

Transcript of Provincial Question Period for September 29, 2016

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41st Parliament, 2nd Session
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MPP Brown to Premier Wynne Re: Energy Management

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. According to innovative research group poll results that were highlighted in the "National post", the people of Ontario have never been so angry and why, Mr. Speaker, are they angry? Maybe it's because this government has lost \$6 billion giving energy away to places like New York, Pennsylvania and Michigan. Maybe it's because according to the auditor general, between 2006 and 2014. The people of Ontario have been overcharged \$37 billion for electricity and global adjustment fees. Maybe it's because this government has overpaid \$9.2 billion for renewable contracts while the Liberal party took \$1.3 million in donations from 30 companies. There's a lot of reasons why the people of Ontario would be angry but, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier why do you think the people of Ontario are so angry at your energy policy?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, let me once again talk about what has happened in this province on electricity generation, Mr. Speaker. We inherited an electricity system that was badly degraded, Mr. Speaker. It was dirty. The grid was dirty, Mr. Speaker. We were plagued with Brownouts and blackouts, smog -- We took that dirty unreliable system, Mr. Speaker, and we cleaned it, Mr. Speaker. We invested in it. We now have an electricity system that is 90% renewable, Mr. Speaker. Cutting -- shutting down of the coal-fired plants in this province, investment in a renewable industry, Mr. Speaker, was -- The single largest reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in North America. We're proud of that, Mr. Speaker. We've done away with smog days.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. Last night CTV's Paul bliss broke a shocking story. Hydro One has been Collecting money specifically to pay for equipment they deemed very high risk for failure. But Paul bliss learned that there are still 111 transformers that are in dire need of repair. So much for the Premier's talking points on reliability. For years this government has been approving rate increases, then failing to fix transformers. They're not bringing reliability to our system. So my question is what did that money go for. It was supposed to be for repairs. Was it use today pay the \$4 million salaries you approved for the C.E.O.S? Was it the \$24 million the Premier approved for the new executive members? Because certainly wasn't going to fix the transformers. So, Mr. Speaker. Why has the Premier allowed either one to raise rates but not fix the system?

>> Premier Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I know, I know that the Minister of energy is going to want to speak in the final supplementary but, Mr. Speaker, let me just say and we have visitors here from California and from Québec with whom we are partnering, Mr. Speaker.

[Applause] We are partnering to continue to -- greenhouse gas emissions.

[Applause] For our visitors and our partners to hear, to hear the rhetoric from the other side, Mr. Speaker, from people who don't, who don't support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, who don't support the changes made to make our grid a clean electricity grid, to do away with smog days, Mr. Speaker, to reduce pollution in the air. They don't support that, Mr. Speaker, but the reality is we are steadfast. We are going to continue to invest in our electricity system. We are going to continue to reduce greenhouse gas emission and work with enlightened jurisdictions like Québec and --

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. I can understand why the Premier would reference Québec being here today. They should be here thanking Ontario because this Premier has been giving away Ontario electricity, sometimes even paying Québec to take it because of the contracts that this Premier signed in return for Liberal party donation. So, Mr. Speaker, back to the

Premier. I received an e-mail -- Mr. Speaker, what do these reckless energy policies mean for people? I received an e-mail to my Simcoe North constituency office for Mary. She is a member of the Canadian forces and a single parent of two children. She sacrificed a lot to serve her country but because of this government's hydro policies she now has to choose which bill she won't pay each month so she can keep the lights on. She has cancelled her cable and phone. And all of her kids' extra-curriculars. Mr. Speaker, she is now saying she has to leave Ontario. She's asking for a different posting. My question to the Premier is why are you doing this?

>> Premier Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and just want to say that we understand that there are people in the province who are having trouble paying their electricity bills. We understand that, Mr. Speaker, which is exactly why in the throne speech we introduced an initiative that will take the provincial portion of the H.S.T. Off people's electricity bills for rural communities, Mr. Speaker, another 12% reduction up to 20% reduction on their bills, Mr. Speaker, and expand the industrial conservation initiative to help businesses to deal with their electricity bills. We understand that, Mr. Speaker. We know that people need support which is why we have a range of programs in place. But, Mr. Speaker, the investments that we have made in our electricity system to make it clean, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The opposition says we haven't made investments. We most certainly have made investments, Mr. Speaker. Over 10,000 kilometres of line. We've made those investments -- Under the table with Premiers from across the country and I know that it is in the best interests of the people of Ontario that we work with Québec, that we work with Manitoba, that we sign agreements and we find ways to share power, Mr. Speaker, which is exactly what we're doing to an unprecedented level, Mr. Speaker .

MPP Brown to Minister Thibeault (Murray) Re: Energy Management

>> PC Leader Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Yesterday the Minister of energy defended the Ontario energy board's decision to bury the cost of cap and trade plans on people's bills. The Liberals have no problem showing their band-aid's rebates solution as a line item -- Mr. Speaker, why should a cap and trade be a line item on the natural gas bills? After all, isn't this government supposed to be in favour of being open and transparent? Mr. Speaker, directly to the Premier, why is the Premier afraid to show the true cost of cap and trade plans? Why is she hiding? Why would she not allow it on the bill? It's inconsistent with what she's doing -- yes or no? Will you have it on the bill?

