

Message

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Subject: MEDIA EVENT: MINISTERS' PRE-CAUCUS SCRUMS
Attachments: March 21 - Ministers' Pre-Caucus Scrums.doc

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Energy related items are highlighted.

MEDIA EVENT: MINISTERS' PRE-CAUCUS SCRUMS

March 21, 2017

Location:

Outside Cabinet Meeting Room, Legislature

Speakers:

Ministers Naqvi; Sousa; Hoskins; Hunter; Matthews; PC Leader Brown; NDP Leader Horwath

Media Attendance:

Print – 11

TV – 6

Radio – 1

Media Outlets:

Jones – CP; Benzie – Star; Ferguson – Star; Rushowy – Star; Cohn – Star; Globe; Jeffords – Sun; Zochodne – QP Briefing; Nanji – QP Briefing; Crawley - CBC Radio/TV; Brule - Radio Canada TV, Radio Canada/CJBC; Lewkowicz – Newstalk 1010; Carter – Global; Bliss - CTV Ontario; Rath - CHCH Television; Tumelty - City TV; Wu – Fairchild TV; Fortin-Gauthier – TFO; Cruickshank – iPolitics; Smith – QP Today

Media Questions:

Questions for Minister Naqvi:

(Joined in progress) you know our policy and our plan on ending sexual violence is a big priority for the Premier and the government. We have taken very strong action in that regard with real resources. It has a huge element around the justice sector as well we have specialized training for our crowns when it comes to dealing with cases of sexual violence and harassment. We made an independent advice program for victims as well. Judicial training is independent from the government. It's very much part and parcel of judicial independence in our justice system. So in my conversations with the Chief Justice I will continue to raise the issue that we need to make sure that there is robust training for all judiciary on sexual violence and harassment. But that decision is for the courts to make.

Q: Rushowy: So there is really nothing the province can do because the feds with unanimous support for (inaudible).

I believe that is a motion that they passed. Again that is just an expression of intent. It's very clear that putting an end to sexual violence and harassment is a very important priority for the government. We are taking all necessary steps at our end to make sure our crowns are appropriately trained on dealing with cases of sexual violence and harassment is a big priority for the attorney general. And in my conversations I have a very good working relationship with the chief justice and I will continue to raise that point. My understanding is that there is training available for judges on sexual violence and harassment. But the scope of that training that's the decision of the chief justice in order to of course respect the independence of our judiciary.

Q: Rushowy: Has the Chief Justice indicated this is a big issue or concern?

The chief justice has assured me that you know they have very robust training and that in all respects. But I, again I think that I should not be in a position to speak for her. And I think it is best that you speak with the court in terms of the training around sexual violence and harassment for judges. Thank you.

Questions for Minister Sousa:

Q: Bliss: What are you hoping for tomorrow other than what you told us about the speculation tax. What other areas would you like assistance from the federal government?

As you know last year I have produced a budget prior to the federal government and sort of setting out our blueprint, our plan, our expectations based on their commitments and their platform and made assumptions in that in that budget. And this time around I'm waiting from them to come out first to determine exactly what it is going to be there and I certainly hope there will be more details with regard to infrastructure bank, a degree of infrastructure spending that will be proposed so that we can then complement that which we were doing, of course I am trying to avoid incrementally because we have a huge pipeline already there and we want to make sure we have support for some of those projects. Skills development is also a big part of the things that we were doing. You know the federal government as we're talking about and it's appropriate for us to enable our young people especially in our careers and things that are happening to be prepared for those jobs of tomorrow and enabling us to be competitive. There's this issue around fiscal balance. Ontario continues to provide much more to the rest of Canada than they take in and that's appropriate. We've always been that even when we qualified for equalization. But now we need to understand more appropriately what the degree of transfers will be for the province of Ontario recognizing that Quebec for example gets \$11 billion dollars more than they give out and we provide \$11 billion dollars to the rest of Canada if we take in. So those have huge fiscal issues to our plan and so I'm looking forward to the budget and I look forward to working closely with the federal government on these very important issues.

Q: Lewkowicz: How much will what you see tomorrow affect what you're able to deliver on soon?

