern and rural parts of our province, Mr. Speaker. We know that the fine print in the back of their document talks about \$12 billion in cuts. This includes over \$6 billion of across-the-board unspecified cuts. What does that mean, Mr. Speaker,? Thousands of teachers being fired? You know thousands of registered nurses without a job. That's what their legacy is, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House, our legacy is building this province up.

MPP Horwath to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro Prepay Meters

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, my question's for the acting Premier. Yesterday I asked the acting Premier why the privatized Hydro One is trying to skirt the ban on wintertime hydro disconnections with their proposal to have families install prepay meters. The Minister responded by saying that that isn't Hydro One's intention. But families and businesses struggling to keep up with their soaring hydro bills can't afford for Hydro One to have a change of heart. They need a guarantee that prepay meters will not be coming to Ontario. Will the acting Premier commit today to giving people the peace of mind that they deserve and ban the use of prepay meters, hydro meters in the province of Ontario?

>> Minister Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have much -- I don't know how much more clear I can be. Maybe the members of the third party need to take their idio logical earplugs out, Mr. Speaker, because last week the member of Toronto- Danforth and the V.P. Of customer care at Hydro One both participated in an interview on the radio. In that interview, Hydro One, Mr. Speaker, was very clear when they said none of this will be forced onto any customer. If in fact we are to proceed with this technology, like this, we will still need to develop and test -- It will be at the customer's discretion. So I'll remind the third party one more time. Any technology that electricity utility companies introduced must abide by the winter disconnection laws. Additionally Hydro One who was the first to voluntarily end winter disconnections with their winter relief program, Mr. Speaker .

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the clarity that people of Ontario need is a full-out ban on prepay hydro meters. That's the clarity that they deserve. The Minister also said yesterday that the O.E.B. Has turned down proposals like this before because the O.E.B. Is in the business of protecting ratepayers. I'd like to remind this Liberal government and the Minister in particular, that looking out for ratepayers is actually -- I'd like to remind this government, this Liberal government and the Minister in particular, that looking out for ratepayers is actually the responsibility, the job of the government, not the O.E.B.. So when will the government do its job -- And stand up for the people of Ontario and put a complete ban on the implementation of prepay hydro meters in the province of Ontario?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So it's this government that stands up and brings forward an affordability plan through the fair hide rode plan to actually help ratepayers and that party votes against it, Mr. Speaker. We bring forward a plan that actually helps first nations individuals living on reserve by eliminating their delivery charge. It's that party that votes against it. We bring forward a plan that increases the Ontario electricity support program, that helps low-income individuals. It's that party that votes against it, Mr. Speaker. The O.E.B. Has a mandate to make sure that they protect ratepayers, and it's this government, Mr. Speaker, that has done that. Besides the fact that they vote against everything we do to actually protect ratepayers, Mr. Speaker. When you look at the end of the day what the O.E.B. Is doing is reviewing the application. There is no prepaid meter coming to Ontario, Mr. Speaker. It is actually not even being considered right now. It is being reviewed. At the end of the day, Hydro One has said this would be an opt-in program if, if, Mr. Speaker, this was to happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker .

>> Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, this Liberal government seems quite comfortable leaving the fate of Ontario families and businesses up to the private for-profit Hydro One. But this company has already shown very clearly that it does not have the best interests of Ontarians at heart. It's applied for numerous rate increases. It's invested in a dirty coal-burning American energy company instead of our own power grid. And now it desperately wants to get around a ban object wintertime hydro disconnections. When will this Liberal government admit that the privatization experiment has failed? Stand up for Ontario families and businesses and begin to undo the damage of decades of Conservative and Liberal sell-offs, the damage that they have done with those sell-offs by bringing Hydro One back into public hands?

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again the law states that there can be no winter disconnections, and this proposed idea in the application brought forward by Hydro One wouldn't be able to circumvent that, Mr. Speaker. That would not be able to happen. That was said by Hydro One on a radio interview. That the member from Toronto- Danforth was participating in, Mr. Speaker. They know. L.B.C.S know that they can't circumvent the law, Mr. Speaker. When looking at the prepaid program, this is being reviewed right now by the O.E.B.. If and when the O.E.B. Makes a decision. And they have a history, Mr. Speaker, of actually defending the ratepayer, making sure that they reduce applications significantly brought forward by any L.D.C. That they have the ratepayers' interests at heart. This would be an opt-in program.