>> Min. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the member of the official opposition for the question, because it's an important one for me to continue to reiterate. We're not comparing apples to apples in that question, Mr. Speaker. We've been very transparent all along about what the cost is going to be to cap and trade. Not acting on cap and trade and not acting on climate change, Mr. Speaker, would cost so much more. The O.E.B. Is a quasi-judicial organization that make its decision, Mr. Speaker, and we respect that decision. Basically, Mr. Speaker, as saying this is the cost of doing business. We don't see the cost of the pipes on the bills, Mr. Speaker. We don't see the cost of labour's on the bill, Mr. Speaker, so they made the decision. They did consultations with many, many organizations and with stakeholders right across the province, Mr. Speaker. This is the decision that they came up with. And this is the decision that we respect. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. By not putting the cost of cap and trade on the bill, Liberals are throwing the natural gas companies under the bus. It will look like the companies are raising prices when in fact it's the Liberals' cap and trade scheme that will force prices up. Why would they want to do that? Well, maybe it's because the Premier's hosting a \$1,000 dinner next week at energy, a Chinese energy company that wants to replace natural gas. The previous Liberal Cabinet plan to ban natural gas was exposed by Adrian morrow in the "Globe and mail" forcing the Liberals to retreat not to mention they are still mandating net zero homes, another way of forcing people off natural gas. Mr. Speaker, is the Liberal -- is this the Liberals' secret agenda trying to force people off natural gas, when will their attack on affordable home heating end?

>> Min. Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, absolutely no one is trying to force anyone off natural gas. We're

actually expanding natural gas. Trying to do is put people back on puffers, Mr. Speaker. We eliminated all coal fired generation, Mr. Speaker. We've invested in our system. Our natural gas system. \$200 million loan program to get more communities and more municipalities and first nations onto natural gas. \$30 million grant program, Mr. Speaker, that is being looked after for by the great Minister of infrastructure. We look forward to having the conversation and getting more of our communities on natural gas to give those choice, Mr. Speaker, to give that choice to as many families in communities right across our great province, Mr. Speaker

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier. I can understand why the Premier wouldn't want to answer these questions. Her government's energy policy is an unmitigated disaster, but I hope the Premier will answer this question. A few months ago CTV's Paul bliss exposed the tax on a tax, just another thing the Liberals tried to hide so let's recap. The Liberals tried to ban natural gas. They are burying the cost of cap and trade on natural gas bills, and the Liberals tried to hide the tax on a tax until paul bliss exposed it. Mr. Speaker, how far will this government go to hide their true plan to rid the affordable home heating?

>> Min. Glen Murray: Mr. Speaker, let's hit the pause button. Because the leader of the opposition has a plan to raise carbon prices between 110 and \$150 a tonne. With zero revenues to how people adjust to it. That means rates would be seven times higher. But maybe he's flip-flopped again like he did on -- And climate change and so many other things, Mr. Speaker, because he's got more positions than he's got ... on his side, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we will not support \$110 increase in people's bills like he will, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MPP Singh to Premier Wynne (Thibeault, Sousa) Re: Toronto Hydro

>> MPP Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, the Premier doesn't want to talk about the privatization of local hydro utilities. She says it's up to the municipalities. But that's not the whole story. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. But that's not the whole story. The Liberals can encourage the privatization by offering special tax loopholes. The government has a choice. Is the Premier going to encourage the Toronto hydro's decision or the privatization of Toronto hydro by creating a tax loophole?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I have answered this question, I've said and it remains the case that it is up to the city Toronto council and the mayor to have this discussion and to make its decision about their utility. It is up to them and if the member opposite is interested in that discussion, he should talk to the members of council at Toronto, at city of Toronto.

>> MPP Singh: Mr. Speaker, the facts are very different from what the Premier's putting forward. The reality is the Premier can make it a lot easier for Toronto hydro and other local utilities to privatize if she gives the municipalities a tax break. That means the Premier won't be sitting back and waiting for municipalities to make the decision. That means the Liberal government will have a direct role in the privatization of local hydro utilities and the media are reporting that the Premier has said, quote, she will not -- I will not stand in the way of any push by mayor John Tory to privatize Toronto hydro. Is the Premier going to make it easier for local hydro utilities to privatize by providing a tax break?

>> Min. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier said, the decision to privatize Toronto hydro is up to Toronto city council. There's no if, ands or buts, Mr. Speaker. That is the council that makes the decision. What I'm thinking that the third party is confusing is privatization and consolidation. We have over 70 L.D.C.S so we have over 07 utilities right across the province, Mr. Speaker, and we would like to see that number come down. So we've put forward voluntary consolidation to actually have these companies come together to find savings. The independent electricity system operator has said that there will be about \$1 billion in savings, Mr. Speaker, for the ratepayers, about a billion dollars in saving it is we have this consolidation. So I think, Mr. Speaker, that the third party is confusing privatization and consolidation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely not. There's no confusion here. In fact I agree that

the city and municipalities have a decision, but if the city of Toronto, for example, were to sell Toronto hydro, they would have to pay \$200 million in taxes to the provincial government in a transfer of tax fees. So the Liberal government can actually encourage this decision if they waive that tax. Liberal insiders say the Premier's interested in waiving this provincial transfer tax and encourage the privatization so that privatizing Toronto hydro could give the Liberals, quote, political cover for their own privatization of Hydro One, end quote. So my question is very simple. Will the Premier help the privatization of local hydro utilities by waiving the provincial taxes, yes or no?