Obviously I'm in the midst of preparing the budget now. We still are looking at various programs and initiatives going forward. The budget from the federal government tomorrow will enable us to better understand what some of those transfers will be in order for us to put forward and lock in our numbers. But you know we're all dealing with one taxpayer here every one is in this together. We are offering a lot more supports to municipalities for example and we're hoping that the federal government will recognize some of those pressures as well and we're stimulating growth and we recognize that Ontario continues to lead Canada and many G7 countries. But at the same time we're doing so in a way that is measured right. We have to make sure that we invest in those things that make it competitive market.

Q: Benzie: Minister speaking of federal transfers, did you guys settle for less on the deal, the health funding deal of two weeks ago. Is that less than you were initially offered last (inaudible)?

Yeah what we were initially offered was a three and a half percent flat rate over five years with some targeted funding for home care and mental health. We felt that was shy given the fact that we'll be spending a lot more than that. And so the federal government agreed to an escalator of 3 percent which is what we already had. And we know that nominal GDP growth is going to be more than 3 percent is going to be more three and a half percent is going to go up to 4.2 percent. So in that regard we are getting a little bit more fairness in the system but we're assuming less risk to the extent that we're now going to be all subject to the increased costs that will be available to us.

Q: Benzie: And it's a better deal, it's a better deal than you were initially offered, right?

And everyone as you know I mean the federal government did a lot of bilateral deals and they put a few sweeteners in each of them. Ontario also got a little extra for housing and affordable housing so (inaudible).

Q: Benzie: So is it fair to say that the tomorrow's budget regardless of what's in it doesn't change your fiscal plan. Are you still going to be able to balance the budget next month?

Absolutely, we're balancing because of the measures we've taken to control spending and of course seeing improved growth in our economy. And I do have prudence in our budget and our plans to accommodate some of those shocks and some of the things that may occur in the marketplace and we will take every step necessary to be nimble achieving that balance in this year, next year and year after.

Q: Bliss: Specifically on infrastructure, are you just hoping they follow through on their promises or you looking for more?

There are couple of new things they are coming out with. One they will have to display and understand more appropriately what that infrastructure spending will be and how it will be done. They also have this business growth initiative, well that is our plan. They have a business fund that they're proposing to help scale up companies. That is important for Ontario. We have more startups here in the province of Ontario than all of Canada combined. We have a lot of new companies that are growing rapidly. We want to make sure they stay home that they grow within the marketplace within Canada in Ontario. So I welcome the support of the federal government in that regard to help us scale up homegrown companies so they can do better and I look for that in their budget tomorrow as well.

Q: Lewkowicz: When can expect your budget?

My budget will come out after we take a full review after we lock in our numbers. I want to make sure that we capture every that's required before I release the date.

Questions for Minister Hoskins:

Q. Jeffords: (joined in progress) did you say that you never had a hospital CEO complain to you about hydro rates in the province?

Well, look, the – for a hospital's operating budget on average, electricity costs amount to roughly one per cent of their budget. There's no doubt that over the past years, because of the fiscal situation the province has been in, hospitals have – have a number of challenges, and we've been working with them on those challenges. So in response to the questions (inaudible) today, I demonstrated specifically the hospitals of concern that were raised by the opposition, I demonstrated the significant increase in their operating budget that we provided last year through the budget, so far in excess of any impact of an annual increase in electricity might to that roughly one per cent of the budget, so I'm confident that as we continue to work in partnership with the Ontario Hospital Association and individual hospital corporations, that – that we are making the right investments in the right areas to allow them to continue to (inaudible).

Q. Jeffords: Don't you think that most Ontarians would look at that and say though that any dollars not going to patient care are dollars that frankly are not being used to the – the best, I guess, advantage?

And that's why we're making the investments that we are, right? And I think that can be said for – so increases to hospitals' operating costs aren't limited to electricity, right? They include contractual agreements with front-line health-care staff; increases that take place; they include increases that result from the purchase of medical appliances or other equipment. So those are the – so there's a mixture or myriad of issues that hospitals, their boards and their CEOs deal with on a daily or an annual basis. That's why we made the substantial almost half-a-billion-dollar investment in our hospitals last year to help accommodate those increases. And what we're seeing – and third-party reports point to this – is we're continuing to see the high-quality care that we would expect to see and want to see and have a responsibility to provide through our hospitals.

Q. Jeffords: Is there hydro relief coming for Ontario's hospitals?

Well, as you know, we've heard there is significant relief coming to – to residents across this province, in all parts of this province. Businesses and corporations, a number of them, a significant number of them, to qualify for certain programs that are available to them that will reduce their energy costs, but we continue to work in close partnership with the Ontario Hospital Association and individual hospitals to ensure that they are being given the resources they need to be able to provide those quality services.

