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Energy-related content has been highlighted.

***with French translations**

PREMIER WYNNE'S TOWN HALL MEETING IN THUNDER BAY

Date: January 18, 2018

Length: 1:16:38 minutes

Speaker(s): Premier Kathleen Wynne

MODERATOR: (Joined in progress)... What have you heard and what have you learned?

PREMIER KATHLEEN WYNNE. Well first of all, Pat, thank you so much. I'm thrilled to be here and your Thunder Bay representatives Michael Gravelle and Bill Mauro – where are they? They're here. Thanks for being here guys. And also David Zimmer, who's our Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation is here as well. And most importantly all of you, thank you so much for joining us tonight. You know I have been asked why I'm doing this and my response to that is that this is always how I have connected with people throughout my whole political career. In fact before I was in elected politics one of the things I did was work in community, bringing people together. I really believe that the way we understand what's working and what's not working is to hear from people who have the direct experience. So I had the opportunity today for example to meet with the chiefs from Nishnawbe Aski Nation. I met with a roundtable of young people at Lakehead and we've talked about mental health because today is Bell Let's Talk Day. So everybody who is tweeting and retweeting today thank you for doing that because that process raises awareness about a really important issue and I'm sure there will be a question about that today. So that's why I'm here. I'm here because I believe that it is part of the democratic process that people should have the opportunity to question their elected leaders directly. E-mail is great. I get lots of e-mails, I get lots of letters, I talk to people on the phone. But I think having a direct conversation is really important. And so in terms of what I have learned, you know I've been in Brampton, I've been in Toronto, I've been in Ottawa, I'm here tonight, I'm going to Windsor on the 15th of February. So there are a lot of themes that run through the conversations. There are challenges that really have reinforced for me that we are living in a really uncertain time you know? That people aren't sure what are the jobs their kids are going to be doing? What does the future look like? The fact is that we have an uncertain global economy. You know I've had questions about international trade. I've had questions about healthcare. I've had questions about education. And I know tonight I will get some of those same questions, but the reason it's important for me to travel the province is that there are differences. You know there were

different questions in Brampton than there were in Ottawa and so that regional differentiation is very important to me. The last thing I will say is that I believe that government exists to do the things that we can't do by ourselves. I believe that government exists to create opportunity and fairness for people no matter where they live. And it's not perfect. There are lots of challenges that we are still confronting but many of the things that we are doing as government, the core of our policies, are about trying to provide opportunity for people. So whether that's increasing the minimum wage, whether it's free tuition as I was talking today with some young people at Lakehead, or whether it's creating childcare spaces across the province. All of that is about fairness and allowing people no matter where they live in the province to take part in the economy and to have the life and the future that they deserve and they worked for. So that's why I'm here. I'm looking forward to hearing your questions, and again thank you so much for joining us tonight. Merci. Migwetch.

PREMIER WYNNE: [Speaking French] And I was told I may also respond to questions in French. So if you have a question you want to ask in French, please speak slowly and I can respond.

MODERATOR: Great, thank you, thank you. You're going to expect I'm sure my next question given my history in the community and I was wondering what your thoughts were in terms of the recent college strike that seemed to be so protracted. What do you think went wrong and what would you do differently in the future?

PREMIER WYNNE: [Speaking English] Yeah that's a great question. I don't know if there are college students in the room, I imagine there are, and you know it's really really unfortunate that you had to go through that. You had to go through that time; it was a very long, protracted period, you're absolutely right Pat. You know I believe in the collective bargaining process. I think that it is important. I think that over decades it has created safe and strong working environments. Having said that, I think that we need to look at – I don't actually have the answer for it. I don't know exactly what went wrong. I don't know why it went on as long as it did and why we couldn't why the parties couldn't get to a deal more quickly. But that's exactly the question that we're asking now. We're looking at it, we're going to look at what is the process that needs to be in place, what are the changes we need to make so we can I hope avoid – not avoid a labour conflict because that's a reality, that's part of, as I say, that's part of the collective bargaining process but avoid a protracted situation that puts kids at risk.

MODERATOR: Thank you. My next question refers back to a comment that you've already made in terms of daycare and I know your government is committed to creating 100,000 new spaces for daycare and that your goal is around affordable and accessible healthcare. And in our city, and I'm sure across the province, infant daycare is \$71 a day and for young couples who are not subsidized that's like a second mortgage payment. How are we going to balance the cost of childcare and still have it affordable and accessible?

PREMIER WYNNE: It's a great question because I really believe that families having options for their kids is very important. And the age group that we're really focusing on now is the birth to four-year-olds because as you know full-day kindergarten actually provides a really safe and enriched learning environment for kids once they are four and before and after childcare we're working with school boards to make sure that there are those options. So we are committed to 100,000 childcare spaces and the commitment goes – subsidy goes with that commitment, Pat. So we're not just building the spaces but we are also providing subsidy and I think we have to have a discussion about levels of subsidy because infants are expensive little things to look after right? They need a lot of care and rightly so. But our commitment is that we work to make those childcare spaces affordable.

MODERATOR: And my last question, again reflecting back on my history, is about healthcare. And I know that you've been working very hard to have an integrated healthcare delivery system, and my observation is that we still have people who fall through the cracks and we still even in spite of some exceptional examples of high quality care all around the province as well as here I'm still seeing that we really still don't have an integrated system and I'm wondering what are your thoughts about the future of healthcare and how can we change that?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well I think that what we're seeing right now in healthcare in Ontario is that there are there are some pretty significant transformations happening and I'll give you two examples. One is that we are seeing a move from long-term care or acute care for seniors and seeing a range of options. So home care, we've put billions of dollars into home

