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des débats
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Tuesday 27 March 2012

Mardi 27 mars 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 27 March 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding House proceedings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we have unanimous consent? We have the agreement.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I move that notwithstanding standing order 58(b), when the House recesses at the end of the morning sitting today it shall stand recessed until 4 p.m., at which time government notice of motion number 20 shall be called.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES
AMENDMENT ACT (RENT
INCREASE GUIDELINE), 2012
LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION
À USAGE D'HABITATION
(TAUX LÉGAL D'AUGMENTATION
DES LOYERS)

Ms. Wynne moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline / Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne le taux légal d'augmentation des loyers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to you on second reading of Bill 19, our government's proposed amendment to the rent increase guideline under the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006.

Je prends la parole aujourd'hui au nom du quelque million de ménages de cette province qui louent un logement : les familles et les particuliers de tous les coins de l'Ontario qui, chaque jour, cherchent à boucler leur

budget, c'est-à-dire à payer leur loyer et à subvenir à leurs besoins quotidiens.

I speak to you in support of approximately a million rental households across the province, the families and individuals throughout Ontario who are struggling each day to balance the rent with the cost of daily life. This legislation would mean that, beginning in 2013, the rent increase guideline would be capped at 2.5% and would not fall below 1%.

Our approach would reduce volatility. It would provide stability and predictability for both renters and landlords while recognizing that modest rent increases are necessary to ensure that landlords can properly maintain their rental properties. So we understand that there's a balance that has to be struck, and in terms of the rental community that is what we have tried to do all along since we came to office in 2003. At this point, what we believe is that by stabilizing the rent increase guideline, we'd help people find certainty in their housing costs, and that would allow them to focus on their jobs or their education.

Madam Speaker, I have to say that I'm actually particularly pleased to be introducing and beginning to speak about this legislation today. It is budget day in Ontario, and I think it's important that we recognize that the business of governing and the business of establishing policies that work for people across the province is complex. It's not best driven, in my opinion, by ideology, and I think this piece of legislation demonstrates that we understand that that balance needs to be reached. Our budget today will further demonstrate that we understand the complexity of the public policy needs and the economic realities across the province. This legislation recognizes the economic realities, the financial realities, that people in the province, particularly renters, deal with every day.

Mr. Jeff Leal: A practical approach.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Exactly; a practical approach, says the member for Peterborough.

My remarks today are all in the context of the central importance of housing in the lives of everyone living in our communities. My responsibility as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is to work with communities, to work with the federal government, to work with my colleague ministers and with advocates to improve the housing options and opportunities for Ontarians.

Of course, housing is about bricks and mortar, it's about frame or glass, but it's larger than that. It is about adequacy of housing, and adequacy of housing in

community is a key indicator of the well-being of that community.

John Lorinc, who's a Toronto journalist, in his book *Cities*, of which I have a pre-publication copy—

Interjection: Oh, how did you get that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It came out some time ago, but I was looking at it last night, and the copy I have is a pre-publication copy.

Anyway, he points out the close link between urban poverty and the supply of affordable housing. Lorinc talks about the history of government involved in urban housing, and he says, "...when municipal agencies began cleaning up slums and building modern sanitation systems to reduce the threat of infectious disease. By the 1920s, governments started taking an even more active role, with the development of social housing." I think we tend to forget sometimes that there was a time not long ago when government didn't see a role for itself in monitoring available housing, let alone partnering to build housing.

We take that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask those members having conversations to either take them out of the chamber or reduce the level of noise.

Minister, please continue.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. One does get used to speaking over the buzz in this place, but I appreciate your intervention.

We tend to forget that there was a time when government did not take that responsibility as part of what it was expected to do, but we do. We think it's a very important aspect of our responsibility as a government to monitor the housing supply in the province, to make sure that there is a balance, and Bill 19 is one aspect of that responsibility. So as we monitor the availability of affordable housing and the costs that Ontarians are bearing, let me talk a little bit more about the background of Bill 19.

There are families all across Ontario who struggle to pay their rent and cover the costs of the basic necessities of life. Julia and David's family are an example. They rent a home in Brampton with their three young children. Keisha is eight months old, Rebecca is four years old and Timothy is six years old. David works full-time at a local car manufacturer, and Julia stays at home and works as a mom.

The family's budget is tight. Julia says that even an increase in rent of \$30 would have a huge impact on her family. It would make it hard for the family to buy the things that their children need for school, save for a long-term goal of buying their own home and save for emergencies. She says that the most important thing is to give her children a sense of belonging, a sense of safety, a sense of home.

I think Julia and David's story demonstrates that stable and affordable rent is an important factor in allowing people to realize their full potential and to help build viable, sustainable, healthy communities where people

can live and work and raise families. I think everyone in this House, Madam Speaker, would agree that that is critical to all Ontarians and to our communities. Whether you are part of a struggling family or not, whether you are a renter or not, I think it's important to all of us that we have a rational regime in terms of tenants' expectations.

0910

Let me talk a little bit about Ontario's history of rent regulation. Madam Speaker, rent controls or rent increase guidelines have existed in Ontario's rental housing sector since 1975.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Bill Davis brought them in.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's right. Since that time, there have been a number of statutes that have regulated rents and rental increases in rental housing. Those include the Tenant Protection Act, 1997, which was in effect from June 17, 1998, to January 30, 2007; and the Rent Control Act, 1992, which was in effect from August 10, 1992, to June 16, 1998.

Each one of those statutes established its own regime or formula which spelled out how rent regulation and increases would be applied to Ontario's rental housing sector. Some of these statutes allowed the government to establish arbitrary caps on rent increases; others developed complex formulas that, in effect, lacked transparency and objectivity.

One of the most prominent issues in the 2003 provincial election campaign for me was the issue of escalating rent. I think for many of us who have a high percentage of rental properties in our ridings, 2003 was really a watershed year in terms of those rent increases. As a candidate in Don Valley West, where almost half the residents live in rental housing, I encountered the issue of high rents at thousands of doors. We committed in that election campaign to introduce legislation to address those concerns.

So the Residential Tenancies Act, in 2006, was introduced under our government, under Premier McGuinty. It was in fact Ontario's first piece of residential housing legislation to establish a fair, transparent and objective measure to calculate annual rental increases, removing the arbitrary measures that had been in place. I think the member for Scarborough—

Hon. Brad Duguid: Centre.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —Centre was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing at the time, and I know that there were many members in the House who worked on that piece of legislation.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Brad Duguid played a big role in that one.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: He played a very big role in that.

The rent increase guideline is calculated under the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, and is based on the Ontario consumer price index, which is calculated by Statistics Canada. The rent increase guideline is the maximum amount that most landlords can increase a

tenant's rent during the year without making an application to the Landlord and Tenant Board, and that's an important caveat. In most cases, the rent for a unit can be increased if at least 12 months have passed since the tenant first moved in or since his or her last rent increase. The tenant must be given proper written notice of the rental increase at least 90 days before the rent increase takes place. The rent increase guideline applies to most private residential rental accommodation covered by the RTA, the Residential Tenancies Act, including rented singles and semis, basement apartments, rented condo units, and special tenancies such as care homes and mobile homes.

Monsieur le Président, la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation a marqué l'avènement d'une nouvelle ère en ce qui touche la protection des locataires et des propriétaires.

It gives tenants, who are often our most vulnerable residents, fair rent increases while keeping our rental housing market strong. The result is, I believe, stronger communities that offer a range of housing choices that meets the diverse needs of Ontarians.

Interjection: It's about balance.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's about balance.

The RTA, 2006, replaced the Tenant Protection Act of 1997, and it was an attempt to level the playing field so that both sides could deal with each other in a fair and reasonable manner and fix the problems associated with the previous act. The Residential Tenancies Act established a fairer, more responsive rental housing system that helps, as I say, build those stronger communities around the province.

The RTA represented a culmination of a two-year dialogue between our government and tenants and landlords. From 2004-05, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing undertook a comprehensive consultation process and circulated a consultation paper with a questionnaire on key issues. There were thousands of responses, e-mails and phone inquiries. There were 10 town hall meetings held in Toronto, Kitchener, London, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Kingston and Hamilton, and about 1,500 people attended.

The point of my outlining that is that there was a lot of discussion about that piece of legislation, what went into it and what was needed. Concerns were raised by both tenants and landlords, including tenants being evicted without a hearing, the issues of building maintenance and having work orders dealt with, rising utility costs, above-guideline increases, vandalism, and issues related to mobile and care homes. Those were all issues that had been raised with us during and before the 2003 election.

The RTA, the Residential Tenancies Act, has two goals: balanced protection for both landlords and tenants, and promoting a healthy investment climate, because we recognize that there need to be more rental units built and we want that development climate to exist. That ensures fair rents for tenants and helps landlords protect their investment, and helps to keep the rental housing market strong. For tenants, it means better-maintained buildings,

fair annual rent increases and a new system to deal with above-guideline increases for utilities and capital expenditures.

Under this piece of legislation, tenants are no longer subjected to a default eviction process, as they were under the previous legislation. Too often, what happened under the former legislation was that individuals and families, including vulnerable children and seniors, were being evicted without a mediation or a hearing, and that's no longer the case. The RTA requires adjudicators to consider the tenant's circumstances in deciding whether to grant an eviction for failure to pay rent. Tenants can also raise related claims at their hearings for rent arrears such as maintenance problems in their buildings, and that is, as we know—those of us who have many tenants in our ridings, we know that those maintenance issues can be the presenting issue in the relationship between tenants and landlords.

At the same time, the legislation provides much better protection for landlords against problem tenants, because there's the balance, you know? We have to make sure that landlords are not facing unreasonable constraints as they deal with tenants who may not be behaving in the way that they should. So a fast-track eviction process deals with tenants who cause wilful damage or who are interfering with the reasonable enjoyment of a landlord's own home. The time required to get an eviction order for these problem tenants is now cut approximately in half, and in the case of excessive wilful damage or serious threats to health and safety, eviction orders can be issued immediately. So that was an improvement for landlords in those serious situations.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Especially small landlords.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Small landlords—the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation remarks that it's often small landlords who have the most concerns, and we recognize that.

Landlords, under this legislation, can also continue to increase rents through the above-guideline rent increase process. They could also continue to be able to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board for above-guideline rent increases for extraordinary increases in the cost of municipal taxes and charges or utilities, eligible capital expenditures and increases in operating costs related to security services. So there was a recognition within the legislation that those situations would require that the landlord go to the Landlord and Tenant Board in order to get an above-guideline increase. They could also be able to continue to negotiate starting rents with new tenants, and these measures I think demonstrated our government's recognition of the valuable contribution that landlords make to the rental housing market in Ontario.

The RTA also expanded rent discounting rules. Landlords can provide discounts of up to three months' rent per year, and that's a particularly useful marketing tool in times of high vacancy rates.

Also, with the RTA, the name of the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal changed to the Landlord and Tenant Board, and what that did was it better reflected the

mandate of enhanced customer service and accessibility for tenants and landlords. With the proclamation of the RTA, most administrative fees were reduced significantly.

The dialogue between our government and tenants and landlords has helped to determine the best way, I think, to promote a sustainable, well-maintained supply of rental housing. We took our time to get it right because strong communities are central to everything that government does, and a strong rental housing market is essential to that building of stronger communities. These consultations ensured that we achieved a fair approach to protect tenants while promoting a stable and affordable rental housing market.

The act, we believe, does not at this time need significant or deep reform, but as the circumstances change for those who rent, we'll listen. We'll be open to amending the legislation when necessary, but at this point we're going to focus on one particular area. We're going to take action right now—and that's what Bill 19 is—to protect Ontarians from potential guidelines that may not reflect the economic circumstances of those who rent.

0920

You'll remember I said that in the RTA, the rent increase guideline was tied to the Ontario CPI, the consumer price index. But what we have heard is that too many families are not able to keep up with inflation, that they are worried about their rents increasing beyond their ability to pay and that drastic increases from one year to the next are not manageable for many tenants. Those spikes are difficult for tenants to manage. That's why we're taking this action.

Our proposed amendment is an example of that balanced approach that I have outlined. If it were passed, it would keep rent affordable and would provide certainty. It would provide some stability that I think is critical.

As I mentioned, Madam Speaker, the proposed legislation, if passed, would mean that the annual rent increase guideline would be capped at 2.5%. So the ceiling would be 2.5%, and it would never fall below 1%. We're proposing a ceiling and a floor no lower than 1% and no higher than 2.5%. The annual rent increase guideline would continue to be based on Ontario's consumer price index, which I think gives that objective and transparent measure that provides the predictability and the stability.

Comme je l'ai aussi dit, cette approche créera plus de certitude pour les locataires. Elle permettra aux loyers de demeurer abordables et stables et elle sera également avantageuse pour les propriétaires qui seront assurés d'un rendement juste sur leurs investissements, ce qui leur permettra d'entretenir convenablement leurs immeubles locatifs.