Q. Jeffords: So it sounds like you can't say right now that there's no plan in place to address hospitals specifically as it pertains to hydro rates.

Well, you know, again electricity is one component of a hospital's budget. It's a tiny component, roughly one per cent of the budget. There are a number of challenges financially the hospitals experience over the course of the year and my job as minister and our ministry is, as we did last year, working hard to provide the financial

investments that allow them to accommodate whatever increases that they might see that are reflected in their need to have a higher operational budget.

Q. Crawley: Actually just a quick question about (inaudible) the federal budget tomorrow. Given that you have the health accord, do you have any – is there anything you need to as health minister worry about the federal budget tomorrow? Or do you have some certainty as to how much money Ontario's getting in terms of the federal, the health transfer?

Well, I mean, I think you've – you've heard the details in terms of the – the agreement that was struck between Ontario and the federal government. We anticipate that that will be reflected in the federal budget tomorrow, but of course we're always looking to see – to see investments from the federal government in other shared priorities in health care, and that may include for example indigenous health care initiatives, infrastructure commitments, other opportunity to work together in partnership to provide the highest-quality health care. But we certainly, with regard to the Canada Health Transfer, we anticipate that those elements that (Inaudible) reflection in tomorrow's budget, we anticipate that (inaudible).

Q. Crawley: So if there's anything like you would say you want from the federal government out of tomorrow's budget, (inaudible) would be those other (inaudible)?

Yeah, I think that, you know, we've seen the federal minister of health for example very outspoken on the national opioid crisis as well. There's – there's strong collaboration on that effort. There's opportunity I think in the requirement for increased investment as provinces and territories are doing, there's an important role for the federal government, and she signalled that – she signalled that commitment, so I think on a number of fronts in addition to though the specific targeted areas in mental health and home care, I think that there is – there's opportunities, whether they are explicitly reflected in tomorrow's budget or not, but certainly we'll continue to work in collaboration with the federal government

Questions for Minister Hunter:

(joined in progress) (inaudible) with the Bill 92 is – is requiring an additional five days if there's any change (inaudible).

Q. Rushowy: If they went from rotating one-day strikes to a full-out strike, would that require an extra five days? Would that be a situation –

That would be (inaudible) type of situation, (inaudible) correct.

Q. Nanji: There were also concerns about, you know, whether or not an education union that's not a teacher union (inaudible) voluntarily opt in to central bargaining. Where do you guys stand on that and I guess why (inaudible)?

So it's a very important that as we look in making improvements to – to the School Board Collective Bargaining Act, that we look at consistencies. So currently teacher unions are – are mandated as part of that central process, but not all education worker unions are. With the recommendations that we have and changes to the legislation it would require all – all education workers to be part of that central table discussion. This is where some of those major items like salary are discussed. We want to ensure that there's consistency and that there's fairness across the system.

Q. Nanji: Do you think that might infringe on, you know, democratic rights to freedom of association?

Well, we actually see that the School Board Collective Bargaining Act is something that we certainly saw that successful initial with the first round all nine tables were settled. We have obviously built on that, moved towards the extension of – of agreements, so we do see that this is working and the improvements that we're making are just ensuring that there's transparency, there's consistency, and that there's flexibility within the act.

Q. Nanji: I know the bill is going to be going for third reading tomorrow. Are you guys in a hurry to get this passed just so you can have these deals ratified and legal?

Well I mean it's very much a priority for us to move forward with this. We have been in discussions about the improvements of this commitment that was made by the former minister, by our premier to review the School Board Collective Bargaining Act. We had extensive consultations that we conducted on this. A report was made. It was posted in the summer, and the ministry worked quite extensively with education and labour partners on the recommendations in the legislation. It's going through the – the process within the legislature. As you know, it's just wrapped up its work at committee, so it's coming back (inaudible) for third reading and we'll have third reading.

Questions for Minister Matthews:

Q. Zochodne: (inaudible) Donations, or with taxpayer dollars to the - to the per vote subsidy?

Well, so, it's a political donation it's it's the - it's funded by by the Ontario Liberal party. And, as you know, the party gets resources from different sources; from donations from the per vote subsidy.

Q. Zochodne: So, it could be either or?

Ya. We don't separate the accounts; we operate as a political party.