MPP Horwath to Minister Hoskins Re: Healthcare Privatization

>> NDP Leader Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. My next question's also for the acting Premier. The Liberals and Conservatives like to privatize things. They did it with electricity and now they're doing with health care. Thanks to both of these parties, there are over 1,000 for-profit private clinics operating in Ontario today. And now the Premier's health care privatization bill will open the door even wider for private health care in Ontario when we already know, just by looking to our Neighbours in the south, that privatized health care doesn't work for the vast majority of people. The NDP Has an amendment to this omnibus bill that will ensure that any new health care facilities that open as a result of these changes will be not for profit. Is the acting Premier and this Liberal government are serious about making sure there is no more private health care in Ontario, they should commit to passing the NDP Amendment in committee. Will the acting Premier commit to doing that right now?

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the legislation that actually we're going through clause by clause in committee right now this week that provides a number of accountability measures, enhancing the oversight, the supervision, the transparency and the accountability of many of those health activities that take place outside of our hospitals, Mr. Speaker. Private hospitals are one category of that. Way back in 1931, there was an act created called the private hospitals act. The intent through this legislation is to repeal that act, to end it, to delete it and get rid of it. We currently have, long before any Liberal government, we currently have a six grandfathered private hospitals that reside within that act. And so this legislation, as we go forward, is going to transition those existing grants. For private hospitals into a better regime of oversight and accountability and transparency. I think we can -- we all can appreciate the value of that.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, Ontarians don't believe that a person's health should depend on how much money they have. Dr. Doris Grinspun, C.E.O. Of the registered nurses' association of Ontario says and I quote -- we are very concerned with schedule 9, which will effectively lift the ban on the creation of private hospitals in Ontario. Thus we oppose the repeal of the private hospitals act and the independent health facilities act and ask for the complete withdrawal of schedule 9, end quote. The NDP Has another amendment to bill 160, Speaker, that would do exactly this, remove schedule 9 from the bill entirely to ensure that no private for-profit hospitals open in Ontario. Is this Liberal government planning to act on their own rhetoric, Speaker, and vote for the NDP Motion -- or amendment, rather, in committee so that Ontario families can actually rest assured that they will never, ever have to pay out of pocket for hospital services?

>> Minister Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, -- so we're absolutely committed as the Liberal government to end the presence of private hospitals in this province. There are six grandfathered. We are a transitioning -- I don't know if the leader of the third party is suggesting by deleting schedule 9, those hospitals will not have a

regulatory oral oversight accountability regime that applies to them. What this legislation in schedule 9 does is addresses those existing gaps in oversight. It strengthens enforcement and accountability. I can't imagine that the leader of the third party is suggesting that we leave those entities without oversight, without accountability, without transparency to Ontarians. So, Mr. Speaker, this is such important legislation that in addition to the fact that we have effectively had a ban on the creation of any new private hospitals in this province for a long time, Mr. Speaker. We're getting rid of almost a 100-year piece of legislation and increasing accountability.

>> Andrea Horwath: Shocking, Speaker, that the Minister of health is basically saying that the C.E.O. Of registered nurses' association of Ontario is wrong. I'm shocked. I'm surprised. They usually are quite well informed. Elizabeth fallerman of the national union of public and general employees says this of the Liberal health care privatization omnibus bill, quote -- adding a for-profit angle to health care in Ontario is not only wrong, it is dangerous. Privatization of our health care system leaves Ontarians vulnerable to a number of risks, not only to their own health but to their overall well-being. Dangerous is how experts are describing this latest Liberal privatization scheme. Has the Liberal government learned nothing from the disastrous Hydro One sell-off, or will the acting Premier push ahead with health care privatization and force Ontario families to pay the price?

