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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 14 May 2012

Lundi 14 mai 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 14 May 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 14 mai 2012

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome Irwin Elman, Ontario's Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and more than 30 young people from right across the province who are children and youth in care and youth who have left the care of the children's aid society and crown ward system.

They're here this morning to deliver a very important report entitled *My Real Life Book*. I understand the youth are holding a press conference to release the report, and I invite all of my colleagues to attend a screening of the video they produced at 4 p.m. as well as their reception at 5 p.m. in the legislative dining room.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm delighted this morning to welcome 100 high school students, who are right here behind me. They're visiting from Chennai, India. All 100 are students of the Chettinad Vidyashram in Chennai.

They're in the GTA, Speaker, and as you can imagine, they are taking in all the sights, including of course the CN Tower and Niagara Falls. But most importantly, they are here to find out more about York University. I expect that some of them will be coming to York University a few years from now, and some might choose to make Ontario their home—

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Good morning, Speaker. I would like to welcome Otter Valley Christian School from Eden in my riding. They're here today having a tour.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm pleased to introduce Ryan Park, who is in the members' gallery. Ryan is from my riding of Niagara Falls. He's in his first year at the University of Toronto taking life sciences, and he's pleased to be here to listen and to see democracy in action.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would also like to take this opportunity to extend a very warm welcome to the teachers, principal and 100 students from Chettinad Vidyashram. It is a prestigious private school in Chennai, formerly Madras, in India. This school has over 10,000 students and 500 teachers. The Chettinad community is known for their trading expertise and takes great pride in the fact that major banks in India trace their origin to this community. Please join me in welcoming our guests and potential future international students as well as their

hosts from York University as they tour Ontario attractions.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Please welcome to the Legislative Assembly Helen Harakas and Melissa Mendes from Windfall Basics charity, providing brand new clothing to those most vulnerable. Welcome. We appreciate all that you do.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, our page Noah Alcantara-Aquino is page captain today, and his family is visiting the Legislature: Reynaldo Aquino, his father; Agnes Alcantara-Aquino, his mother; Ava Alcantara-Aquino, his sister; Amelita Alcantara, his grandmother; Mary-Grace Oledan, his aunt; and Alison Walker, a friend. We welcome them to Queen's Park today.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: This morning, I'd like to introduce again Shaumik Baki's parents—he's one of our pages—who are here to visit us again: father, Mohammed Fazle Baki, and mother, Fouzia Baki. Thank you for attending again, and welcome.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very pleased to welcome close to 40 people from the great riding of Kitchener Centre who are down today at Queen's Park to see question period and have a tour of the Legislature. My staff have convinced me that I can't read all 40 names out, but I'd like to welcome them all and hope they have a great day today at Queen's Park.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Very good. This time I didn't have to stand up.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. We've seen seven months of inaction from the Ontario Liberal government when it comes to jobs, the economy and reining in government spending. Basically, in the last seven months, there was an Auditor General's report that was damning of your record. You shrugged that off. The Drummond report recommended a change in direction when it comes to government spending. You basically put Don Drummond on the shelf. And Moody's gave the province a downgrade, which was subsequently ignored.

Premier, on Friday, StatsCan came out with the latest data that showed Ontario lost 8,000 jobs while the other

provinces gained a total of 20,000 jobs. Will this finally shake the Premier out of his complacency when it comes to creating jobs in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question. I see the StatsCan report a little bit differently, Speaker. It demonstrated that last month we created 23,000 full-time jobs. That follows hard on the heels of 46,000 full-time jobs created in the earlier months. In fact, since June 2009, Ontario has created 371,300 new full-time jobs here in the province of Ontario. We're leading the country in this regard. We're leading the US in this regard—certainly the Great Lakes states, Speaker—and we're leading the UK as well.

Is there more to be done? Of course there is, but I think by—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew is warned.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There has never been a shortage of enthusiasm from the Ottawa Valley, I must say, Speaker. That's not necessarily a bad thing.

But by any objective assessment, we are certainly moving in the right direction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: I don't think the Premier means the same thing by "objective" as the rest of Ontario. Only the Premier could think Ontario is on the right track when we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs, when for 64 consecutive months Ontario's unemployment rate has been above the national average. Friday's numbers were a further condemnation of the Premier's approach. Quebec added 23,000 jobs, BC added 20,000 jobs, Alberta added 11,000 jobs, and Ontario lost 8,000 jobs.

1040

Sir, your economic policies are causing active damage to the economy: soaring energy rates, higher taxes, more government spending. Will these numbers wake up the Rip Van Winkle Premier from his slumber to change course and get our economy moving in the right direction?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I guess they've been working on that one all morning, Speaker.

The fact of the matter, again, is that we keep creating jobs here in the province of Ontario. I'll draw my honourable colleague's attention to a fabulous announcement we had just last week in northern Ontario, in the Ring of Fire district. It represents the biggest mining discovery in some 100 years in Canada. As a result of this new proposal, we're talking about thousands and thousands of new jobs that will benefit Ontario families living in the north for decades to come. That is just yet one more sign of a growing economy here in the province of Ontario.

I would encourage my honourable colleague to take off those tinted glasses and just put on some clear lenses and understand what is happening in the province of Ontario. There is good reason for optimism.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, these aren't my figures; they're Stats Canada's that demonstrate that for 64 consecutive months—he makes reference to my glasses. Perhaps the Premier should better unplug his ears and talk to real Ontarians, hard-working Ontarians, small business owners who are struggling to move ahead, and Ontarians who say that Ontario should be the leader in Canada, the number one province in this entire country for job creation, for starting a business. But you have us at the back of the pack.

One of the reasons as well, Premier, is that your expensive energy policies are driving hydro rates through the roof. We've seen a loss of 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Just because the Premier can create jobs at Ornge for Liberal friends and insiders and hand out wind and solar contracts to well-connected Liberal donors does not an economic policy make. Lower taxes, reliable and affordable energy, and reining in government spending: That's the path forward for our province. Won't you agree, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, in addition to the Stats Canada objective information, which says that Ontario remains the number one job creator in the country, I would also refer to Stats Canada, which tells us that last month Ontario led with an increase in building permits. We issued building permits in this province valued at \$2.7 billion; that's over twice that of the second-highest province, which is Quebec. Export Development Canada, another independent, reliable and objective source, tells us that Ontario will lead Canada in export growth both this year and next year at 9% growth in our exports every single year.

Again, the fact of the matter is, objectively speaking, we are moving in the right direction.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: I guess, Premier, export growth means other economies are growing faster than the province of Ontario. This is the problem. You now have 64 months with higher unemployment rates than the rest of Canada.

I'll tell you again: Here is the record. Ontario lost 8,000 jobs while the rest of the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development and Innovation is warned.

Mr. Tim Hudak: So Ontario lost 8,000 jobs while the rest of the provinces added 60,000. Those are the facts, Premier.

Your economic development minister had a press conference subsequent to the bad news from Statistics Canada. We expected him to announce a brand new eco-

conomic plan, but instead all he did was announce yet another committee with an appointee with no report-back date, no terms of reference. This is, once again, kicking the can down the road.

Premier, instead of announcing a new committee to study the problem, why not take action, take the Ontario PC idea to create 200,000 jobs through the skilled trades, good jobs that—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, a slogan does not a—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Prince Edward–Hastings is warned.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I was going to say that a slogan does not make a job creation program. It takes hard work. It takes working in concert with our colleagues in the private sector, and I'm talking about employers and labour alike, and it calls for good government policies at the same time.

My honourable colleague makes fun of a new Jobs and Prosperity Council headed up by Gordon Nixon, who heads up the Royal Bank of Canada. The fact of the matter is, that's going to be a very solid council. We'll look forward to announcing the balance of the membership shortly. It will be providing specific advice with respect to how we might construct our fall economic statement and our next budget as well.