care over the last number of years because people are saying we want to be at home, we want to age in place and we want the supports at home. But what we don't have I think is the right continuum of care. I think that when you talk about people falling through the cracks I think the situation we've got right now is that there are some people who are in acute care hospital beds who are looking for more supportive care than we've been able to provide. And so in that transformation what we're looking at is how do we not just send that person home but actually create opportunities for housing for example where there's support with the housing? Because I think that's one of the – you know you can't talk about healthcare transformation for seniors or end of life care without having a conversation about housing. It has to be part of the same discussion. And so that's one of the transformations that's happening, it's creating options for people who need care but can't stay in their home and aren't sick enough to be in an acute care hospital. I think the other transformation, and this is, I think it's a good day to be talking about this – for decades, I would say the Western world but certainly in Canada, we have not recognized the degree to which mental health, mental illness actually, is debilitating, is silent, that it's hidden. And so I think what we're seeing right now is a real transformation, particularly young people are saying you can't ignore this anymore. The young people who sat with me today were very clear that they want supports. They want them on their campuses. They want those supports early. They want to know early on in their education that they're going to learn about what the signs are and how to help their families to cope with mental illness. So I think that is a huge shift and I would say as a society we're catching up you know? We're creating new opportunities, we're recreating youth hubs, we're putting money into more counsellors and different models. But we're not there yet by any stretch of the imagination, which is why we still have to have days like Bell Let's Talk Day. Because we've got a lot of work to do to do that early identification and then come up with the right treatments.

MODERATOR: I'll save my questions later, and I'll turn it over to you and just remind everybody that there are runners in the audience and make sure when they do give you the microphone that you keep it close to your mouth so that we can hear your questions. And when I observed, when I watched the last couple of sessions that the Premier did I noticed that she made sure that she took questions from all parts of the room, so you will all have an opportunity to lead to be engaged.

PREMIER WYNNE: Exactly Pat. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to move from here, and then this half of the centre, and then this half of the centre, and then here, and then I'll ask a couple of questions here, or get a couple of questions from here and then we'll do it again okay? So I'm going to start here. And Jessica's going to take the mic. Okay. All right.

Q: Good evening, Madam Premier.

PREMIER WYNNE: Good evening.

Q: My name is Wayne (inaudible). I'm a lifelong resident of the Great Northwest. I appreciate that a few years ago part of the Liberal platform was to tackle insurance rates for vehicles. I can assure you I have never had a premium reduction and yet I've never had an at fault accident in well over 20 years. Last summer was the breaking point. After more than 20 years with the same company my premiums went up on average 22.5 per cent. There was no reason whatsoever that the company could give me for either my vehicle, a half ton truck or my wife's vehicle a Dodge Journey. After weeks of telephone consultations I ended up leaving that company but I couldn't get much lower premium elsewhere. What can be done to not lower my premium but to get a competitive vehicle insurance program for Ontarians? Right now we are individually without any bargaining power. Is it time for a province-wide vehicle insurance program?

PREMIER WYNNE: Thank you, Wayne. Thank you very much. So this is a challenge to us and I would say to you that we've been pulling on a number of levers to try to lower insurance auto insurance rates across the province. They're uneven, they're not the same in every part of the province and that's one of the challenges. We have work to take fraud out of the system. I think there's more that we have to do there and reduce costs. But I would just say that you know this is one of these issues that I know is burdening people. It's like it's one of those things that adds up and we have seen, I mean on average, and that's one of the challenges with this, with auto insurance, is that on average there have been reductions across the province. If you look at all of the drivers and all of the premiums there's been a 6 per cent reduction. Some companies have been able to reduce their premiums more than that. But most people haven't, as individuals as you say, felt the benefit of that. So what I can say to you is that there is more that we need to do. When we look at the public insurance, the provinces with public insurance – there was just an article in the paper about B.C.

today and the costs. I don't think that's the answer. There are additional costs associated with doing that in terms of bureaucracy and government control. So we're not going to go in that direction but we have asked David Marshall to give us some advice to reduce the costs of the system. We're going to be taking those recommendations under consideration. And I think that we'll be able to land in a place that will give – what I'm looking for is how do we acknowledge your good driving record and make sure that you get the consideration for that, and at the same time have to have a system that works for everyone. So we're going to work on it okay? Thank you. So we're going in this section.

Q: Hello my name is Eugene Francois. And I thank you for coming up here. You know this is like a bear pits session right?

PREMIER WYNNE: It's my pleasure. Thank you for coming.

Q: I'm a president of the Thunder Bay & District Injured Workers Support Group and I was also the president of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups. And yes, I've worked with I. David Marshall. He is not what you call a perfect gentleman when it comes to cost cutting because what we got, what injured workers got from all the changes was cutting benefits, cut everything. Right now he also made some policies of previous preexisting injuries. And I'll just – because I'm – what I'm saying is not everybody's right up there with it but if you were hurt say in high school playing football whatever, and then you went to work for say 25 years and you had absolutely no problems with that injury from high school, you get hurt on the job. The reason now you're going to be cut off benefits is not because you fell 40 feet onto the ground from a ladder that was something happened to it, it was because you were hurt in high school. They're using that as a mechanism to cut off benefits. So my question to you is a whole bunch of questions but when I was president of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups we did start meeting with your staff, your staff in office, your staff in the Premier's Office.

PREMIER WYNNE: Right, okay.

Q: What I'd like to, I guess put you on the spot, is will you meet, will you be the first Premier in history of Ontario to meet with the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups because we have ways of saving money. All we have to do is include all the employers to be in the pot and we would have – say we can pay it like OHIP. You know how all the employers are paying OHIP? And then there's no questions about – like there'd be no adversarial because experience rating is not helping absolutely one worker in this province. But I would really like to meet with you, our group.

PREMIER WYNNE: Okay.

MODERATOR: We need to let the Premier answer the question, please.

PREMIER WYNNE: So yes, if you want to have a meeting and you want to set that up we will find a way to make that happen. So absolutely. But let me just let me just step back for a second because you know you're raising an area of real challenge. And I've actually in my own riding had the opportunity pretty much every year to meet with injured workers from the community that I represent, and I know that my colleagues have and there are there are different challenges that that people are confronting. But my belief is that we can find ways to resolve those issues. You know we can't propose to have a province that's fair and that has opportunity for everyone if there's a group of people who feel that they're not either getting a fair hearing or they're not getting their needs met. I can't promise you that we're going to agree on everything or that I'm going to be able to solve every challenge that you bring forward but will I meet with you? Can we have the conversation? Absolutely, and my staff – I've got a number of staff members here, we can follow up okay? Thanks for raising the question. This woman right here. There's a mic there for you.

