

Summary of Question Period for Tuesday October 17, 2017

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Please see the select or full summary of today's legislative Question Period.

MPP Brown (PC) to Premier and Minister Thibeault (Energy) re: review of Fair Hydro Plan

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the **Premier**. Tabled just minutes ago as another damning report by the auditor general. The unfair hydro plan will cost Ontario up to \$4 billion more than necessary. \$4 billion. That means Ontario families will have to pay an additional \$4 billion just for the Liberals' reelection campaign. Mr. Speaker, this scheme, unfair hydro plan is about one thing and only one thing and that's the Liberals' reelection. It's not about paying hydro bills. It's not about helping Ontario families. This is just about the partisan interests of the Liberal party of Ontario. The auditor general makes that abundantly clear. What I want to know, Mr. Speaker, from the **Premier** is how can she justify blowing \$4 billion to help the Liberal party?

>> **Premier Wynne**: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the work that the auditor general has done. Mr. Speaker, you know the reality is that families across this province, individuals across this province were saying that the cost of their electricity prices were going up too high, Mr. Speaker, and going up too quickly. Mr. Speaker, I have acknowledged many times in this legislature and outside this legislature that the investments that had to be made, because we had a degraded electricity system in this province, Mr. Speaker, that we needed to rebuild, that there was a cost associated with that. I've been quite open about that, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I hear heckling from the other side that this is partisan. This is not partisan. This is about people needing to have reliability of turning on the lights, Mr. Speaker, and the lights coming on. In 2003, we had blackouts and Brownouts. The lights weren't coming on, Mr. Speaker. We've rebuilt the system and people needed a break.

>> Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the **Premier**. The way this government chose to do their unfair hydro plan cost Ontario families \$4 billion. This is your decision. This is the path you picked. The auditor general makes that unequivocally clear. It also confirms another thing, that the Liberal party and the way they're doing this cooks the books. You know, you read the direct quote, Mr. Speaker. This is a direct quote. They're making up their own accounting rules.

[Interjections] Can you package that? A direct quote making up your own accounting rules? She also unearthed the fact that ratepayers will be charged more than the actual cost of electricity being produced in order to pay back borrowing. This is cynical politics

at its worst. Making up your own rules, charging Ontario families more to serve the partisan interests of the Liberal party. Mr. Speaker, my question for the **Premier** --Why won't she just come clean and admit to Ontario families that she's --

>> The Speaker: Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Be seated, please. I am -- I'm not prepared to accept the terminology that was used so I'll ask the member to withdraw.

>> Patrick Brown: Withdraw the direct quote.

>> Minister Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government thanks the auditor general for her review of our plan to reduce electricity bills for all residential consumers by an average of 25%, Mr. Speaker. Families in this province have asked for real and immediate relief on their electricity bills. That's why we have delivered, Mr. Speaker, the largest rate reduction in Ontario's history. Since 2003, nearly \$70 billion have been invested in the electricity system, including more than 37 billion in electricity generation to ensure that our system is clean and reliable. Mr. Speaker, as we all are aware the auditor general's report is particular Cal in nature and I understand she will be discussing it with the media and members of the legislature at 12:00 PM Today. We've also been addressing some of these points that the standing committee on estimates, Mr. Speaker, so, in respecting the Independence of the --Officers of the legislature, including the auditor general, our government will respond to the report following the **Premier's** conference.

MPP Tabuns (NDP) to the Premier and Minister Sandals (Treasury Board) re: review of Fair Hydro Plan

>>MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. My question to the **Premier**. Last may the financial accountability officer revealed that the **Premier's** so-called fair hydro plan will not reduce hydro costs but merely postpone payment of those costs until after the next election. In the long run, Ontario families will pay billions more under the government's scheme than they would have paid without that scheme. And today the auditor general revealed that the government is wasting, wasting \$4 billion on an enron-style accounting scheme whose sole purpose is to hide this truth from the public. Why is the **Premier** forcing Ontario consumers to pay \$4 billion --Just so she can mislead the public about her hydro borrowing scheme?

>> **Premier** Wynne: Were going up quickly and they were going up to a very high rate, particularly in some parts of the province in some of the rural and northern communities, Mr. Speaker. So we responded by putting in place a plan that, again, I have said publicly we knew that over the long term was going to have a cost associated with it, Mr. Speaker. But we also know that the asset that has been built --And rebuilt, Mr. Speaker, will last for a number of generations and that we spread that cost over a longer period of time.

>> MPP Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. That was not a satisfactory answer. The **Premier** spending \$5.5 million in public money to tell Ontarians that hydro costs are going down when we know they're actually going up. And now the auditor general's revealed that the **Premier's** forcing ratepayers to pay \$4 billion in an enron style accounting scheme designed to conceal this truth from Ontarians. Instead of adding billions in needless costs onto the hydro bills of Ontario families, will the **Premier** finally admit her misguided hydro borrowing scheme will make everyone worse off in the long run?