As I said, what this approach would do is provide tenants with greater certainty. It would also allow for more affordable and stable rents, and landlords would benefit by being assured of a fair return so they can properly maintain their rental properties.

One of the things I say to tenants on this issue is that we want to make sure that landlords are able to maintain their properties, because it doesn't help anyone if properties are not upgraded, if there aren't capital expenditures, so it's important to keep that possibility in place.

We're also proposing that the act be amended to require that the annual rent increase guideline formula be reviewed every four years, because when we first put it in place, we thought that it would be able to be maintained throughout, but what we realize now is that as economic conditions change, we need to be able to review the rent increase guidelines. So we've put that measure into this legislation.

I want to assure landlords that the proposed amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act would, if passed, not be retroactive. We understand that the 2012 rent increase guideline came into effect on January 1, 2012, and many landlords have already begun to collect lawful 2012 rent increases. The proposed new guideline formula, if passed during the spring, during this legislative session, would not take effect until 2013. I've had tenants say to me, "Why wouldn't it take effect right now?" I think we have to recognize that landlords planned for the 2012 increase and they have begun to collect rent, so that's only fair.

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's got to be fair.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Exactly.

I noted at the beginning of my remarks that it's budget day. All members of this House know that we are facing economic challenges, both in Ontario and globally, and that's why the government is committed to working hard to create jobs and continue to strengthen the economy. That's really our primary objective at this juncture in our history. Our government's balanced approach, I think seen in this amendment, if passed, would help to make rents more affordable, lessen and provide certainty for tenants and allow them to focus on their jobs or education. Landlords large and small are important partners in delivering quality rental housing, and that's why our approach would allow landlords to maintain their properties while still allowing them to see a return on their investments.

Landlords would be assured of an increase of at least 1% per year, remembering that they received less than that last year—if you'll remember, the rent increase guideline last year was 0.7%.

Our proposed amendment represents a fair and balanced approach and would be aligned with the average guideline increase over the past five years, which has been 1.7%, and over the past 10 years it has been 2.1%. So the numbers that we have landed on, the 2.5% ceiling and the 1% floor, are not arbitrary. They're based on what we've seen the averages to be over recent history. These guidelines have allowed landlords to maintain their properties while still allowing them to see a return on their investment, and we anticipate that the revised guideline, if passed, would see these conditions

continue and provide greater certainty for both landlords and tenants.

As I've said, landlords would retain the ability to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board for increases above the guideline for costs associated with an extraordinary increase in the cost for municipal taxes, charges and utilities, or both; eligible capital expenditures; and increases and operating costs related to security services.

So what does this mean for the province? Sur une échelle plus large, nous croyons que la mesure législative proposée est dans l'intérêt des personnes les plus vulnérables de notre province. L'automne dernier, le premier ministre s'est engagé à améliorer la loi pour que les augmentations de loyer correspondent à la réalité vécue par les locataires.

On a larger scale, we believe that this proposed legislation will help those most vulnerable in our province. Last fall, the Premier committed to fixing the legislation so that the increase would be in line with what's happening in the real world for renters. A picture of that real world is captured in the Poverty by Postal Code 2: Vertical Poverty study released by the United Way in January 2011. Almost half of the tenants interviewed in that study said that they worry about paying the rent each month. One of four tenants interviewed say they do without things they need every month to pay the rent. One in three say that they and their families do without other necessities some months of the year.

As far as we're concerned, Madam Speaker, that's unacceptable. As stewards of the future, we need to act now to help make housing more affordable and improve the quality of life of those most vulnerable. Affordable, stable and secure housing has a direct impact on a person's health, education and economic status. It plays a strong role in addressing poverty and providing families with a decent standard of living. According to the Canadian Council on Social Development, children living in adequate housing have significantly higher overall health and do better in school than those in poor housing conditions, so I'm a firm believer that when we get people into safe and affordable housing we're helping the entire community and we're giving particularly the children in those families a better future and a more aspirational outlook. Their communities become places in which people can take pride and where they can feel more secure.

Yesterday, Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to speak with members of the Halton Poverty Roundtable's housing forum, and that group and so many communities around the province are having important discussions. They're doing the necessary local planning to incorporate housing initiatives into their overall poverty reduction strategies, because I don't believe we can talk about poverty just in terms of family income or individual income. We have to talk about poverty in a much broader way, and housing is a central part of that. And that work at the local level is critical, in addition to the work at the

provincial level. It makes clear the connections between the adequacy of housing and the reduction of poverty.

One of the things I said at the roundtable yesterday was that there has been and there needs to be an inter-ministerial conversation about poverty reduction at the provincial level, but that needs to be reflected at the local level, as all of the community groups and individuals and agencies work together to put together plans.

From a broader perspective, investment in the housing sector provides employment and stimulates economic activity, and I'm really pleased to be part of a government that values and respects the need for all families to have a safe, healthy, affordable place to call home.

So we've got to work together. There's more to be done. We know that for housing to be affordable, families can really not afford to pay more than about 30% of their pre-tax income for housing. According to Stats Canada's 2006 census, approximately one in three renters in Ontario are in what's called core housing need: that is, households or persons that spend more than 30% on shelter. Approximately one in eight renters is in severe housing need, meaning they spend at least half their income on shelter. Those families, as you can imagine, Madam Speaker, have very little left over to cover the costs of basic needs: clothing, food and medical costs. All of that can affect a family's standard of living, their productivity, and it can limit even our national competitiveness.

0930

The current situation for tenants today is reflected in the fall 2011 rental market survey released by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. The survey reported that the average rent of a two-bedroom unit across the province rose by 2.2%, from \$980 in October 2010 to over \$1,000 in October 2011. The survey also found that the average vacancy rate in the province fell from 2.9% in October 2010 to 2.2% in October 2011.

So with rents rising and the availability of rental housing decreasing, there's a need for affordable housing in this province, and that's why our government is taking action. That's why we're going to, through this bill, if it's passed, stabilize the rent increase guideline, and it's part of the reason that we introduced our long-term affordable housing strategy. We can fix particular issues in the moment, but we need a long-term plan, and that's what our long-term affordable housing strategy is.

I just want to quickly talk about how the new calculation will work, by way of an example. We imagine a tenant who's earning just over \$29,000 a year. The tenant is currently paying \$800 a month for her apartment unit. She comes home on August 1 this summer and finds a notice from her landlord in her mailbox that says her rent is going to be up in three months' time, which can never be good news.

Now, Madam Speaker, there are two points I want to make clear at this point in the story. First of all, the tenant's lease runs from November 1 to November 1 each year. The second point is that by providing the tenant with notice on August 1, the landlord has fully complied

with the legislation by providing at least 90 days' notice. So on November 1, our tenant's monthly rent will increase by the amount allowed by the current rent increase guideline.

The next step is to calculate the percentage increase that the landlord will be allowed to raise the rent. In Ontario, Stats Canada has calculated that the CPI for the previous 12 months is 2.7%; we're imagining that. The provincial guideline that would be established by our proposed legislation is 2.5%. What that means for our tenant is that her rent can only be increased by a maximum of 2.5% when she renews her lease in November, were our legislation to pass. So instead of paying \$800 a month, the most our tenant would be paying is \$820 a month. That \$20 increase represents the maximum 2.5% which the landlord was allowed to raise the rent.

Pat Moore is a co-op tenant, and in fact she's a community activist who has supported tenants for years in the Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon part of Toronto. She says, "We're living in a time of great uncertainty and this rent increase guideline will help me and my family plan ahead. It will help reduce the anxiety associated with speculation and give us a little peace of mind." So when tenants can anticipate what the rent increase will be, they know what to expect and they can prepare in advance.

Here's another example, Madam Speaker. In this example, Stats Canada has calculated that the consumer price index for Ontario is 2.3%. Well, 2.3% is less than the upper threshold of 2.5%, and it's also more than the 1%. In that case, the landlord is allowed to raise the tenant's monthly rent by a maximum of 2.3%. They wouldn't be allowed to go up to 2.5%, because the CPI indicates that 2.3% is the amount. So on November 1, the landlord would be able to raise the rent by 2.3%, and that would work out to a maximum monthly rent payment of \$818.40.

The final example I want to give is where Stats Canada pegs the CPI at less than 1%, so that's 0.9%, for example. Right away, we notice that's lower than the 1%. What happens in that case is that the rent increase guideline holds the annual rent increases to between 1% and 2.5%. So the landlord would be allowed to charge an increase of 1%, which would mean that the new rent that the tenant would be paying would be \$808—\$8 being 1% of \$800. So \$808 would be the maximum that the landlord would be able to charge. Those are three scenarios that could be played out.

Mr. Jeff Leal: They'd understand that math—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: They would.

Madam Speaker, another tenant advocate, Masood Alam, has said that—he's a representative, actually, of Morguard tenants' association in my riding of Don Valley West. He's expressed concern about how unpredictable rent increases can be challenging for members of his community. He said, "This year, landlords could increase rent up to 3.1%, which is not affordable to the majority of tenants living in the Thorncliffe Park area. In our community, there are situations where, due to

unemployment or underemployed situations, up to 70% of the tenant's net income can go towards their rent. This leaves them with very little money to fulfill their family's needs. Putting a cap on rent increases will help these families and give them some relief."

So to summarize, Madam Speaker, the calculation of the proposed rent increase guideline will continue to be based on the Ontario consumer price index, but the range would, if this legislation passes, now be limited to between 1% and 2.5%. Within that range, the allowable maximum rent increase allowed under the rent increase guideline matches the Ontario consumer price index. The other two possible scenarios are when the CPI, as calculated by Stats Canada, is below 1% or above the 2.5% threshold of our range. Landlords are protected when Ontario's inflation is low, and tenants would be protected when inflationary shock threatens to make their rents unaffordable. That's what this legislation is about.

I said, Madam Speaker, that I was talking about this legislation in the context of the broader issues of affordable housing, in the broader issues, I would suggest, of poverty reduction. December 2011 marked the third anniversary of the poverty reduction strategy that our government put in place, meaning that we've passed the halfway point to its promised target date of reducing child poverty by 25% by December 2013.

I have to say, Madam Speaker, much has happened since December 4, 2008, which is the date our Ontario government produced its first five-year poverty reduction commitment. But especially in light of ongoing economic turmoil, we recognize that much more needs to be done.

Our government has focused its efforts primarily on children and families, but we've also taken steps to create opportunity for those most adversely affected by the economic downturn and to build the economic and social foundations to achieve our poverty reduction goals. We do understand that the economic downturn has affected us all, but primarily people who live in more marginal and vulnerable circumstances.

Our report *Common Ground: A Strategy for Moving Forward on Poverty Reduction* reviews the government's progress, and I just want to highlight a few aspects of that. From 2008 to 2009, the first year of the poverty reduction strategy, 20,000 children moved out of poverty. This means over 4% fewer children living in poverty as we've measured it since we introduced the strategy. We had a definition of poverty, we took a benchmark, and since that benchmark was put in place, 20,000 children have moved out of that definition of poverty. I say that because I recognize that even those children still have needs; there's still more that we can aspire to for those kids.

But the fact is that they are doing better than they were before we put our initiatives in place. Poverty rates for single-mom-led households dropped from 43% in 2008 to 35% in 2009. The number of children living in households that could not afford two or more essential items has dropped from 12% in 2008 to less than 9% in 2009. And that measure was, could families afford to buy

necessary winter clothing, could they afford to have friends over for dinner? There are some measures that we've put in place to look at not just income, as I said, but what's the quality of life? So on those measures, there has been improvement.

0940

The report also focuses on the costs associated with poverty in Ontario. Our government has invested heavily and greatly in education. We're aware that children from low-income families tend not to do as well at school as their peers. They often fall behind, they drop out in greater numbers and face higher rates of poverty as adults. And so we've understood that and we have targeted resources where they are the most needed.

The cost of poverty in Ontario has been estimated as high as \$13 billion a year when you take into account health care, criminal justice and lost productivity. So it only makes sense to make those investments up front, because you pay now or you pay later, and the whole thrust of our poverty reduction strategy is to make those investments so that those are costs avoided down the road.

Our goal of reducing child poverty by 25%: The Premier has said that there's no shortage of evidence that if we don't address these problems in the early years, the costs will only be greater later on. We clearly can't afford to ignore that nearly 1.7 million Ontarians live in poverty and that there is more to be done.

Nous devons agir maintenant pour aider les Ontariennes et les Ontariens les plus pauvres pour qu'ils puissent s'aider eux-mêmes, améliorer leur sort et contribuer à l'essor de leur collectivité.

So we want to act now. We have to help the most impoverished Ontarians so that they can help themselves build better lives and better their community, with support. We're going to all need to act together and continue to build on the common ground that we've established, and continue our efforts to lift 90,000 children out of poverty in this province by December 2013. That is our target.