>> Minister Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're doing the opposite of what the leader of the third party is suggesting. We're actually ending private hospitals and I have to give credit to the Ontario health coalition, Mr. Speaker. We've been working closely, including with their legal team over the past week, to make sure we could be absolutely crystal clear and that any future government would not have the ability to create private hospitals unless they were to come back into this legislation and amend the legislation. We want to rid this province of private hospitals but acknowledge that there are six that were grandfathered that are providing services to Ontario. We need to, however, move them into a regime of full accountability, transparency and oversight by the ministry of health. And I think if the member opposite were to speak with the Ontario health coalition and were to speak with R.N.A.O., particularly once this legislation is passed -- They will be satisfied that our intent is equal to theirs.

MPP Clark to Minister Naqvi Re: House Debate

>> MPP Steve Clark: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the government House leader. The level of the government's debate over the last few days has been appalling and probably embarrassing for them. They then reduce today being talking-point robots. Who said by the nonsense from their Liberal research bureau. You can't trust a word they say. Nothing that comes out of their mouths has any credibility. So I want you to look at the history. The "Ottawa citizen" wrote the Liberals are declaring themselves the champion of facts but in reality the Ontario Liberals are making things worse, as we get dubious political spin dressed up as fact checking. We all remember the Bob Probert incident when the Minister of energy had to issue an apology to Troy -- because Liberal research services couldn't even back-check a hockey fight. That's the kind of team that's feeding this government the it ter nonsense and malarkey that we're hearing from them. So, Speaker, my question -- As the leader of the government --

>> Minister Yasir Naqvi: Well, thank you very much, Speaker, for the question from the House -- from the member opposite, because I think, Speaker, when we speak about the deep hidden cuts in their glossy magazine platform, that is talking about facts. Speaker, when we talk about the facts they're right there on page 76 of their glossy magazine. There are \$12 billion worth of cuts, and asking the opposition, asking the Conservatives and Patrick Brown to explain to Ontarians what services, what programs are going -- they're going to cut is not, Speaker, wasting time. I think Ontarians deserve to know what Ontario -- what

services, what programs the P.C. Party and Patrick Brown are going to cut because, Speaker, on this side of the House, we're committed to –

>> MPP Clark: Speaker, back to the government House leader, who exactly asked to Liberal research services that can't fact-check out of a wet paper bag. I'm going to give him some more highlights. The "Toronto star" wrote -- Liberals mocked over frivolous complaint that Tories NDP Are breaking fund-raising law. Let's not forget about the time the Liberal research bureau got the two downtown Toronto venues mixed up. The Ottawa citizen wrote about saying crime sexism without having done the research reveals something about them. "The sun" summarized it as -- by asking is there a twit club? And then there was a two reporter, who I can't even say what he said because it's unparliamentary language. So, again, back to the government House leader. Are you going to take back control from the Liberal researchers? Are you going to take back and bring facts back to this government -- Continue to lower the debate in this House ?

>> Minister Naqvi: Speaker \$12 billion worth of deep cuts is what Patrick Brown and Conservatives -- \$12 billion worth of deep cuts is what the Conservatives and their leader is guaranteeing to the people of Ontario, Speaker. And that is not acceptable to us. Speaker, their plan, under their plan, Ontarians will pay more and will get less. They're going to cut \$6 billion worth of programs that will ensure that our hospitals are more energy efficient, that our schools are more energy efficient and are good places for our children to study. They will cut all environmental programming so that we can really tackle with the issue of climate change. In fact, Speaker, they're going to bring a carbon tax that is going to cost people more money. Speaker, that's not the kind of people's guarantee we need from the oppositionment they need to explain -
- To Ontarians what are the \$12 billion --

MPP Tabuns to Minister Zimmer Re: Grassy Narrows Clean-Up

>> MPP Peter 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 David 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.

MPP McMeekin to Minister Hoskins Re: Lung Health in Ontario

>> MPP Ted McMeekin: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Speaker, we know that lung disease affects millions of Ontarians, not just the 2.4 million who live with a chronic respiratory illness, but also the millions more who deserve to breathe with ease. Our government has been taking action to promote lung health and promote lung -- prevent lung disease. Last year we celebrated the tenth anniversary of our smoke free Ontario strategy which helps smoke smokers quit, protects people from exposure to second hand smoke and protect the health of children and youth. As a result of these efforts, we have decreased the smoking rate from 20.9% in 2005 to 17.4%, about 480,000 less. Speaker, can the Minister please explain -- Our government is taking to improve lung health for the people of Ontario?