Q: Thank you. Hello Madam Premier. My name's Kim and my question to you is kind of a little bit of a story too. I have to two preexisting conditions that are quite rare. Not many people have them, not many people even know what they are and there's no specialists here in Canada that could treat me if I need special surgery. For me to go across the border that's thousands of dollars that I don't have and OHIP doesn't cover. Is there something that you can do to change so that OHIP will help people like me to get coverage in other countries that aren't available here?

PREMIER WYNNE: So OHIP does cover some procedures out of country. I don't know. I obviously don't know the details of your situation, but one of the principles of OHIP and our medicare system is that if there is a procedure that's not done in Ontario or not available then we find a way to get that done. It doesn't happen often but it does happen. So I don't know – again I don't know the details of your situation but if it's something that you can talk to my staff about – but there are there are provisions for procedures to be done in the States depending on whether it's something that is recognized here as a procedure.

Q: (Inaudible)

PREMIER WYNNE: It's not recognized, okay. So that's a challenge because we have – you know we have a full range of procedures and treatments that are recognized here. We to the best of our ability and particularly in healthcare what we do is based on evidence, it's not based on political choices, it's based on scientific evidence, and so as those procedures are recognized then they are covered by OHIP. So again I don't know the situation with yours. One of the challenges with a publicly funded healthcare system is that there are always new things happening you know? And it was interesting a few weeks ago Bernie Sanders came up from the States and he brought some American health practitioners with him and they were asking all these questions about whether there was innovation in Ontario and whether people had to – whether people got access to primary care physicians and are our practitioners were able to answer their questions you know. There's such a debate in the United States about whether health care whether publicly funded health care works. And there was a real sense of pride on the part of the practitioners here about what we can offer to people, what we what we are able to do for each other because there's nothing that expresses our values more I think than our healthcare system. It's about caring for each other, it's about providing fair and equitable care across the province. But there is more and more research that's being done, there are more discoveries, there are more procedures and the system expands as those things become part of what we recognize. And if those aren't there yet, then I don't know the timeline. But let me have my staff follow up with you and see where they're at and what the Health Ministry's perspective is on them okay? Thank you.

Q: Good evening.

PREMIER WYNNE: Good evening.

Q: A lot of the questions that you'll be asked tonight will involve funding challenges for the Ontario government, as with any government. And currently in Thunder Bay and I think everywhere, the public and Catholic school boards are both spending money on advertising trying to compete for students, money that you would think could be better spent in the classroom. All it would take is a resolution passed in the Ontario legislature to end public funding for religious schools. It's 2018. Why are we wasting millions of dollars funding two school systems?

PREMIER WYNNE: Thank you. Thank you for that question. And let me just say that our publicly funded education system is one of the best respected in the world. There are people who come from all over to see how we run our education system here and I know that having been the minister of education. I had delegations come from countries in Europe, countries in other parts of the world, to see how we see how we delivered education here. I think it is absolutely wrong that the Catholic system, the English system, the French system, would be advertising to take students from the other systems. I completely agree with you. I think that would be – that is a very bad idea. I think it's something that shouldn't happen. And I've said that. I said that when I was minister of education and I think you're right to raise it. The existence of our French language system, our English language system, our Catholic system, our public system is rooted – it's rooted in the way this country was formed. And I know that if we were creating an education system today it might look very different than that. But my belief is that what we need to do is we need to make sure that school boards are working together no matter whether they're the French board or the English board they need to be working together. They need to collaborate on sharing space and sharing administration back office. And that is the way that those – the issue around money is one thing but when we think about the attachment to the system because of the constitutional rights and because of the history those are harder to deal with than the actual money issues. Because really where the challenge is in the funding is when there isn't co-operation and we've got lots of situations in the province where there's good collaboration and we've got lots of situation where there's bad collaboration. I can tell you, if anybody has a question about this I can talk in more detail about it, but we are pushing the boards to work together so

that they share space, they share dollars and also work with municipalities so that actually public dollars are used in the best way possible. But we're not going to move away from the systems that are rooted in the history of the province at this point. We're not going there. So thank you for the question. Over here.

Q: Hello.

PREMIER WYNNE: Hello.

Q: My name is Erin Rice and I am the chair of developmental services with OPSEU. So my question to you is – I'm just going to read how I wrote it so I don't mess it up. Developmental services in Ontario is still fighting pay equity issues and many agencies cannot afford to pay past obligations. Many employers are considering eliminating positions, changing job descriptions to get around equal pay for equal work. So what I'm standing here asking you today is that you put a budget line in all of the transfer agencies and developmental services for pay equity.

PREMIER WYNNE: Thank you for that question, and I know that OPSEU members support a living wage, support equal pay for equal work, support part-time and full-time people if they're doing exactly the same job that they are paid the same. And we recognize that there's a need to acknowledge the costs. The developmental services area has had a big infusion of resources over the last few years as you know and we recognize that we're not done yet. You know there's still need, there's need for people to have the supports that they require in their lives. You know if we want to talk about fairness in the province it is eminently unfair that someone would not have the resources that they need if they have a disability or if they are not able to look after themselves. So that's why \$810 million was put into the developmental services area, that's why developmental support workers along with ECEs and personal support workers got a targeted increase in their salaries in the I think it was in the 2014 budget. So I recognize. So we've done all those things. I recognize that there's more that we have to do and I recognize that it is an issue of fairness and we will continue to work with you because it is extremely important to me that both the people who work in the sector and most specifically the people who need the support get what they require. So thank you. Thank you for the work that you do. Can we take a question here? Yes, I'll take one here.

Q: Thanks Premier Wynne. My name is Dennis Brown. I'm lucky to be the Mayor of the town Atikokan.

PREMIER WYNNE: Nice to see you.