One of the key milestones of the poverty reduction strategy was the release of the long-term affordable housing strategy, as I said, in November 2010. Our government recognizes the need for affordable housing and its role in supporting the growth and health of communities across Ontario, and that's why we developed the long-term affordable housing strategy, affectionately known as LTAHS. It is the first strategy of its kind in Ontario, Madam Speaker, and it sets a strong foundation in place for an accessible and efficient system for those who need safe and affordable housing. The proposed amendment to the rent increase guidelines that I've talked about this morning supports the goals of the long-term affordable housing strategy by giving families greater access to a range of affordable housing options.

Madam Speaker, yesterday on CBC—we're talking about housing, we're talking about what housing means and what it means in the broader context of society. Yesterday on CBC Radio Toronto in the morning, there

was a story about the meaning of home, and it was the meaning of home as articulated by a grade 6 student from Woodbridge. Her story had been submitted to a nationwide writing contest, and I just want to share that story with you because I think it captures what we all, in our hearts, know home is. It was called *The Meaning of Home*.

"To me home is more than just brick, stone, mud, straw, snow, ice or wood. A home is a place where whether it's 5 a.m. or noon, if your mom shakes you awake or if it's at your leisure, you wake up. Safe and sound. A warm cozy bed or a pull-out couch. You shower, get dressed, eat and head off to whatever it is you call a regular day. School or work. After your day you can go home and relax and play. You have a nice meal and go to bed.

"A home is a place for love and joy. Some people still live in the house where they took their first steps and lost their first tooth. Sure, now that home is fairly old but it still has lots of sentimental value and that is worth more than any amount of money you can sell the house for so you can buy a new one.

"Home is a place where you build tree forts to isolate yourself from the outside world. You built snow men, igloo minis, threw snowballs at your unsuspecting neighbours and played spies with your best friends.

"Home is a place where you sneak into the candy cupboard and eat an entire bag of chocolate chips. You feed your vegetables to your dog or cat and give nine fish a whole can of fish food in one night. It's where your hamster escaped seven times so far and is starting to make hideouts in places like the oven that you don't use or the air ventilation system.

"Home is a place where you throw your birthday parties and have lots of good memories. Your family is always there to support you through thick and thin. They will always love you no matter how bad you have been.

"Home is a place where you keep your deepest secrets, wishes, and dreams. It's a sanctuary where you can feel safe and secure no matter what wars are going on outside. It's where you work out all the problems you encounter in your life. It could be a confusing math problem or a fallout with a friend.

"Today more than 100 million people are homeless. If we all work together and devote ourselves to making a difference, we can change that number. It isn't impossible for us to do. There are great people out there accomplishing great things. For example, Greg Mortenson wants to change the world, he wants to promote girls' education so that kids our age in Pakistan and Afghanistan have just as bright a future as we do. He is making the world a better place, little by little. Before he was famous, he was just like us, except he had a vision. If he can do it, so can we; making the world a better place begins at home. If you look deep down inside you will find a longing for a better world. It starts with you. When you do something good for someone, like giving them a home, the smile on their faces will be brighter than the sun. That smile will make you feel amazing. Why? It is

because you will have just helped improve a life once full of sorrow.”

This is her final statement: “Giving a home is giving hope, happiness, love, and confidence. A home isn’t something you should want. It is something you deserve.”

Interjection: That’s wonderful.

Interjection: Very nice.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes. You know, out of the mouths of babes. It’s a grade 6 student.

Madam Speaker, every child in Ontario deserves a home, every grown-up in Ontario deserves a home. The long-term affordable housing strategy provides municipalities and housing providers with greater stability to deliver housing services, recognizing that communities have different needs. What we’ve asked of communities is that they measure those needs, that they look at the needs in their communities. As money flows to communities, they are able to then identify the needs quickly; they have projects that are ready to go. Those projects will not look the same from community to community, and so it’s really important that we recognize that we’ve built that flexibility into the long-term affordable housing strategy because of the differences among communities.

L’avenir du secteur du logement dépend d’un financement pérenne. L’Ontario a besoin d’un engagement à long terme en matière de financement de la part du gouvernement fédéral qui soit équitable envers les Ontariennes et les Ontariens, et qui permette de satisfaire aux besoins des familles ontariennes.

We really need that long-term sustainable funding. We need a long-term funding commitment from the federal government that is not ad hoc, that is not unpredictable. We have had a good partner. Some of the members opposite grimace, but the fact is, we have had a good partner in the federal government, and I believe that we can continue that partnership. But we need a commitment, and we don’t have that commitment past 2014.

The four-year federal-provincial Investment in Affordable Housing agreement that I signed on November 8, 2011, continues the goals set out in the long-term affordable housing strategy and the work that our government is doing to help address the housing needs in the province. Our investment in affordable housing in Ontario with the federal government—this latest investment, this latest agreement—will create over 5,000 new jobs and will build and repair approximately 7,000 affordable housing units over four years in Ontario. That’s about the size of Hanover or Acton. These are big investments.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Barry’s Bay.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That’s right. The program represents a combined investment of \$481 million from the federal government and from the Ontario government.

We continue to build new affordable housing and repair existing units. Our overall investment of \$2.5 billion since 2003 has translated into the construction and repair of more than 270,000 housing units and the pro-

vision of 35,000 rent supplements. All of that has created 57,000 jobs across the province.

The objective of the Investment in Affordable Housing for Ontario program is to improve living conditions for Ontarians across the province, and it’s one step towards helping Ontario families open those doors to that prosperous future.

As I say, the fact is that we need that housing to be incremental, we need it to be predictable, and so I will be working with my counterparts across the country. In fact, I’ve already had one opportunity to talk with my counterparts across Canada, and we all recognize that that predictability and that partnership with the federal government is extremely important. So having a national housing strategy that includes the provincial partnership, I think, is critical.

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The current short-term or declining funding from the federal government limits the ability of municipalities and housing providers to make good on those long-term plans. We’re asking municipalities to do long-term planning, but if they can’t count on funding flowing, then that exercise starts to feel futile—and we know that the needs are changing.

Our demographics are changing. Almost every conversation that I have about housing now starts with bricks and mortar—or, as I say, frame and glass—but where it goes to is the demographics. It talks about: What are the supports that are needed? What’s the range of housing that we’re going to need to be able to deal with the demographics, the fact of aging baby boomers, the fact of a generation that is going to want to stay in home and is not going to necessarily want to go into long-term-care homes?

I think it was interesting that Don Drummond, the economist who advised us recently, said the answer is not to build long-term-care homes, but to provide that community care. We know that the Minister of Health is working very hard, and we’re going to be working to provide the kind of supports—and that doesn’t necessarily mean a nurse. It doesn’t necessarily mean a doctor. It may mean a personal support worker. It may mean some housekeeping support to help people stay at home. But all of that has an impact on the kind of housing and the kind of interministerial and intersectorial discussion that needs to happen if we’re going to come up with the right solutions.

We’re going to continue to partner with municipalities and to engage other provinces and territories and the federal government in order to create a housing framework that includes adequate, long-term, flexible funding for affordable housing.

I firmly believe that the only rational way to build community infrastructure, whether it’s roads, whether it’s bridges, whether it’s housing, is incrementally and predictably. Sometimes, we don’t think about housing as infrastructure. Sometimes, when we talk about infrastructure, we talk solely about concrete infrastructure, and I don’t think that is a good long-term vision. I think

what we need to do is we need to think about all of our community infrastructure, and housing is a big part of that.

Clearly, Madam Speaker, our government has stepped up to the pressing issue of ensuring affordable and safe housing in the province—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Did you say that with a straight face?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that my colleague the member for Parkdale–High Park is just waiting to get up and to shoot holes in all of the adequacy arguments that I have made. But I say to her that it would be refreshing if she were able to stand up and give credit where credit is due, because there have been billions and billions of dollars invested in housing.

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To my colleague the member for Renfrew, I have said that we have partnered with the federal government, that we have worked with the federal government and with municipalities to make these investments. But I have also said that that funding needs to continue. We have a commitment to 2014; beyond that, we do not know where the federal government stands. It's all very well to make ad hoc investments when the whim moves one, but the reality is—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I've never been moved by a whim.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You've never been moved by a whim. Well, I think that some of the ways that governments in the past have invested in infrastructure, including housing, have been on whims. They have been ad hoc. I think that what we have to accept—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Is that “whim” or “Wynne”?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That was “whim,” W-H-I-M.

What we have to do, on all sides of this House, is we have to commit to predictable investment in infrastructure, including in housing, because if we don't do that, what happens is—and we saw it under the previous government—you have a gap in investment. You get out of the business of repairing and building roads, repairing and building bridges, building affordable housing, supporting the housing industry, and then what happens is you're playing catch-up, and that's what we've been doing since we came into office in 2003.

So when I say we have stepped up to the plate and we have made investments, I am under no illusion, nor is anyone under any illusion in this House, that the work is done. We know that it's an ongoing issue, we know that it has to be talked about across ministries and across governments and among our partners, and we need to do that, community by community, across the province. We need to establish what the need is.

What I am saying to all of the stakeholders and all of the community members who come and speak to me in my ministry—and when I went to ROMA/OGRA, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and Ontario Good Roads, I met with 50 delegations, and all of the delegations that spoke to me about housing—we talked

about the different needs in the different communities, whether it was small rural communities or larger rural communities. We started with the concrete, bricks and mortar discussion, and we ended up with the supportive conversation. We've got a whole range of needs around the province, and those conversations have to continue.

As I've said, our proposed legislation, if passed, is a small piece of the initiative of providing affordable housing, but it is a piece of it. What we've said is that the rent increase guideline, if passed under this legislation, will be capped to 2.5% and it wouldn't fall below 1%. What I believe is that this represents a balanced amendment that will provide stability and predictability for renters and landlords. But we are not stopping there. The proposed amendment is just one step; it's just one part of the broader initiatives to keep housing affordable and to create more affordable housing opportunities.

We'll call upon the federal government, and we'll be working with them. I want stories like Julia's and David's, the couple from Brampton, to have a happy ending. Stories like those make us realize that having a place to call home is crucial. It's crucial to our well-being and our quality of life.

Avoir un chez-soi est le premier pas permettant aux familles à faible revenu et à leurs enfants de s'extirper de la pauvreté. Avoir un chez-soi est le premier pas qui permet à une personne de saisir les occasions qui s'offrent à elle pour améliorer son sort. Nous savons qu'il n'existe pas de solution unique, rapide ou simple au problème consistant à trouver une façon d'aider les gens à trouver un logement sûr, abordable et salubre.

I would suggest, Madam Speaker, that anyone who says to you, “If you would just do this one thing, then you would solve the housing problem in the province”—I think that the oversimplification of complex issues is one of the most serious challenges that confronts us as a society—not just government, but as a society. When you boil down solutions to sound bites, when you oversimplify complex issues—and I know, Madam Speaker, that after we present the budget today, which is a complex document—I think it's over 300 pages—what will happen is that in the aftermath of the presentation of that budget, there will be oversimplification after oversimplification. There will be a cherry-picking of items and there will be a critique of those in isolation from the rest of the budget.

What we have to recognize is that there are complex issues confronting us. We have a range of services that it is our responsibility as government to deliver. Affordable housing and the monitoring of affordable housing and the balancing of the affordable housing market is one of those responsibilities. There are a myriad of services that government provides—not only provides, but creates a framework within which other agencies can provide services—and so we need to make sure that our budget addresses all of those. If we allow ourselves to be trapped in the oversimplification, if we allow ourselves to take the bait on, “Well, if we just ran off in this direction, then we would solve the problem” or “If we run off in this

direction, we'll solve the problem"—the reality is that we have to have a considered and thoughtful approach, and I think, over the last few weeks, you have seen and you've heard that we've been doing that. We've been listening to people. We've been listening to stakeholders from across the provincial waterfront, if I might say. We've listened to the economist Don Drummond. We haven't subjected the province to slogans because it takes a lot more than slogans or sound bites or oversimplifications to solve the complex problems that we confront.

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It's not a simple question: How do we recover from an economic downturn that has laid low some of the strongest economies in the world? We look south of the border; we look at the struggle that the United States is facing.

So there are no simple solutions. It is not possible to boil the current economic situation down to a sound bite. It is also not possible to boil the housing issues down to a sound bite. If we look at the work that's being done in my ministry right now, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, we are looking at streamlining some of our homelessness programs. We are looking at implementing the long-term affordable housing strategy with municipalities, and we are looking at this legislation as part of the solution to making housing affordable for people across the province.

I think if we listen to that young child from Woodbridge, our grade 6 student who says that everyone deserves a home, that children deserve a home, it's not something that is a choice. It's something that is absolutely fundamental to having a secure life, not having that anxiety that comes with not knowing where you're going to live; for parents, not knowing how they're going to provide for their children. So if we can, as government, introduce just a little bit more certainty, if we can provide just a little bit more stability, then I think we are doing our job—and it's what's expected of us.