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member from Ancaster- Dundas- Flamborough-westdale for the question. And if I may I'd like to take a moment first to recognize the tremendous work the member has done to advocate for better lung health in Ontario. Mr. Speaker, we can all breathe easier because of the hard work done by the member from Ancaster- Dundas- Flamborough-westdale. And with the help of the lung association here in Ontario, he has been a crucial part of the establishment of the new Ontario lung health consultation group. This group will consist of health experts, persons with lived experience, caregivers, advocates and more and they'll provide my ministry with advice and recommendations on research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease and for the development of an Ontario lung health action plan. Through this collaboration -- I'm confident we'll be successful in protecting and caring for the millions of Ontarians who live with a lung disease.

>> MPP McMeekin: Thanks very much, Minister. Through you, Mr. Speaker. I want to just take a minute to acknowledge with gratitude the member from Cambridge who spearheaded this initiative. I know, Mr. Speaker, that this group will create a plan that will ensure we are providing a coordinated approach to prevent lung disease, improve patient outcomes and reduce health care spending. Our government recognizes that those who live with chronic lung disease have real challenges, as well as their families who rightfully deserve a plan that will ensure less people suffer the loss of a loved one to lung disease. And we're confident that this group will help to achieve just that working with our wonderful partners from the Ontario lung association. Speaker, account Minister of Health and Long-Term Care -- Please share with us what else this government is doing to promote lung health in Ontario?

>> Minister Hoskins: Thank you again to the member from Ancaster- Dundas- Flamborough and west Dale for that question. This summer, in partnership with cancer care Ontario, we launched a new screening pilot for people at risk of getting lung cancer. And the pilot ensures that we're doing our best to organize lung cancer screening for people at high risk across this province. And in fact the pilot sites are based out of the Ottawa hospitals. The Renfrew Victoria hospitals, health sciences north in Sudbury and lakeridge health in Oshawa. We also have a number of existing programs that address COPD or chronic

obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma and other lung diseases. Of course we'll also starting January 1st through ohip plus be providing free absolutely free asthma inhalers, those puffers of steroids and ventolin to children and youth through ohip plus, Mr. Speaker. I'm confident that, with the member's continued advocacy and the member from Cambridge and our partnership with the lung association that we'll be able to achieve much, much more for the lung health of Ontarians.

MPP MacLeod to Minister Sousa Re: Ontario Budget

>> MPP Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the finance Minister. Earlier this week Ontario P.C. Leader Patrick Brown announced an important plank in the people's guarantee. He announced that in Ontario Progressive Conservative government will introduce a new Ontario child care refund for up to 75% of child care expenses or up to \$6,750 per child. That is real change. Real change that would make life affordable for Ontario families. Account Minister explain why he doesn't support much-needed relief for Ontario families?

>> Minister Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. Of course we all want relief for Ontario families. The member opposite and her party are not doing that. In fact all they have done, and it's quoted time and too many again this week, that their plan doesn't add up and that's coming from their own expert advisors. The fine print on the last page of their report make it clear they have \$12 billion in cuts. And the question remains what are you going to cut? Which hospitals are you going to cut? I recall, Mr. Speaker, there was another five-point plan. Mike Harris. Where did that take you, Mr. Speaker? Well, let me see, Mr. Speaker. His five-point plan said he would not make an impact education. We know he created a crisis. He said he would not close down hospitals. Instead he closed down dozens of hospitals, fired nurses and brought the system to its knees. Mr. Speaker, what are you guys going to cut?