>>Minister Sandals: Thank you very much, Speaker. You know, when I think back to 2003 and I think of my own riding of Guelph, I think about part of Ontario that never used to have smog days. The reason we had smog days was because of coal generation. We have invested a lot of money into the Ontario hydro system to make sure we get rid of coal-fired generation. You know what? We don't have smog days -- But we also know that consumers have been struggling with the cost of electricity bills, and that is why we brought in the fair hydro plan is to reduce the cost of hydro for our -- for people throughout Ontario, for average families. What we also know is that the auditor has tabled her fair hydro plan today. We appreciate her work. We'll respect the auditor going forward --With the conference at noon

MPP Smith (PC) to the Premier and Minister Duguid (Economic Development and Trade) re: review of Fair Hydro Plan mentioned

>>MPP Smith: Thanks, Speaker. Thanks to the auditor general for her report today, we know that the **Premier** and the Liberal government blew \$1 billion in the gas plant scandal to get reelected. Now we know they're going to double down as a result of the report. They're not even going to double down, Mr. Speaker. They're quadrupling down to \$4 billion annually -- We know that the **Premier** was responsible for the billion-dollar scandal with the gas plants. We now know that this scandal that's been uncovered today by the auditor general is a \$4 billion scandal. This government is doubling down. It's quadrupling down using taxpayers' dollars for its reelection ploy. And if the auditor general's report isn't scathing enough we have a report from the financial post this morning that released stats on the loss of manufacturing jobs as a result of the green energy act which got us into this mess in the first place. The report states -- That we have lost 75,000 jobs in Ontario in the manufacturing sector, a direct result. Why is the **Premier** continuing to defend

>> Minister Duquid: Mr. Speaker, I just came from the Canadian manufacture and exporters annual general meeting and, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you one thing. Our exporters, our manufacturers are tired of opposition members talking down --The incredible progress they have made. Through the global recession, Mr. Speaker. 12,000 net jobs in the manufacturing sector alone in the last year alone. It's not fair, Mr. Speaker, to talk down that hardworking sector leading the country in growth, helping us create 800,000 net new jobs, Mr. Speaker, across this province. It's time for that party to start supporting our manufacturers, Mr. Speaker, rather than denigrating them.

>>MPP Smith: Speaker, back to the **Premier**. We're getting a very, very different story on this side of the House when it comes to job losses in Ontario and companies that are hanging on by a thread in Ontario because of the policies of this government. The green energy act in this study, done by "The financial post" shows, shows that 75,000 manufacturing jobs left Ontario as a result direct result of the green energy act. It's a mess, Mr. Speaker. It's a mess for our employers over there. It's a mess for our manufacturers. And the auditor general has pointed out today that this government is willing to blow another \$4 billion. That's \$800 per House hold in Ontario for their reelection platform. It's unheard of. It's disrespectful and it has to stop. But there's no

sign of them stopping. They got away with once at the gas plant. They're going to do four times the damage with this unfair Liberal hydro plan. Will they stop it now?

>>Minister Duquid: Mr. Speaker, where was the opposition when we invested \$1.9 billion in our manufacturing sector to leverage \$18 billion to private sector investment and support 90,000 jobs? Mr. Speaker, they were nowhere. They were opposing those investments. Where was the opposition when we were reducing regular regulatory burdens on the manufacturing sector, when we brought the industrial exemption, Mr. Speaker, they were absolutely silent. Where was the opposition, Mr. Speaker, when the finance Minister This sector saving them hundreds of millions of dollars. Where were they, Mr. Speaker, when we brought in the smart green program run by our Canadian manufacturers and experts. Nowhere, Mr. Speaker. Where were they when we brought in three different initiatives in the I.C.I., industrial conservation initiative --To save our manufacturers billions full of dollars, Mr. Speaker. Nowhere, Mr. Speaker. They're all talk, no action. We stand up for our manufacturing sector. And that's why this province is up –

MPP French (NDP) to the Premier and Minister Sousa (Finance) re: Sears liquidation and pensions.

>>MPP French: Thank you, Speaker. My question's to the Premier. On Friday, an Ontario superior court approved a motion permitting sears Canada to shut down operations leaving 12,000 people with no jobs and no severance and thousands of pensioners with a total pension shortfall of more than 260 million. This will have a devastating impact on families in my community of Oshawa and across the province that have worked their whole lives counting on their pension being there when they require. Last year I introduced a motion to ensure that pensioners are given top priority ahead of large corporations during bankruptcy proceedings. This government supported my motion unanimously but I against they changed their mind or gone back on their word. Will the Premier do the right thing, honour the commitment she made and stand up for Ontario's pensioners?