Q: Thank you for coming here tonight, and I want to thank you again for coming to Atikokan last August. We had a great day with you and we much appreciate it. However, we did bring up one issue that was a concern and still a bit of a concern of ours and that has to do with the two OPG plants. There's one here in Thunder Bay, as you know, and one in Atikokan. And the one in Atikokan is very important, we're getting mines development. We're expanding the power up north to more First Nations communities and so on. But nowhere do we read where those two plants are going to keep operating well into the future. So I just bring this forward again. Atikokan needs that OPG plant to be there for the next 100 years if we can, Premier Wynne. So anything that you can do about that? And I'm sure the same applies in Thunder Bay. We need this plant here to provide power and to support the communities. So anything you can do would be appreciated.

PREMIER WYNNE: Thank you your worship. And it will not surprise you, your worship, it will not surprise you that Bill Mauro has raised this issue with me a few times. And my commitment to you is that wherever you live in this province you need to have a steady reliable supply of power. I know that there are the two plants. There's also the discussion about the East-West tie and there's a lot of really great work that's being done right now and you know my vision for this part of the province is that you're going to need every bit of that power because you're going to grow and thrive and you're going to have industry that's going to need that supply. You're going to be connecting First Nations communities and your economy is going to be booming. So as I say you're going to need every bit of that power. So we're going to work with you to make sure you have that power. And I, as I say, Bill Mauro will not let me forget, not even for a day that this is an issue. Okay? Thank you. So – back here.

Q: Hi, my name is Peggy Brekveld. I am Vice President of Ontario Federation of Agriculture and here in Thunder Bay, about 20 minutes away, I'm a dairy farmer.

PREMIER WYNNE: Thank you for that.

Q: One of the roles of government is to tell – to decide who does what where. Another role of government would be to fund those greater-good projects and in this province, you've often been quoted to say the province is thriving and I don't dispute that but when I think of rural Ontario and Northern Ontario sometimes it's not the reality we see and some of the challenges are coming from those greater-good projects that just can't get done in rural Ontario and Northern Ontario because we don't have the dollars for infrastructure and we're thinking of things like broadband and, really, roads and bridges. Dollars are going towards – the big public transit dollars are going to subways, promise for high speed rail going into London and beyond. And yet, I know my local municipalities are sometimes struggling just to put in the roads that they need and fix the roads that they have because there's just not enough people and a lot of infrastructure. And so, I guess the question to you is what does the plan to do the greater good for those communities that don't have the population numbers that the big cities have?

PREMIER WYNNE: Thank you for that question. And, you know, you raise such an important point because when I talked about the anxiety that people are feeling in my lessons from the from the town halls that I've done but just might my knowledge of what's going on in the province, you're right. Our province is doing very well. We're really thriving. We are leading economic growth in the country and our unemployment rate is below the national average and has been for months. But you are correct. There are parts of the province that have different needs and are not necessarily sharing in that growth or in that wealth creation in the same way that others are. And so, that's why it's so important that we make exactly the investments that you're talking about. We're making, on average, about \$600 million, \$500 million to \$700 million investment in roads and bridges in the Northern Highway Program in Northern Ontario. When I was Minister of Transportation, I had the opportunity to travel and look at all the roads and bridges around the province and that led me to believe that we needed specific funding for rural and northern roads and bridges and so we've actually created dedicated funds – the one that... the community infrastructure fund is \$300 million a year as of 2019 and that's an annual permanent fund that is targeted, not at the large communities, not at the urban centres or suburban centres, but specifically to deal with the roads and bridges of northern and rural Ontario. So my answer to you is that we recognize that if we're going to have one Ontario, if we're going to have a fair distribution of investment across the province, we have to recognize that there have to be very intentional programs set up and so that is what we have done. The other thing that's happened is that municipalities are very on top of what their infrastructure needs are. In the last few years, they've done assessments of their infrastructure needs and they're able to say exactly what they need now and so that makes it a much better partnership in terms of the funding. And we now have a federal government that's working with us whether it is transit in all of our urban centres or whether it's water and wastewater – because that kind of infrastructure –that's needed the federal government is working with the province and the municipalities now so we have we have more leverage. So thank you for your question. It's very important and it's important to the economic viability of all the communities in the province.

Q: Madame Wynne.

PREMIER WYNNE: Bonjour.

Q: My name is (inaudible) Gleason.

Q: [Speaking French] Hello Premier Wynne, my name is [Inaudible] and I am the vice president of the Francophone Association of North West Ontario.

Q: [Speaking English] I'm the Vice President of L'Association des Francophones du Nord-Ouest de l'Ontario. If you don't mind, I'd like to start with a question in French, but I would like to translate it for the rest of the room because I'm sure they would love to understand what I'm saying but I think it's important that I address you in French.

Q: [Speaking French] The Ministry of Francophone Affaires committed to overhaul the French Services Act in November 2016. After a large public consultation, the French Language Services Commissioner, Francois Boileau and the Francophone Assembly, proposed to change from 26 to 1 designated area - this region must be the whole of Ontario . Here in North-Western Ontario, it would greatly benefit from the implementation of this measure. Premier Wynne, will you go ahead with these recommendations and modernize this legislation more than 30 years after it was passed?

Q: [Speaking in English] On November 2016, the Minister of Francophone Affairs committed to overhaul the French Services Act. Following the large public consultation, the French Language Services Commissioner François Boileau and (inaudible) proposed a change from 26 to one designated area. This region must be the whole of Ontario. Here in Northwestern Ontario it would greatly benefit from the implementation of this measure. Madame Wynne, will you go ahead with the commissioner's and (inaudible) recommendations and modernize like this legislation more than 30 years after it was passed?

PREMIER WYNNE: [Speaking French] With help from Minister Lalonde, the Minister of Francophone Affairs, we are trying to modernize these laws. Right now, I do not have the details, but I know that these are important changes for Ontario Francophones and the entire province. And I believe that if the Francophone community is strong, Ontario is strong.

PREMIER WYNNE: [Speaking in English] So we are in the process of modernizing the rules, the laws. I don't have the detail for you at this moment but Madame Lalonde is very committed to making those changes and my philosophy has always been that if the Francophonie in Ontario is strong then Ontario is stronger. Merci.