So I think that the proposed amendment is a step in the right direction, but I'm looking forward to continuing to talk to tenants, Madam Speaker, and to landlords about our proposed bill. I know there will be lots of discussion about the bill in the weeks and months ahead.

As I've said, I'd like to call on my colleagues across the floor to support this legislation. I think it's balanced. I think it allows—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Balanced? I knew you'd slip that in there.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, I had to, the member opposite; I had to. You were calling for me to say the word "balanced" again, and so I said it again just for you.

I believe that because it is, because it takes into account the needs of tenants and landlords, because it recognizes that there needs to be fairness, I hope that you will support it and we will provide that stability for tenants and landlords.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a couple of minutes of comments on the minister's address, and I have to say that I did enjoy some of the quotes that she made this morning. I'm sure we all have quotes.

Mr. Paul Miller: Lots of them.

Mr. Steve Clark: Lots of them, as the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek said, from landlords and tenants.

I have to tell you that I was extremely pleased when our leader, the leader of the official opposition, Tim Hudak, made me critic for municipal affairs and housing. As most of you know, I've had a bit of a history with the municipal side, but since I was appointed I've had a tremendous opportunity to engage with landlords and tenants right across the province, and I have thoroughly enjoyed hearing their feedback.

As the early days of this minority Parliament began, I think it gave us a great opportunity to look at substantial reform in the province of Ontario, and as I have—not just in my own riding, which is a small rural riding, but in urban ridings as well, there's just such an appetite for that bigger amount of reform in housing. And this bill could have went so much farther than the narrow cast that it provides today, because let's face it: It's only for one reason that this bill is being tabled, and it's because, as the minister noted, of this 3.1% increase. That's it; that's all. The reason the ceiling and the floor have changed to 2.5% and 1% is because of this year. So many people have talked to me about the fact that we should have more reforms, we should have more dialogue. If there's going to be a time that things are going to change in this province, they should change when we have a minority Parliament, where we can sit down and talk about the more substantive issues that are facing Ontarians. So no, I'm disappointed, Minister, plain and simple.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and I'd like to thank the member from Leeds–Grenville as well for their presentations and comments.

Unfortunately, this bill only makes a very small dent in the crisis in affordable housing in Niagara. I, like the member from Leeds–Grenville, have had a number of years' experience on the municipal front with Niagara Regional Housing in my area, and I know that the wait-lists for affordable housing continue to grow. Although the minister talked about poverty rates decreasing, our information and stats show that poverty is actually increasing, at least in the adult population, across this province. There's much more that could have been done in this bill and that needs to be done in this bill with respect to affordability for tenants and the rights for tenants to live in safe, well-repaired housing in this province. The minister actually spoke about these happy stories, but I've heard many sad stories over the last number of months that I've been the critic for this area.

The minister also spoke about if, you know, people say, "Just do one thing"—well, we need to do just one

thing, and that is to actually provide housing in this province.

The issue of community care, I think, came up as well. If we're going to provide community care for seniors in their housing, then we need to quit cutting the hours that the CCAC is giving them so that we can actually keep seniors in their homes and not end up forcing them into nursing homes and onto those lists.

I look forward to my hour lead-in on this bill and I'll have much more to say on this—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to add a little bit of time on the presentation by the Minister of Housing, Ms. Wynne, on this wonderful piece of legislation. I do hope, as the minister called for, that the House can move this piece of legislation forward, because it is much needed. It is well timed. It comes at a particular time when I think—and I do have a lot of tenants myself in my area. Sometimes we contest amongst ourselves who has got the most tenants, and I have to say that I have perhaps one of the largest and the poorest concentrations of tenants. I have to say that they will be welcoming this piece of legislation with open arms, as they have done with the rent control legislation that we have passed, and with the initial long-term strategy on housing as well.

I have to say, as the minister has mentioned during her presentation, I was part of the long-term housing strategy, and we travelled from Thunder Bay and Sudbury to Hamilton, to Peterborough. Frankly, Madam Speaker, we have heard the same thing. This comes at a time when we can give some peace of mind to our tenants, and, as the minister said before, every four years we can review this piece of legislation.

I think the 1% and the 2.5% will give our tenants peace of mind to adjust their lives, to move on with their lives, to concentrate on education, on family issues, on children, on getting on with important things in their lives, and not to worry about what they're going to be doing next month to pay possibly a very large increase in rent.

So I think it's well timed, it's an excellent piece of legislation, and I do hope that the House will support it and move on so we can provide protection for our tenants.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: A point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes, a point of order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise today to clarify some remarks I made in the House on Thursday, March 22, regarding the ministry being in caretaker mode during the writ period.

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My comments were intended to refer to the long-standing convention that ministries operate in caretaker mode during a writ period to ensure that substantive

decisions are not made immediately prior to a possible change in government.

My intention, Speaker, was not to suggest that I was not the Minister of Health during that period, nor was it my intention to suggest that I was not responsible for overseeing Ontario's health care system. I was and remain responsible for—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd say it's not a point of order. Thank you very much.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I might just remind the member that normally a point of order is when you're correcting the record; it would be a significant number change or something very brief. This, then, becomes something beyond that. I listened carefully and it went on into much more detail than would normally be considered under a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: To that point of order, Madam Speaker: I could not hear because of the noise in the House. Did you indicate that it was a point of order?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to sit down. I made my ruling on this as not a point of order, but I did recognize her because the minister wanted to raise a point of order. Thank you.

We have one more speaker, and questions and comments. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I know we're speaking on Bill 19, not on points of order, apparently, this morning. I hope the Minister of Health will—she's more than welcome to make that statement today prior to question period, when the House is filled—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to restrict his comments to Bill 19.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Of course, of course, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much.

So, on Bill 19: I spent the whole hour here held in rapture by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and her wonderful address, but the bill—there's not much in the bill. She spoke for an hour and it sounded more like an application for reappointment to a job or something than a speech about a particular piece of legislation. It went on and on and on about what her purported wonderful record in government has been with respect to housing and rental properties and residential tenancies work and stuff like that, but it didn't really talk much about the bill; there's not much in the bill. That is, in fact, Madam Speaker, one of the concerns we have about this.

There are so many significant issues that need to and should be addressed within the Residential Tenancies Act, and the one that the government is doing is, it always seems—and it's so disappointing to members on this side of the House. Sometimes we actually show our frustration because we're powerless to stop them, but we do have to at least indicate our discontentment at times.

There are so many important things that could be talked about and should be talked about, and we would really appreciate if the government could move on in

those directions to help people who are in rental housing, and also to ensure that landlords are treated—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The minister has two minutes to respond.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank the member for Leeds–Grenville. I hear his comments about the narrow scope of the bill, and I think I addressed that. I think I said that there are—I acknowledged that there are other issues that need to be talked about. I await the members of the opposition coming forward and raising those issues with me. I'm open to having that conversation. But at this point, we need to address this rent increase guideline, and we need to get on that because we need landlords to be able to plan for next year.

I thank the member for Welland for her comment. She noted that there are sad stories as well as happy stories. I totally get that. There are sad stories in the province, and there are as many sad stories as there are happy stories, but the reality is that we want to increase the happy stories. We want to do what we can to make sure that there are more happy stories.

She says that we can do just one thing. I don't buy that. I don't believe that there's just one thing that we have to do to solve the complex issues of affordable housing. I think there's a range of things that we have to do.

The member for York West, who is my parliamentary assistant: I want to thank him. I'm happy to give him the mantle of having the most tenants in his riding because he has a very challenging riding, and he's a terrific MPP. He represents the interests of his tenants and of his residents, and he knows housing. He has worked in the housing area as a parliamentarian for a number of years. We need to listen to his experience.

I apologize to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, that he was held hostage in this place having to listen to me for an hour. But it could be worse. There were good anecdotes, and it's an important piece of legislation, no matter that you don't think it's balanced and you think that there's more that we should do. I appreciate you staying, I appreciate you listening, and I will even more appreciate you voting for the legislation.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being 10:15 of the clock, the House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my great pleasure to introduce in the west members' gallery the family of our Sarnia–Lambton page Kyle Hendrixx, who is actually the page captain today. I am proud to introduce Dale and Joanne Hendrixx, the parents; Anne Grootjen, Archie and Ada Hendrixx, grandparents; and Margaret Romphf, an aunt. Some of them also share the border with my

colleague from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Monte McNaughton. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm extremely proud to introduce the parents of Alex Ruddy. They are Laura—and Laura, by the way, is an associate professor for Brock University—and Alex's dad, Doug, who is an emergency physician and a medical director for the southwest paramedic program. Welcome.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to introduce to the House today Ms. Rima Mastronardi. Rima's the mother of Domenique, our legislative page from Chatham–Kent–Essex. It's my pleasure to welcome her to a very exciting day at the Ontario Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no further introductions, it is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Peter Shurman: My questions today will all be to the Premier and all about spending and accountability. For example, back in June, I attended an event at the new Vaughan city hall, and the mayor of Vaughan and the member for Vaughan were there; the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care—she still is the Minister of Health, I think—they were all there.

Anyway, Premier, they were all there to reannounce—and that's right, I said “reannounce”—a new hospital for Vaughan. That was then, before the October election, and this is now, the time to deliver.

Premier, please tell the people of southern York region if you'll be keeping your commitment. Is the Vaughan hospital a yes or a no?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I welcome the question. I say to my honourable colleague that I know he has—and understandably so—a tremendous amount of impatience for the budget to be introduced shortly in this very chamber. We look forward to doing that.

I can tell you that we have worked hard to reconcile competing principles, and I think we've landed at a very good place, a place that gives expression to the choices that Ontarians would have us make, that would have us express their values. So we're going to do what we need to do to protect our schools, I say to my honourable colleague, and to protect our health care, including our hospitals. We will do more as well to lay a strong foundation for jobs and growth.

I think it will be exactly what the doctor ordered in terms of our economy and fiscal challenges.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Again to the Premier about his pattern of spending and unkept promises: It's just after 10:35 on March 27. Could you please tell us, at this particular moment, if your government is funding or not funding transit in Toronto? I ask this because six of your

Scarborough members don't seem to be able to decide which side of that question they're on. One week they're voting against subways, and the next, Ministers Duguid and Best are trying to backpedal to save their political hides.

So I again have to ask: Will you or will you not build subways for the residents of this city, especially those in Scarborough?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure whether my honourable colleague's leader is aware of this line of questioning, but this particular gentleman keeps asking me to spend more money. His leader asked us to spend less money.

We remain absolutely committed to investing in more transit in the city of Toronto. We're proud to be building, as we speak, a line between the airport and downtown Toronto. We're proud to be building a subway out to York University, and we look forward to coming to a final conclusion with our partners at the city of Toronto in terms of where we're going to proceed there. Recently, we received some real clarity with respect to their choice as a council. Our responsibility is to respect that choice, Speaker. We will do that. We look forward to investing in still more public transit right here in the great city of Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Back to the Premier about his inexplicable view of Ontario finances: Only for this government could being in the red be business as usual and \$1.1 billion in annual revenue from racetrack slots be part of a subsidy. Had you put that revenue that you've netted from those slots, Premier, in your piggy bank every year and applied it to the deficit this year, that deficit could have been a modest \$6 billion or \$7 billion, but alas, you did not. Instead, you are going to turf that annual \$1.1 billion. You're going to do something else, but you haven't said what.

Since your spending plan hasn't stopped, how do you plan to finance your expensive habits? How will you replace the \$1.1 billion in annual revenue that you've decided to throw away?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: So, Speaker, if I can understand the pattern that has evolved in this line of questioning, it's kind of a new amalgam of criticism of spending but insisting within every question itself that we spend more. So you can understand why we're a little bit confused with respect to the position adopted by the folks on the other side.

Again, we will do what Ontarians want us to do. They want us to protect the gains that we've made together in our schools and in our health care. They want us to continue to find ways to build a still stronger economy that is characterized by strong growth and new jobs. They want us to do that in a way that is mindful of our responsibilities to our most vulnerable, and that's exactly what our budget will do.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Peter Shurman: Back to the Premier: I'm just trying to understand, Premier. You've blamed just about every imaginable thing for Ontario's financial disaster, but I bet you've never once looked in the mirror, conveniently forgetting the fact that all of Canada has been subjected to the same conditions. Yet it's Ontario, on your watch, that is suffering.

We had an election less than six months ago. You obviously knew, almost to the penny, what this year would hold for Ontario. So since you knew these things about Ontario's precarious financial position before, during and after the election, yet made spending promises that people believed in and voted for, the only conclusion one could reasonably reach is that you made promises you knew you couldn't keep. There's an unparliamentary word for that, Premier.

Based on your track record, how do you expect Ontarians to ever again believe that your pre-election promises could possibly result in delivery on your commitments?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, my honourable colleague is inclined to conveniently forget that he ran on our fiscal plan. He ran on our plan. The significance between us and them during the course of the election was that our platform was much more modest, both in terms of the number of commitments and the financial impact of our platform.