>> Min. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the member opposite has it all wrong because in fact when we were looking at Hydro One and our ability to broaden its ownership, it did in fact incur a degree of deferred tax which we benefitted from as people of Ontario to the effect of again enabling us greater value to the trillium trust which is now going to be used directly into infrastructure. But the member opposite in fact has his own utility which is under question now which is going to benefit from a consolidation because of the benefits we provided for tax relief with Brampton hydro, Enersource, Verizon and Power Stream. All of that consolidation's very great efficiency for that member's constituents which he apparently opposed as well and that's unfortunate because this member and his constituent will benefit from some of these initiatives and again will be able to invest even more into the infrastructure. Ultimately the people of Toronto, the council of Toronto, it's their decision to make, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Singh to Minister Thibeault Re: Hydro One/Toronto Hydro

>> MPP Jagmeet Singh: My question again to the Premier. Let's make it clear no one in this province benefitted from the privatization of Toronto hydro but for the Liberal party and their elite friend. People across Ontario are concerned about how they're going to keep the lights on, how they're going to warm their House this winter. Privatization doesn't mean that hydro agencies will have different owners as the Liberals like to claim. It means that prices will go up. Costs will go up. As one investor told media, if Toronto hydro is privatized the new owners will, quote, expect a return on their investment and the obvious way is to further rate increases for the Toronto hydro's 730,000 customers end quote. It's very clear privatization increases costs. The question is will the Premier rule out any further privatization of our hydro system?

>> Min. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and answer the question for the Honourable member. As he well knows the O.E.B. is the organization, the quasi-judicial organization that's not part of the government. They set the rates, Mr. Speaker. The broadening of Hydro One is actually -- has actually helped our government continue to invest in infrastructure right across the province and it's not just us that's saying that, Mr. Speaker. There's a great report today in the "Globe and Mail" from reporter Tim Kollazzi that talks about the Hydro One sale is a home run. He points out that when the P.C.S. were in power they privatized the 407 and the cut-rate price as he says luckily, quote, the Premier was, he listened to our advisors and decided today sell 60% of Hydro One in chunks but this strategy allows the province to maximize the value of the sale while still maintaining a controlling stake. His analysis is spot on, Mr. Speaker. I continue to look forward to working with this government to build infrastructure right across the province, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Singh: People want to build a good life for themselves. More important they want to build a better life for the next generation. They want to make sure they have the same if not better than what they had but the rising cost of living makes that very difficult. Privatization of how Ontario generates electricity has increased the cost of electricity from about 4 cents per kilowatt hour to 18 cents per kilowatt hour. That's what the privatization is doing. Now the Liberal government is opening up the privatization of Hydro One and naturally that's going to increase costs even further. Now they're opening up a further door of the privatization of local hydro utilities. Selling off more of our hydro system means less options, less opportunities. It means the next generation will have a difficult time and harder time instead of an easier time. Will the Premier make it clear and commit to ending any further privatization of our public hydro utility system?

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know we're on track to realize the target of \$9 billion generated through the I.P.O., Mr. Speaker, and through that, I was going to continue to talk about

the report in the "Globe and mail", Mr. Speaker, broadening the ownership of Hydro One is smart policy, Mr. Speaker. It's supporting this government's significant investment in infrastructure right across the province and talking about creating jobs, Mr. Speaker. Part of the money that we're getting from the broadening of this sale went towards \$173 million that my friend from the ministry of transportation was able to announce, Mr. Speaker, on expanding highway 69 to four lanes, Mr. Speaker, making our roads safer and making sure that we create hundreds of jobs throughout the province as we build Ontario up, Mr. Speaker. We've got investments happening from Kenora to Ottawa to Windsor, all over this province, Mr. Speaker, because we recognize the importance of building infrastructure and broadening the sale of Hydro One does just that, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Singh: Mr. Speaker, there's no broader ownership than every single person in this province owning a public utility. The people are worried that the Premier is getting ready to help privatize those utilities. People have seen this movie before. They've seen it with Hydro One. They've seen it with this government never running on this idea of selling off Hydro One and then going ahead and selling off our public utility. Now we know the Liberals haven't run on, haven't spoken about this in the throne speech, haven't run on the sale of private local hydro utilities, but now we're seeing that they're not ruling that out as well. Privatized hydro is pushing people over the edge. Will the Premier once and for all rule out any further privatization of our public utilities? Just rule it out.