Q. Bliss: What, why the blitz - with these propaganda type brochures?

Well. This is, this is an important initiative, as I think all of us understand - hydro prices are an important issue for the people. So we want people to know that we're making changes (inaudible).

Q. Bliss: I find it interesting the brochure says that the Liberal Party recognizes that hydro rates are rising too quickly.

Yes.

Q. Bliss: But you're the reason hydro rates have been rising too quickly.

So we, we made investments and we're not ashamed of the investments we've made. We're proud that we have an electricity system that is an excellent system. There were costs associated with taking it from what it was to what is now - a reliable system. And we are, we are spreading the the payments for that over a longer period of time. And that's bringing down the rate. That's what people have been asking us to do.

Q. Bliss: Now, there's a question in the House about whether or not it's OK to run those government funded ads.

Ya.

Q. Bliss: Do these fall under any category of the gray area where you still can't do this -

No, No –

Q. Bliss: Because it's not implemented yet - the bill hasn't been passed?

This is a this is political advertising. Other parties do this kind of event - the the blitz - letting people know what we're doing. And this is, this is not government advertising at all. This is the Liberal party advertising.

Q. Bliss: Did you ever think you'd be promoting your electricity policy.

[Absolutely. This is a this is a very important initiative that this government is doing.

Q: Zochodne: Are you guys desperate to, to, at least get some credit in the eyes of voters - trying and reverse your fortunes in the polls right now?

Ya - we're, we're a political party, you know, we've got a campaign in that little over a year. So of course we're doing that kind of work that you would do in our lead up to an election.

Q: Crawley: Didn't these Liberal party ads say almost exactly the same thing as the government funded ads; and you admit that the Liberal party's ads are political.

Ya.

Q: Crawley: How, how come the government funded ads are not political given that they're saying basically the same thing.

So, we put our ads through the auditor general. We still have the most restrictive rules around partisan government advertising. And so the government advertising goes through that process. And we live by that legislation every day.

Q: Wu: Would you tell the public how much the government (inaudible) the hydro ads.

I don't have that information.

Wu: would you be willing to release the (inaudible).

I will, I will leave that to the minister responsible for that.

Q: Zochodne: In running ads by both the Liberal Party and the government at the same time - aren't you sort of muddying the waters and not making clear that there's a division between the two?

Well, I think the liberal logo on that piece that was handed out today is big and prominent, and people know it's the Liberal Party.

Q: Bliss: But it directs them to the government website, does it not - the fair hydro plan website?

So I'd, I'd have to –

Q: Zochodne: (pulled out a copy) got it.

Matthews: You, you brought it so I could see it? - So that is the Web site that contains information about what this means for individuals. So that's - I think that's information people want.

Questions for PC Leader Brown:

Q: Lewkowicz: Their argument is that they're just informing public (inaudible) that change is coming.

Ya. There's a reason they stripped the Auditor general of the powers to review. There's a reason - I think the auditor general said very clearly, these are a pat on the back. They've been scolded on this before. This is an abuse of taxpayer dollars. These are partisan ads. It's about serving the Liberal Party interests not the taxpayer interests.

Q: Benzie: So when you, if you win next year - are you going to give the Auditor-General back those those powers so that the ads can be vetted again?

Well, uh, uh - you know, there there needs to be proper vetting of ads. You, You can't have this type of abuse; and we certainly stand by that continuing this type of abuse it's inappropriate it's wrong.

Q: Benzie: So you would go back to this, to what we had before Wynne stripped it down. Like, McGuinty did - McGuinty's the one who strengthened it, and then Wynne stripped it down?

Ya, I absolutely feel should be strengthened again.

Q: Zochodne: do you think that the liberals are muddying the waters by running ads by both the government and the Liberal party at the same time?

Well, interesting, interestingly. They've already been scolded on this once. Remember when they had the ORPP. They got scolded for having liberal party ads that were very similar to the government ads - it was piggybacking using taxpayer dollars to do it. They're doing it again. They just got scolded last year for abusing taxpayer dollars in this manner with partisan ads - and, and, they are right back at it. The, the - They don't seem to care what the auditor general says; they don't. They don't seem to care this, this is disrespectful to taxpayers. And they may even be in contempt of Parliament.