One of the things we understand is that if we're going to work successfully, we've got to keep working together. We look forward to working with our partners in the private sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, with all due respect, your dithering for seven months doesn't create jobs, your slogans for seven months have not created jobs, and further committees are not going to create jobs in the province.

I have had a chance to speak to Mr. Nixon, among others. I've listened to his advice, and here's the difference between Premier McGuinty and the Ontario PCs: He wants to kick the can further down the road; we want to see action when it comes to jobs and the economy today. What I worry is, this Nixon report will end up on the same shelf with Don Drummond, the Auditor General's report and countless other Liberal reports.

The time for action is now, Premier. Move forward on skilled trades. Bring in an energy policy focused on reliability and affordability, and bring in a public sector wage freeze to save \$2 billion and free up room for the private sector to grow.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'd also draw my honourable colleague's attention to another independent source. The CFIB, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, tells us that business confidence has grown for seven months in a row now in the province of Ontario. There was a study released by the American Express folks on May 1 this year, saying that 85% of Ontario

retailers consider the financial outlook positive in the course of the next 12 months. It seems that the only person who has a permanent rain cloud over their head these days is the leader of the official opposition and his colleagues there.

The fact of the matter is, there are good reasons for us to be optimistic about our future. One of those reasons, Speaker, is that we continue to have great confidence in the people of Ontario themselves.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, sadly, the Premier likes to trivialize the real concerns of the 600,000 unemployed women and men in our province, or those who have a part-time job or that lost a good job in the manufacturing sector. And, sure, they're struggling to get by. They're proud to be bringing a paycheque home for their families, but they think, "Can't we do better, Premier, in the province of Ontario?" You dismiss their concerns as rain clouds. I say that these are the dreams and aspirations of real Ontarians, who say that better days should be ahead, that Ontario can achieve more, that we can be a leader again. We just need the right direction.

Premier, the CFIB you mentioned, they like our ideas of reliable, affordable energy, of a public sector wage freeze, getting public sector pensions under control and making sure we actually lower taxes on job creators—pro-growth, pro-economic Conservative policies to make Ontario a leader again and help those families get jobs in our province. The time for action is now. Will you move forward, Premier?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As they say, talk is inexpensive, but when push comes to shove, when there was some heavy lifting to be done by the leaders of the province, when we put forward a proposal to move ahead with the HST to harmonize our tax system, which was the single biggest request coming out of the business community, when push came to shove, they were missing in action. They opposed that. They knew it was going to be difficult politically, so they ran away from that as fast as they possibly could.

The fact of the matter is, when push comes to shove, when there's heavy lifting to be done in this province, when it comes to doing what it takes to strengthen this economy, the people of Ontario can count on this government right here.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question this morning is for the Premier. Last week the government proudly joined Cliffs resources as they announced plans for a feasibility study for a smelter in the riding of Nickel Belt. The project will have significant electricity needs. Can the Pre-

mier tell us, even roughly, how much electricity they're going to be using?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My understanding is, they will be using quite a bit, Speaker. I don't want to be technical, but I can say that they'll be using a lot.

We're very proud to be partnering with Cliffs in this regard. You might think of them as an anchor tenant in a very important development to take place in northern Ontario. It's a very exciting mining find, the biggest in Canada in 100 years, and we are determined to get this right for all the communities living in northern Ontario, to ensure that all our families benefit for decades to come.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it looks like the Premier came to question period with his funny bone intact today.

The Premier and his cabinet ministers are working very closely with Cliffs; that's obvious. They're even joining them at press events. What concerns, if any, have been raised about electricity costs, and has the government responded specifically to Cliffs with any particular offers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: We're very, very proud that last week we were able to announce that we're moving from pre-feasibility to feasibility with regard to the Cliffs project. It has an enormous opportunity for all of Ontario but in particular our First Nations communities and the people who are living in northern Ontario.

We are still in dialogue with Cliffs about a number of factors. One of them is electricity. We make no bones about that. These are important dialogues and discussions; they will continue. Once we've reached an agreement that both parties can sign off on, we'll be more than happy to make those public.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I think it's really clear that a facility of the size that they're proposing, of course, is going to have a pretty high hydro bill here in Ontario. We know that large industries already pay \$3 million more a month in Ontario than their competitors pay in adjacent provinces, like Manitoba and Quebec. Has the high cost of Ontario electricity been raised specifically by Cliffs or by other companies that plan to access the resources in the Ring of Fire?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, I'm not clear, in the question, if in fact the NDP are in favour of this investment or not. We are in favour of this investment. We are going to be working with Cliffs and any other proponent that has an opportunity to make this type of investment in the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario, because it benefits everyone in Ontario.

We are proud that we are open for business, that we are the leading jurisdiction when it comes to mining. We will continue to send out that proactive signal, because

investments like Cliffs's are good for the province of Ontario and good for the people of Ontario.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. People tell us they do want to see Ontario's resources used responsibly to create sustainable, good jobs and lasting prosperity for the people of Ontario, not ripped from the ground and shipped away as quickly as possible. But if we're going to attract those good, value-added jobs, we need affordable and reliable electricity. What is the government's plan to bring electricity costs under control in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the question, but I do want to reinforce the point made by my honourable colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. It is very difficult to determine at this point in time whether or not the NDP in fact support this new development in northern Ontario. It represents thousands and thousands of new jobs. It represents a new evolution in the economy in northern Ontario. It represents the fulfillment, at least in part, of many of the hopes and dreams of people living in that part of the province. So it would be good to know, at the end of the day, whether or not the NDP in fact support this new development in northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: New Democrats have been pretty clear that it's time to start looking at affordable, reliable, public power in this province, the kind that's actually keeping prices affordable in places like Manitoba and Quebec. Instead, the government is pushing ahead with plans that actually limit public oversight and accountability.

Is the government going to commit to an open review of our electricity system and look honestly at a way to control costs, or are they going to keep pushing the same solutions that just have not been working?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm reminded that the northern Ontario industrial electricity rate, one we put in place through measures in our 2010 budget, which was opposed by the NDP, means that those businesses in northern Ontario have the fifth-lowest industrial electricity rates in North America, so I think we need to keep things in perspective. We're working very hard with the business community, but especially our large electricity users and especially those located in northern Ontario.

If my honourable colleague has some suggestions with respect to how we might work together to ensure that we maximize the benefits of this latest development in northern Ontario—a very exciting one—of course we would most warmly welcome those suggestions.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario's electricity bills are some of the highest in Canada, and over the next decade the government says they plan to spend billions and billions on new electricity supply. In estimates committee

last week, the Minister of Energy couldn't even tell members of the committee how much he planned to spend. For families who are already paying unknown costs for cancelled power plants in Mississauga and Oakville, this is getting pretty darned scary.

Is the government going to commit to an open review of our electricity system and look honestly at ways to control our costs, or is he going to keep pushing the same old solutions that just are not working?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague of what it is that we have done together with Ontarians. We are in the midst of a massive overhaul of our electricity system. We are rebuilding about 80% of it over the course of 20 years. We have invested in some 9,000 megawatts of new generation. We're expanding our capacity at Niagara Falls. The development that's going to take place on the Lower Mattagami in northern Ontario is the biggest of its kind in decades. I think we've put in place seven new gas plants. We are refurbishing our nuclear reactors. There have been over 5,000 kilometres of transmission lines that have been rebuilt or rehabilitated in some way. So we're talking about a massive, multibillion-dollar investment in our electricity system. There are necessarily costs associated with that, Speaker, and that's why we put in place our 10% rebate for our families.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Premier: The Minister of Health continues to defend her ministry's failure to oversee the province's emergency services and their mismanagement, and it continues. Last week, there was no air ambulance available to respond to a serious collision in the GTA because Ornge was incapable of managing its shift change. The patient died. The minister's response: "We'll look into it."