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And again thanks for the question. You know he started off his question talking about how it's important to make sure that every single Ontarian owns a portion of Hydro One and will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker. Ontario will remain the single largest shareholder of Hydro One. Legislation requires that we keep a minimum of 40% ownership. So -- and no other shareholder group is going to own more than 10% of that, Mr. Speaker. You know what? Every single Ontarian in this province is talking about what they want and what they want to own. What about owning new transit? What about making sure we're building bridges, Mr. Speaker? What about owning decent roads right across the province, Mr. Speaker? That's what Ontarians want. They want jobs and growth and we're providing that, Mr. Speaker. We're building Ontario up and we'll continue with that focus and make sure it happens for all families right across this province.

MPP Clark to Minister Sandals Re: Public Accounts

>> MPP Steve Clark: My question's to the president of the treasury board. By law, this government is to table the province's public accounts by the end of this week. But on Tuesday the president of the treasury board rose in the House and said because of ongoing discussions with the treasury board and the auditor general, the books would be delayed. But an insider says this discussion is more of a dispute and that the treasury board is challenging the auditor general's accounting. Mr. Speaker, will the president of the treasury board please explain why she will not be tabling the public accounts on time? Speaker, what is this government hiding?

>> Min. Liz Sandals: Thank you very much, Speaker. And let me answer the last part of the question first. We're not hiding anything. In fact if he reflected on the rest of my statement to the House, he would know that I also said that I am pleased to report to the House that in fact we are on track to meet our deficit targets as published in last year's budget and the fall economic statement from a year ago. So we're not hiding anything. We are on track to meet our targets. What I did say, Speaker, was that we are having -- there's some complex accounting issues that we're working on. We're working on them with the auditor general. Directed my officials at treasury board to work with the auditor general to come up with a plan to table the books as soon as possible

>> MPP Clark: Back to the president of the treasury board. You know, Speaker, something just doesn't seem right. Just one week ago the Deputy Minister at the treasury board quit. Now the Liberals are going to miss the tabling deadline. Why is that? Has this government been using shady accounting practices? Is the debt and deficit higher than the government is letting on? Mr. Speaker, what exactly is going on in that office? What else is this government trying to hide?

>> Min. Sandals: Yes. Thank you very much. And I would repeat that we have absolutely nothing to hide. There is a discussion going on between the accountants in the auditor general's office, the

accountants in the treasury board secretariat, the accountants at the ministry of finance, and I've asked that they come together. It's an accounting issue. It's quite a complex accounting issue and that they come together and find a solution to that and that we will table the books as quickly as possible, but once again I want to assure the members, Speaker, that we have absolutely nothing to hide and that in fact we are on target to meet the deficit plan that we tabled in the budget in the fall economic statement. Thank you

MPP Vanthof to Minister Thibeault Re: Northern & Rural Hydro Rates

>> MPP John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. People in rural and northern Ontario are being hammered by sky-high hydro delivery charges which are often higher than the actual cost of the power consumed. The Wynne government has promised to reduce the rural delivery charges by 12%. In the House yesterday the Premier stated that rural and northern communities have ... to the 20% reduction, which is 12 plus the H.S.T. -- Access. My question is very simple. Will all northern rural customers qualify for the promised 12% delivery charge reduction?

>> Min. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Honourable member for his question. As we said all along families in rural and remote communities that have been qualified for the triple R.P. Will continue to get the triple R.P.. If the families don't get the triple R.P., they get the 8%, Mr. Speaker. So the one thing that we're very proud of is we're making sure that the triple R.P. That has never increase now going to \$45 a month or 20% on an average bill, Mr. Speaker. We're making sure that the families that are in northern Ontario that, are in rural parts of our province, Mr. Speaker, can save as much as possible. It's difficult, Mr. Speaker, for me to actually have a broad sweep with all people because everyone has a different designation on their bill, Mr. Speaker. The important thing to recognize is every ... will be getting at least 8% right across the province, Mr. Speaker, and those families that are in northern parts or rural parts, Mr. Speaker, they will get the 20%. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Vanthof: Speaker, my question is again to the Premier. This morning, in a response she said there will be a 12% reduction for rural communities. She didn't say rural and remote. She said rural communities. The Minister now says he's backtracking a bit because several times in this House it was 20% for everyone. So there's 1.8 million people in rural Ontario, but apparently only 300,000 will be getting the rebate. So -- total rebate. So people need to know, will the Premier tell people who were promised but won't be getting it? Thank you.

>> Min. Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So now it's a debate amongst semantics. Rural, remote, northern, Mr. Speaker. I know the folks in northern Ontario don't like being called rural but -- Mr. Speaker, 330,000 families in the rural, remote or northern parts of our province will be getting the benefit of 20% on their bills. We've been saying this all along, Mr. Speaker, and we recognize, even the financial accountability officer has come out with a report, Mr. Speaker, that says we recognize that some families in these parts of our province are seeing higher cost of their electricity bills on the delivery charge. That percentage, Mr. Speaker, that goes directly toward lowering that piece. But the financial accountability officer. Also said, Mr. Speaker, that on average we're right in the middle of the pack when it comes to our rates right across this country, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Kiwala to Minister Hunter Re: Math Education

>> MPP Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of education. We have a lot to be proud of when it comes to student achievement thanks in large part to our great educators and staff. Our schools are recognized across the country and around the world for excellence in education, and this is something that we need to be extremely proud of. Last week I understand you announced how we are working together with our schools to implement our new renewed math strategy, and I know that the latest eqao results show that there is more work for us to do to support our students and our teachers in mathematics learning. Speaker through you to the Minister, what is the Ontario government doing to raise student achievements in mathematics?