Q: Hello, Premier Wynne.

PREMIER WYNNE: Good evening, hi.

Q: Good evening. I have a couple of questions. My name is (inaudible) Fiddler and I'm a parent. I'm a mother of two daughters and I'm a teacher as well and I am a parent council member with the Children's Centre in Thunder Bay. And so I want to talk about children's services, particularly around mental health and complex special needs. So I heard today that you had answered a question regarding the \$220 million that's being invested into Child and Youth Mental Health Services in the province and I'm just wondering how much of that is going to be committed to Thunder Bay. And when I think about Thunder Bay, I'm a visitor in this Territory. I'm from further north – the remote north and Thunder Bay it really is Midwest Ontario. We have two thirds the landmass north of here of the province of Ontario. And I think we have to recognize, we have to acknowledge that we are a hub; we are a service centre and the demographic is changing and the needs are increasing. And you spoke earlier today about the mental health needs of our children and youth from the north. Well they are coming to Thunder Bay to access services and we don't have the proper supports in place to transition them out of the adolescent mental health unit or the adult mental health unit. Just this Christmas, a relative of mine spent a week in adult mental health. He was discharged and sent back to his community and he died by suicide right after New Year's. Both of my daughters have accessed the children's mental health services through the Thunder Bay Hospital and I'm fortunate that I'm a squeaky wheel. But I spent a lot of time waiting and jumping through hoops to try and access services. There are not enough services for children here and children are dying. My older daughter is identified as complex special needs through the MCYS. She lives with a number of diagnoses and when it came to a point where we weren't able to provide support for her within her home we needed help parenting. We were told that she would have to go to a group home in southern Ontario because Thunder Bay did not have an option for her and I refused and my colleague and friend Paddy is here beside me. Her son has spent six years in a group home in southern Ontario and he's identified with similar complex special needs and their (inaudible) – at one point there were three boys in one group home that were from Thunder Bay and they're being funded between \$200,000 and \$300,000 annually for their care. That's a million dollars going into a group home in southern Ontario and I refuse to let my daughter go in. And so, now she's aging out.

MODERATOR: Maybe we can let the Premier answer, please?

Q: Yes, thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

PREMIER WYNNE: So you shouldn't have to be a squeaky wheel. You shouldn't have to work that hard to find the services for your children. That is true. That is a given and I'm sorry that you've had to go through what you've had to go through it. It goes a little bit to what I said earlier which is we, as a society, are catching up. We haven't done a very good job, first of all, of even acknowledging that mental illness was a challenge that touched every family that touched every community but we're sure having to figure that out now. And the good thing about the awareness campaigns is that we are figuring it out. We're figuring out that there needs to be more resources and so what I was talking about today, that's just a piece of what needs to be done and I just want to acknowledge that Thunder Bay is a hub. Thunder Bay is a location where people come from all over the north to find services and First Nations kids come out of communities and they need support. We've actually put extra counsellors and extra supports in place for kids through the school to try to provide some support and transition for them. I talked with a group of kids from the NAN – at the NAN meeting today and they were and they were talking about the kind of residents that they would like to see here because they feel like they're a bit adrift when they come to the city so I would say to you that in terms of the proportional support that Thunder Bay needs, we recognize that Thunder Bay has a responsibility for a broad swath of the province and so there will be proportional funding to that but we're going to need to work together on exactly what those models look like. We're going to need to understand better what can work and what isn't going to work. So I look forward to hearing from you and working with you on that. Thank you. Migwetch.

Q: Hello, Premier Wynne.

PREMIER WYNNE: Hi.

Q: Thank you for coming. I just had a quick question. You mentioned a lot of things about funding in areas such as transit, provincial highways, spending on children and youth services, more care for seniors, money for infrastructure, postsecondary education and we've been touched by the spending in communities in the north. My question relates to the debt of Ontario. It's one of the largest almost in the world. \$336 billion going forward. Now, we spend more money on all of those services just paying down the interest payments. So my question to you is what's going to be done about that?

PREMIER WYNNE: So Ontario is larger than most of the subnationals if you look around the look around the world and I've been travelling to the United States a lot recently because we're engaged in discussions around NAFTA. I've met with more than 30 governors and when I look at their states, you know, they're a fraction of Ontario. Ontario is as big as many countries. So we're actually working on what you're talking about. Our debt to GDP is going down and that's a really good measure of health. But let me just say to you that when I look at the people in this province and I look at the wealth that we are creating in this province, what I believe is that there should be a fair share in that. I believe that we have a publicly held publicly funded health care system because people in Ontario believe that that is the right thing to do. It is the right thing to do to look after each other. We have a public education system because we believe that all children should have access to that system. So we fund those things because we have a contract with each other that we're going to look after each other. So, I absolutely understand where you're coming from. That's why we've committed to balancing the budget this year and we're on track to do that. We're on track to see our debt to GDP continue to go down. But am I going to stop working to meet the needs of the kids that we just heard about, the developmentally delayed folks that we just heard about, am I going to put on a backburner the needs of the people in this province? No, I'm not. I'm going to work to get that debt to GDP down. I understand fiscal responsibility but I also know that we need to look after each other. We need to find ways to support each other so that everyone can take part in their communities, can have the opportunity to thrive economically as well as anyone else in the province. So that's my philosophy.

Q: Bonjour.

PREMIER WYNNE: Bonjour.

Q: [Speaking French] (Inaudible).