Q: Bliss: What do you think about the Liberal Party with the (turns to Zochodne) would you show it to him (copy of the partisan ad)? They're at the subway is just blitzing people with this, saying that they recognize that hydro prices recognize that hydro prices have risen too quickly when they're the ones responsible?

I think right now they are desperate. That's why they're abusing taxpayers. They're desperate in public opinion. Uh, No voters in Ontario are buying the fact - you know, 400 percent increase - and now there is a, a temporary relief. I think the issue right here, and they're trying to muddy the waters, the issue right here is they're abusing taxpayer dollars for partisan purposes. And the fact they're now piggybacking on it with their own Liberal Party literature - They already got scolded on this. They got scolded last year on these ORPP ads. The Auditor General made it clear you can't piggyback on these ads using similar themes. They're doing it again. They don't care about taxpayers. They don't care what the Auditor-General says. It's the Liberal Party way or the highway.

Q: Jones: Does the fact that the Liberal Party ads give the same message as that government funded ads, perhaps, weaken the argument that the governments ones aren't?

It absolutely makes them more egregious. The fact that the Liberal party flyers are the same as the mi - you know - they're they're spending a few dollars of Liberal Party pamphlets and they're spending millions possibly when it comes to the government buy. So Yeah they're they're ripping taxpayers off for their own partisan purposes.

Q: Jones: Um, on cap and trade - The auction is tomorrow. I know you talked a lot about your plan to bring in a revenue neutral tax. The revenue neutrality of BC's model, which you've often pointed to, has kind of been questioned lately. Does that give you any pause. Does that make you rethink what you would bring in?

Well - I think it needs to not only be revenue neutral but be revenue negative. And I think one of the challenges in B.C. is, you know, there's questions if it is revenue neutral. I believe that is whatever is collected should be given back.

Q: Jones: How would you make it revenue negative?

Well to make sure you give back more than you collected - you just, you just, uh, side on caution that it is not a government cash grab. My criticism with cap and trade - not only is it a 1.9 billion dollar cash grab by government, but we're sending - forcing businesses to buy green credits in the hundreds of millions that will be going to California and Quebec. It makes Ontario less competitive. And - if it was really about the environment - it would not be a revenue tool for government.

Q: Jones: How big of an income tax cut would be required to to make something like that revenue negative?

Well, in terms of how that's given back and the type of relief - we're still going through our policy process on that. It's going to be the largest grassroots consultation in our party membership will - and our (inaudible) are leading that process.

Q: Zochodne: Would it be the income tax that you cut to make it revenue neutral negative or would it be other tax, or a variety?

There there's a number of, of, of tax policies that are being examined- um, and whether, um, the - there are numerous options whether it's personal income taxes; whether it's small business taxes; whether it's the HST - there's a number of ways you can get funds back to the public. My point is this should not - they should not be taking advantage of the goodwill on the environment that the public has as a cash grab for government.

Q: Zochodne: What's your preferred tax cut, though?

Well - uh, yeah and we'll have that in our platform.

Q: Crawley: Can I be clear though whether if if you were elected premier in June of next year; will you withdraw Ontario from the Western climate initiative - from the cap and trade program

Yes I, I would dismantle cap and trade. I would withdraw Ontario from the Western Climate Initiative.

Q: Crawley: And do you - have you figured out, sort of, the implications of that in the sense of -

We are currently going through the um, um our policy advisory committee are studying the legal implications of that; and how we go about that because we'd want to exit from this this framework as quickly as possible. It, it, it makes Ontario less competitive. The faster I can get Ontario away from subsidizing businesses in Quebec and California the better. [

Q: Zochodne: But you would keep the Liberal government's greenhouse gas reduction targets the way they are?

Uh, ya, Well, first of all - I, I don't actually think that their reduction targets are realistic. I do want to actually meet reduction targets. But, it, we saw the auditor general's report the emission reductions that the government is is, is proposing - they're not going to meet; they're going to be - those reduction of emissions will be had in California. So, it's one thing to have a goal; it's another thing to achieve it, and the government's not even doing that.

Zochodne: So you would try and hit those targets with 100 percent made in Ontario.

Made in Ontario. Yes.

Jones: Tell me if I'm wrong, I might be remembering incorrectly, but didn't the government commissioned analysis of this - and looking at the cap and trade versus carbon tax - show that a lot of the emissions actions under a carbon tax versus cap and trade would come from businesses leaving the province?