We have found a way, in fact, to deliver on our plan. We moved ahead with our 30%-off tuition grant, which I'm sure my honourable colleague is going to want to support. Our healthy homes renovation tax credit: We found a way to move forward with that as well. So, Speaker, we have found ways, in fact, to deliver on our commitments.

But again, I would remind my honourable colleague that he in fact ran on our fiscal plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: You know, Speaker, I think what we have here is a failure to communicate. We have a Premier and we have a government that seems to govern by weather vane. If the wind is calm but there's a southern breeze, then the wagons get circled, an abjectly incompetent minister is protected, and an economic development minister not fit to run a candy store can jump from surface LRT to buried subway overnight, joined in lockstep by a Minister of Consumer Services whom no one has ever heard from. Hospitals can be announced, reannounced and never built.

Premier, tell this House: When we go into the budget lock-up this morning, will we be pleasantly surprised and see you follow through on your election promises, or will we find a budget that looks like it was written by the former board of directors of Ornge?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, in all seriousness, I'm just not sure how that constitutes any kind of a positive, constructive contribution at the time of a very

important debate about where our province goes next. So it's an interesting litany, but more than anything else, it's a distraction. We'll stay focused on our responsibilities, Speaker.

What are Ontarians telling us today? I think they're telling us very clearly, "You've got to get the job done. There's a significant challenge before us: Make sure that you rise to the occasion"—and make sure we do hear what they are doing in their homes. They're making extraordinary efforts to pay down their debts and to protect those things that are most important to them and their families. We'll do the same thing here: We will protect their health care, we'll protect their schools, we'll protect their economy and we'll make sure we eliminate the deficit as part of a five-year plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Well, you haven't done much of a job so far. I'll take that as your gentlemanly way, Premier, of telling me where to go.

I'm an Ontarian, one of 13 million comprising the population of Canada's biggest, most beautiful province, and I, like my constituents, demand accountability and responsibility from the Premier and this government. Please stand in your place, Premier, and tell us this: Why should any Ontarian have confidence in your budget or your explanations of where we've been, how we got here and where you expect to take us when your finance minister shares with us his fifth attempt at a workable budget this afternoon? And while you're at it, why should any Ontarian accept a word he or you have to say and believe that you can actually lead us to a better day?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I appreciate the question, and I say to my honourable colleague and to Ontarians in general: Take a look at our record—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We inherited a \$5.6-billion deficit, Speaker. We in fact changed the law—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'll say it again: On three separate occasions now, we have placed our record before the Ontario electorate. We asked them to carefully consider our record. My friends opposite are unhappy that Ontarians arrived at a different conclusion than the one that they arrive at as a result of their partisan perspective.

We inherited a \$5.6-billion deficit; we worked hard to clean that up. We then balanced our budget three times in a row. We were hit hard by a recession. Since then, Speaker, on every occasion we have come in under our projections when it comes to deficits. That's a substantive record on which we will continue to build.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier.

Speaker, the Auditor General made it abundantly clear that the Minister of Health had ignored all the warning signs at Ornge, but the Premier still hasn't explained his role and his office's role in this debacle. Can the Premier tell this Legislature whether his top aide, Jamison Steeve, approved of Ornge's for-profit ventures after being informed in January 2011?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question, and I know that my honourable colleagues in the opposition generally have been very, very focused on a traditional political game. I understand that. But I would recommend to my colleague an article that appeared in today's *Globe and Mail*, written by a distinguished columnist, André—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland will withdraw.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Withdraw.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I quote: "To her credit, when the depth and breadth of the Ornge scandal became clear, Ms. Matthews did act, and pretty forcefully: The board was sacked, senior management was turfed and the OPP was called in...."

"The calls for Ms. Matthews's resignation are little more than partisan squawking...."

"Errors have been made. Fix them. Make sure they don't happen again."

"It's time for the minister to stand tall, not walk away."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Mr. Speaker, the Premier cites an article in today's *Globe and Mail*. Wouldn't it have been nice to have the same thoughts two years ago, when the scandal first erupted in this House? Why couldn't we know then?

On March 5, 2012, the Premier's health minister said this about the proposal to strike a select committee to investigate Ornge: "If it is the will of this Legislature that there be a select committee ... I will, of course, be fully supportive of that."

This Legislature made its will clear. There's an opportunity here, Premier, to save face and to do the right thing. Why won't the Premier strike the select committee today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think it's really important that we reach beyond this chamber. We're sometimes a little too focused on generating heat and a little less focused on generating light.

Let's take a look at what the *Hamilton Spectator* had to say, Speaker, just yesterday: "At a time of budget pressure and enormous change in the health care sector, is it in the best interests of Ontarians for" Minister "Matthews to resign? No. It is better that she be permitted to continue the cleanup of Ornge."

Again, I recommend to my honourable colleague that he take a look outside this chamber, where, as I say, we can be too devoted to heat, a little less devoted to light, to get a good understanding of what Ontarians expect of us.

They expect us to clean up what's happening at Ornge and they expect us to move forward, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The heat that I think the Premier refers to is the heat that his Minister of Health is taking off of his back and his responsibility to deal with the behaviour at Ornge and the scandal at Ornge. It's disturbing to see the Premier and his government go back on their word, on the word of the health minister, and I think families are rightly wondering why this government refuses to strike a select committee. Is it because the Auditor General suggested there's more to the Ornge debacle than we know and the Premier knows as well?

Please, Premier, strike the select committee today and do the right thing for the people of Ontario.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: On the matter of a committee, I think my honourable colleague will recognize that we have, by way of concrete efforts, taken a number of steps to ensure that there are considerable reviews of what happened. First of all, there was a forensic audit. Then there is the matter of the ongoing Ontario Provincial Police investigation. There is the matter of the auditor's report. There's the matter of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which is holding hearings and calling witnesses. There is the matter of new legislation introduced in this very chamber, Speaker. There will be an opportunity, hopefully, upon second reading hearings, for a committee to preside and have witnesses appear at that time—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: And then, of course, there's the matter of a new performance agreement that we've introduced. I think all that speaks again to what the public would have us do.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. All across the north, municipal councils are up in arms over the elimination of the Ontario Northland because they know it will mean the eventual total loss of passenger services in many communities across the north. North Bay city council unanimously adopted a motion calling on this Premier to honour his pledge not to allow the privatization of ONTC, and they are seeking the immediate suspension of the divestment process so that a community task force can devise a plan that works for the north.

Premier, will you listen to the people of the north and announce you're abandoning your misguided plan to close down Ontario Northland?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I appreciate the question coming from my honourable colleague, and I must say this was a very difficult decision. Our record of support for the ONTC, back to 2003, was to provide 439 million more dollars. We have made a determined effort to try to find a way to make the ONTC in its existing

construct viable, and it is not, Speaker. We're now providing a subsidy of some \$400 per trip. Obviously, that is simply not sustainable, Speaker. Subsidy levels have increased some 274%, from \$27.6 million in 2003 to \$103 million in 2011. Revenue has declined and ridership has remained stagnant.

So, Speaker, it's not something that we come to with enthusiasm, but it's something that we come to out of a sense of responsibility.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Ontario Northland is the lifeline that transports people and freight and employs nearly 1,000 people across the north; it's the lifeline. So let's say we're cancelling—Metrolinx is also a service that doesn't make you money. No wonder northern municipalities are outraged.

But don't take my word for it. Here are the exact words of Al Spacek, president of the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities: "You cannot imagine my shock and disappointment. It's not just the horrible ramifications this divestiture has for the people of northern Ontario, it was also the way this decision was arrived at—in Toronto behind closed doors without any input from northerners who are most impacted."

Why is the Premier making closed-door decisions that will eventually deny access to public transportation to northern families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, again I want to reiterate that this was not an easy decision for us to make. We understand it is not going to be easy for some of our northern communities and families in particular, Speaker, to cope, but we feel, again, out of a sense of responsibility, it's a decision that we must make.

Speaker, we want to ensure that the limited resources that we have are available for services that matter most to northerners. We want to continue to invest in our northern schools. We want to continue to invest in our northern health care system. We want to continue to invest in job creation and priorities like the NOHFC and the northern highway program.

It comes down to this being a matter of choices, Speaker, and we decided to invest in those programs that benefit all northerners: their schools, their health care, their highways, and their job development programs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: City politicians, union officials and northern chambers of commerce are all calling on this Premier to give the north the chance to prove that the ONTC can be a viable operation. Many of us feel the plan was to cancel the ONTC all along—another broken promise. Why else was a lucrative refurbishment contract given to a Quebec firm last year when the work could have been done in North Bay?

But, Premier, the most important question in this whole series is, what have you got to say to Fran Cote when she can no longer take the train to Toronto for her

cancer treatments? And not a later train, not an earlier train—there's one train, and you're killing it, sir.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I believe my honourable colleague in fact understands that we'll be working through the divestment process to ensure that there is a replacement. I also want to assure my colleagues that while the ONTC operations will be tendered for sale, we will maintain the Polar Bear Express and motorcoach services—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —to communities served only by the ONTC.

Speaker, again, I know this is a difficult decision, but there is some surprising support in some surprising quarters. For example, I'm very pleased to have the support of the member for Nipissing, whose community is directly affected by this. This is something we could not do without support from some members of the opposition, and I want to acknowledge the continuing strong support of the member for Nipissing for this difficult initiative.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Picard and the Hamilton Spectator may be interested in some more information about Ornge.

Following my questions in the Legislature on April 5, 13 and 25, in which I warned the minister about Ornge, I received this letter. It's a 15-page letter from Ornge threatening me with legal action. It was written by a Mr. Lepine. He refers to my questions as an attack, a partisan attack. He concludes by saying, Speaker, "We are consulting counsel."

This letter, I was advised, was actually written by the president of the Liberal Party, and when the Premier characterizes opposition questions about Ornge, he refers to it similarly, with the same words, as "partisan attacks." Is it possible that the Premier's speaking notes for this issue are written by the same president of the Liberal Party?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, this is a lot of reaching, a lot of grasping, I would suggest here, Speaker.

What I can say to my honourable colleague is that while I appreciate his persistence and enthusiasm, I interpret our responsibility and our accountability owed to the people of Ontario as being somewhat different. I believe that our responsibility now is to find a way forward.

I commend the minister for acting in a concrete and substantive way in the face of the information as it was received by her. She brought in a team of forensic accountants. There's an OPP investigation under way. We've received the auditor's report. We've introduced new legislation. We've replaced the CEO; we replaced the board. There's a new performance agreement, and now we're moving forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, Alfred Apps is all over this. Alfred Apps's words are all over every letter that was sent.

The auditor said that when he saw what was going on at Ornge, his nose told him that something was wrong. There were many noses, including the minister's, the Premier's and the Premier's advisers, who saw the same information. Why did they not respond in the same way that the Auditor General did? Why is the Premier covering for those people?

We want to know this: Why—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Interjection: Withdraw.

Mr. Frank Klees: We want to know this: Why will the minister not subject herself to a select committee? Why will the Premier not subject his aides and others in the government to a select committee so that we can get to the bottom of it, find out who was responsible for what, why they made the decisions they did—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will be seated when I stand. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I say to my honourable colleague, he's well aware the matter is going to public accounts, I think as soon as tomorrow. Speaker, there will be ample opportunity during those public accounts committee hearings to call witnesses and to put questions to them.

I must say, Speaker, there is a growing interest in members of the opposition who have had access to information and who hung on to that information, did not bring that to our attention, did not see any cause for concern in that information at the time, who are now saying, of course, there was much cause for concern.

Let's move ahead with the public accounts committee. Let's take a look at all those individuals who had access to the information and why it is that they didn't bring it to the forefront.

FOREST FIREFIGHTING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Minister of Natural Resources: Minister, last year the northwest was devastated by one of the worst fire seasons on record. Many First Nation communities in the Far North were evacuated, and crews had difficulty keeping up.

This year, we have had one of the driest and warmest winters on record. While they have been small in size, a number of fires have already been reported, during a period when temperatures are normally well below zero.

My question is simple: Does the minister have a plan in place for what could be one of the worst fire seasons in our province's history?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question. Indeed, last year was a rather extraordinarily difficult forest fire season, almost a record in the northwest. We were very, very proud of the work that was done by our Ministry of Natural Resources staff. Premier McGuinty, in fact, was up in the northwest at the most crucial period of time. We're grateful for all the work that was done.

May I say, you're right. We're very conscious of the challenges that may be faced as a result of the kind of winter that we've had—the lack of snow, the lack of rain, even in the warmer temperatures happening. May I assure you that, indeed, our ministry people are not only on the alert; they're in position to fight the battles as they need to be fought. We're committed to certainly having the resources that we need. This could not be more important.

May I say also, we learned some good lessons from last year as well, in terms of how we can work with the municipalities and the First Nations communities, indeed, at a very, very difficult time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Speaker, my point is this. Last year, we had help. Fire crews from a number of provinces stepped in to help. With warm and dry weather affecting most of Canada, we can't count on this help this year.