Q: [Speaking Ojibwe]

Q: [Speaking English] My name is Erin Bottle. I'm from Mishkeegogamang. I live and reside in Thunder Bay since 2011. I also represent the city's Indigenous Community on a community level. And I'm a passionate advocate for our people and our people are the fastest growing population in this country and our people are the most marginalized in this country when it comes to equality of services that Ontarians get to enjoy and benefit from. What I'd like to ask is, it's in relation to what you had spoke about with health income poverty. This city has a very high poverty rate. It has a very high – when I was a mother in social assistance up north with two kids I was getting \$280. What I get here in the city is \$317 and this system is built to not lift us up because of the policies and the structure and the systemic barriers that indigenous peoples face, not only indigenous but non-indigenous people. Since I've been back in Thunder Bay, I do a lot of street advocacy for our people. Since I've been back since 2011, 84 members of the city have passed away in the city streets and have been – that have fallen through the systemic barriers. So my questions are with respect to the basic income and reform is, what are you going to invest in this budget and will the rate increase with the standard flat rate or what's going to be in the Income Strategy budget? Are they going to release something? I know they're going to be releasing something in February or March in response to the roadmap map. As a people, we just don't want the roadmap recommendations to sit on the shelf. We want this government to invest in the income increase rate because, quite frankly, a lot of our people fall through the systemic barriers. They don't qualify for certain things and we need support because this is degrading to live on \$317.

PREMIER WYNNE: So yes. Thank you. Thank you for that question. So you've talked about a number of issues and I think the overarching issue that you're talking about is poverty and how do we support people so that they can work their way out of poverty. How do we reduce poverty in our in our society? You mentioned the basic income pilot in Thunder Bay is one of the cities where we are – we have got in place a basic income pilot because we want to understand whether there's a better way to support people. My hope is that, through the basic income pilot, that we discover that there is a way that people can actually stay in school longer, that they can retain – they can get into and retain a job because they have a bit more of an income to back them up. In terms of the report, we're just looking at it now. The Minister is just looking at it and we recognize that there are some really important recommendations there. We're going to do everything we can to reform the social assistance system as it exists now so that it's that it's more respectful of people, that it helps people to get through that time in their life and get into a better place because that's the whole point. That's what social assistance is meant to do. It's meant to help people to have a better life. And so the Minister is looking at the recommendations and the basic income pilot is part of that. But you are right. There are systemic issues that we have to tackle and that's the other part of your question. There are systemic issues that are rooted in our history. When I was at the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation meeting today we had this conversation. There are things that we have to work on together, Indigenous and non-indigenous people, because it's not just as simple as what's the rate going to be. It is what is happening in our school system, what is happening in our child welfare system, where's the local control, how do we rewrite that story of our relationship because we didn't do it right the first time around. So thank you very much. Migwetch. We're going to go over here and then I'll come back. The next time around, I'll take another question from here. Okay.

Q: I'm going to read from my phone. I don't have this memorized. So, while my comments deal specifically with my family on the north shore of Lake Superior, I know there's many, likely, of you guys here who own lakefront property and you're going to be affected by what I'm saying as well. My 90-year-old mother in law owns a place at Walker's Lake and Strieber (sp.). From 2016 to 2020, her impact assessment will have increased a whopping 400 per cent. As I'm sure you're aware, this has a direct result – or a direct impact on property taxes, which in the past two years have already doubled, and we anticipate they're going to double again in the next two years. As you talked earlier, society is trying to keep seniors in their own homes for as long as possible. But given the ridiculously high hydro rates that we're experiencing, rising fuel costs and now these huge increase in the Impact Assessments resulting in higher taxes, how, Madame Wynne, can you expect a senior citizen to stay in their own home on restricted income and maintain a decent standard of living and are you prepared to help us with the impact issue? Thank you.

PREMIER WYNNE: You're very welcome. So this impact question, particularly to do with (inaudible) came up. It came up to me when I was at ROMA and I had a question on it in the Legislature so it's something that I've been aware of and we're trying to sort it out. You raised a number of issues. We worked to lower people's electricity bills. Our Fair Hydro Plan dealt with, not just urban, but the more remote communities and reducing those costs. I understand that this particular issue, this impact issue, raises the taxes and it puts an extra burden on families. I understand that there have been some reassessments that have been done but I think there's a fundamental challenge. There's a fundamental problem that we need to tackle. I had a conversation with our Minister of Municipal Affairs who is Bill Mauro, as you know, and I think we need to ask this question of impact. We need to sit down and look at what it is because my question is, what are the competitors? How are they coming up with these assessments if, what I understand is, the market value is nothing like the numbers that they are finding? So that's the question I'm going to take back and we're going to explore it because it's not fair. From the sounds of it, it is not a fair process. It's certainly not an open process and so I appreciate you raising it. We're going to ask that question. Okay, thank you.

Q: Madame Premier. My name is Ken Bjorn (sp.). I am a first year social service worker student at the college. I took marketing between '09 and '13. Couldn't find a job so I'm back in school. Now I have noticed a great difference in the amount of student services between '09 and now. The amount of staff, the amount of profs who are part-time have both – the part-time staff have increased. The staff ratio to students has increased. And, you know, if you want help it's fine if the prof is full-time; they have an office but it seems to be all profit based now. During the strike, I was talking to several faculty and the employment council, which they were bargaining with, correct me if I'm wrong, they are a for-profit government-funded entity. Is this, in your opinion, fair to us students because we're the ones losing out?

PREMIER WYNNE: So as I said to Pat earlier, I think that there are some really serious questions that we need to ask about the process that led to this this impasse. Some of the issues that you raised around part-time and full-time staff, some of those were issues that were actually being bargained. They were part of the negotiation and I think that they are going to be addressed in the process of coming to an agreement. But in terms of the actual negotiating process and who the negotiators were and what the rules are in terms – and I'll give you an example. In the elementary and secondary school, there is there is a provision that if there's a ruling that the year is going to be in jeopardy then then the government can take that and act to get the kids back in school. There's no such provision in the postsecondary panel. I think we need to look at what's missing from the process, where are the problems. I don't think there's a for-profit piece of this though. I mean, I will have to look at that but that is not my understanding that there's any for profit. There is an entity that was negotiating with the colleges but I take your point. Many of the issues that you talked about were part of the negotiation and we are looking at what we can do to make that process work better. So thank you for raising it and good luck with your course.

MODERATOR: Madame Premier, you have five more minutes.

PREMIER WYNNE: Okay, I've got a question right here so that for a couple of more questions, I think. Yeah.

Q: Good evening, Madame Premier.

PREMIER WYNNE: Good evening.

