
PREMIER WYNNE & SAULT STE. MARIE MAYOR PROVENZANO REMARKS & AVAILABILITY

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<i>Speaker(s):</i>	Premier Kathleen Wynne Sault Ste. Marie Mayor Christian Provenzano

SAULT ST. MARIE MAYOR CHRISTIAN PROVENZANO: [started in progress] to our civic center and our community. Premier Wynne and I had a very good discussion this morning on a number of topics, including Essar Steel Algoma. Since the CCA process began in 2015, the province of Ontario has been a steadfast and willing partner in our efforts to help our steelmaker find a positive resolution to its current situation. That remains true today. And our city appreciates the province's ongoing support and commitment very much. I was also glad to have the chance to talk to the Premier about several other issues of concern and interest to our community and to northern Ontario at large, including electricity prices, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation, and opportunities relating to the development of the Ring of Fire. Premier Wynne, on behalf of the city of Sault Ste. Marie city council, let me say that we are glad that you have taken the time to visit Sault Ste. Marie to speak to us and to listen to us. The podium is now yours.

PREMIER WYNNE: Thank you very much. It's a real pleasure to be here. Although I have to say, I wish I was going for my run now in the light because your trails are so beautiful. Thank you everyone for being here. And I'm going to begin, as I do, by acknowledging that we are on traditional territory of many First Nations and that we are meeting in the Robinson Huron Treaty area. I also want to recognize the neighbouring communities of the Ojibways Batchewana and the Ojibways Garden River, the local Metis communities and acknowledge that Sault Ste. Marie is the home of the important [inaudible] decision of the Supreme Court of Canada on Metis constitutional rights. As I said, it's a pleasure to be back here again. I was just noticing the picture on the wall. Is it of Lakeview, the technical school. Lakeway, which is the school my grandmother taught in the 20's. It is a pleasure to be here. Thank you all. Your worship, thank you for our meeting this morning. The last time I was here – I was here in August. I was at Northern Heights to announce increase school funding for school repairs. We had a community barbeque in Belleview Park, so the weather is a bit different – although it's pretty mild. As the mayor has said, we had a good about a number of issues. And I would say the overarching issue that we talked about is the economic well-being, the economic development of Sault Ste. Marie and whether that's in the context of discussions around OLG or Essar Steel. And I just wanted the mayor to be clear that I've appreciated the partnership over the years that we have had with Sault Ste. Marie. He and I have met before. We will continue to talk the work that our former MPP David Oraziotti did has laid a very strong foundations of understanding between Queen's Park and Sault Ste. Marie. That is intact and it's ongoing. So as I look forward to continuing the work that we're doing together. We had an interesting chat about the importance of the location of Sault St. Marie and the historic geography that has made this hub for not hundreds of years but thousands of years. And so I'm really struck when I travel internationally and I talk about the gateway that Ontario is to the North American market, that Sault Ste. Marie is one of those important gates in that story. My belief is that there will be always be an important role for Sault Ste. Marie as a hub in this province and in this country and in the North

