

Summary of Question Period for Monday March 20, 2017

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Please see the selected or full summaries of today's legislative Question Period.

MPP Brown (PC) to the Premier about hydro radio ads being partisan

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the **Premier**. This Liberal government has no business in possibly spending millions of hard earned taxpayer dollars on self-promoting hydro act. They are blatantly partisan and they are literally radio stations and social media in a sad attempt to save this government's falling popularity. Mr. Speaker, will the **Premier** do the right thing and stop spending public dollars on these advertisements and order that they be cancelled today? Yes or no?

>> **Premier Wynne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've been travelling the province. I've been talking to people for months, Mr. Speaker, including last week and people are very, very concerned about their hydro bills, Mr. Speaker, . The leader of the opposition knows that. He knows, Mr. Speaker, as does the third party, they know that people are looking for relief, that the work that we have done up until now, Mr. Speaker, that there's more that we need to do. That's why the 25% reduction is very important. So, Mr. Speaker, we're moving ahead with our plan. I would have thought that, given the knows from the other side, Mr. Speaker, they understand that people are concerned about their electricity bills, that they would be supportive of the changes that we are bringing forward, Mr. Speaker, that -- Will give real relief to people across the province.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the **Premier**. As the **Premier** travels the province, no one is asking for more government vanity ads. The Liberal government has a bad track record, a long track record of misusing taxpayer-funded ads for partisan purposes. We all remember the \$8.1 million in self-congratulatory ads for the job-killing pension scheme that never came to fruition. \$8.1 million just to tax and sell -- Mr. Speaker, how many millions of dollars is this government going to waste on more self-congratulatory radio ads?

>> **Premier Wynne:** Mr. Speaker, you know the two issues that the leader of the opposition has raised, retirement security for people across the province and lower electricity rates, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely proud of our record on delivering both of those, Mr. Speaker. The reality is -- The reality is that the leader -- this leader of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, sat in a federal government for nine -- The federal government, Mr. Speaker, for nine years. They wouldn't even talk to the province about retirement security. We couldn't talk about Canada pension plan

enhanced position, Speaker. We moved on that. We now have a national agreement on pension enhancement, Mr. Speaker. Because of the work that we did on the ortc, Mr. Speaker. In addition we're going to deliver lower electricity rates, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier. It really is unbelievable. People can't afford their hydro bills. This government is spending millions on vanity ads self promoting their own agenda. I want to read a quote from the auditor general. The ads likely would not have been approved under the old government advertising rule. That's Bonnie Iysyk. Changes the Liberals enacted in 2015 reduce her office to a rubber stamp. I'll continue to quote from the auditor general -- It would likely not have passed because it does convey a positive impression of the current government and it's more a pat-on-the-back type of advertising. Those rules were put into place to prevent Liberal wasting taxpayer dollars on vanity ads. They changed the rules so they could use taxpayer dollars to promote themselves. The government can dance, point the finger, the government can avoid answering the questions. For years they complained about these type of ads when they were in opposition. Change the rules to not allow this to happen, and now they're doing the same thing. Mr. Speaker, to the Premier. Are you going to continue with these vanity ads?

>> Premier Wynne: This is a very important issue, and the reality is that, when this government came into office under my predecessor, there were virtually no rules around partisan advertising, Mr. Speaker. And in fact I can remember sitting in this gallery and listening to the Liberal opposition -- I can remember sitting in this gallery, Mr. Speaker, when the Liberal opposition was asking the then Tory government about advertising that had the Premier's face in it, Mr. Speaker, that was all over. There were kids out of school because there were strikes, Mr. Speaker. There were hospitals being closed. The amalgamations were being imposed, Mr. Speaker. Chaos was raining and the Premier of the day had his face all over advertising. We changed those rules, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Horwath (NDP) to the Premier about partisan advertising

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question's for the Premier. The Premier and her Liberal government ads touting their phantom hydro plan have been condemned by the auditor general as a pat on the back partisan exercise that would never have been allowed before the Liberals changed the rules on advertising, Speaker. Can the Premier tell Ontarians what the price tag is for these self-serving ads?

>> Premier Wynne: I will just remind the leader of the third party that we were the province in this country that actually introduced rules around partisan advertising, Mr. Speaker. Before this government under my predecessor came to office, those rules didn't exist, Mr. Speaker. We put in place rules that said partisan advertising is unacceptable. In reaction, Mr. Speaker, to -- in reaction, Mr. Speaker, to the really egregious advertising that has been done by the Conservatives, Mr. Speaker, that were so blatantly partisan that it was obvious that there needed to be restrictions put in place. Those restrictions -- time. And we adhere to them.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I feel like it's comedy hour in the legislature. This government changed the rules and then changed them back so that they could use public money to advertise and promote themselves when they get into

political trouble. Not one dime has come off of the skyrocketing hydro bills and this Premier has not tabled a plan yet or even any legislation yet to show Ontarians what their money is going to be spent on or if they are even going to save any money in the future. But she is still spending more money on advertising claiming the problem's been solved. How much is this attempt to buy the political relief on hydro bills going to cost Ontarians?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let me just remind the leader of the third party that we have a plan that actually will reduce people's electricity bills, Mr. Speaker, and will reduce those bills by the summer, Mr. Speaker, substantial relief. 25% on average off all bills across the province, Mr. Speaker, for residents who pay electricity in their homes, Mr. Speaker. Further relief for people who are paying disproportionately high distribution costs, Mr. Speaker, in remote and rural areas and an enhancement to the Ontario electricity support program that will help people on low income. Mr. Speaker, it's a substantial program that will deliver relief and will deliver it in a timely manner, Mr. Speaker. And I'm so pleased that the leader of the third party is eager to get going on that plan, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to her support as we move forward.

>> Andrea Horwath: Speaker, instead of partisan ads, how about we actually receive a plan? We hear a lot of talk. We see a lot of press releases, but we have not yet seen a plan. These are obviously much more about the Premier and her Liberal party instead of making life more affordable for the people of Ontario. How much public money -- Is this Premier spending on advertising, Speaker, for -- How much public money is this Premier and her Liberal party spending on advertisements for the billion-dollar hydro borrowing scheme that she has still not made public?

>> Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased that we are talking about our plan, the plan that we've brought forward, that is actually going to reduce people's electricity bills --, Mr. Speaker, it is a substantial plan. And it actually will work, Mr. Speaker. So I was at a business this past week, Mr. Speaker, called -- I was in Barrie at a great chocolate and cheese shop, Mr. Speaker. They're going to see a substantial reduction in their electricity bill, which is going to allow them, Mr. Speaker, to expand their business. They are -- they're building a patio on the back of their store jai door and it is going to be a real anchor on the main street in Barrie, Mr. Speaker. J'adore. That's the kind of business we want to see thrive and that's why it's so important that the real plan we are bringing forward is going to give them real relief.