Q: I'm a disabled person in Ontario and what I'd like to ask is – sorry about that. What I would like to ask is, you talk about fairness and a living allowance. Well, people who live on disability do not get a living allowance. We can barely make ends meet if we can make ends meet. We have to survive from food banks, the kindness of friends. It's really hard. When you've had to do that for years, it's almost degrading. So what is your government going to do for the homeless, the poor and the disabled and the seniors?

PREMIER WYNNE: So thank you very much and one of the earlier questions touched on this because I think that it is fair to say that we can judge a society on how we treat our most vulnerable people. I think that's a fair rule to live by. The reason that we are testing the basic income, the reason that we're working to reform our social assistance program to make it more respectful, to make it more supportive for people who either can't work or are in a transition is exactly what you're saying. I hope that as we go through these changes that you will feel more supported but it is absolutely our

commitment that we're looking for better ways, we're looking for better ways to interact with you and to support you. Thank you. I'll just add to that that as we as we go through these changes we're also cognizant that people who are able to work, people who are able to take part, they're struggling to in many ways. And so that's to go back to the living wage, to raising the minimum wage, the OHIP+ so that young people have access to pharmacare and the free tuition. Those are all acknowledgements that people have a lot of costs. Lowering electricity rates was about people not being able to afford their lives. We're trying to find ways to support people who are struggling on a day to day basis. There's a question right there.

Q: Yes, Premier Wynne, thank you for being here. My name is (inaudible) Landry. I have a background with injured workers.

PREMIER WYNNE: Can you speak into your microphone, please?

Q: Oh sorry, my name is Gerald Landry. Thank you for coming, Premier Wynne.

PREMIER WYNNE: Pleasure.

Q: I have a background injured workers groups in Ontario and nationally with Canadian Injured Workers Alliance. I was on an air emissions project in 2003. On my last day there, there were 59 of us on oxygen. The client-owner of the pulp mill was given a grant for the project. I went three and a half years without benefits from the compensation board and a year later vehicle exhaust starting on-setting the same (inaudible) symptoms. But, number one, you talked about equality of rights under the Charter Rights. Canadian Charter Right were to be afforded fair and equal treatment before the law. When are going to have a legal aid clinic in Thunder Bay for injured workers. Two, when are you going to dissolve the office of the Employer Advisor. Your Ministry of Labour funds the Office of the Employer Advisor. If an employer has less than 100 employees they pay for the legal costs too. Well what can I say? Screw the injured workers. Okay. Also two, all federal employers – federally regulated employers, provincial employers, cities, municipalities and hospitals do not take workman's compensation premiums on hundred dollars of payroll. Like private sector employers and I'm sitting there at the injured workers office and nurses are phoning and just bawling for the way they are getting treated and they have over 80,000 members in the province and many other horror stories I could never repeat. So –

MODERATOR: And your question is, sir?

Q: Are we going to get a legally clinic in Thunder Bay for injured –specifically for injured workers? Are you going to dissolve the Office of the Employee Advisor? Is that is totally unfair that they get paid full legal costs to screw injured workers?

MODERATOR: We'll let the Premier answer.

PREMIER WYNNE: Can I just suggest that I think there are a number of issues associated with injured workers that I think need to be addressed. I'll be honest with you. I don't have the specific answer to your questions just as I didn't have the specific answers on the other injured workers question but I've agreed that I'll sit down with you if you want to combine those meetings because I think there are some shared issues here and I understand that there are some real challenges in terms of injured workers getting the support that they need. I also know that we do try to make sure that those supports are in place but I'm very open to hearing your concerns and hearing where we can do better.

Q: Premier, I would like you to come back and we'll have Labour Minister Patty Hajdu and it will be a televised meeting for all of Canada at the events centre because we have to get rid of Schedule Two across Canada.

PREMIER WYNNE: Okay, so you know what? You'll have to have that conversation with the Feds. Thank you. Okay. I think we've got – have we got one more question here? Yes.

Q: Good evening, Madame Premier.

PREMIER WYNNE: Good evening.

Q: My name is Owen Smith. I'm (inaudible) of Confederation College. Support staff, how's it going? My question is regarding the current funding of the Ontario college system. According to the Price Waterhouse Cooper report that was released last year, by 2024-25 the current debt cumulative for Ontario colleges will be \$1.9 billion. So do you have a plan to fix this, especially to keep the Northern colleges viable, especially my college Confederation College?

PREMIER WYNNE: So we want the colleges. Thank you. Thank you for your work. We want colleges and universities across Ontario, including at Northern colleges and universities, to be viable. We want them to thrive. I think that, again, I think part of the discussion during the collective bargaining process was about the funding model for colleges. And so I think we're going to see that roll out and that conversation's not over. As you know, that is not over. We need to be creative as northerners always are but in terms of the viability of all of our northern colleges and universities there are really good ideas that have been put forward. We're working with the sector. But as I said, my starting point is we want northern colleges and universities to thrive because we want young people to be able to access postsecondary education close to home. So thank you very much for the work that you do and thanks for your question. Okay, sure.

MODERATOR: Two more questions.

PREMIER WYNNE: Okay. All right, we're going to take one from back here. Was there one?

Q: Good evening, Madame Wynne.

PREMIER WYNNE: Good evening.

Q: Thank you for coming to north western Ontario. My name is Rob Ferguson. I'm a counsellor in Atikokan. As a municipal politician, I have to answer questions about the municipality, the province and the federal government.

PREMIER WYNNE: Me too.

Q: One question I get a lot is the wisdom or the thought process of selling off Hydro One to the private sector. I just need an explanation that I can bring up.

PREMIER WYNNE: So let me connect it with a question that came up earlier about infrastructure. My experience of this province is that we have had an infrastructure deficit going back decades and that's roads, it's bridges, its schools, its hospital upgrading. I was not prepared to not move on that. I was not prepared to let those roads and bridges continue to deteriorate. I knew that we needed to make a massive investment into infrastructure in this province. And yes, part of that is transit but it is roads. It is bridges. There are, I think, 19 bridges in Kenora that need fixing. There's a Nipigon Bridge is being repaired right now and I know there's a need for options along there. Highway 17 needs to be four lanes. We're doing that but there's more that needs to be done. All of that needs money to invest. And so we're in the midst of \$190 billion investment over 13 years. And part of that was we needed to leverage some assets, which I ran on in 2014, that we need to leverage some assets to build new assets and that's what the broadening the ownership of Hydro One was about. We can't build infrastructure if we don't have the resources to do it. That's what the Hydro One change was about.