Today, we learned that a man in his 30s died yesterday here in Toronto waiting for a land ambulance that never showed up. The highest priority level emergency call, and there was no ambulance.

I ask the Premier this: How many more deaths will it take before he acknowledges that his Minister of Health and his emergency health services branch are incompetent and cannot manage this file, and when will he put someone in charge who knows what they're doing?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I do not share my honourable colleague's perspective on this. I will say that whenever there is a tragedy that unfolds, we are obviously extending our sympathies to the family and friends of those affected.

I think there are some 7,000 paramedics employed in the province of Ontario and I believe there are some 1.4 million calls on an annual basis to which they respond. Overwhelmingly, in a great majority of cases, they do the very best they can, and they provide extraordinary quality

care to Ontarians who find themselves in emergency need.

Speaker, we will look into each and every one of these cases where there appears to have been something amiss, but Ontarians can and should continue to have confidence in their ambulance system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Air ambulances can't respond because shift changes can't be managed competently. Land ambulances can't respond to the highest-priority emergency call because scheduling can't be managed. Front-line emergency workers, doctors and schedulers have been warning this government and this minister for years that there is a systemic problem.

Speaker, the real emergency is in the minister's office and at the health services branch. It is apparent that the vital signs are absent there.

I'm going to ask the minister one more time. If, in two weeks, there were doctors not available in the emergency wards to look after patients who arrived there, the minister would immediately step in. Why is it that she allows the emergency services branch of this province to continue to demonstrate this kind of incompetency? Why can't Ontarians count on their ambulances to be there—

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

1100

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll once again remind my honourable colleague that paramedics are now responding to 1.4 million requests each year. There are some 7,000 of them working to the very best of their capacity, Speaker.

I'll remind him as well that this year we will be investing \$16 million to fund nurses to assist incoming patients at the hospitals. I'll remind him as well that most of our ambulance services are delivered by the municipalities, and I'll remind him again that we have uploaded some of those costs. We're now sharing it on a 50-50 basis, something their party continues to oppose.

Again, we will continue to work in partnership with our front-line workers to ensure we're delivering the best possible care to Ontario families.

CASINOS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Paul Godfrey, the chair of the OLG, doesn't seem to be interested in waiting until 2014 for a Toronto-wide referendum on a casino. Even though Mississauga council hasn't officially weighed in on a casino, Mr. Godfrey said, "We'll build it in Mississauga or somewhere else first."

Will the Minister of Finance commit to the people of Toronto, Mississauga or anywhere else that they'll be able to vote on a possible casino in their respective community?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, there is a process under way to locate a new casino in a willing host municipality somewhere in the GTA. There have been ex-

pressions of interest from a number of municipalities. We will leave it to those municipalities to determine the process upon which they will determine if there is a willingness in the community to host such an opportunity. I've indicated in the past that if a community doesn't wish to host a casino, they simply won't be required to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: The government seems to be in a rush, even though it hasn't begun to look at the impact of a new casino. In fact, while the OLG's chair is talking about a casino on Toronto's waterfront, when the NDP put in a freedom-of-information request, the response we got from OLG says it hasn't conducted a social impact study yet because "no specific municipality has been identified for a new location."

Can the minister explain why OLG seems to be moving full steam ahead on a casino in Toronto without conducting a social impact study?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, part and parcel of any planned expansion of gaming in Ontario, whether it's in the greater Toronto area or elsewhere, would involve precisely those kinds of studies. On an ongoing basis, we look at the impact of gambling. In fact, Ontario has the most generous support for people with gaming addictions anywhere in North America at more than \$40 million a year.

So as this process unfolds, I expect there will be ample debate, ample opportunity for those opponents in any of the municipalities which have expressed a high-level interest in this type of development to look at these questions, to examine them, if they choose to take it to a referendum within their communities. We will continue to respect that, Mr. Speaker, and we'll work co-operatively with any municipality that has an interest in exploring the opportunity of developing another gaming facility here in the greater Toronto area.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. My constituents up in Willowdale have reminded me recently that in February your ministry introduced a bill that will repeal the 1939 Public Works Protection Act—that's the bill that contributed to all the G20 problems about two years ago. They know that the bill was enacted early in World War II. They feel that it's out of line with what's going on in society today. They're looking forward to the legislation that was proposed by Chief Justice McMurtry, who was also a former Conservative Attorney General.

I know that the bill has been sent to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy—I've been sitting on the committee from time to time—and what's happening, Minister, is that the bill has just stalled there. It's plagued with delay, adjournments, bell ringing and all sorts of obstructionism by the PC caucus members. What can we do to move the bill—

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci, monsieur le Président. Je veux remercier le membre de Willowdale pour sa question.

I agree that the Public Works Protection Act is outdated and needs to be replaced with new legislation. In fact, all parties in one form or another have expressed support for Bill 34. The bill is now in front of the standing committee on justice, but it has been stifled by the Conservative political tactics and by inexcusable 11th-hour submissions from both opposition parties. These delay tactics, such as adjournment of committee and bringing replacements at the last minute, affect our ability to timely address Justice McMurtry's recommendations.

It's a new day, and with it I hope we see a new approach from the official opposition when they finally get back to work for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Thank you, Minister. The bill has been in front of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, and as I said, I've been sitting in on that committee. There were a number of concerns raised by participants at the committee. Specifically, some of those concerns were that members of the public—issues about having to produce identification before entering court premises, the accommodation of faith issues in the courts, and the warrantless search of vehicles that are not actually on court premises. We heard about those concerns and I know that there are recommendations that have been put forward by our government to address those concerns, but notwithstanding that, the bill is still being stalled by the obstructionism, the bell ringing and the delay tactics—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While I understand the situation that you're trying to describe, it is the tradition of this place to talk about government policy and not committee work. I will allow the last part of that question. But the minister will respond in the way I have requested.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have made some change to Bill 34 in an effort to strike the right balance. But whatever changes we bring forward, I fear that the opposition will continue to play games with this Legislature—

Interjections.

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

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is for the government House leader. It's clear that the government's refusal to take necessary steps to restore confidence in Ornge is born out of its desire to wash its hands of the scandal and blame "rogue operators" for the corruption that has taken place under its very nose. Despite the ongoing scandal at Ornge being a sordid tale of greed, deceit and corruption—all of which have compromised patient safety—not a single person has been held accountable by this government, either in the minister's office or in the ministry. So I ask the House leader: Does

he agree with the Premier's decision to absolve the Minister of Health and the emergency health services branch for putting patient safety at risk—patient safety, House leader, which Ontarians expect from them and those services?

Hon. John Milloy: I 100% support the strong action that's been taken by our Minister of Health to get to the bottom of the Ornge situation and to correct it. I support her bringing forward Bill 50, which is the final piece of the puzzle and which the opposition continues to oppose through childish bell-ringing tactics.

The member opposite seems to pretend that no one is looking into the issue of Ornge. The fact of the matter is that the public accounts committee has so far sat for 24 hours and heard from 30 witnesses. Last week, for example, they heard from Rick Potter, former Ornge chief aviation officer. He testified that he was recruited by PC lobbyist Kelly Mitchell through his Conservative connections to sit on the Ornge board for \$1,000 a meeting. He also testified that he has been a lifelong member of the Conservative Party and was a candidate in Thunder Bay.

1110

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: House leader, you won't be getting Bill 50 till we get a proper inquiry into Ornge.

It's clear that the Liberal government will stop at nothing to shield itself from the ongoing scandal at Ornge. This includes allowing for ongoing risk to patient safety. The government has continually been asleep at the switch, laughing off questions from the PC and NDP caucuses with flippant and cavalier answers.