>> MPP MacLeod: Cut an economic development Minister. We're going to cut a Minister of infrastructure who doesn't know how to roll out infrastructure. We're going to cut a Minister of health who lets patients stay in hospitals floors. We're going to cut a Deputy Premier who allows the longest College strike in Ontario history. We're going to cut a finance Minister who hasn't seen his own seat by cancelling \$1.2 billion in gas plants. We're going to cut a treasury board president that has to fight with the auditor general all the time. We're going to cut a transportation Minister who -- upside down --

>> Minister Sousa: Mr. Speaker, here's what I suspect they're going to cut because they voted against these very measures in the past. They're going to cut osap. Free tuition for students. They're going to cut ohip plus. Free pharmacare for those under 25. They're going to cut \$16 billion in infrastructure to schools this year alone, Mr. Speaker. 20 billion for hospitals. \$190 billion over the next 13 years for roads and bridges. And, Mr. Speaker, the list goes on because they voted against these very measures. And furthermore the "National post", another favourite of theirs, say it's all a shell game for middle-class income earners. They're going to have an 81% increase in gas taxes for the people of Ontario, costing them more money. And furthermore, they're going to go into deficit, Mr. Speaker. They can't even balance the books when they're making all these cuts and all these revenue increases. It's fiscally irresponsible and a social deficit as much as a fiscal deficit that they're providing.

MPP Gates to Minister Naqvi Re: Ticket Buying Protection

>> MPP Wayne Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to the acting Premier. With bill 166 this Liberal government told the public that they wanted to protect fans who bought tickets to concerts and sporting events. One of the ways this government can protect fans is by revealing how many tickets actually go on sale to the public and how many are just giveaways to vips or resold at higher prices. Public this information, consumers would know when they're being gouged. During the debate on bill 166, the Attorney General said 99% were in favour of at least some additional transparency requirements. Yet last week, we found out the Liberals removed that section of the consumer protection from their own bill. Mr. Speaker, will the acting Premier tell Ontarians who pressured the Premier to abandon protecting consumers who just want to buy tickets alt concerts for sporting events?

>> Minister Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to thank the member for asking a very important question. Speaker, as you know, we have brought a piece of legislation that is working for this House, which really will ensure that we put fans first when it comes to tickets events, sporting events, concerts, etc. We have heard very clearly from Ontarians that they want to ensure that they get tickets at affordable price, that they have a fair shot at getting tickets and that's why, Speaker, the proposals before this House would put a ban on these computer bots, would in fact would ensure that resellers, consumers, people will not be able to sell -- but, Speaker, we also take in the -- taking the financial incentive away by making sure we're putting a cap of 50% on resale prices. So that Ontarians do have access to affordable tickets. They are very robust enforcement measures and transparency requirements that I will speak to in supplementary.

>> MPP Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the acting Premier. We've heard numerous complaints at venues are holding back tickets, which means only a small fraction ever go on sale at face value. That means when parents save enough money to take their kids to a Jays game, argos game or leafs game, they only have a small opportunity to buy tickets at a fair price. Most times they have to choose between paying highly inflated prices for tickets from scalpers or letting their kids down. This Liberal government says it's committed to transparency and rejecting consumers who want to see shows or attend sporting events. Speaker, if that's the case, why are the Liberals backtracking on this important issue of consumer protection and letting down those people who just want to take their kids and their grandkids to a sporting event?

>> Minister Naqvi: I'm really happy the member opposite is interested in this issue we have shown leadership in addressing. Transparency, Speaker, is a very big part of it. One of the big things we're doing in this legislation, Speaker, is we're ensuring there's all-in pricing so that consumers, fans know exactly what they are paying for. Now, Speaker, we did also talk to a lot of artists. And we wanted to make sure there is no unintended consequences to this legislation. And the amendment that we have proposed exactly deals with that. We want to make sure that we have a robust arts and culture scene all across Ontario, just not in Toronto. And one of the concerns that was raised to us, which is legitimate, that some of the requirements that was initially proposed may result in artists not coming to smaller regional markets like niagara, the member's riding or Ottawa, Kingston, Windsor. We want to make sure, Speaker, that our arts and culture community is thriving in all parts of the province and these big ads come to our smaller markets and don't cause --

MPP Hoggarth to Minister Milczyn Re: Affordable Housing Benefit

>> MPP Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of housing and the Minister responsible for poverty reduction strategy. Our government has been running a \$20 million pilot in 22 communities across the province to increase affordable housing options for survivors of domestic violence and their families. Speaker, the affordable housing benefit provides families with the freedom to choose where they live since the subsidy isn't tied to a specific unit like the most rent geared-to-income housing. The two-year pilot project for the portable housing benefit was launched in September 2016 in 22 regions throughout Ontario. Speaker, the affordable housing benefit has been an important program for helping survivors find stability and housing. Cot Minister up dit the House on the announcement that he made yesterday? -- update the House .