>> Min. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. And I want to say thank you to the very hard working member from Kingston and the island. Wonderful advocate for her constituents. Mr. Speaker, supporting effective learning and teaching in mathematics is a top priority for our government. I am very proud that we are dedicating more than \$60 million to supporting students across the province as they strive to do well in mathematics, and this strategy is in place as of September. Math is critical to the jobs of today and for the jobs of the future. Our renewed math strategy is informed by research and best practices in learning, and we have consulted with educators from across the sector. It focuses on the need of students, educators and parents while encouraging a shared responsibility that we all share. To support our students in their learning. By working together with our students, we can ensure their success

>> Min. Kiwala: Thank you, Minister. We are extremely proud of the investments made in education. It is important that we will continue to focus on improving the achievement of all students in mathematics, and I'm please today hear that the students in my riding of Kingston and the island look the limestone District School Board, the algonquin Lakeshore catholic school board Francophone will have access to increased support when it comes to mathematics. Minister, can you please tell this House what types of supports and opportunities our government will be providing as part of the re nude math strategy?

>> Min. Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you again to the member. Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the school year, we were introducing key elements of the renewed math strategy. A minimum of 60 minutes each day of protected times for learning effective math instruction, assessment for students in grades 1 to 8. Up to three math leads in all elementary schools. We're also ensuring that resources are in applause for students and parents. Better access to online math resources and math support such as homework help and ... as well as a parent's tool kit. Opportunities for educators to deepen their knowledge. Learning, teaching and leading. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all of our education workers for the great work they're doing on behalf of our students.

MPP Fedeli to Minister Sousa Re: Financial Transparency

>> MPP Vic Fedeli: Thank you and good morning, Speaker. My question's for the Minister of finance. In his recent annual report, the financial accountability officer confirms what we already know. This government is neither open nor transparent. The F.A.O. Said they are actively skirting their obligation and refusing to disclose information obligated under the law. He even said, quote, I believe this is political direction. Through the work of the F.A.O., we have learned a number of shocking revelations. The sale of Hydro One will have a negative impact on the province's finance. Business investment is set to decline, and Ontario's debt level is spiraling out of control. Yet they refuse to co-operate with the F.A.O. And obey the law. I ask the Minister what are you hiding from the Ontario taxpayers?

>> Min. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we're working very closely with the F.A.O.. We recognize the importance of getting our information out. C.D.howe institute and many others have already expressed Ontario's books and accounting are by far the most transparent and most indicative of what is the state of affairs, unlike what would happen in the past or in the Conservative regime where they hid \$5 billion at the time of their last election. We have been surfacing -- surpassing our targets. We have constantly decreased our deficits year over year. Rating agencies and investors bow to Ontario, and even the F.A.O. Has raised that we are coming to balance, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much.

>> MPP Fedeli: Thank you. Back to the Minister. Well, there are some examples of what the F.A.O. Has called a quote broader pattern of secrecy and refusal to provide legally required information. Speaker, this government has failed to release the long-range assessment of Ontario's finances, which was due us on the June 12th deadline. They have failed to provide third-quarter financial statements since 2012, Speaker. These are important documents for MPP S to do our job, and yet their end, Speaker, they're required under the fiscal transparency and accountability act. So much for being open and transparent. Speaker, this government has plunged Ontario into structural deficit and record levels of debt. Yet they refuse to come clean and obey the law. I ask the Minister again,

what else are you hiding from the people of Ontario?

>> Min. Sousa: Mr. Speaker, long-term report is coming out as it did four years ago and it actually did come out at a later time and we're going to maintain, we want to make certain all the information is obtained including some of our more recent reports that we are in the midst of having completed. But furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the F.A.O. Recognizes credit agency's assessment that we are well positioned to achieve our target stating and I quote Ontario's credit rating indicates that they believe the province has taken adequate states on both revenues and expenditures to achieve its plan to restore balance, Mr. Speaker. Recently by four credit rating agencies including moody east upgrading of their outlook of Ontario's credit. The F.A.O., the accountants, they're all working on the matter. We are eager to release our public accounts because we have a great story to tell, a story to tell, no support from the op stoition reduce our deficit and increase our

MPP Tabuns to Minister Thibeault Re: OEB & Capital Upgrades

>> MPP Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, my question as to the Premier. The government insists that the Ontario energy board will defend ratepayers when a privatized Hydro One comes calling to demand more private profits. But the auditor general found the O.E.B. Approved rate increases for capital upgrades that never took place. Hydro One spent the money on something else. And then as the number of blackouts increased Hydro One came back to demand even more ratepayer cash to fix the problems they should have fixed with the money they have already been given. What are the consequences for a utility that receives ratepayer cash for upgrades that never take place or for the regulator that approves those rate increases?