The failure of the health minister and her bureaucrats to provide oversight at Ornge is totally unacceptable. Since the House leader has been tasked with cleaning up the Minister of Health's mess, can he share with the House when Ontarians can expect to see the individuals responsible for putting patients at risk removed from their positions?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure I'm not the only one in the Legislature who noted the fact that the member stands up and admits that his party is going to block the recommendations of the Auditor General which are contained in Bill 50 that is before this Legislature—

Interjections: Ornge, Ornge, Ornge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Halton is warned.

Government House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member stands up and admits—he calls for the government to take action and then he admits that he and his party are going to block the recommendations of the Auditor General which are contained in Bill 50.

He also tries to lead people to believe there is not an investigation going on into the Ornge situation. I would remind him again of the Auditor General's report. I would remind him of the good work of the public accounts committee. I would remind him of the Ontario Provincial Police, which is looking into the matter—

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

ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is for the Premier. Last week, this government made an announcement on the Ring of Fire without bringing First Nations to the table and without any assurances around job and training opportunities for the First Nation communities in the region. NAN Deputy Grand Chief Terry Waboose says that the government is not listening to First Nation aspirations for their youth and children.

Does this government have a plan to ensure First Nations workers will receive the training they need to benefit from development in the Ring of Fire?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Absolutely, yes, the government does have a plan to ensure that First Nations people are brought into not only training opportunities and skills development, but also into the consultations around environmental monitoring, around resource revenue-sharing. It is a whole package of involvement on behalf of First Nations.

As I said last week, the business decision that was made was made as a business decision and it had to be made in confidence. But the fact is that now we start that larger formal consultation to make sure that all of the First Nations involved and the children for generations to come have the opportunity to benefit from this terrific project.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: The Ring of Fire is not going to work unless it involves opportunities for the First Nations that live near the mining site.

Last week in question period, following the Cliffs announcement, Minister Duncan made some lofty claims about the 1,200 First Nation Ontarians who will be hired to work in the Ring of Fire, but in fact, there hasn't been any commitment for First Nations job training.

Will the Premier commit to actual funding and a strategy to ensure that First Nations can take advantage of the employment opportunities the Ring of Fire provides?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, as I said last week, one of the first trips I made when I was appointed to this ministry was to Webequie, which is one of the communities that is very close to the Ring of Fire. The conversations that I had with the people in Webequie were about exactly this: They were about training opportunities, they were about the skills development that was going to be needed; they were about the location of those training facilities to make sure that the young people involved can access those opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely aware that without the involvement of First Nations people, without that workforce—and folks in Kenora said to me last week that the First Nations people in northern Ontario are the workforce for northwestern Ontario. So it's absolutely part of the plan. We know that the Ring of Fire cannot be successful unless First Nations people are brought up to

speed, they have training opportunities and they're involved.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is to the Minister of Education. Confronting bullying is a key issue, one that is very important to me and many of the MPPs in this Legislature, but most importantly to kids and parents in our schools and communities across the province. We all know heartbreaking stories of the impact bullying has on our kids and the poisonous effect it has on our school environment.

Bullying can take many forms and affects a cross-section of children, especially our LGBT youth, who are often susceptible to bullying and intolerance. That's why student-led groups like gay-straight alliances are an important tool for addressing this problem, and research shows that they make a real difference.

As the Legislature considers anti-bully legislation to address these problems, Speaker, through you, would the minister tell us what Bill 13 says about GSAs?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member for Ottawa Centre for being such a strong advocate for anti-bullying initiatives, both in his riding and here at the Legislature.

Speaker, there has been a lot of misinformation about single-issue, student-led groups like gay-straight alliances. If passed, Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, says that schools must support students if they want to form a group like this. There's nothing radical about making sure that students have the support they need to succeed in school, and that's what Bill 13 is all about. It's about making sure that every student, regardless of race, culture, creed, gender or sexual orientation, feels safe and respected and welcome at school. It's not about the names of the clubs.

I'm confident that Catholic schools can operationalize this legislation. That's why we have the support from the Catholic teachers' association and from the Catholic school trustees.

I want to tell you what some of the names of the clubs are: Embracing Xavier Equality at St. Francis Xavier, Anti-Homophobia Alliance, Born Equal, Dialog, Youth Embracing Sexualities. It's about the support for students.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: There's certainly nothing radical about our young people being supported in school by their peers. The Accepting Schools Act, Bill 13, provides protection for all students and helps our kids support each other. That's why it is difficult to hear the Progressive Conservative Party and their allies attack this legislation as somehow divisive because of this.

Speaker, I can't imagine what my colleagues opposite think is divisive about student-led support groups for kids, groups that have the approval of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association. It seems that the PC Party doesn't want kids to have the choice to form

student-led groups. They think that kids should choose French fries and gravy for lunch, but not choose support clubs. I just don't get it.

Minister, you have said that you will work with the opposition to pass anti-bullying legislation, and our kids are waiting on us. Speaker, will the minister tell this House if she will remove that provision from the Accepting Schools Act to do so?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I had a lot of opportunity in this House to talk about the good elements that exist in Bill 14, but let me be very clear: The provision in Bill 13 about student-led clubs, such as gay-straight alliances, is an important provision. It helps promote a more accepting school climate. It's only the Accepting Schools Act that includes that provision, to ensure that kind of support in schools.

When it comes to making schools safe for our students, the PC caucus is clearly divided. Last week, we saw the member for Nepean-Carleton be supportive of GSAs. Later that day, though, unfortunately, the PC leader disagreed with her and issued a statement and sent his press secretary out to reverse the position. The PC leader's office said that the party will oppose Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, because of the provision for GSAs. I'm very disappointed. This is about providing support for students. Student-led clubs provide that exact support.

CASINOS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question is to the Minister of Finance. On April 26, here in this Legislature, I tabled my private member's bill, Bill 76, to give Ontarians their say about casino development in their communities.

Minister, the word on the street is, you're trying to bully your caucus into allowing casino development to happen all over the province, without any local input, all in a cynical attempt to fund your spiralling deficits.

Your party's chief whip; a fellow cabinet minister and deputy House leader; and five other prominent Liberal caucus members voted with the PCs and NDP to give local decision-making to the people. Minister, will you stand in your place today and look your seven courageous Liberal colleagues in the eye and tell them that you support them by allowing referendums for future casino development?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: When it comes to private members' business, our members are allowed to vote the way they see fit, unlike the Tories on the bullying bill. In the morning, one member says one thing; the leader brings her down, and they change the policy overnight and re-establish the policy.

1120

The provision for referendum exists in the Municipal Act; it has for many years. We've said that any willing host has the opportunity to determine how they will gauge winning conditions or will gauge what it means, the willingness. We welcome the provisions of the Municipal Act. I'm glad our caucus members vote freely on

private members' bills. We respect them. We have strong debate within this caucus, unlike that party, which won't stand up for kids who are being bullied in our schools all over Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It sounds like a divided caucus and cabinet on that side of the House. The Liberal members from Etobicoke Centre, Mississauga East–Cooksville, Don Valley East, York Centre, your chief government caucus whip, the member from Peterborough, and the cabinet minister from St. Catharines and deputy House leader all supported the PC bill to give local decision-making on casino development to the people of Ontario. Minister, your colleagues think it's right to give residents a say on local casinos. Why do you think it's wrong?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Municipal Act permits municipalities to conduct referendums. It has been there for many years. I think the member opposite, instead of criticizing and trying to find fault here, maybe ought to tell his constituents why he's voting against the southwest Ontario economic development fund. At a time when his riding and communities have been hard hit by decisions made by outside interests, that member chose to vote against the most progressive policies on economic development for southwest Ontario. I guess we ought not to be surprised, because when it came, for instance, to horse racing, he said to keep the subsidy. He says that here, but in his riding, he puts out press releases that say that "one of his biggest mistakes has been to shovel out business subsidies.... Back home in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, local business owners do perfectly well without handouts from Queen's Park." Flip-flop.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education: 275 schools across Ontario are closing or facing closing. A People for Education report indicates that the accommodation review process for closing schools is broken. It pits community against community. It doesn't adequately explore other community uses for schools. Will the minister launch a review to fix the process and encourage alternative community use of schools?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very proud to be part of a government that has built or is building, since 2003, 400 new schools in this province. We have made significant investments in our education to ensure that we have new, modern buildings so that we can have our students in those buildings. At the same time as we have increased investment, seeing \$6.6 billion or 46%, we've seen a decline in enrolment of 121,000 students.