Later today, our provincial budget will be unveiled, and many are projecting across-the-board cuts. Will the minister give his assurances that this department will have the financial resources in place to effectively protect northerners and our vital infrastructure?

1100

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Well, thanks again, and that's certainly a fair question. Let me assure you that indeed our top staff, in terms of our forest fire management centre, is working ahead of time to make sure that they are ready. We will have aircraft and other obviously important devices in place.

We have agreements, as you would know also, with other jurisdictions in terms of help, if it is needed. We were very grateful for the assistance last year, as we share that with other jurisdictions when our forest fire season is not as bad as last year's was.

So again, let me provide you with the assurance that I think you're looking for, that indeed our ministry is prepared, is recognizing that this may be a more challenging season.

I personally am looking forward to getting up to the Dryden fire management centre very, very soon to meet with them. We will be prepared; we will have the resources in place; we will have the aircraft and all the equipment we need to make sure that the forest fire season—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, the warm weather of the past several weeks has caused earlier-than-normal breakup of ice in northern Ontario. Over the weekend, the chiefs and councils of Kashechewan and Fort Albany First Nations declared a state of emergency when the early spring melt caused the Albany River to break up, raising concerns of potential flooding and creating an immediate threat to the communities in the area.

Despite the fact that weather conditions posed a real challenge for pilots on the ground, I understand your ministry staff, working closely with Emergency Management Ontario and other partners, proceeded with the planned evacuation of the communities' most vulnerable residents, including elderly people and children.

Minister, can you please share with the members of this House details of the weekend's events?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks to the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan for asking this very important question.

Certainly, Speaker, at a time when Ontarians needed our government the most, Ministry of Natural Resources staff moved quickly and decisively to address the extraordinary flooding challenges in the communities of Kashechewan and Fort Albany this past weekend. Despite quite harsh weather conditions, Ministry of Natural Resources aircraft flights conducted surveillance to monitor the fast-changing flood situation. Six aircraft completed 10 flights to assist with the evacuation, to ensure the safety of over 250 of the communities' most vulnerable.

Speaker, this was a very difficult situation, yet emergency workers on the ground were very much at their best. I sure want to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts and bravery of each and every man and woman involved in this weekend's flooding situation. I especially want to thank Emergency Management Ontario; our federal, municipal and First Nations partners who were integral in ensuring the swift and smooth implementation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Minister, again, thank you to your ministry, the EMO and our federal and First Nation partners on this file.

I'm told MNR and officials in Kashechewan have reported that there is concern along the north channel if breakup occurs, and it could affect the water intake for the community. The water level is going down in both channels and escaping on the south side. There's a reported problem 10 kilometres upriver as a result of freezing last night. It has also been reported that lots of water is still upstream and it will take days, if not a week, for it to run through.

When these natural precarious circumstances cause inhabitable conditions, it's always necessary to ensure

that those most vulnerable are the priority and are taken somewhere until conditions improve.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can you tell me, what is the status of the evacuation and what arrangements have we made for accommodating the evacuees?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me say thank you to the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan for asking this very important question.

The temperatures in the area are expected to remain steady and cold, which has helped stabilize the current ice breakup. As my colleague has pointed out, currently 258 vulnerable residents, including elderly, women, children and people with medical conditions, were airlifted from Kashechewan to Kapuskasing and Wawa over the weekend.

The First Nations leadership in Kashechewan and Fort Albany First Nations have suspended evacuations until further notice. The two First Nations and the Ministry of Natural Resources are assessing river conditions to determine whether further evacuations would be needed.

In closing, I want to say thank you to all the people involved and thank you to Kapuskasing and Wawa—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, we're less than a week away from your College of Trades making critical decisions on apprenticeship ratios and mandatory certification that will directly impact jobs here in Ontario and the ability for Ontario citizens to have a career in the trades. It is clear that your process has been completely secretive. Minister, can you explain why you are keeping thousands of employers in the dark and not providing details on your plan that will kill thousands of jobs here in Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I think the member opposite must have some political dyslexia. The only government that held back apprenticeships in the modern history of Ontario was his party, in power, which was generating a total of 60,000 people in the apprenticeships and trades, compared to 120,000 today.

I'm tempted to ask the member opposite, given their appalling record in government and their failure, when they will apologize to the people of Ontario for holding back Ontario for about 20 years in a broken system that didn't work, where it was big government telling business and labour how to run businesses and how to do training.

Mr. Speaker, we not only have 120,000 people in our trades and apprenticeships—and I want to congratulate those hard-working students—we have 30,000 people right now adding every year.

Right now, I would invite every member of the Conservative—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Stop the clock, please. Because of some of the heckling, I wasn't quite sure of what I heard, but I think I did hear something that I did not find appropriate in this House, so I'll ask the member to withdraw.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I withdraw, whatever it was.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will not hear other comments while I'm speaking.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham.

Supplementary question?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you for that answer, Minister. You're the gift that just keeps on giving.

Minister, I've heard from stakeholders representing thousands of concerned employers and employees that would like to have an opportunity to present their cases to the College of Trades. It's fairly simple. You know full well that the governance of your college is biased and completely unbalanced.

Minister, you say that the College of Trades is open, transparent and accountable. Then, why do you continue to keep these hard-working Ontarians in the dark and not provide the details, process or criteria on how they can have a say on the future of their jobs?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I take that as high praise from the member opposite—I am the gift that keeps on giving; as a matter of fact, what I'm giving are invitations.

You'll remember, Mr. Speaker, I invited every member opposite to join us for a reception with the College of Trades where business leaders, board members, their former colleague Mr. Ron Johnson—a former Conservative member—to come and join us to learn about that. These people volunteered several hours of their time to answer all the questions very transparently; not one member of the party opposite showed up.

Since I would like to keep on giving, let me send another invitation to the members opposite. Today at the Ex, there are 7,000 young people, the businesses and trades, for building our future. You will meet 8,000 young people going into apprenticeships and every business leader—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, the McGuinty government promised to review the funding formula in 2010 and didn't do so. Now, school boards are facing painful, painful cuts. The Toronto District School Board is facing large-scale layoffs, and schools are facing closure across Ontario.

Minister, why did your government break its promise to review the funding formula?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to stand up and talk about education as the

best investment in Ontario's future prosperity, and to have that conversation on budget day I think is entirely appropriate.

Ontario Liberals are committed to helping our kids become lifelong learners. That's why we've increased funding for education for the ninth straight year. Funding is up 46% since 2003. Our full-day kindergarten program, Speaker, is the first of its kind in North America, and by 2014, 250,000 children will be enrolled in full-day kindergarten. Families will save thousands of dollars of child care costs while their kids get a world-class education, and we know it's world-class because we are being acknowledged around the world.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, it's really hard to be angry at the minister for evading the question. The simple reality—the simple reality, Speaker—is that in Peterborough, PCVS is facing closure. Communities in Nickel Belt, in Sudbury, in Huron-Bruce, all facing school closures; here in Toronto, disruption of our schools with layoffs. Minister, what do you say to all those who are suffering from the cuts you've imposed on school boards?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I know the member opposite knows very well that the funding formula has changed every year. The members opposite, on that side of the House, Speaker, voted against every new dollar that we have sought to invest in education.

Let's talk about the Toronto District School Board for a minute. We've continued to increase funding to the TDSB by 33% over the past eight years, even though enrolment has declined by 12%.

I am so proud of the record that our government has when it comes to education, Speaker. We're being acknowledged around the world as one of the jurisdictions where students, no matter their first language, no matter where their families have come from, are achieving success in Ontario's education system. We look forward to doing much more, and I would ask the members opposite to support us in the Accepting Schools Act and other pieces of legislation before this House that are doing just that.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question today is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, Ontario is on track to replacing dirty coal-fired generation with a cleaner source of power by 2014. This is the single biggest climate change initiative in North America and has made Ontario a global leader in clean energy, so that's something my constituents take a lot of pride in.

A lot of the clean energy focus has been on wind and solar power; however, one of the cleanest and most affordable forms of energy is hydroelectric power. For many years, hydroelectric power has been a key component of Ontario's electricity supply mix. In my riding of Peterborough, the Trent-Severn water system offers

many hydroelectric opportunities. Minister, can you please share with this House what Ontario's hydroelectric supply will be, now and into the future?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I share the member from Peterborough's support and enthusiasm for the clean source of power that's hydroelectric. It has powered Ontario homes and businesses for generations, and we're determined that it's not only going to be a source of power today but a continuing source of power in the future. We've already brought on new projects over the past five years, and we're in construction right now on a couple of other exciting ones that I'll talk about in a moment.

My friend from Peterborough mentions even more opportunities that are available throughout the province of Ontario. We don't have the benefit of vertical geography for most of Ontario, so we look forward to the force of water, to run-of-the-river opportunities and to enhancing the vertical geography we have. Hydroelectric power: We're determined to be a province of clean, green sources of power. Hydroelectric power is the most important—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you, Minister, for that excellent response. I am pleased to hear that hydroelectric power will continue to play an important role in Ontario's electricity supply mix.

Many clean energy projects across the province are creating jobs and bringing needed investment to Ontario communities. To date, Ontario's clean energy economy has created over 20,000 new jobs and brought over \$27 billion of private sector investment at a time when our economy needs it most. Minister, I'd like to know what hydroelectric projects are currently being developed in this province and what their economic benefits are for all the people of Ontario.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: He brings up a very important point: What are we doing to build on that great history? I want to talk about two.

One is Niagara Falls. It's the largest hard-rock tunnel in the world, and it's going to bring water from above the falls down to the hydroelectric generating station at Beck and power another 160,000 homes every year for 100 years. It alone is providing \$1 billion worth of construction and related materials investment into Ontario and into the Niagara region.

Another one is the Lower Mattagami, just south of James Bay. I know the members opposite who talk about jobs will want to hear about this, because it's a 440-megawatt hydroelectric project, fully involving Chief Hardisty of the Moose Cree First Nation. It's going to power hundreds of thousands of homes, \$2.6 billion worth of job-creating economic—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. We've heard the government often repeat that Pan Am is on time and on budget. They figured that was enough, but actions speak louder than words. The minister and Pan Am organizers are backpedalling. Apparently, now they're only trying to be on time and on budget.

The hard-working families of Ontario deserve better. They have the right to know how their money is being spent. When will the minister finally stop hiding behind the same cloaks of secrecy that shield the College of Trades and the Ornge scandals and instead do the right thing? Release the timeline and the budget to the families who are footing the \$1.4-billion bill.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, once again, it's a pleasure to remind the member opposite and my other critic—who I've invited to come and meet with me to discuss the issues regarding the Pan Am.

As I have said very openly and very transparently, we are investing \$1.4 billion, of which the province is putting up \$500 million. Of that amount of money, there have been a number of venues that have been announced. Infrastructure Ontario has been monitoring and managing the process, around 80% of which has been complete. We've got a little bit more to do. Once it's done, and working in collaboration with the federal government, we'll announce and open up the vision.

I am anxious to tell you everything I can, but at this point, we do have a number of items that are still missing from completion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Speaker, we've heard this recycled script before. Here are the facts: The only budget we've seen is three years old and obsolete. No audited financial statements have been released. FOI requests for the budget have been denied and 60% of the venues have been changed. None of this adds up to respect for the earnings of hard-working Ontario families. This pattern of secrecy endemic to Pan Am organizing rivals that of Ornge and the College of Trades.

Since I know the minister will continue to skirt producing the plan and budget, can the minister at least give us his word that they're on track and confirm that their slogan, "On time and on budget," is not merely rhetoric?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this: In over 80 years, this province has not had the opportunity to host the games. It was because of the vision and the leadership of this government that we were able to acquire and win the bid.

In all the years that the Conservatives were in power, not once did they build an infrastructure to support our athletes, an infrastructure that will support our economy, that's going to create 15,000 new jobs and enable us to provide social well-being for our children, and health promotion. These are critical to our economy, critical to society.

Working together—and I encourage the member to continue to contact me, as he already has—I will continue—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order

Hon. Charles Sousa: —on these issues.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the work being done by Toronto 2015, in collaboration with all levels of government, to produce outstanding games in 2015.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Speaker, the medical director of the emergency department, Dr. Rob Lepage, publicly sounded the alarm bells over the growing crisis at our hospital in Sudbury. He wrote to the minister. He told her about the overcrowding in our emergency department. He told her about the long wait times for sick people—some of the worst wait times in the province. He told her about good, qualified, experienced nurses and physicians leaving our emergency department because the conditions are so bad.

Why is this? Well, in part because the hospital has been told to close 30 beds in order to balance their budget. They have to do this, although they're still caring for over 112 ALC patients.

Does the minister have any intention to answer the alarm bells that are ringing in Sudbury right now in their emergency department?

1120

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I was very pleased to be in Sudbury. I visited Health Sciences North, and I saw some of the superb work that is happening at Health Sciences North.