American context. I will just say that as we enter into a new relationship with the United States, I think it's important that we remember how important our, or how significant our economic integration is with the United States. Places like Sault Ste. Marie really reinforce that. People going back and forth between Michigan and Ontario as part of the Sault hub, that's exactly the kind of example that when I talk about subnational relationships, when I talk about integrated economies, this is the kind of example that we need to use. That I think in fact heightens the importance of Sault Ste. Marie to Ontario's economy and to the economy of the north. We did talk about some of the specifics around those economic opportunities – the Essar Steel conversation. And we talked about that in the context of the steel market international and the importance of steel to the North American economy and how we need to make sure that we have a robust steel industry in Canada, in the United States. And in the global context right now that's a challenge. I think it's important point of discussion with are American partners and it is certainly an important discussion that is ongoing here at Queen's Park. We are doing everything we can to support that. I also told the mayor that I am on a tour of province because of the importance of our education workforce. I am here because I'm gonna be doing a visit at Sault College. I'm gonna be at Algoma, ah, this afternoon – because if we, if we don't make sure that our young people – and people who want to get back into the education system – um, we don't make sure that they have absolutely the most support possible, then we won't compete that competitive edge; that we won't – we won't retain that competitive edge that we have in the global economy. Our educated workforce is our number one advantage. And so, the changes that we are making to student assistance in this province, which will mean that kids from low-income families – \$50,000 or less in income – they will qualify for the most part – average tuition – they will qualify for free tuition or better than free tuition. And students from families of, you now, between \$50,000 and \$80,000, ah, one in five of those students will qualify for, ah, free tuition or better than free tuition. So that is a really important – actually it's not one in five – it's, it's four out of five. Sorry – four out of five will qualify for free tuition or better than free tuition. All of that is to say that we are, we are reorganizing the student assistance program in this province to make sure that students for low and middle-income families go to post-secondary in greater numbers. Right now, they are four times less likely to go to post-secondary than students from high-income families. And so, that's a very very important – that's a very important gap to close. Finally, we did talk about electricity prices. And electricity prices are top of mind for me. We have made a commitment – on top of the eight percent reduction, which people will see on their bills at the end of this month – it came into effect January 1st – but, people will see it on their next electricity bills. Ah, on top of that eight percent reduction; on top of the changes that we've made to support businesses – the expansion of the industrial conservation initiative – ah, we are working to find more, more reductions to electricity bills because we know that even with what we've done, it's not enough. And so, before the budget, you will see us come forward with more proposals on how we can lower people's electricity bills. Because we know that that is a challenge – not just in Sault Ste. Marie, not just in the region – but across the province. So I'm gonna stop there and we'll, we'll take your questions. Miigwetch.

Q. Premier, when ah – first (inaudible) a lot of people's minds – when is the by-election gonna be called?

[Laughter]

PREMIER WYNNE: Oh ya, that.

[Laughter]

PREMIER WYNNE: Um, you know, there, there needs to be a; there needs to be a process of candidate search. I know that there are some candidates that have been nominated. We're in the process of that

– so there needs to be a good consultation with community; with the party members and, ah, stay tuned. There will be, there will be, there will be a by-election called in due course. But, you know, in the interim, we have a very strong working relationship and look forward to that continuing.

Q. But at this point, we don't have a voice or an MPP at this point. So, what, will – will you go to try and do this sooner rather than later?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, you know, you do have a voice. Your mayor, your mayor is a very strong voice.

[inaudible – followed by laughter]

PREMIER WYNNE: Mayor Provenzano has my phone number. He knows, he knows how to get in touch with us. You have a very strong, you have a very strong voice at the table in, ah, in Toronto at Queen's Park. And, and – I'm, you know, I travel a lot in Ontario. And Sault Ste. Marie is an important, is an important part of this province and you don't – you don't need to worry about being forgotten. You will not be forgotten. You are very much top of mind, and that's why it's important that, you know, the conversations we had about Essar; about OLG – those are issues that are very much on our radar screen and we are working on them very hard.

Q: I know you said the, ah, the by-election will be called in due course, but are you concerned about a summer election at all? With people being away on holidays – not getting out to the polls et cetera. Will you do the (inaudible) prior –

PREMIER WYNNE: Well, you know, let's, let's – let's just not get ahead of ourselves. We haven't got all of the candidates – all the candidates nominated. And, and – you know – um, David Oraziotti, who has been a wonderful, wonderful MPP, um, we – we didn't know that this was going to happen. Right? It was a decision that he made for all the right reasons – but everybody needs some time to, ah, to do those candidate searches; and, and people in the community to determine who they want their candidates to be. Okay.

Q: What is the Ontario government have to do for Essar?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well – there are. As you know, there's a labour discussion going on right now. Um, we are, we're working as well as we can to facilitate the process that needs to happen. Our concern is obviously for the families; for the workers. For their, for their ongoing security. And so, we want to see – we want to see this industry thrive. I, you know, I believe that we have such a strong history in the steel industry in Ontario that that should continue. We have, ah, expertise; we have corporate memory – and we want, we need to make sure that it thrives. So, Essar – the steel industry – here in Sault Ste. Marie is an important part of that history and an important part of the present day capacity that we have for steel. So we will do everything we can without overstepping the (inaudible). And that's why it's important for everyone to know that we are in close communication, that officials here are in close communication with the officials at Queen's Park and there is a real intensity to the work that is going on and that intensity will not, that will not ease up.