Since we came into office, we have reformed the process. We have ensured that there is community dialogue, that the accommodation review guidelines are in place and that we have those local conversations. That being said, we are always prepared to make sure that that con-

versation is inclusive and includes other community partners, and that's exactly what we said we would do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister, on Saturday, students and parents in Welland, St. Catharines, Cambridge, Peterborough and Sudbury all spoke out against the closure of schools in their communities. They don't want their children bussed across town. They don't want valuable community space sold off. Parents need to know that every viable option is being explored. Why won't you fix the accommodation review process and make sure that we have a proper search for alternative community use?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: We do believe in working with our partners in education, and we believe very strongly in the important role that locally elected school boards take, because they know their community best. They're best able to facilitate that local conversation.

There are measures that we need to put in place, and our focus is on ensuring that we spend dollars on students and not on heating empty buildings. I know the NDP has knowledge of this, because when they were in power, 150 schools in this province closed. These are very difficult conversations. We look to the leadership of our school boards, and we will be there, at the Ministry of Education, to facilitate the bringing together of community partners so that we can spend our education dollars on our students and not on empty buildings.

FRUIT GROWERS

Mr. Kim Craiton: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, in my riding of Niagara many of my constituents proudly grow apples and tender fruit, such as peaches, nectarines, cherries, pears and plums. As you know, there have been widespread reports over the past few weeks about damage to apple and tender fruit crops due to the warm weather we experienced in March, which caused the fruit trees to come out of dormancy, followed by a cold snap in April that caused frost damage to the budding fruit.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you please inform the House and the people of the Ontario the effects of the weather on the fruit crop in Ontario?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Thanks very much to the member from Niagara Falls. I certainly recognize the serious impact the recent cold snap has had on the tender fruit and apple producers in Ontario. In fact, just last week I had the opportunity to tour Mountainview Orchards, an apple farm of Richard and Peter Feenstra, and to view first-hand the damage done there. Our staff from OMAFRA and Agricorp, of course, have been on the ground talking to farmers about this and working with the apple growers and the Ontario tender fruit processors. We understand all too well over here just how important this loss is to farmers, and not just in economic terms.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kim Craiton: Thanks, Minister. I know the apple and tender fruit producers, who are my constituents, are glad to know the industry is important to our government.

As you know, Minister, Ontario accounts for 40% of all the apples grown in Canada. Ontario apple crops have an annual farm gate of \$63 million. It's important to note that Ontario's tender fruit crops have an annual farm gate of \$40 million. The cold snap that happened a few weeks ago has seriously impacted fruits for this year and will for a few more weeks, before we know the true extent of the loss.

Mr. Speaker, again, through you to the minister: Can you outline your ministry and what it's doing to assist people and the tender fruit farmers at this time?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Speaker, my ministry and Agricorp have been on the ground for the last several weeks working with those potentially impacted, and it's our plan to continue to work with the apple growers and the tender fruit growers to assess the damage and to respond.

I'm also pleased to report that last Thursday I had the opportunity to speak with Minister Corbeil from the province of Quebec as well as federal Minister Ritz with respect to the suite of potential programs to assist tender fruit growers, and they will stand with Ontario and we with our tender fruit and apple growers, as we move forward to assess the damage and look at how best to respond.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. As the Premier knows, the government is entertaining a proposal by wpd Canada to build wind turbines as tall as 500 feet in close proximity to the Collingwood Regional Airport. The Chair of the airport board, Mr. Charlie Tatham, called the proposal "asinine, unjustified, and dangerous." In a letter to the company, Mr. Tatham told the proponents "the most damning thing of all is that your proposed placement of wind turbine obstacles beside the airport will inevitably lead to damages and losses and could cause injury and death."

Why is the government even entertaining a project that would compromise safety at the Collingwood Regional Airport?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to remind the member that, if we quote things, that there are ways in which that can happen—and I just offer everyone a caution: If you read a quote, you still can't use unparliamentary language. Okay?

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member will know that the renewable energy approach is one that's very extensive, that every application goes through a very long and extensive examination and that, obviously, questions of public safety, such as those involved with airports or other structures, are very much considered.

1130

Actually, airport safety is a federal jurisdiction matter in most cases, and those regulations and rules would take precedence in virtually every circumstance. My friend

may be getting far ahead of the approvals process for a particular contract, but just to repeat, the approvals process is very long and extensive. It looks at public safety issues, structure issues, environmental and other issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Minister, that's a rather out-of-touch response. The problem is, there are no rules about windmills in proximity to airports because no one ever thought someone or any government would be stupid enough as to put 500-foot-tall windmills on flight paths leading to regional airports.

Mr. Speaker, municipal councils in Collingwood, Clearview and Wasaga Beach have all passed resolutions echoing the concerns that the board itself has expressed.

In another letter to wpd Canada, Mr. Tatham continues to plead for common sense to prevail. He wrote: "And so we remain with our assertion ... that there is absolutely no reason whatsoever to place these startlingly tall and potentially dangerous structures adjacent to a busy general aviation airport, other than you"—the company—"have apparently obtained willing property owners. How sad, and so completely unnecessary."

Again, Mr. Speaker, when will the government start paying attention to the warnings from the experts who sit on the board of the Collingwood Regional Airport?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I think really my friend opposite would know that there are always rules and regulations relating to aircraft safety that must be complied with. There have long been and there still are, and the federal government has responsibility over aviation.

With respect to the particular issue that is raised, I understand that there may be litigation pending surrounding it. My friend would know better than to ask a member of the government or this House to start commenting on matters that are either before the courts or involved in litigation. That wouldn't be the appropriate way to resolve issues.

The renewable energy approval process is very extensive. We've streamlined the decision-making process, but we've done so in a way that enhances safety, adds to environmental protection and just gets to decisions faster.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: The Ontario flag is now flying at half-mast in northeastern Ontario communities. It's a sombre ritual—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question to who, please?

Mr. John Vanthof: To the Premier. I'm sorry.

It's a sombre ritual that's usually reserved for a death or a severe tragedy. In this case, the death is of passenger and rail transportation service in northeastern Ontario, and the tragedy will be even more trucks on our single-lane highways and the response of what's seemingly an uncaring government.

According to Al McDonald, the mayor of North Bay, "The fact that the Premier will not even acknowledge the

mayors' concerns regarding ONTC is the straw that broke the camel's back." Premier, my question is simple: Why do you refuse to even acknowledge the concerns of northern municipalities?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The fact of the matter is that we had a very, very good meeting on April 19, and the mayors gave us their points of view. The reality is, we cannot sustain the ONTC in its present format, and so we have chosen to divest the ONTC. I told the mayors that I'd be more than happy to discuss parameters with regard to the ONTC. In fact, later on this week, Infrastructure Ontario, our agent for divestment, will be informing FONOM with regard to the process. The reality is, we are moving forward with divestment. I've told the mayors on an ongoing basis that we will meet with the mayors and that we will listen to the mayors when it comes to ideas with regard to divestment. The reality is, the decision to divest has been made.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Premier: Tough decisions are best made when all facts are on the table, like the fact that all public transportation in the province is subsidized, not just the ONTC, and that you include all the impacted groups in those decisions, like the mayors and the customers of ONTC, in meaningful discussions about the future of our region. "Meaningful discussions" is not having MTO striking another committee to look at northern transportation after you announce the closure of ONTC.