And, and I'm sure the government can commission any poll or or study they want - If, if you look at the one province that's actually had emission reductions, it's actually B.C. So, evidence in Canada suggest otherwise.

Q: Nanji: Patrick, do you know if any of the fraudulent ballots in the CPC leadership debate had any connection to the Ontario

No - we certainly don't share our lists.

Q: Nanji: Are you concerned or maybe conducting your own investigation.

No because I'm not involved in the, in the leadership campaign and I'm glad the federal party takes their process seriously. But I have no interest in, in getting involved. And I hope they have a spirited contest, and that it's fair and transparent.

Q: Nanji: Did the CPC, I guess, approach you or the party when conducting their investigation?

No - Like I said, we, we, we would never share our lists.

Q: Benzie: But aren't some some of the same players involved; like some of the some of the organizers who were named in this one, were involved in the CPC - in the PC leadership in 2015. I can't remember if they were with Christina or with you - but since I've have been with both.

It was, uh certainly I have friends who are actively involved in all the campaigns. I've got very good friends involved in numerous of the federal leadership campaigns. But I'm sure they're not getting involved; my office isn't getting involved. I've actually asked everyone in my office at headquarters to follow my example and not get involved.

Q: Nanji: I mean, does that it maybe concern you that there's suggesting that people are piggybacking on your memberships.

Listen we had a record membership drive. Our party is at a higher membership - and it continues to take place. You know, we had 40000 plus memberships come in just in the fall. We're seeing record membership numbers, and you know, um, I am not surprised that federal leadership candidates would want to piggyback on the success of the provincial PC brand right now.

Q: Nanji: I guess I'm a little unclear about why you're not conducting your own investigation or maybe looking into this, I mean, do you maybe owe it to your members to address some of these concerns?

If, if the federal party had, uh, uh, - we'd, uh, we would obviously cooperate with the federal party, but they never asked for any - our, our lists have not been shared. So there's that - This has nothing to do with provincial parties.

Questions for NDP Leader Horwath:

Q: Bliss: Andrea, what do you think of the fact that the Liberals are now using party money and donations to advertise on the subways with these brochures handing out to everybody saying, "Hey we recognize bills are rising too quickly we're helping out?"

Well I mean I think this latest tactic by the Liberals shows a couple of things -- one that they're desperate. And two, that in fact there's, there's a very, you know, practically invisible line between the Liberals partisan activities and their governing of the province of Ontario, and we've been saying that for some time, that their biggest interest is their own political power, their own political position, and this latest move is an attempt for them to try to reverse the polls frankly and leave the free fall that Kathleen Wynne is in right now. And again, using partisan, using rather, public money for partisan advertising is bad enough. And watching them blur the lines by the tactic that they took this morning is enough I think to to have people (inaudible) nodding their heads in disgrace over the actions of this government and I don't blame them. It's a very, very cynical move and I don't blame people for, you know for calling it that. It's, once again, it shows that this government is more concerned about their own political well-being than they are about the fact that people can't pay their electricity bills specifically because the Liberals made a mess of our electricity system.

Q: Ferguson: Would you restore, sorry, would you restore the Auditor-General's powers over the ads that the government over advertising that the government took away last year?

Absolutely. Absolutely. Look we supported the idea of making sure that public money is not used, to you know, prop up or to advertise a political agenda of a political party. And that's what the government is doing. The government pretends that they changed the legislation to stop using public money for partisan purposes. But

everybody knows that they changed it back. So now they can use public money for partisan advertising. It is absolutely wrong. That's not what public money should be utilized for. It should be utilized for fixing our health care system and getting rid of hallway medicine. It should be used, you know, for making sure our schools aren't being closed in communities across the province. It should be used to make sure that people can build a good life here and raise their families here without being worried about the future which is the problem that we have here today. The Liberals have been using public money for their own partisan purposes. Unacceptable and New Democrats, we don't believe that that's the right way to go here.

Q: Jeffords: Andrea, should there be targetted hydro relief for hospitals across the province?

