

Transcript: Premier's Interview with Sudbury Star

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PREMIER WYNNE'S INTERVIEW WITH SUDBURY STAR

Date: September 13, 2016
Length: 12:15 minutes
Speaker(s): Premier Kathleen Wynne

PREMIER KATHLEEN WYNNE: [joined in progress] I was up in the summer, it was great.

Q: (inaudible)

PREMIER WYNNE: It confirmed what we were already hearing, Jim. We had known for some time that electricity prices were a challenge. I mean, it's why we put the Ontario Energy Support Program in place for low and middle income people; it's why we took the debt retirement charge off people's bills, that's about a 6 or 7 per cent relief. We knew that there were challenges and when I asked Glenn Thibeault to take on the role of Minister of Energy, he knew that this was going to be part of his mandate, to work on energy, on electricity prices. I also knew that there were specific challenges in the north because of what our members had said. I knew that the distribution charges were a challenge, the delivery charges were a challenge, so that – the northern tour just confirmed all of that, but we had already been working on what the package of changes was going to be.

Q: (inaudible)

PREMIER WYNNE: It's a reflection of what we had already heard and then confirmed on the northern tour, but it was by no means the first time I had heard it. And I think for rural and northern consumers, a 20 per cent reduction is a pretty substantial relief, and so I was really glad we were able to figure out how to do that.

Q: (inaudible)

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, he is very strong. Glenn is a very strong and, you know, he is a seasoned politician. He has been in office for a number of years. He really has the big picture. He looks at policy issues through a very intelligent lens and I know that I can already see how he's tackling this file with that really common sense, but also a real understanding of how policy works. He is also a great communicator. He has had experience being the leader in a caucus, caucus chair and he has a real respect for members and keeps them informed, and that's a great thing in a Minister and particularly in a Minister where there is an issue or a set of issues that are very much on the front burner for MPPs. So he is doing a great job and I know he'll continue to do so.

Q: (inaudible)

PREMIER WYNNE: And yes. So when I said to you that we knew electricity prices were a challenge, I knew they were particularly a challenge in the north, you know. I mean they're a challenge all over the province, don't get me wrong, but we had already heard – for example, the need to have the Northern Industrial Energy Rate Program, you know, the NIER, and have that as a permanent program. So I already knew that this was something that our northern members were struggling with. And so we had, you know we have had, Ministers of Energy who had been from other parts of

the province and I thought it was important to have that Northern lens on this file as we try to resolve this issue.

Q: (inaudible)

PREMIER WYNNE: Yes, well it, you know it continues – the Ring of Fire and the infrastructure related to it particularly continue to be very important to this government. I mean we – I see the potential a road, opening up that part of Northern Ontario as extremely important because of the mineral development and the potential mineral – the wealth there and how that can be developed. But also, quite frankly Jim, because there are communities that will benefit that will be much more connected once we get that infrastructure in place. I'll just tell you briefly – I don't know if this is too much information for you but I the opportunity this summer to be in Yukon because you will know that the Premier's meeting was there. And I had – sorry? I met with First Nation leadership. I had the opportunity to travel a little bit because my partner and I did a canoe trip on the Yukon River. Yeah. But I was really struck in my conversations with both political leaders and community folks that all of the communities except for one in Yukon are connected by road because of the work that was done in the Second World War. The Americans came in and built roads. And so you know, I believe there is a direct relationship between that infrastructure and that access and the ability of communities to be successful with economic development and quite frankly, to have different capacity around self-government. So I think that this road is very important, I think that the infrastructure associated with Ring of Fire is critical, which is why I said I want to by 2018, I want to see us having made progress on the building of that infrastructure. We have to do that in consultation with the First Nations and that's, you know, the work that we've been doing. But there are companies that are working with us, there are First Nations that are working with us, and you know, I believe that we'll get there. It takes years to realize one of these developments and so I know it seems slow to people but we're there, our commitment remains in place. And then, I guess the other piece of it is that we do, you know, we do expect that at some point the federal government will be working with us, you know. They worked with us on some studies and I do expect that there will be substantial investment, we just don't have a commitment on that yet.

Q: (inaudible)

PREMIER WYNNE: Okay. The transportation funding? Yeah, so the money that – it's about \$31 billion and around half of that is targeted for the GTHA and about half of it is targeted outside of the GTHA.

Q: (inaudible)

PREMIER WYNNE: Yeah, that's money that will be distributed around the province. I mean, there are broad band projects, for example, that are part of that, and they will have an impact in rural and northern communities, but that's just part of it. There are – the way – sorry, say it again?

Q: (inaudible)

PREMIER WYNNE: So I think the whole – yeah I mean, what I want to see is a really good intermodal system of – or multimodal system of transportation in the north. And so, you know, we've had the ONTC and we've refurbished trains and we're working on new buses. There are new buses that have been bought for ONTC. But that only deals with Northeastern Ontario, and so I think one of the things that the Minister of Transportation is doing as part of his mandate is looking at how do we make coach system the best system rational in Northern Ontario? The whole Northern Ontario. And how do we make sure the right connections are in place, whether it's roads, whether it's bridges, whether it's regulation around coach lines. How do we make sure that the kind of transportation links that are in place? And you know, some of that is local transit systems, but a lot of it is the intercity as well.

Q: (inaudible)

PREMIER WYNNE: The other thing is the \$100,000 licensed child care spaces that we referenced in the Throne Speech. And again, that's about 0-4 year olds across the province. It's a recognition that

only about 20 per cent of families with 0-4 year old kids have access to licensed child care. And we want to make sure that we get that that up to 40 per cent at least, you know. We think the demand is about 40-45 per cent in those families and we want to work to make sure that families have access because that means that parents have access to the economy, you know. They have access to jobs. One of the things that we know from the work that's being done on closing the gender wage gap is that women don't have access to child care in the way that they needed, and so part of putting those \$100,000 licensed spaces in place is about making sure anyone who wants to be a part of the economy in terms of wanting a job is able to do that.

Q: (inaudible)

PREMIER WYNNE: Well it's a good question because that was really what the Throne Speech was about, you know. We wanted to make sure that our health care system, our education system, are progressing and increasingly excellent. We talked in the Throne Speech about increasing nursing care hours in order to enhance home care. We talked about continuing to reduce wait times for specialists, and then connecting every Ontarian who wants one with a family doctor or a nurse practitioner so they have the primary care that they need. So that, that's part of my vision for health is that people have that kind of access. We're going to continue to invest in hospitals and schools and roads and bridges and transit, we just talked about that. We know, Jim, those investments we've been making have created jobs and they also built the foundation for future prosperity and economic development. Ontario's leading the country, you know, it's one of the leaders in the country in terms of economic growth. Over the last two years, we've seen 6 per cent growth and we're projecting 2.5 to 3 per cent growth over the next couple of years. So that's the kind of success that I want to see continue because that kind of economic success and growth means we can make the investments in people that will help them in their lives every day, whether that's in the free tuition for lower middle income kids or whether it's child care. We want to make sure that we continue to grow the economy so that we can support people. That's – from my perspective that's what government exists to do.