Once again to the Premier: Will you commit to meet with the northern mayors right now to discuss issues that are crucial to the north?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: At the April 19 meeting with the mayors, we committed to ensuring that we have an ongoing dialogue. They can bring their ideas forward with regard to divestment.

But you know, Speaker, I find it pretty rich. The third party is now the defender of the ONTC, but when they had the opportunity to make a difference, the member from Timmins–James Bay sat on his hands, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane sat on his hands, the member from Nickel Belt sat on her hands, the member from Algoma–Manitoulin sat on his hands. The reality is, when they had the opportunity to stand up for the ONTC, they chose instead to support the horse racing industry.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, this question is for the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order. The member from Essex come to order.

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker.

This question is for the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. People all over southern Ontario are

talking about the 2015 Pan and Parapan Am Games in Ontario. The games will attract thousands of tourists, help promote physical activity and focus international attention on all that Ontario has to offer. It will also be a huge economic driver, stimulating millions of dollars of investment in much-needed sporting facilities and improved transportation infrastructure. Ontario communities will also gain thousands of new jobs.

Minister, last week you announced a number of games venues. Would you update the House on the status of the Pan Am Games venues?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member for Mississauga–Streetsville for the question. I was indeed very pleased to announce last week in partnership with Toronto 2015 and the federal government that the majority of the Pan and Parapan Am Game venues have been finalized and are proceeding on schedule.

These will truly be the people's games. Events will be hosted in communities across the Golden Horseshoe, including Toronto, Scarborough, Etobicoke, Markham, Mississauga, Hamilton, Caledon, Orangeville, Welland, Minden, St. Catharines, and negotiations are well under way with the town of Milton for the construction of an all-seasons, four-seasons velodrome.

The people's games will be accessible and affordable, benefiting communities throughout the greater Golden Horseshoe and attracting visitors from around the world.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener–Conestoga on a point of order.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome a good friend of mine on his inaugural visit to the Legislature today, Mr. Bill Maginas in the members' gallery. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank you again for allowing the youth in care to use your gallery and to welcome them into the House this morning and also to welcome the youth in care who are not able to be in the House with us this morning but are watching live on TV and through the computer systems. It's quite important to them today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank the member for stealing my thunder, because I was going to introduce in the Speaker's gallery and on both sides of our visitors' galleries the guests of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, the young people who have been responsible for the Youth Leaving Care hearings and the report which they will be releasing later today.

We welcome our guests and thank them for their hard work for us.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Some of these individuals weren't able to join us this morning. I'd like to welcome Irwin Elman, who is in the gallery, Ontario's Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, as well as many members of the Youth Leaving Care team. They are a group of remarkable individuals who have worked extraordinarily hard over the last year to produce My Real Life Book, which is a report to improve outcomes for children and youth living in care. I'd like to welcome them all to the Legislature this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests, for sure. Thank you.

Introductions?

Hon. John Milloy: We have a large delegation here in the gallery from Kitchener Centre. I'd like members to help me welcome Bill Arends, Charlie Love, Doug Cakebread, Wanda Cakebread, Jane Arnold, Ben Jackson, Pinghu Chen, Lin He, Roel Vis, Wayne Morris, Pauline Morris, Andy McAuliffe, Norma McAuliffe, Kevin Bedford, Oleg Feldgajer, David Schenk, Carolyn Longman, Lauris DaCosta, Sue Morgan, Robin Le Lopez-Nguyen, Kennedy Lopez-Nguyen, Dan Pink, Mary Zilney, Carolyn Albrecht, Corrine Ament, Phil Charbonneau, Andres Fuentes Martinez, Christina Romualdo, Andrew Hilliard, Alyssa Clelland, Ryan Clelland, Dawn Clelland, Nayda Cakebread Mateus, Joyce Palubiski, Ed Simon, Claudine Dey, Shirley Hynman—and that's it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think you've just introduced everybody in the House. I appreciate that from the government House leader. Thank you.

Introduction of guests?

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry for being a bit late here. I'm welcoming a grade 10 civics class from Bowmanville High School and their teachers Debbie Williams and Kevin Goss. Welcome to Queen's Park. They'll be here shortly.

Miss Monique Taylor: I again just want to reiterate what—Minister Hoskins has introduced all the youth in care who are able to be here with us in the House today, but I also want to extend that once again to the youth in care who are not able to be here with us at Queen's Park and are watching us at home today by however means.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise today to congratulate two outstanding volunteers, both from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, for their selfless contribution to their communities and positive inspiration as role models.

I would first like to recognize Janette Hammell, who is just one of six recipients of the 2012 Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers. The honour is awarded to volunteers

between the ages of 15 and 24 for contributing significant amounts of time and effort to their community. Janette Hammell coordinated a local, volunteer-run soccer league which currently has around 300 participants of all ages, and did that almost single-handedly. This exceptional young woman also went the extra mile as an agricultural ambassador for Bruce county. Not only did she reach out to fellow community members, but in particular, children who didn't have the opportunity to learn about agriculture on a regular basis. In her role as ambassador, she worked hard to promote agricultural awareness, safety and sustainability to over 120 primary students.

Next, I would like to acknowledge the success of the South Grey Bruce Youth Literacy Council. They received the 2012 June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for exceptional work in teaching youth literacy skills through a hands-on experience. Their mentorship program aims to encourage a partnership effort between a tutor and a learner to work to improve grades.

I'd like the House to join me in congratulating both Janette Hammell and the South Grey Bruce Youth Literacy Council for their dedication to the learning and futures of our youth citizens. It was my privilege to attend both awards ceremonies and congratulate these constituents in person for their outstanding achievements. Thank you on behalf of the people of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Ms. Cindy Forster: The District School Board of Niagara is deciding the fate of two high schools and an elementary school in my riding, and the whole process in itself is questionable. Many are feeling the closures are a done deal regardless of what input has been provided at the local level through the accommodation review committee.

Trustees will make the final decision on the future of Crowland Central school in Cooks Mills, Thorold Secondary high school and West Park Secondary School in St. Catharines next month. It has pitted schools against each other, when each individual site and its impact on the local area is what should be addressed.

Protests over school closures were held across the province over the weekend, including in Niagara. They want the Premier to know that they're not happy with the province and its total lack of concern over these closures and leaving it in the hands of trustees. Presentations are continuing by local school groups at the board level fighting for these important schools for their community. Each of these areas will be gutted if the schools close in the name of cost savings.

Speaker, having students spend their lives on buses as their local school closes is simply not viable. The cost of busing for the District School Board of Niagara is over \$17 million a year. The McGuinty government shares a lot of the blame for the funding formula for schools that

it promised to review. It has not changed since 1997, when introduced by the Harris government, and the review was promised in 2007.

Minister, intervene and put a moratorium on these closures until the process used for closing them is fixed.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Our government is taking strong action for a serious time. The single most important thing we can do right now to grow the economy and create jobs is to balance the budget.

A vibrant economy will allow us to protect the gains we've made and the services that matter most to Ontario families, like health care and education.

Our plan to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18 is working, and our province's economy is making steady progress. In April, Ontario continued to lead Canada in job creation, accounting for more than half of the full-time jobs created across the country.