Look, I'm shocked at the way that the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Health refuse to acknowledge that an increase of electricity bills ranging anywhere in some hospitals from 45 percent to hospitals in my own riding by up to 105 per cent -- that's over double -- an increase in your your electricity bills and somehow that's not going to have an impact on patient care? It's called an operating budget. And if you're taking money from your operating budget that's going to electricity bills instead of frontline patient care, then it's going to have an impact. So look I think it's a disgrace what the Liberals have done, and it's, it's unbelievable that they're not acknowledging the impact it's having on our hospitals and on municipalities and on schools and on people. The bottom line is everybody is hurting from their failed electricity policies. And unfortunately we're going to be hurting for a long time into the future because they're just kicking the football down the field and forcing the next generations to pay for the mistakes of this Liberal government

Q: (inaudible)

Well look, I mean I think it's clear that the liberals are desperate to try to turn things around politically for themselves but it's shameful that they're using public money to do so with their radio ads and now they're kind of blurring the lines, by this morning, coming out with this, this tactic on the subway with their leaflets. I think it's very very clear that the Liberals, they are desperate to find anything that will help them turn around their political fortunes.

Q: Crawley: When you look at this Liberal party ad, and you see, or listen to the ads that the government is paying for on the radio, do you see any connection?

Well, I mean I think it's obvious. I mean they had a plan to do what they could by using public money on the radio ads and now they're doing the same thing with their their party ads, but I don't think people distinguish the difference. And I think it shows that what we've known all along, which is, the Liberal Party of Ontario is governing this province not for the interests of the people of Ontario. They're governing this province, in the province, in the interests of the Liberal Party of Ontario. That's what they've always done. It's about the Liberal's ability to maintain power. And that's what it's always been about.

Q: Crawley: Cap and Trade auction is tomorrow. If you are elected premier next year, you will keep Ontario in this Cap and Trade system?

I mean we have some real concerns about some of the benchmarks that we had hoped the Liberals would put in place when they brought forward cap and trade. And we're worried that they haven't done that. And that's going to have some impact. So, particularly we expected them to put some fairness measures in place. We expected a plan that was fair we put forward amendments to see that that happened. Those were, those were voted down by the Liberals. We wanted some transparency and some, you know, some assurances around the effectiveness of the plan. And none of those things were guaranteed by the government and plan they brought forward. None of our amendments to ensure effectiveness and transparency as well as fairness were built in. And so we're going to have to take a look at where we end up when 2018 comes as to whether we have a cap and trade plan that is fair, effective and transparent.

Q: Crawley: What do you mean by fairness? Like, what's not fair about this particular?

Well, I mean, for example, if you look at other jurisdictions they've built in you know programs around lower income families, around geographically you know disparate locations. So for example, Northern Ontario where there is a harsher climate, where there's, you know, a longer winter season for example. None of that was

taken into consideration in this plan. Whereas in places like California it certainly did look at lower income families in places like even Alberta and their plan looked at fairness measures for those who would be the hardest hit.

Q: Zochodne: If there's an NDP government in 2018 would you dismantle cap and trade?

What we'll certainly do is an analysis as to the effectiveness of that plan. Can it be made effective? Is it transparent? Can we make it transparent? And we're going to have to look at the, you know, the specifics. By then we'll have had over a year operating in the province with cap and trade and we'll have a look at it.

Q: Zochodne: Do you have a preference one way or the other, cap and trade or carbon tax? Patrick Brown says carbon tax.

Well I mean, I think it goes to the effectiveness piece really. I mean, what is, you know, what or where, where is the value? You know, where are people taking credits, where are people, you know, able to reduce their impacts. But I think the most important thing is everybody knows that climate change is an issue that we have to deal with. Everybody knows that greenhouse gas emissions have to be reduced. And so the issue becomes, is this an effective plan to get us there overall.

Q: Zochodne: Are you in a bind at all in many NDP members are from the working carbon intensive industries, like auto workers or they are steel workers, and having to try to explain to them that their jobs may not fit in to a future with cap and trade because you have to do something about climate change.

Well in fact I think that many of the industries that you've talked about have been engaged with the government in this process and certainly the workers have been engaged as well in some of the, in some of the processes - we certainly keep in touch with them. But I mean this is the other issue around fairness. I mean if there are going to be impacts on people's livelihoods how do we make sure that those impacts are cushioned and that folks are not left in the lurch without decent work?

Q: Zochodne: So are you getting a push from any of your members to protect certain industries from a carbon price?

No. I mean, I think at this point what we're seeing is that people are committed to you know to a plan that deals with climate change and greenhouse gas emissions. And I think everybody takes that responsibility seriously around our carbon footprint and how do we make sure that it's reducing and not increasing.

N.B.: Comments captured are not verbatim quotes