>> Min. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm, you know, thankful to be able to stand and clarify a lot of things that was in that question, Mr. Speaker, because, you know, Hydro One does not reflect investments in rates until those assets are in service, Mr. Speaker. So to make that clear customers do not pay for deferred investments and the O.E.B. Is very clear on that, Mr. Speaker. The O.E.B. As we've said all along is the organization that sets the rates. They look at what is being brought forward and then they make that decision. At no time has any, any decision been made to defer investments, Mr. Speaker. But what I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the hard work of this utility is part of what has transformed an unreliable and under-maintained system that was left in place by the P.C.S, Mr. Speaker. We've that turned -- turned that into a clean and reliable system. And that's something we can all be proud of, Mr. Speaker .

>> MPP Tabuns: Well, Speaker, it's clear the government hasn't read the auditor general's report on Hydro One. The Ontario energy board approved higher delivery rates to pay for a fivefold increase in capital spending by Toronto hydro. But upgrades that were supposed to take place years ago were delayed or deferred. Even so the O.E.B. Gave them ratepayer money for capital upgrades the C.E.O. Of Toronto hydro ant mayor of Toronto are now claiming there's no other way to pay for capital upgrades and prevent blackouts except through privatization. And the Premier's encouraging this privatization by offering a fat tax break that will transfer debt burdens onto Ontarians. Instead of subsidizing the privatization of Toronto hydro, why won't the Premier make sure that when the O.E.B. Approves rate increases. That those upgrades actually take place?

>> Min. Thibeault: Again, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the privatizing of Toronto hydro, Mr. Speaker, that's a decision for Toronto city council. When it comes to the O.E.B., Mr. Speaker, the agency has a strong record at reviewing rate applications with the consumer in mind, Mr. Speaker. For example in 2010 Hydro One asked for a rate increase for its distribution and received a 9% reduction in its capital requests. In 2012 Hydro One asked for a rate increase for its transmission and received a 3% reduction for its capital request, Mr. Speaker. Priority when it comes to replacing transformers, Mr. Speaker, is decided by the condition, performance and how critical the asset is into the electricity service is one of the factors that they look at what they're making that decision as a company, Mr. Speaker. And once again there is nothing there to reflect that investments in rates will increase for assets that are in service. Customers do not pay, Mr. Speaker, for deferred investments.

MPP Rinaldi to Minister Chiarelli Re: Infrastructure Investments

>> MPP Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of infrastructure. Minister, Ontarians know that investing in infrastructure, be it jobs, stimulus growth and enhancing the quality of life is a top priority for our government. Our historic 116 billion investment has already started building bridges, roads, schools, hospitals and other critical public infrastructure projects. In my riding and across the province. This investment will also fund often forgotten but equally important great infrastructure projects such as clean water and wastewater infrastructure. Across Ontario, a growing need for all levels of government to make strategic investments in clean water, effective water management systems. Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister, could he please explain -- investment our government's making in clean water and wastewater infrastructure?

>> Min. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the member from the great riding of Northumberland-quinte west. Speaker, the people of Ontario deserve to know that they have clean water and effective water management systems that they can trust each and every day. That is why our government is partnering with the federal government to make significant investments in clean water and wastewater infrastructure across the province. The federal and provincial governments, along with Ontario municipalities, are investing \$1.1 billion in the clean water and wastewater fund, Speaker, which will provide access to clean and reliable drinking water, efficient wastewater systems and healthy waterways. \$270 million will be provided by our government and Ontario's municipalities each. Speaker, we are honouring our commitment to build Ontario up by investing in critical public -- That creates jobs, stimulates growth and enhances quality of life.

>> MPP Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister. I'm delight today know our government is making significant investments into the protection of municipal water supply. It is encouraged to know that our government is working to ensure constituents like mine from port hope to quinte west have safe, reliable public infrastructure that they can count on. I know that our government's multibillion-dollar investment in infrastructure will create jobs, stimulate growth and enhance quality of life for all Ontarians, sustaining an average of 110,000 jobs per year. I also know our government has many infrastructure funding programs for everything from small community projects to major public transit works. Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister, could he please elaborate on our government's historic infrastructure program?

>> Min. Chiarelli: 41 projects have already been approved under the clean water and wastewater fund and application from the all municipalities and first nations across the province are now being accepted. But the fund is only one part of our province's historic \$160 billion investment in critical public infrastructure. The constituency -- of every single member in this House will receive support for infrastructure projects through various if you want -- fund. We have committed to boosting the Ontario community infrastructure fund from 100 million to \$300 million per year. \$31 billion on moving Ontario forward. 15 billion dollars of which will be spent outside the gtha and many of the ridings of the members opposite, Speaker. We have also committed \$1 about I don't know to the. Northern Ontario and billions more in education and health care capital and retrofits.

MPP Munro to Premier Wynne (Sousa) Re: ORPP

>> MPP Julia Munro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Premier, when the O.R. P.P. Was abandoned, the government said it would cost around \$20 million. Then it was revealed the true cost was more than 70 million, including generous severances for Liberal friends, some of whom had only worked on the orpp for days. But that report also revealed an unaccounted \$12 million in office space. First it was 20. Then 70, now 82. Will the Premier tell us the true cost of cancelling the orpp or are you hiding that?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the Minister -- I know the Minister of finance will want to comment in the supplementary, but let me just say, Mr. Speaker, that it is a very good thing that across this country we now have agreement on -- the fact is that we were moving ahead to put in place an Ontario retirement pension plan in the absence because under the Stephen Harper

government, and I know that the leader of the opposition knows all about that, under the Stephen Harper government, there was no appetite for, no understanding of the pension crisis that was facing people across the country. So now that we have been able to work with the federal government and work with our Colleagues across the country, we have a Canada pension plan enhancement, Mr. Speaker. But we were very determined in Ontario to make sure that in the absence of that agreement at the federal level and across the country, we would have secure retirement for people in Ontario.