The global and US economies may not be out of the woods just yet, and there's still more work to do. That's why we're creating a Jobs and Prosperity Council to advise the government on job creation and productivity. The council will include leaders from business, labour, academia, government, and non-governmental associations. It will be led by Mr. Gordon Nixon, who's the president and CEO of the Royal Bank of Canada. They will generate ideas to boost Ontario's long-term productivity and competitiveness so that we can encourage homegrown success stories and attract more foreign investment.

While the official opposition are more interested in playing politics, only the McGuinty government has a plan to create good jobs for Ontario families.

BILL MOODY

Mr. Ted Arnott: On May 5, one of my best friends, and perhaps the greatest community builder I've ever known, passed away.

Bill Moody dedicated his life to making his community a stronger, better and more caring place. A teacher by profession, he served as a town councillor in Mount Forest.

He was also Canada's representative on the board of directors of Lions International, where he represented all the Lions clubs in our country. He helped to start and organize countless Lions clubs throughout North America.

Bill was instrumental in the establishment of the Lions Foundation of Canada's dog guides centre in Oakville. This centre has trained more than 1,700 dog guides for blind, deaf and other special-needs men, women and children.

He was also the founding executive director of Lions Quest Canada, an organization which has developed drug prevention, violence prevention and anger management programming for students.

Bill also served the larger community of Ontario with distinction as the chair of the Ontario Film Review Board, which has the important responsibility of classifying films to give parents the information they need to decide which movies their kids shouldn't see.

I tell my own sons that when they grow up, "You have three big obligations in order to have a full life. You have your family life, your professional life and your community life. You can't have a full life without all three."

Bill Moody's life taught me that. Through his tireless work, he has left a lasting legacy and made Ontario a better place.

I know that I speak for all members when I offer our condolences to Bill's wife, Kaye, and the rest of the Moody family.

NURSES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Today, I want to talk about a wonderful experience that I had last week, hosted by the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario at Take Your MPP to Work Day. Nurses from across the province invited MPPs from all political parties to experience a day in their working life.

For myself, I was at the University Hospital in London, where I met Janet Hunt, chapter president for RNAO Middlesex-Elgin. Janet asked us to think about the experiences we were about to have in terms of our critical responsibilities. She suggested that each of us use this as an opportunity to engage beyond the experience of job shadowing and make lasting connections into their world through our own work experiences. I thought that this was an innovative approach and was eager to learn more. Politicians like myself could learn about the multi-faceted roles that nurses have in our communities, see how nurses use their knowledge and skills to better the health of the population, and have an opportunity to observe RNs interact with patients.

I was assigned to and had the pleasure of being accompanied by Jeanette Mills, the RN coordinator. We were on the floor for infectious control, and Jeanette described the many initiatives that her floor has taken to implement and reduce the spread of infections to patients, nurses and visitors.

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CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: I'm proud today to stand for the over 8,000 children and youth currently living in care across the province and for the thousands of youth who grew up in care before them.

Earlier today, the Youth Leaving Care hearings team, a group made up of both youth in and from care, courageously submitted a very humbling report titled My Real Life Book to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I encourage all of my colleagues in this House to read it.

The purpose of this report is to improve the experiences and lives of youth living in care. For years, these youth felt they weren't being listened to. These hearings provided a venue for them to share with us their feelings, their hopes and their aspirations. We must continue to listen. They must be included in the decision-making process when deciding how to best enhance the system in this province.

I'm very proud to table in this House later today a private member's bill to proclaim May 14 as Children and Youth in Care Day in the province of Ontario. This bill, if passed, will raise awareness, reduce stigma and recognize children and youth in care.

I want to congratulate the Youth Leaving Care hearings team on their report, and I hope that all of my colleagues on both sides of this House will join me in supporting this very important bill later this afternoon.

Again, to everyone who was here earlier today for the presentation, thank you for the wonderful presentation and thank you for putting forward this report.

KIDS' FISHING DAY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'd like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to all the groups and volunteers who worked so hard for our 12th Annual Kids' Fishing Day at Heber Down Conservation Area last Saturday.

The beautiful, sunny weather was enjoyed by all, and many fish were caught. A great crowd of parents and kids alike came out to take part in the fun-filled day of fishing and outdoor activities. It was a no-cost event, and the children were able to take part in many activities, including conservation, wetland and trapping displays, lure making, face painting and fish identification.

Numerous groups and organizations gave their time and effort for this special day, and I'd like to take the time to thank them for all of their help: the Boys and Girls Club of Durham region; Calvary Baptist Church; Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority; Ducks Unlimited; Durham Regional Police Service; Kids, Cops and Canadian Tire; Lindsay Trappers Council; Ministry of Natural Resources, Aurora district; Muskies Canada; Ontario Deer Hound Association; Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Zone E; Ontario Sporting Dog Association; Optimist Club of Oshawa; Oshawa Community Health; Pickering Rod and Gun Club; Simcoe Hall Settlement House; South Central Ontario Fish and Wildlife Association; Toronto Sportsmen's Show; Valu-Mart, Lindsay; W.T. Hawkins; Westmount Kiwanis; and my two sons, Josh and Garrett, along with Max and Simon Lysyk, who made more than 1,500 snow cones for the kids.

There is an old adage that says, "Fish bite best before the storm," and certainly this was the case on Saturday, and numerous rainbow trout were caught by the young anglers. The wonderful weather enhanced the spirits of the kids who enjoy the great outdoors.

Thanks again to everyone who worked tirelessly and made this day a huge success for the children of our community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You had an extra four seconds; you could have added a couple of more volunteers.

DRIVEN TO QUIT CHALLENGE

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I rise today to congratulate the winners of the 2012 Driven to Quit Challenge. The Driven to Quit Challenge is a fantastic initiative hosted annually by the Canadian Cancer Society to encourage tobacco users in Ontario to quit smoking and build awareness of the supports and resources available to help them be successful.

The Canadian Cancer Society's partnership with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and its seven tobacco control area networks is now in its seventh year. This year they achieved the highest number of participants yet, with over 37,000 Ontarians who registered to make an attempt to quit smoking, and 40% of participants have reached out to the smokers' helpline for support.

Please join me in congratulating this year's winners and commend them for kicking the habit. Eric Huynh, Paul DeSerres, Dallas Fitzgerald, Natalie Doussept, Melissa Wice, John Vanderwerf and Alyssa Beach-Wallis were the regional prize winners, taking home \$2,000 in cash. Benjamin O'Leary and Ken Daub were the vacation prize winners, receiving a \$5,000 vacation from the CAA; and Amy Ladouceur of Hamilton took home the grand prize, a 2012 Ford Edge.

Congratulations to all the winners and to the Canadian Cancer Society for bringing us ever closer to our goal of becoming a smoke-free Ontario.

BREAST CANCER

Mr. John Yakabuski: Tonight, the Tampa Bay Rays are in town to face the Toronto Blue Jays. That's not particularly noteworthy. What is noteworthy is that tonight the Blue Jays, as all 30 major league teams have done, will be going to bat in the fight against breast cancer.

A representative was chosen for each major league team. The Blue Jays representative happens to be my sister-in-law Vicky Yakabuski, the wife of my brother Lawrie. While the recognition was officially part of Mother's Day, the Blue Jays ceremony had to be scheduled for tonight, their next home date. Tonight Vicky will take part in pre-game activities and be honoured during an on-field ceremony.

Vicky was chosen to represent the Blue Jays because of her own face-to-face battle with breast cancer. She was diagnosed with breast cancer in September 2008 and underwent surgery and chemotherapy as part of her treatment. The following year, she helped organize a separate Run for the Cure in York region. She did more. She

entered a team, aptly named Team Victorious, that was the largest fundraising team in the region and was honoured by the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation. For Vicky, it wasn't enough to just beat cancer personally; she has accepted the challenge of fighting it on behalf of others.