Q: Hydro One wasn't yours.

MODERATOR: Just a moment please.

Q: (Inaudible)

MODERATOR: Just a second, please.

Q: Hydro One (inaudible) Liberal MPs 57.

PREMIER WYNNE: And you still own more than 40 per cent of Hydro One and it is –

Q: (Inaudible).

MODERATOR: And we're going to allow the Premier to answer, please.

Q: (Inaudible) see yourself, Premier.

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, the reality is we need this infrastructure built. We're in the midst of building it and we're going to continue to build this province up.

Q: (Inaudible).

PREMIER WYNNE: Last one there, okay.

Q: Good evening, Premier. Thank you so much for being here in Thunder Bay. I'm Charla Robinson President of the Chamber of Commerce and I represent over 850 member businesses and 20,000 employees in our community. The job of business is to meet customer needs and to do so profitably. But it's becoming really challenging to make a business profitable in Ontario right now. The addition of cap-and-trade pricing last year made it more expensive for every business to transport their products to and from Thunder Bay which you kind of have to do and to keep the heat on at their operations. This year, the changes to employment standards implemented in Bill 148 which included, not only the 22 per cent increase in minimum wage, but also new rules around stat pay, emergency leave, on-call pay, vacation and equal pay for equal work are adding significantly to the overhead costs of many local businesses, charities and institutions as well. And it's making it really hard for them to continue to create jobs pay taxes and support their community charities. So I'm here on behalf of the hard working entrepreneurs and their employees who are disappointed that their concerns were ignored when Bill 148 was being debated. They were very clear in expressing their anxieties about how quickly this was being done and that they felt that it was too quick and they asked for more time for implementation. So we're now one month into this reality and to date, the education provided by the ministry has not been very clear. There are a lot of employers who don't even know what some of these changes mean for their business and business owners are having to reduce hours as they said they would, when they can they, are having to increase prices. Many can't, based on contracts that they have. The City of Thunder Bay is pointing to a \$1.2 million increase in our tax levy because of the cost this is implementing for the City of Thunder Bay and we're all paying higher prices for everything from groceries and dry goods to daycare and home care. We know this was done with the best intentions, Premier, but unfortunately the short implementation period means that this is landing at your feet. And so we're asking for you to provide the promised help that you had talked about and I'm wondering what that help will be for business.

PREMIER WYNNE: Thank you, Charla, thank you very much. I talked about increasing the minimum wage a couple of times tonight and I think that we can all agree that if you live in Ontario and you're working full-time, you've got a job and you're working 40 hours a week, you should be able to look after yourself and your family. And so that's what increasing the minimum wage is about. We did listen to businesses. The small business tax rate has gone down from 4.5 per cent to 3.5 per cent. We reduce that tax rate. We put in place supports for businesses to hire young trainees and there are millions of dollars in place so that, when those employees are hired, there's an offset for businesses so we did we did pay pretty close attention to what businesses were saying because, of course, we want business to thrive across Ontario. But the reality is there are thousands and thousands of small medium and large businesses that are already paying a living wage. They're already doing this. And so it really is not an impossibility and I've been in small mom and pop shops on main streets. I've been in big corporations and I've been in medium sized businesses so we'll continue to work with the businesses in this province. But I think that, as I said, if we are honest with each other we would say that somebody who's working full-time in Ontario and remember we're competing with places like New York, with Alberta, with Seattle that are also either there or they're raising their minimum wage as well. So that's who we're competing with and we're competing for the best. And I appreciate the work that you do and I appreciate the businesses – all of the businesses in the region. But I also know that people need to be able to feed themselves and their families. Thank you so much for having me tonight. Merci beaucoup. Migwetch

MODERATOR: Madame Premier, thank you so much for being here this evening and I appreciate everyone's cooperation. I do see lots of hands that are up and there's one man in particular that's had his hand up all evening. And so if he promises to be good, I will let him ask his last question. Is that fair?

PREMIER WYNNE: That's fine.

Q: I hope you recall that you granted this gentleman over here a face-to-face meeting, Premier. On October 17th of 2016 we had to go to the opposition to get them to ask a question on our behalf with respect to MPAC. In your response, you gave your personal assurance that you would look into the matter. We are on our way now to Queen's Park on February the 22nd to bring this issue to the national media. Mr. Gravelle has been trying for two years. He claims to get your attention and to get your ear. This 184-year-old woman, my mother, has had her taxes go from \$5,000 a year to \$11,000 a year and she's not the highest it's in Schreiber. \$15,000 a year, folks, for a three bedroom shack in Schreiber. We can't afford it. You've got us in a no-win situation, excuse the pun. We need help. We need it now. We cannot wait.

PREMIER WYNNE: And I think I answered the question, "am I concerned about it?" and I am.

Q: Being concerned, ma'am doesn't get us a reduction. We need help.

PREMIER WYNNE: I understand that and I am going to take it up with MPAC.

Q: I have a PowerPoint presentation that I'd love you to look at because I think if you saw it you'd realize why you have to talk to MPAC tonight, not tomorrow.

MODERATOR: Why did you leave that? I'm sure the Premier would be delighted to have it.

Q: It needs a dialogue to go with it, Mrs. Lang. So if you've got an hour I'd be more than happy to show it to you.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

Q: We need help. We need it now.

PREMIER WYNNE: Thank you. Thanks very much.

MODERATOR: All right. So thank you. And I see that there's still lots of hands up and I think that the Premier would be willing to have some one-on-one conversations with people if there's an opportunity for that. But I do want to thank you for your participation tonight. I appreciate the fact that you've become engaged in the democratic process. And I want you to drive safely and stay warm and please come back.