>> MPP Munro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier. If the Premier had just listened to my call to put an end to the orpp while I'm told -- I'm told after the federal election -- Thank you. Instead the Liberals recklessly plowed ahead. The 82 million doesn't count staff resources or the 7 million spent every year on pension policy development. Mr. Speaker, the Premier should come clean and tell us the true costs of cancelling the orpp. And I want to ask another part of a question here. Do Ontario taxpayers regularly pay for cross country advertising?

>> Min. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, a couple of things that the member references which are completely incorrect but the most important one is the fact that if we had listened to them and listened to her, there would be no retirement security for the people Ontario or the people of Canada. We stood in this House. We fought for the people of Ontario and all of Canada. I'm very proud of the work this Premier has done to support that cause. And furthermore, we put forward what we anticipate will be the high point of any outstanding costs and those costs are actually coming down, Mr. Speaker, so again she's incorrect on that point. And furthermore this is a national effective situation that we're benefitting all of Canada and that is what this member -- recognize we are working for all of Canada as well as Ontario and they're going to benefit from the decision that is all of us are making Collectively, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MPP P. Miller to Premier Wynne (Ballard) Re: Social Assistance

>> MPP Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. My question's to the Premier. 900,000 people depend on Ontario works and odsp to live. Since 19 a, the price of a loaf of bread or a dozen eggs has more than doubled. Rent and hydro have gone through the roof. In that time, social assistance for a single person has gone up just \$18. That's barely 2% in 21 years. Families can't make ends meet. Kids are going hungry. Your announcement today won't even dent the years of neglect. Why has this government not used its 13 years in power to substantially increase the efforts for the people and the money they need to survive?

>> Premier Kathleen Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister responsible for poverty reduction will want to comment in the supplementary. But I wanted to say to the member opposite that, you know, I completely support in principle the bill that he's brought forward and, Mr. Speaker, we have already taken action to put more money in the hands of people who are vulnerable in this province. And the fact is the group that was most at risk, Mr. Speaker, the single people without children now receive \$100 per month more than they did in 2012 and that's \$1,200 a year more than they received, Mr. Speaker. We've increased \$25 a month for single adults receiving Ontario works, 1.5% for families receiving Ontario works and 1.5% for individuals with disabilities. Who receive odsp. On top of that the Ontario child benefit. We are working on rent supplements. We understand that there are a myriad of things we need to do to support people who are living in poverty, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP P. Miller: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the Premier for the compliment. However, even with your increase, people are still \$11,500 below the poverty level. This government is failing most vulnerable people in Ontario. People expected more from the Premier and her government. This government simply does not understand the cost of living in our province. New Democrats believe the government should make policy based on evidence and research. We need hard evidence on the real cost of living to ensure that social assistance benefits meet their basic needs. In April all three parties, I quote, voted to support the establishment of a social assistance research commission, which we appreciate. What we don't want it to die in committee. We want it to go through committee, be called to committee, go for third reading and be law in this province. Will the Premier

and her caucus support the social systems research commission again, as they did unanimously last - five months ago, this afternoon and ensure. That the committee calls –

>> Min. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to respond to the question from the member opposite, and I wish I had more time to go over an exceptionally lengthy list of all the positive accomplishments this government has accomplished in the past three years. I just want to touch on a couple of these. Income security reform working group is developing that road map that focuses on needs and prioritizes actions for the most meaningful impact. Mr. Speaker, just want to touch on a couple of things that are happening. For example we've removed the provincial clawback on child support payments to families receiving social assistance. Increasing the annual income of almost \$1,000 families by an average of \$282 per month. That's \$3,300 annually. Most are single income families, Mr. Speaker. This government is dedicated to working with the most vulnerable members of our society, Mr. Speaker, and making sure they reach their potential.

MPP Wong to Minister Sandals Re: TBS Accomplishments

>> MPP Soo Wong: My question's to the president of treasury board secretariat. Minister, it's well-known to every member of this House that the treasury board secretariat acts as an important control function for the government, that the treasury board is responsible to ensure that we maximize -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That the treasury board is responsible for ensuring that we maximize the value of every dollar that we spend. In addition to control costs your ministry is proactively working to modernize government and find efficiencies. The Minister is leading our government in streamlining transfer payments to the organizations that deliver services and are implementing more effective ways of delivering information, information technology solutions to Ontarians. As parliament of modernizing government, I know that the treasury board supports ministries by adding behavioural science lins to policy development and prom implementations. Through you to the Minister. Will she inform the House how treasury board supports ministries through the behavioural insights unit. Thank you.

