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Subject: Hansard: Matthews to Zimmer -- Aboriginal Community Support Reconciliation

INSTANT HANSARD

>>MPP Matthews: Well, thank you, Speaker, and my question also is not for our superstar, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, it is for the Minister of indigenous relations and reconciliation. Speaker, our government is committed to creating fairness and opportunity for all Ontarians, however, Barriers to economic participation are continuing in equality in income and employment rates are major challenges for indigenous peoples in Ontario, particularly in northern Ontario. Over the past 15 years, the Liberal governments have taken many actions in close collaboration with our indigenous partners to drive economic development and build a better future for indigenous communities after years of inaction, neglect, and worse, under the Harris Conservatives. Can the Minister tell us more about how our government is supporting the indigenous communities to fully participate in our economy.

>>Minister Zimmer: Thank you, Speaker. Speak, since 2008 we have provided \$136 million through our new relationship fund to close the socio-economic gap and support indigenous economic participation, including nearly \$25 million for first nations. Our \$95 million indigenous economic development fund, which the P.C.S voted against in 2014, has provided \$25 million in funding to date. It will provide another \$70 million in additional funding over the next seven years. Our indigenous community exam grants programme has provided \$34 million in funding to key infrastructure projects and through our \$650 million Aboriginal loan guarantee programme, a major initiative under the green energy act, which the P.C.S say they will repeal -- We have continued to support meaningful participation in renewable energy projects for indigenous communities in Ontario.

>>MPP Matthews: Well, thank you Speaker. The PCs say they support economic development for indigenous communities but actions speak louder than words, Speaker. The truth is they consistently voted against the key investments we're making to support Ontario first nations. Education is key to indigenous economic development and to reconciliation and it's a shame that to the Conservatives voted against our landmark osap overhaul which has helped drive a 35% increase in one year, Speaker, a 35% increase in hot number of indigenous students receiving osap over the past year. What's more, just in December they voted against the historic \$56 million investment in indigenous institutes, allowing indigenous learners to gain the skills --Is actively supporting.

>>Minister Zimmer: Speaker, the fact is the PCs have no real plan for indigenous economic development. They voted against our fair hydro plan and the first nations delivery credits which were commanded by non-other than Ontario regional chief Isidore day as an important step to reduce poverty and economic development. They voted against our

landmark \$1 billion commitment to the ring of fire infrastructure in the tribal council area. Speaker, reconciliation is more than words! Speaker, it's about action. By voting against key actions we were taking, the PCs made it clear they are not -- On Ontarians journey towards reconciliation. Cuts are coming if the PCs form the next --

N.B.: Transcripts are captured by a closed captioning system and may contain errors.