Q: You spoke about the importance of the U.S.-Canadian relations, especially with us right here. During the U.S. election you were vocal about your opinions on Donald Trump saying he might be bad for Canada between the two candidates. Trump doesn't seem to play well with people who publicly go against him. Have you talked to him at all? Have you made any sort of trying to mend the relationships at all with him, considering they're so important to Ontario's future?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well I think there were a lot of people in Canada who were saying they were worried about protectionism. That they were worried because we have such an integrated economy with the United States, that that was a concern. So I'm not on Donald Trump's radar screen. He hasn't called me.

Q: Have you reached at all to him?

PREMIER WYNNE: What I've done is I've reached out and will continue to reach out to my governor colleague. You know, it's up to the Prime Minister and his office to establish that relationship with Washington. We have a representative in Washington, Monique Smith is our representative in Washington. She has briefed our cabinet and we're in close communication about issues that are of real importance to Ontario. And that's as it should be. I have a strong working relationship with Rick Snyder who's the governor of Michigan and that's really important to Sault Ste. Marie, it's important to Windsor, it's important to Ontario and the auto-sector, it's important to Sault Ste. Marie in terms of that relationship. So I'm going to continue to work very hard on those subnational relationships and support the Prime Minister in the work that he's doing to establish a good working relationship with Washington.

Q: Are those relationships, do you think more important having them with the governors of the states than with President of the United States?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well I think it's the appropriate level. I didn't have, I never had, the Premier hasn't had a working relationship, a day-to-day working relationship with the President before Donald Trump. And so it is my responsibility as the Premier to work with other subnationals to make sure that we do everything we can to strengthen our economies. And we've done a lot of work in that subnational context. Whether it's on climate change, or whether it's in the autosector, I just a few months ago signed a memorandum of understanding with Michigan on the autosector and we will continue to work together, so that is the appropriate relationship for me to foster.

Q: Going back to Essar steel Algoma, might there be a financial (inaudible) for the province in terms of this whole process? Is there an ask for a provincial (inaudible)

PREMIER WYNNE: Again, I'm not going to pre-empt the process. There might be but we really need to let the process unfold.

Q: Premier was there any discussion or could I say revisitation of the issue of connecting link funding for major Sault industrial roads? Such as the widening of (inaudible) was there any revisitation of that discussion?

MAYOR PROVENZANO: So I did not raise the issue with respect to connecting links. I felt that was below the Premier's (inaudible). I think those are relevant issues but I have to raise those issues with the appropriate minister and the Premier's Office is actually assisting me in setting a day in February when

I'll be going down to Toronto, Queen's Park and meeting with a number of ministers about some of our current issues.

Q: Going back to your talking about, it takes time, David Orazietti, made this announcement like you said out of the blue. It takes time to find the right

PREMIER WYNNE: It wasn't out of the blue for him

Q: For the party. The NDP and the Conservatives both have made nominations. Is that worrisome that they have their candidates out there, they're knocking on the doors, they're out there trying to get support while the Liberals don't have a candidate. There's (inaudible)

PREMIER WYNNE: You know what, there's a good process underway among Liberals in Sault Ste. Marie and we're going to let that unfold. We'll have a great candidate to run and to follow David Orazietti's footsteps.

Q: Not concerned?

PREMIER WYNNE: Well you know what? I'm concerned that we continue to work to make Sault Ste. Marie as great as it can be. That's our objective. We will get to the by-election. There will be a good process and we'll have a great candidate. You had a question and then we'll stop.

Q: Well I (inaudible) getting into water diversion and (inaudible) maybe I'll just ask in terms of that possible candidate. Might that be a city councillor?

(laughter)

PREMIER WYNNE: (inaudible) Thank you everybody. Thank you very much. Thanks for being here.