>> Minister Peter Milczyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member of Barrie for the question and also for her advocacy on behalf of vulnerable Ontarians. We've been doing very important work to help survivors and their families escape violence by providing them with flexible portable housing benefit. That's why I was happy to announce yesterday that after a successful pilot we're expanding the portable housing benefit right across Ontario. We will also be expanding the program to include victims of human trafficking. I was also happy to announce that these survivors of human trafficking will also receive special priority access to social housing as victims of domestic violence do now. We're dedicated to making this program better to provide easier access to make it more inclusive. This expanded benefit. Is providing \$30 million over three years to support 3,000 survivors and will increase to \$50 million a year in 2020. Provide housing when and where –

>> MPP Hoggarth: Thank you, Speaker. Again to the Minister of housing and Minister responsible for poverty reduction strategy. Earlier this year the ministry of housing introduced its new fair housing plan. This plan includes 16 comprehensive measures to help Ontarians find a safe, suitable and affordable place to call home. The plan is helping people find affordable homes, increase supply, protect buyers and renters and bring stability to the real estate market. I understand that the Minister made an announcement this morning about the fair housing plan and how he is working to encourage the creation of new purpose-built rental in Ontario. Cot Minister please update the House on this announcement?

>> Minister Milczyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very pleased to be able to announce this morning a key part of our fair housing plan. In some places in this province, it's very hard to find suitable affordable housing and especially for those who want to rent. We're seeing condo buildings pop up on every corner but not quite so many rental developments are being built. This morning I was pleased to announce that Ontario's making it easier for people to find a place to call home by helping incentivize the construction of more rental housing in communities where many people rent but rentals are hard to find. We will encourage developers to build new rental housing by rebating development charges, Mr. Speaker. And will continue -- we'll continue to work on ways to increase the supply of housing in Ontario and build on the other initiatives in our fair housing plan that are creating more rental housing and more affordable housing across the province.

MPP Yakabuski to Minister Naqvi Re: Victim Relief Services

>> MPP John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. My question's to the Attorney General. Victim services of Renfrew county does a tremendous job in assisting and working with victims of crime to help them through their terrible circumstances, but we have a problem here, Minister. Due to legislative changes that have vastly increased the work load by over 700% coupled with the fact they've had no meaningful funding

increase in the past five years puts them on the brink of being unable to provide the services so badly need under Renfrew county and indeed all across Ontario. Speaker, I've written to the Minister about this in the past and have made it clear that, without an increase in funding victims of crime are at a greater risk than ever before. Will the Minister commit to funding victim services to the level necessary to comply with the mandate that he has given him?

>> Minister Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to thank the member opposite for asking the question. He had spoken to me about this very important issue as well, Speaker. Speaker, I want to be very clear that our government is very much committed to helping victims of crime when they need it most. Since 2003 the ministry of the Attorney General has invested over \$1 billion in vital services to support those who have been harmed by crime. As part of our government's strategy to end human trafficking we will be investing \$1.93 million over four years to expand the benefits available under the victim quick response program to better serve victims of human trafficking. Speaker, we are also investing \$6.65 million over four years to enhance the victim crisis assistance Ontario program so that our community based service delivery partners can provide better supports and case coordination for victims of human trafficking. Further, Speaker -- As part of the government's sexual violence plan in 2015 we increased funding to sexual assault centres by \$1.75 million per year.

>> MPP Yakabuski: Back to the Minister. Thank you very much. There's a lot of numbers there, Speaker. Victims of crime are still being left unserved. The Minister knows that the funding formula victim services rely on is incoherent at best, inconsistent and full of boutique envelopes. This part is not complicated. Even though victims is largely volunteer based, if the funding is not there, they can't provide the services that are needed by the people. Along with the exponentially growing case load they are now faced with the cost implications of bill 148, leaving them in even more threatened financial position. Speaker, can I count on the Minister today to ensure that victim services of Renfrew county will receive the funding it requires to provide the services that victims of crime so badly need? Thank you.