I do understand that there are challenges. I think there are challenges in all of our hospitals, but what I can tell you is that they are all making progress towards the goal of providing excellent care for all Ontarians: providing the right care at the right time, at the right place and for the right price.

I'm very pleased to know that at Sudbury Regional Hospital we've seen wait times go down dramatically. For hip replacements, for example, it's gone down by 273 days. Knee replacements have gone down 786 days. That's an 80% reduction in knee replacement surgery.

There's excellent work being done and it will continue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: When the medical director of our emergency department recommends that we call a code orange—an internal disaster—I call this a crisis. When patients describe their experience in our emergency department as similar to a refugee camp or a war zone, I call this a crisis. When health care professionals say that patient safety is being compromised, that they are not able to do their jobs because of the situation in the

ED department, I call this a crisis. When 33 of our 38 emergency room beds are not available for emergency care, I call this a crisis. How much worse does it have to be before the minister reacts?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, I was in Sudbury and visited Health Sciences North. I visited programs that are specifically designed to support seniors who are in hospital to get healthy and to go back home as quickly as they can and as safely as they can. I know that the people at Health Sciences North are very focused on reducing their ALC level by providing more supports in the community.

I was also delighted to visit Finlandia, a wonderful example for the whole province of how to care for seniors in the community through supportive housing.

There's a lot of good happening in Sudbury, and I know that the good people at Health Sciences North are focused on fixing this problem.

EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: My question today is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontario has a highly skilled and highly educated workforce because of the importance our government has given to post-secondary education and skilled trades. In uncertain times, we need to protect our government's investments in these key areas that have put Ontario's education system at the forefront.

A few weeks ago, I was impressed to hear the minister speak about incubators in our universities and colleges. These are important in helping people start their own businesses and also in helping them get ready to participate in the economy.

Speaker, through you to the minister: How is our government providing the support required for our students to have an opportunity to participate in experiential learning programs?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: First of all, there are a lot of ways that members can do that, and I want to thank the member for having attended the many events: the College of Trades and others. I also want to commend some of my colleagues in the opposition: the member for Essex and the member for London—Fanshawe, who have both been very active out there, meeting with groups and working with members on this side to advance this.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put out a challenge, if I may. Today, the Ontario Construction Secretariat, at the Ex, has 7,000 young people down there with major business leaders and companies as well as every training institute for the apprenticeship. Every member in this House, including every member opposite, has received an invitation when your students from your community are looking at that.

I will conclude by saying that the party opposite has made a great deal about trades. One way each member can do that is to show up at this event in the next three days and be there for your students, who—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, Minister. I certainly am proud to attend many of those events and to know what's happening in my community and across the province with respect to training and employment opportunities.

The Premier said yesterday that health care, education and social services are high priorities for Ontarians and will continue to be our priorities. It is very clear that our government's investments in our post-secondary education are an important aspect of ensuring that we continue to create a strong economy.

The work-related knowledge, skills and experience gained from participating in experiential learning programs have a positive impact on the student life and career prospects, giving them a competitive edge in today's labour market. Minister, how will you ensure that employers continue to participate in providing an opportunity for working and learning beyond our post-secondary institutions?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Not only do we have 120,000 people in apprenticeships and trades—another 30,000 every year—we have 50,000 co-op students right now in universities like Waterloo who are working. We have the Digital Media Zone. There was a group here, that some of you saw, from Saudi Arabia, who are touring that.

We want to continue connecting private capital to young students so that they're graduating not only with their trade certificates but with their own businesses, their incorporation certificates.

But before I sit down, I do want to go back, because I'm going to ask the folks to keep attendance. I will give a personal tour to the member from Simcoe North and the member from Cambridge, if they would join me down there, because I think it's important that—there are some times when you have to be Ontarians first before partisan politics. We can all, simply by being present, show up and support those young people in making some positive employment choices.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The member from Cambridge.

TUITION

Mr. Rob Leone: I hope the minister won't stand me up. Mr. Speaker, this question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities—a busy man today, Minister. The Ontario tuition grant has been flawed since day one. It has been condemned by part-time students, it has been condemned by individuals returning to school after being laid off, and it has been condemned by single parents returning to school after caring for their kids. A month ago, Mr. Speaker, it was condemned by the Liberal economist Don Drummond.

The minister has protected this program as one of his pet projects. There has to be a reason for this. One hopes that it is to address the jobs crisis. Given that the deadline is fast approaching to apply for this program, can the

minister tell this House how many single moms, laid-off workers, mature students and graduate students are receiving this grant?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment, come to order, please. The member from Renfrew: last time. As for the others, I'd like to hear the answer. We're having a little trouble with the speakers today—not you as speakers, but the actual Speaker's speakers—and I'm having a little difficulty hearing, so I'd appreciate your indulgence. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks. Mr. Speaker, I think students in Ontario are still waiting for an apology from the party opposite for raising their tuition 67% and taking half a billion out of the higher education system.

But we have to have hope, because the member from Cambridge signed a petition for a tuition freeze the other day, and I'm waiting to see that reconciled into the government spending plan opposite—the tax-and-spend Tories are at it again.

We have 310,000 of 600,000 students who are eligible—the vast majority have already signed up—for the 30%-off-tuition grant. Of 600,000 undergraduate students, we have 475,000 who receive some form of student aid, including 52,000 older workers who are back in retraining—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I haven't seen so much frivolous sidestepping since the government House leader failed to answer questions on Ornge yesterday.

The reality is, the Ontario tuition grant is flawed. Student groups have suggested that only one third of college and university students are eligible for this grant, and few are actually receiving it. This policy is so flawed that students had to opt into the program, and when so few students were doing so, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities engaged in a travelling road show to fix the bad PR surrounding the implementation of this flawed policy.

All these costs are not accounted for in the \$2-billion price tag. Ontario is heading down a path toward a \$30-billion deficit. Minister, will you at least answer this question directly: How much was spent on this uncoded, unbudgeted and unaccounted-for tour?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It was a little bit more than zero.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark, come to order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, as I've said many times, I'm not sure whether Saturday Night Live is more fun or the opposition, these days, when it comes to ridiculousness.

The money was found within, and you'll see it in the budget. This government made the commitment. I was asked by our Premier to deliver it within budget—and as my friend the minister said, on budget, on time.

To answer his question very directly, Mr. Speaker—and I'll say it slowly, because I've answered it several times—of 600,000 students, 475,000 received some form of student aid, including for older workers. Fifty-two thousand laid-off workers whose families get as much as \$28,000—that's some of the finest—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

POVERTY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Certainly the social planning council of Ontario has shown that since the Liberals took power, poverty rates are up, both for adults and children. The McGuinty government, in light of that, promised with great fanfare to reduce child poverty by 25% by 2013. A key policy commitment to achieving this was to increase the Ontario child benefit to \$1,300 by 2013.

Now that the government is abandoning its promise to increase the child benefit and freezing social assistance rates, is it official, I ask the minister, that the government has completely abandoned its poverty reduction program and plans on actually balancing its budget on the backs of Ontario's poor and children?

Hon. John Milloy: The Premier indicated Sunday and yesterday in various media appearances that we've had to make some very tough choices in this budget. But what he has also indicated yesterday is that despite the fiscal constraints we have, we are still going to find resources for investments in three key areas: education, health care and social services.

Mr. Speaker, we will not, like the Conservative government when it was in power, balance the budget through a 22% cut in social assistance rates.

The Premier's commitment to social services builds on the good work we've done in terms of the Ontario child benefit, which will continue to go up; in terms of the increase in social assistance rates; in terms of the supports for those people who want to transition into employment, including changing the rules, providing more benefits and allowing the extension of drug, dental and vision benefits.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we are undertaking the most comprehensive review of social assistance in generations.

VISITORS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order for the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Would it be a point of order, Speaker, if I were to welcome Brock, Ceci and Michael Cairns to the Legislature today?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, it would not, but we do welcome them.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 4 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1133 to 1600.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2012 ONTARIO BUDGET

BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO DE 2012

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I move, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask the indulgence of the entire House and remind them to make sure that the aisles are clear, that the pages deliver the budget to each member.

I'm impressed. I have to check to see that all members have received their copies of the budget?

The budgets have been received. It's now time for the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I rise to present Ontario's 2012 budget.

It lays out a five-year plan to keep Ontario on track to balance the budget by 2017-18 ... and describes the choices that we are making.

Choices that speak to the priorities of Ontarians.

The right choices.

Ontarians want a strong and growing economy that creates well-paid jobs.

People want a strong education system for their children because they recognize that it is the best possible investment we can make in their future.

In fact, a strong education system keeps us competitive in a tough global economy.

People want a strong health care system because we know that when someone we love is sick, nothing else matters.

A strong health care system also gives us an economic advantage.

Protecting and building on Ontario's achievements, while returning to balance in 2017-18, are the cornerstones of the 2012 budget.

To achieve these goals, we will transform the public and broader public sectors and, in so doing, how they serve all Ontarians.

Government, and the role of government, are evolving ... and everything we continue to do must be done more efficiently and even more effectively.

All of us in this Legislature, and all Ontarians, must turn our attention first to balancing the budget.

We must change the political culture and the way all of us in this Legislature, and across the province, approach and confront the challenges that we face.

To meet these goals, Ontarians needs a plan ... a plan that makes the right choices to build confidence in our economy both at home and abroad ... a plan to continue to move our province and our people forward, together ...

a plan to build a stronger Ontario for our children and our grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, economic growth has returned to Ontario.

It is slower growth, yet growth nonetheless.

Our gross domestic product rose by an estimated 1.8% in 2011 and all private sector forecasters expect modest growth to continue.

To be prudent, our plans are based on forecasts that are slightly lower than those of private sector consensus.

We are projecting GDP growth of 1.7% in 2012 and 2.2% in 2013.

Mr. Speaker, there is growth in jobs.

Ontario has created over 500,000 net new jobs since 2003 ... and almost 300,000 net new jobs since the recessionary low in June 2009.

On a net basis, these are all full-time jobs—and there is still more to do.

In fact, the choices we are presenting in this year's budget will create and protect 170,000 jobs.

En fait, les choix que nous proposons aujourd'hui permettront de créer et de protéger 170 000 emplois.

To ensure strong job growth into the future, Ontario must eliminate the deficit to strengthen the foundation of our economy.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of the global recession ... as a result of the substantial stimulus the McGuinty government, like others around the world, injected into the economy to create and preserve jobs ... as a result of the external factors that are affecting our economic potential—such as ongoing global economic uncertainty, a sluggish US economy, a higher Canadian dollar and rising oil prices ... Ontario has a deficit ... and despite progress towards balancing the budget, we must make the right choices to ensure that we continue making gains in overcoming the challenges as well.

If Ontario does not take strong action, the deficit will grow ... and that would mean an unsustainable level of debt.

Already today, interest on the debt is the third-largest expense in the budget.

More than we spend on colleges and universities.

This cannot continue, Mr. Speaker.

We have seen countries around the world lose control of their finances to others ... and lose control over their ability to decide where to invest in public services.

That is why we choose, building on earlier initiatives, to take strong action ... and make the right choices ... to build a stronger economy.

Ontario's edge in the global economy is our highly skilled and educated workforce.

That is why the McGuinty government's plan will maintain the 30% tuition grant for families.

Another key to prosperity lies in the creation of good, well-paying jobs for Ontario's workers.

The McGuinty government believes in making smart investments to help businesses create jobs.

Ontario currently provides about \$3.5 billion a year in support to businesses and people, through the tax system

and through dozens of grant and training programs across many ministries.

We will create a new jobs and prosperity council to work with us and help create the jobs of the future.

We will review business support programs and decide which ones should be continued and consolidated into a new jobs and prosperity fund.

This reform will create administrative savings ... some existing programs will not fit the new productivity focus so we will wind them down ... and save close to \$250 million by 2014–15.

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The council will also help provide a sharper focus on the programs that support and develop Ontario's highly skilled workforce.

We will remove overlap and duplication by further integrating the province's employment and training programs through Employment Ontario.

To support workers, Ontario invests directly in employment and training programs.

Together, by 2014-15, business and training supports will total an investment of over \$2.5 billion per year in our workers, job creation, increased productivity and the economy.

Right now, the single most important step that Ontario can take to grow the economy, Mr. Speaker, is to balance the budget.

À l'heure actuelle, la mesure la plus importante que le gouvernement de l'Ontario puisse prendre afin de stimuler l'économie est d'éliminer le déficit.

Speaker, the 2011 budget called for reductions in spending growth in order to meet our balance target date of 2017-18 ... and our government's five-year plan will keep Ontario on track to achieve this goal.

For the third year in a row, we have beaten deficit forecasts.

The deficit for 2011-12 is now projected to be \$15.3 billion, which is a \$1-billion improvement from the deficit forecast in last year's budget.