>>Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of finance is going to speak to the specifics of the financial situation but let me just first say that it is -- it is obviously very, very hard on families when a business of this magnitude shuts down, Mr. Speaker. You know, my heart goes out to all of the people who are affected. We are working with the situation, Mr. Speaker. We are working with all of the players and we will do everything that we can but, Mr. Speaker, in the first instance the economy is shifting. There's no doubt about that. You know, there was just a lively exchange with the Minister of economic development and growth and the opposition. The reality is that the nature of our economy is changing. Jobs are changing. There are jobs coming to Ontario. There are new jobs that are opening. We talked about an investment in artificial intelligence, Mr. Speaker. But there are jobs, there are jobs that are no longer, Mr. Speaker, because of the nature of the economy, the nature of retail.

>>MPP French: Thank you, Speaker. And again to the Premier. It's lovely that her heart

goes out to them but we hope that help would go out to them as well. For pensioners, this isn't just an outstanding debt on a balance sheet. It's about keeping food on the table and a roof over their families. New Democrats have called for any revenue from liquidation sales to be used to fund sears employees' pensions first not more executive bonuses and we'll continue to fight for laws that make this the case for all workers. Does the Premier think that big corporations and executive bonuses should be the priorities over pensioners.

>>Minister Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question and the concern. And I know that members of the Canadian federation of pensioners are here today. One of them is a pensioner from sears who's being affected by it as we speak today. And only in Ontario will he have the benefit of a pension guarantee fund. Nowhere else in Canada is that available. Furthermore, we are looking at making reforms and providing greater support for pensioners going forward. Put forward. I not member opposite is talking about the changes that should be enacted by the laws of Canada and we recognize that and support that. But right now we need to help pensioners today as it affects them today and we are doing just that by the reports we're making working alongside the members' other pensioners and knowing that we must do our utmost to protect those pensioners. I can assure members of sears over 08 to 90% of them will get their full pension because of Ontario's guarantee. Furthermore their pension habits are not affected by the bankrupt Sitt and we'll fight for them all the way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MPP Jones (PC) to Minister Flynn (Labour) re: Safety of health workers

>>MPP Jones: This question is for the Minister of infrastructure. Today **OPSEU members join us at Queen's Park to highlight the important issue of mental health in the workplace**. I'd like to highlight one of your so-called state-of-the-art provincial facilities, a facility that itself has been used as a weapon. One resident made a homemade sword out of the wall at waypoint centre. The provincial investigator found that, quote, the patient was able to destroy their room to the point of accessing metal supports from behind the drywall, including the removal of a towel rack, and proceeded to construct weapons out of these materials. No worker in this province should fear being attacked by home made weaponry in any provincial facility, let alone home made represent weaponry fashioned from the facility itself. Account Minister explain how the government allowed this to happen?

>>Minister Flynn: Speaker, thank you to the member for this very, very important question. Speaker, as we learn more about mental health in our society, some of the treatments have to be provided in secure facilities, Speaker. And we trust the care of those individuals to some of the people that have joined us here today, some of the people that have joined us for breakfast this morning from **OPSEU**. Speaker. Let me tell you I visited waypoint myself personally. I plan to return in the fall. Some of the things we were hearing, some of the complaints we were hearing out of the institution, Speaker, were ones that we didn't want to hear at the ministry of labour. We sent our inspectors in. We realized there was some changes that needed to be made, Speaker. What I've done is I've talked to the heads of all four hospitals in the province, Speaker, at camh, Brockville, Ottawa and waypoint. What I've asked them to do, what I've asked waypoint

specifically to do is to come back with a plan that deals with these issues, Speaker. Once that plan is in place. I understand it will be very shortly, I will return to waypoint, Speaker and take a look at the facility myself.

>>MPP Jones: Back to the inminister of infrastructure. Frontline workers know that the Minister 's not done enough. The ministry fail today provide a facility that would keep our workers safe. Our frontline workers and our nurses are not being put first by this government. This government is prioritizing the interests of Liberal insiders over the best interests of Ontarians. Will the Minister promise that any facility will be putting people first, not Liberal insiders?

>>Minister Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you for the follow-you and thank you for the concern, Speaker. Because nobody should go to work in the province of Ontario, Speaker, no matter what job they do. Nobody should go to work in the province of Ontario thinking that they may be in danger. There's some unique hazards that are associated with these institutions, with this environment, Speaker. In the past it was accepted for our nurses, for people that looked after patients in these facilities. It was accepted that there would be a certain risk. There was a tolerance to that risk. There was almost an expectation you would get hurt. Speaker, that is simply not good enough. It's not good enough for me, not good enough for the ministry of labour, not good enough for this government, Speaker. We're working towards rectifying. Some of the people that have come forward today, Speaker, they are right. They're telling us about things that need to be corrected. We should be proud of the work we've done to date Not satisfied but proud of the progress we've made to date on this issue.