>> Minister Naqvi: Speaker, we very much recognize the hard work victim services do in Lanark county and across the province, and that's why, as we are introducing these very important programs on the urging of a lot of these victim services groups, like human trafficking, to end violence, sexual violence against women, we're making sure that they are funding available to go with it because we recognize that there is going to be extra workload. Speaker, we're also doing work right now with indigenous victims. There's work happening on gender base violence to make sure that there is more appropriate supports available for victims. But, Speaker, I also want to highlight, though, the member's going to be careful because one of the things that he is guaranteeing the people of Lanark and the people of Ontario is a \$12 billion cut from essential services. So is he going to take away \$1 billion worth of victim services as a result of their people's guarantee? Speaker, I hope that is not the case because that is going to be a major setback. For these observations for the services they provide.

MPP Fife to Minister Hoskins Re: Ambulance Wait-Times

>> MPP Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question's to the acting Premier. Acting Premier, pair med nicks Waterloo region are struggling because of off-loading delays at local hospitals, ambulances are taken off the road as paramedics wait for their patients to be transferred. This year the Waterloo region paramedics services has seen a rise in both code yellows, where there are three or fewer local ambulances on the road, and code red where there are no local ambulances on the road, none. Mr. Speaker, ambulances are essential to our health care system. Without them, people in crisis lose access to the care that they need. It shouldn't take a person's death like in Hamilton for the government to start

taking these shortages seriously. What will the government do to ensure that there are no more code reds in Waterloo region?

>> Minister Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I know that the three city of Waterloo hospitals are all participating in the dedicated off-load nurses program that the ministry initiated and has been implementing for a number of years. It provides additional resources directly to E.R.S, through nursing support, so that they can assist and expedite those off-loading challenges that may take place in hospitals around the province. And so, Mr. Speaker, it's important that Ontarians understand, because this is such vital funding that 100% of that funding to support off-loading is provided by the government, provided through the ministry of health. The city of Waterloo receives the funding from us but it is 100% provided by the government. And I'm happy to talk specifically about the performance of Waterloo in the supplementary.

>> MPP Fife: Thank you very much. Ambulance response times have slightly improved in Waterloo region but increasingly these calls are taking longer because of off-loading delays at the local hospitals. The average for ambulance days lost to off-load delays has increased by 167% compared to October 2016. The Waterloo region paramedic services has asked the government to provide enhanced funding for off-load nurses in the region. According to their interim report, provincial funding for the off located nurse program has not kept pace with the increase in patient volumes, and in fact has marginally decreased. Ontario families deserve more than an underfunded health care system that lurches from crisis to crisis. Will the government commit today to provide Waterloo region with the funding that they need for the dedicated off-load nurses?

>> Minister Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, our funding for off-load nurses provincewide has increased actually by 64% since 2011 and '12. So in the last five years, Mr. Speaker, 64% increase. But I think it's important that those who rely on the Waterloo hospitals understand that those three hospitals in the city of Waterloo have above-average provincial emergency department patient flow and above-average provincial ambulance patient flow resulting in higher ambulance off-load times. In fact the ambulance off-load time ranking of hospitals based on the 90th percentile from highest to lowest. Grand river hospital and cam bridge memorial hospital are ranked 12th and 17th respectively out of 123 E.D.S in Ontario. So I want to congratulate the hospitals in city of Waterloo. Because notwithstanding the argument made by the member opposite, they are performing exceedingly well and we're remunerating them directly to do that.

MPP Des Rosiers to Minister Matthews Re: Post-Secondary Education Funding Support

>> MPP Nathalie Des Rosiers: [Speaking in French] Voice of Translator: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of postsecondary education and professional development. [End of Translation] Postsecondary education is, but I also know about the financial Barriers that many students face when they try to access postsecondary education. And I know that the Minister firmly believes that the decision whether to obtain a postsecondary education should be based on students' ability to learn and not their ability to pay. [Speaking in French]. Voice of Translator: Postsecondary education is important for it to be affordable for students, and it's also important for -- [End of Translation] Seven out of ten new jobs will require a postsecondary education. So access to high-quality postsecondary education is important to the economy. As well as to the students. Account Minister explain what she's doing about this problem?