>> Min. Liz Sandals: Yes. Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member from carborough-Agincourt for her excellent question. Ontario is one of the first jurisdictions in Canada to leverage behavioural sciences to improve outcomes and deliver better services to Ontarians. And a really good example of this, Speaker, is the organ donor registration. We know the majority of Ontarians say they're willing to register as an organ and tissue donor. Yet only 27% are registered. The greater Toronto area has one of the lowest rates in the province with only 17% registry. Using behavioural insight, treasury board work closely with the ministry of health to improve the registration process, making it easier and faster for donors to register while making it cost effective to the ministry of health. With this new process, we saw registration rates increase up to 143%.

>> MPP Wong: Speaker, thanks to the Minister for the response. I know the treasury board is often characterized by the financial function With the rest of the government. It's great to hear treasury board is assisting ministry in creating more efficient processes and delivering positive outcomes. In my riding of scar Wroe Agincourt I encourage my constituents to become registered organ donors. I work closely with Mohan Tom and Helen, I know they're watching today, to promote organ and -- shoe donation in our diverse community. It is shocking for me to hear only 17% of G.T.A. Residents have registered as organ donors. I'm very please today hear the treasury board is part of that solution. Can the Minister inform the House what other accomplishments at the behavioural insight unit of the treasury board have achieved to date.

>> Min. Sandals: The treasury board created the behavioural insights unit in 2013, Speaker, and we have numerous examples. For example treasury board work closely wit the ministry of transportation. To modify the information sent to Ontarians encouraging Thome to renew their licence plate stickers, something people don't like doing all that much, he can do it online. So during an 8-week pilot, we saw more than 13,000 licence plate renewals online with the help of the behavioural science unit. And that resulted in a saving of 28,000 because -- I think that's mine. Because of that. In a short period of time we saw large savings simply by shifting user behaviour. So with the help of the recent behavioural insight unit we look forward to more of these -- go thank

you.

MPP Coe to Minister Damerla Re: Post-Stroke Physio Access

>> MPP Lorne Coe: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Premier, in 2010, Jim Mcewan, a Durham region resident, suffered a stroke at the age of 55. Like many post-stroke patients Mr. Mcewan has required hundreds of physiotherapy treatments to regain mobility and improve his quality of life. However, when Mr. Mcewan needed our health care system the most, he was afforded only a dozen treatments and then was forgotten about. In fact the ohip law for physiotherapy greatly limits the coverage of those between the ages of 20 and 64. As a result, Speaker, post-stroke patients in this age range struggle for access to rehabilitation services they need and deserve. Premier, will you take steps to insure that all post-stroke patients, regardless of age, have access to sufficient rehabilitation services?

>> Min. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker. I want to begin by thanking the member opposite for the question and his advocacy and I want to reassure him that indeed patients under the age of 65 who are recovering from a stroke are eligible for ohip coverage restorative services. Our government is committed to providing quality care to all stroke patients and as part of the patients first action plan, we're already taking steps to improve the quality of care provided to Ontarians for post-stroke care. Let me give you some examples. In Ontario publicly funded physiotherapy and other rehabilitation services regardless of the age of the patient is available for anybody who is recovering from post acute stroke recovery and is offered in five settings -- hospitals, hospital outpatient clinics, in-home care, long-term care homes and community physio clinics. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

>> MPP Coe: Back to the Premier, Speaker. There's a large body of evidence indicating that with consistent rehabilitation post-stroke patients can show dramatic improvements to their health. We need to recognize that there's a great need for comprehensive and integrated post-stroke management. Premier, this afternoon I'm bringing forward a private member's bill for second reading asking to end age discrimination for post-stroke recovery patients. Will you commit, Premier, to supporting that bill?

>> Min. Damerla: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I thank the member opposite for his advocacy. I also thank him for introducing his private member's bill. I look forward to the debate on this bill as I know that the Minister of health looks forward to hearing all of the arguments. We look forward to hearing the legislature discuss the bill and let it go through its due course. But in the meantime I want to reiterate, Mr. Speaker, that this government already has programs in place to help post stroke recovery victims -- patients regardless of their age. So, Mr. Speaker, we are already doing that. We always look forward to doing more. So, Mr. Speaker, all I wanted to say is I know that the Minister of health when he's back will also want to weigh in on this and I want to assure this legislature of our commitment to helping. Patients recovering from strokes with all of the services that they absolutely need and deserve. That is what our universal health care is all about, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Sattler to Minister Damerla Re: London Healthcare Access

>> MPP Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Speaker, seniors in London have been waiting months on end for complex continuing care beds. More than two years ago there was a plan to add 11 beds in London but it never happened. This Liberal government has made no new funding commitment to complex continuing care, which leaves Londoners unable to access the care that they need. Speaker we are at a tipping point in my community. Without some big changes soon, London hospitals will not be able to meet the growing needs of Londoners. Instead of cutting hospital budgets, when will the Premier support the new complex continuing care beds that our hospitals and our patients need?

>> Min. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I used to be as you know the associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care responsible for long-term care. So I just want to assure this House that

our government has been making record investments in long-term care. As the Minister responsible for seniors I will continue to advocate on behalf of seniors, but I do want to remind this legislature that we have increased funding for long-term care at record levels. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.