This forecast is based on overall expense growth of 2.5 per cent.

For 2012-13, the deficit is projected to be \$15.2 billion and is consistent with our plan to balance the budget which we laid out in the 2011 budget.

In spite of this progress, there is still much more to do.

The Conference Board of Canada estimates that if no further action is taken, Ontario's deficit would reach \$16 billion in 2017-18.

The Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, the Drummond commission, estimated the deficit would reach \$30 billion by that time if no action is taken.

Despite the difference between these numbers, one fact is clear: Ontario needs to take strong action to balance the budget and build a better future.

L'Ontario doit prendre des mesures décisives pour éliminer le déficit et bâtir un avenir meilleur.

If action is not taken, the deficit will increase, which would hurt Ontario's ability to continue to focus on its

priorities—education, health care and smart investments to create jobs.

Escalating deficits would also impair Ontario's ability to set and control its own priorities, choices and actions.

That is why, for every dollar in new revenues outlined in this budget, there are four dollars of savings and cost-containment measures.

Pour chaque dollar de nouveaux revenus décrits dans le budget, il y a quatre dollars de mesures d'économie et de restriction de coûts.

Over three years, the plan includes \$17.7 billion of savings and actions to contain cost increases.

Le plan comprend des économies et des mesures de restriction des augmentations de coûts totalisant 17,7 milliards de dollars sur trois ans.

Mr. Speaker, we choose to ensure that everyone plays their part in returning the budget to balance.

For those of us fortunate enough to serve in Ontario's Legislature, we are proposing to extend the pay freeze for MPPs by a further two years, for a total of five years.

We also propose to build on the actions we have taken to end executive perks across the broader public sector.

In addition, we will propose to extend the freeze on pay for executives at our hospitals, colleges, universities, school boards and agencies for another two years, for a total of four years.

Mr. Speaker, working with the people of this great province, Ontario has become one of the most competitive places for businesses to invest and create jobs.

In total, we have reduced taxes for Ontario businesses by over \$8 billion.

The result, Mr. Speaker, is a tax environment that is far more competitive for businesses now than it was eight years ago.

In fact, we are second only to California as the world's favourite destination for foreign investment in North America.

We have made Ontario a more attractive place for businesses to invest and create new jobs.

So we are asking business to do its part to help Ontario balance its budget.

Nous demandons aux entreprises de faire leur part pour aider l'Ontario à éliminer le déficit.

That is why we are proposing a freeze on further reductions of the general corporate tax rate and education taxes for businesses until the budget is balanced.

Speaker, Ontario families understand the importance of building the best education and health care.

In total, our tax plan for jobs and growth has cut taxes by \$12 billion for Ontario families ... and nine out of 10 Ontario taxpayers now pay less income tax.

In addition, Ontario delivers tremendous support to people through a number of programs including social assistance.

Where other governments have tried to balance their budgets on the backs of those who need assistance, the McGuinty government is maintaining current social assistance rates ... and we are increasing the Ontario child

benefit, although on a slower schedule than we would have liked.

To continue to protect the most vulnerable, we will drive reforms to our benefit programs to create a more efficient, integrated system that helps low-income Ontarians get back to work.

We will also keep the Ontario clean energy benefit in place.

While we are keeping it in place for virtually all families and smaller businesses, we are capping the benefit for larger consumers of electricity.

We know that average energy use by a family of four each month is between 800 and 1,000 kilowatt hours.

So we are proposing a cap of 3,000 kilowatt hours per month, which will generate savings of \$500 million.

That would mean families and smaller businesses will continue to get the full monthly benefit, while larger users would get the benefit on their first 3,000 kilowatt hours.

That is only fair because, as we fight the deficit, it makes sense to give the most help to our families.

Ontario provides assistance to seniors for the cost of their prescription drugs through the Ontario drug benefit program.

All seniors are eligible, regardless of their income level.

This means a senior with an annual income of \$300,000 receives the same benefit as a senior with an income of \$30,000.

That is why we are changing the program so that high-income single seniors with net incomes of \$100,000 or more and high-income senior couples with net incomes of at least \$160,000 will pay a greater share of the cost of their prescription medicine.

This change will affect only about 5% of Ontario's seniors—those with the highest incomes—and it will bring Ontario in line with other provinces that have an income test for drug benefits, so that the highest-income seniors pay a greater share of their drug costs.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has told us that where Ontario charges a fee for a service, that fee should recover the full cost of providing the service.

We are raising some fees, some of which have not been raised in more than 15 years.

A few will affect people, and others will affect businesses.

They are modest increases and they serve the practical need to move towards recovering the costs of providing these services.

We welcome other restraint measures from partners in the broader public sector, such as the announcement by the Ontario Hospital Association last week that hospital executives would match MPPs by taking a five-year pay freeze.

Speaker, protecting and building on Ontario's achievements in education and health care means keeping our teachers working in our classrooms and doctors and nurses working in our health care sector.

It also honours the importance of the work that they perform and the services that they provide to Ontario families.

At the same time, the inescapable fact is that over half of the government's costs go to wages, benefits and pensions.

So, to protect what we have built together, we need to come to an understanding together.

To balance the budget while protecting results, we will need to address the question of compensation.

To that end, our government has begun negotiations and discussions with school boards and unions.

In 2004 and 2008, we secured agreements that allowed us to make real progress in our classrooms.

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Now, as we discuss the first new agreement since the global recession, we are proposing parameters that, if accepted, would allow us to protect the gains Ontario has made in the classroom.

These choices reflect the priorities of Ontarians.

Health care is also a priority for Ontarians.

We are negotiating with doctors to renew the billing arrangements that expire at the end of this month.

These payments to doctors under our health insurance plan total \$11 billion or 23% of health care costs.

Mr. Speaker, together with doctors and other health care providers across the province, Ontarians now have shorter wait times for surgical procedures ... more nurses ... and better access to care.

We must not sacrifice the gains we have made, together.

And that means total physician compensation has to be maintained at current levels.

Again, Mr. Speaker, these are the right choices to make because they reflect the priorities of the people of this province.

The McGuinty government's plan keeps Ontario on track to balance the budget by 2017-18 while protecting education and health care.

In their election platforms, none of the parties represented in this Legislature set aside additional money to fund increases in compensation for public sector employees.

So I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that all parties can also agree that it is necessary to work through the collective bargaining process and other consultations to achieve results that allow Ontario to protect our positive results in schools and health care.

When we begin negotiations with other broader public sector partners, including OPSEU and AMAPCEO, we will do so with that shared objective in mind.

The McGuinty government respects the collective bargaining process and we will work through it.

Bargaining in good faith is not only the right choice to make ... the Supreme Court of Canada requires it ... just as all Ontarians require that we stay on track to balance Ontario's budget.

Where agreements cannot be reached that are consistent with the government's plan to balance the

budget ... and if no agreement can be struck to protect Ontario's progress in education and health care ... we are prepared to propose necessary administrative and legislative measures to protect the public from service disruptions ... and also to protect jobs for teachers, education staff and health care workers.

That is not a choice we would make lightly.

Respect will be our watchword when it comes to these negotiations.

Respect for our public sector partners.

Respect for the collective bargaining process.

And the respect we owe all Ontarians who are counting on us to eliminate the deficit.

Mr. Speaker, this country and this province are recognized as having some of the strongest pension plans in the world.

Unlike retirement supports in other countries, the Canada pension plan is sustainable.

Unlike in other countries, our public sector pensions are well governed and well managed.

Security in retirement for our seniors is important.

That is why we have led the national call for a modest and gradual enhancement to the Canada pension plan.

To ensure that our public pensions remain strong for people who are already retired and for those who will retire ... we choose to take action.

The Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services forecasts that, if changes are not made, the cost of public sector pensions to Ontario taxpayers would nearly double between now and 2018.

This is neither sustainable nor affordable.

Cela n'est pas viable ni abordable.

Finally, many public sector employees, particularly those just starting their careers, are at the limit of what they would like to pay towards their pension.

So, when we address pensions, we are looking to make them affordable for taxpayers and sustainable for public sector workers.

One way to help make our jointly sponsored pension plans more sustainable is to change the way they address pension shortfalls.

When a public sector pension plan has suffered a pension shortfall ... taxpayers and pension plan members have been called upon to make higher contributions.

We don't think it's fair to ask a single mother who earns \$14 an hour to pay even more of her hard-earned tax dollars into the pension funds of others, especially when she does not have a pension of her own.

We want to work with our broader public sector partners to limit taxpayer exposure when a pension fund is in deficit ... by reducing future benefits, rather than asking taxpayers to contribute even more.

And let me be clear, Mr. Speaker.

Any changes would not affect people who are already retired.

Les changements apportés ne toucheraient pas les personnes à la retraite.

It would only affect future benefits, not those already earned.

We will consult with the opposition parties, and start a dialogue with Ontarians—those with and without public sector pensions—before we introduce legislation that would strengthen our pension plans.

Employees in many public sector plans contribute less than their employers do to their pensions.

We are asking public sector workers to share equally the ongoing costs of their pensions with their employers.

This is only fair ... and it will again help protect the gains we've made in education and health care.

Research shows that large pension plans generate higher returns at lower cost than smaller plans.

In spite of this, Ontario has about 80 smaller pension plans.

For example, Ontario's 20 publicly funded universities have more than 25 pension plans.

The government will propose legislation this fall that would pool investment management functions of smaller public sector pensions to help put them on a more secure footing.

Mr. Speaker, we will build on a made-in-Ontario model that has been recognized by others as an example to the world—to make the management of our public sector pensions even stronger.

Speaker, the 2012 budget presents a strong plan to move forward and transform public services—to change the way they are delivered to give Ontario families better value for money and better results.

The plan includes choices that will lay the path to a better future.

The right choices—which will ensure that Ontario families are receiving the best possible service and the highest value for tax dollars.

We will use office space more efficiently to reduce the government's real estate footprint by about one million square feet.

We will propose legislation that allows ServiceOntario to help us maintain high-quality services for families—at lower cost—through public-private partnership models.

We will maintain the Polar Bear Express, which delivers a vital public service to isolated parts of the province ... while divesting other parts of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission's operation because taxpayers can no longer maintain a subsidy of \$400 per ticket on its passenger rail service.

And we will not stop there, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue looking for additional savings across government while providing quality public services for Ontario families.

And we welcome good ideas—from people, from business owners, economists and the opposition—on how to best find these savings.

We will adopt those ideas, where we find them.

Indeed, the opposition parties will see some of their ideas reflected in this budget.

We recognize, however, that the responsibility falls to us, as a government, to keep Ontario on track to eliminate the deficit through strong action.

Speaker, Ontarians know from experience that deep, arbitrary across-the-board cuts create deficits in education ... they create deficits in health care ... and they create deficits in core infrastructure.

Evidence shows that across-the-board cuts create a trampoline effect ... in other words, the money saved in the short term only leads to higher costs in the long run when the bill comes due.

So, we choose to reject that approach.

We know what the right choices are when it comes to education and health care.

Some would have us cut full-day kindergarten for our early learners.

Mr. Speaker, we choose to keep it.

Some choose to increase class sizes in our early grades.

We choose to keep them small.

Some would choose to cut nearly 10,000 teaching jobs and 10,000 non-teaching jobs, eroding the quality of our kids' education.

Mr. Speaker, we choose to protect those jobs.

Some would let people wait longer for medical care.

We choose to keep the shortest surgical wait times in Canada ... and be assured, Mr. Speaker, when we make these choices ... we will choose protecting education and health care—every single time.

And that's because that is the right choice.

You know, Ontario families make difficult choices every day.

Every day, they make responsible decisions for themselves to create a better future for their families, their children and their grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, we choose to do what Ontarians themselves are doing.

We are taking a good hard look at our financial circumstances.

We are thoughtfully examining the choices we can make, today ... that will best position us for long-term success.

Because when we make the right choices about our government's finances ... we will balance the budget.

The right choices create confidence among investors and the markets.

When we make investments in a strong, well-trained and healthy workforce ... it creates confidence among the businesses that want to set up shop and create jobs here in Ontario.

The McGuinty government's plan will create a stronger economy ... a better quality of life ... and a better future for all Ontario families.

The choices we are making are the right choices to meet today's challenges.

They are fair, they are responsible and ensure that all of us have a role to play in overcoming these challenges.

To build a stronger, a brighter, and a more confident future for Ontario.

Our Ontario.

The greatest province ... in the best country in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

The official opposition House leader and member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey has moved adjournment of the debate. Agreed? Agreed.

Debate adjourned.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Does the Minister of Finance wish to offer us a bill?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yes. I would ask the House to revert to introduction of bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All in favour? Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

STRONG ACTION FOR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR UNE ACTION ÉNERGIQUE POUR L'ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / *Projet de loi 55, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister for a short statement? I guess not.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 o'clock a.m.

The House adjourned at 1634.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
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Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

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Milligan, Rob E. (PC) Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC)	Richmond Hill York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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