>> Minister Deb Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. I have to say thank you to the member opposite for her

passion about postsecondary education. Speaker, the transformation of osap has been a resounding success. We've had 60,000 more students apply this year than same time last year. Over 200,000 students in this province are getting free tuition, Speaker, and another third of our students are getting help with their tuition and their living costs, Speaker. It is tremendous. Speaker, almost all of students who receive osap receive grants that they will not have to repay. We are absolutely committed to making sure that every student in this province has the ability to learn, Speaker, because our economy depends on it. As the member opposite has said, our future economy depends on a well educated work force. And we're doing a very good job of getting there, Speaker

>> MPP Des Rosiers: [Speaking in French] Voice of Translator: Thank you for the Minister. [End of Translation] Great legacy that the transformation of osap is for our province. I had the pleasure this morning of meeting with the Ontario undergraduate student alliance, and I know that it's not only tuition that is difficult for them. There are other costs that they have to face. Tuition is not the only cost of postsecondary education. The very real concern that it brought to me is the cost of the textbooks. Textbooks are certainly an important tool of learning but their cost is often burdensome for students, and I think it is important that we address these costs fully. So, Mr. Speaker, account Minister explain what action the government is taking to increase fairness and opportunity in Ontario? Because we want to assist students with their nontuition costs.

>> Minister Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. I am really delighted to talk to the House about campus Ontario. I urge anyone who's getting a little bored with the proceedings here to go on line, ecampus Ontario, Speaker. 22 different textbooks are available not just to students, Speaker, but to the general public as well. So 227 titles. We are looking at expanding that number, Speaker. We've invested another \$1 million so that more textbooks can be added to this library. This means real savings for students, Speaker. These textbooks can cost hundreds of dollars. Real savings. It's far more convenient to be able to access open educational resources. We applaud you for pushing us on this issue, Speaker. They've been tremendous advocates. They did it on free tuition. They're doing it again on free textbooks. Thanks, Speaker .

MPP Rick Nicholls to Minister Del Duca Re: Highway Safety

>> MPP Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker. Speaker, earlier this morning we heard the names of several of those who lost their lives on 401's carnage alley. This question is to the Minister of transportation. Thank you. Now the Premier made a promise to this House to build a Barrier. Everyone understood her to mean a concrete median Barrier. As the Premier began walking the promise back, the transport Minister then said that he was looking into high-tension cables. It's not good for small cars and motorcycles. Decapitation. And large trucks just simply plow right through them. Now, Speaker, winter is coming. That stretch from queen's line to Kent road 15 in my riding every Chatham Kent Essex is extremely hazardous. Transports will inevitably cross over the grass median, end up in the ditch in the opposite direction. Road construction is currently taking place there right now. Speaker, my constituents are demanding a concrete Barrier, not a cable Barrier. I've organized a town hall meeting in my riding of Chatham- Kent -- Thursday evening. So my question to the Minister is simply this. Will you attend?

>> Minister Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. Of course I thank the member from Chatham-kent- Essex not only for the question today. He and I have had the opportunity to go back and forth on this very precise topic here in this legislature in this chamber during question period. We've also had the opportunity to speak about this a number of times one on one and frankly, Speaker, he was good enough to arrange for some of his constituents to come here to queen's park to meet with myself and some of our

officials to talk about this very issue. So I do respect the fact the member's asked the question today and the fact that he's also organized a town hall meeting for I believe tomorrow, tomorrow evening back in his community. As I mentioned to the member, there will be officials from the ministry of transportation who will be attending the town hall tomorrow evening, Speaker. I've also assured that member and his constituents that I take the issue of highway safety, road and highway safety extremely seriously, Speaker. It's why we passed legislation. With respect to this. It's why we're happy to keep the conversation going. Frankly, Speaker, it is -- it's also why following the meeting with his constituents I did ask the ministry to go back and do additional analytic work. From people from his community and I'd be happy to provide additional -