Breast cancer is a life-altering experience for the victim as well as their family. I want to salute Vicky, Lawrie and their two girls, Julia and Jenna, for the courage they have shown throughout and the loving support they have given one another. Tonight we can show our support for all of those who have survived or are currently battling breast cancer by attending the game, supporting the cause and committing ourselves to finding a cure. Until then, we will continue to fight back.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE

DAY ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE JOUR DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES PRIS EN CHARGE

Mrs. Piruzza moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 90, An Act to proclaim Children and Youth in Care Day / Projet de loi 90, Loi proclamant le Jour des enfants et des jeunes pris en charge.

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 member for a short statement.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, Speaker—a very short statement. By proclaiming May 14 each year as Children and Youth in Care Day, the province of Ontario recognizes the enormous contributions that current and former crown and society wards make to the province, as well as the strength, bravery and resilience shown by these children and youth in the face of adversity. Children and Youth in Care Day is an opportunity to raise awareness about children and youth under care of the province and to recommit to supporting them and helping them reach their full potential.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

YOUTH SERVICES

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I want to say that earlier today I was pleased to accept the report My Real Life Book from the Youth Leaving Care team, a courageous and talented group of young people committing to improving outcomes for youth in care when they leave the child welfare system. I want to thank these youth as

well as the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Irwin Elman, for their hard work over—well, quite frankly, the past year.

One of my first official duties and privileges as Minister of Children and Youth Services was to attend last fall's hearings at Queen's Park organized by this team of young people with the support of the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. Attending these hearings gave me a deep appreciation for the challenges youth in care face, both while receiving child welfare services and when they age out of care. We heard it loud and clear throughout these hearings: Youth in care feel left out of the decisions that affect them. They feel left out of their own lives. They need a stronger voice.

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The report that these talented youth have produced is without precedent. It is groundbreaking and it is brave. It draws from the real-life experiences of youth previously and currently in the care of children's aid societies, experiences that in many cases have been extraordinarily difficult. The report is evidence of just how valuable it is to hear from youth who have lived these experiences about what it's going to take to improve our system and make lasting change.

Mr. Speaker, we owe these kids our sustained attention, yes. But most of all, we owe them our respect, we owe them action, and that is what we are doing today.

A short time ago, when I received their report, I was proud to announce that we were taking action on the number one recommendation emerging from this report. I am directing my ministry to bring together a working group made up of youth with experience living in care, along with partners from across the province, to determine how best to ensure a stronger voice for the youth themselves, at both the government and the children's aid society levels, and to create an action plan to improve the outcomes for children and youth in care.

Mr. Speaker, we need these youth to contribute their experiences to the decision-making process. They have demonstrated, through this report, the value of their unique expertise and their powerful insights into the experience of living in care. These youth have proven that they are powerful advocates for the well-being of their fellow children and youth in care. They have been a powerful voice for the vulnerable.

I'm also pleased to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that action is being taken on another recommendation brought forward by these youth in their report. My colleague the member from Windsor West, to my right, has just introduced—we just heard a private member's bill to designate May 14 of each year as Children and Youth in Care Day.

We know there is much, much more work still to do. My ministry will carefully review all of the report's recommendations to determine how we can further strengthen the child welfare system together.

I'd like to thank the Youth Leaving Care team for their hard work and their courage in making their voices heard. Your government shares your commitment and your aspirations. Together, we will build on the progress

we have made to further help young people in care successfully transition to adulthood.

Mr. Speaker, we know how important stability is to children and youth who have experienced upheaval in their lives, and it's why recent changes were made to enable crown wards whose care ended when they were 16 or 17 to return to their CAS and receive the financial and other supports they need until age 21.

We also know that a good education and the right supports are key to success down the road, and it's why we provide tuition grants, crown ward education championship teams and we exempt Extended Care and Maintenance financial support from OSAP calculations. Also, current and former youth in care can complete post-secondary or vocational training.

I'm proud of the progress that we've made and the supports that we've enhanced, but as I said, there is much, much more work ahead of us. With the support of partners like the Youth Leaving Care team and the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, we can and we will do even more to help children and youth in Ontario reach their full potential.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, and a particular thank you to the youth in care who have contributed so much to this conversation over the last several months.

I am honoured to rise in the Legislature today on behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, and speak to the release of this report.

These two eye-opening days were enabled by Irwin Elman, Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. He is certainly to be commended for his role, but he would also acknowledge that the greater honour must go to the young people who organized this event. It is their vision and energy that saw it through to this moment.

The hearings have opened up an invaluable process that has yet to reach a conclusion. These young people hold on to their belief that everything will turn out all right in the end. In moments of shared vulnerability, these young people show profound optimism, uncommon strength and ambition.

As these hearings proved and this report reinforces, children and youth can't just help us make better decisions, but they can often make better decisions than we can. We must become better listeners. Certainly from a front-line perspective, their experience is startlingly clear. Read this report, talk to them, as I have, and you will learn of the painful limitations of the government status quo; and worse, the corrosive effects of a system that often shuffles youth through homes and schools so frequently they're barely able to know which way is up, let alone to put down the roots needed for emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual growth.

At the time of the Youth Leaving Care hearings, the province of Ontario was the legal guardian of 8,300 young people living in foster homes, group homes, transitional housing or other settings. About 40 individuals

and groups made presentations at the hearings. Their take on the street-level impact of public policy was a powerful eye-opener.

Studies have shown, and the young people tell us, that when crown wards transition out of care, they don't do as well as other young adults. They're less likely to finish high school, pursue post-secondary education or even earn a living wage. They're more likely to spiral into poverty, homelessness, mental health issues, challenges and entanglement in the justice system.

Entitled *My Real Life Book*, this document is both a report on the state of the system—of this government's level of care, occasionally its lack of care—and a road map of potential solutions, solutions that would make a world of difference in the lives of those who are, in effect, children of the state. It reflects the life experiences and real-world recommendations of youth in care.

These hearings were a phenomenal event. They were an unprecedented undertaking and an achievement in which all of those involved should take great pride. In my discussions with them, I sensed that the experience had already transformed them in ways that they hadn't expected, and those conversations affected me in ways I hadn't expected. We must use these insights to find a better way forward.

As I've said before, we can make real progress by seeing clearly, thinking creatively and asking critical questions rather than believing that funding alone is a solution. We have a moral obligation to youth in care to make sure that they get the best possible start, despite what can sometimes be the worst possible circumstances. In the words of one courageous young woman, "I would give anything for one month when I didn't have to be in survival mode every second of every day."

As a mother of five wonderful children who inspire me daily, I get my sense of self-worth when I look into their eyes, and I understand the gravity of that relationship. While government can never take the place of a parent, it aspires to do so for youth in care. I know in my heart that we can do better, and as these hearings and these reports have made clear, we must do better.

Miss Monique Taylor: Today I'm honoured to be able to stand and speak to 8,300 youth in our province. And they're not just any youth; they're crown wards and children who have found themselves in our child welfare system through no fault of their own. Some have faced trauma, death of family members, abuse of all types. They are known as our youth in care.

When I was first elected and was spending the very first of my days as an MPP, I was invited to a set of hearings being held here at Queen's Park. They were the Youth in Care hearings. I was not exactly sure what I was attending, but all the same, I went and sat in to listen. Wow, it was a true eye-opener of what I was to face as the new critic for children and youth services. What I heard was children and some young adults telling the stories of what had been happening in their lives as children in care. With the assistance of the child advocate's office, these young people were able to come

together and share what life had dealt them and what they felt needed to change to make life better.

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The hearings were two days of life stories, both good and bad; unfortunately, more bad than good. There were those who just spoke of their lives, while others recited poetry, sang songs that they had created, danced and performed theatre, all reflecting the emotions that they had not been able to otherwise express.

I cried and I smiled through tears. It was emotional for all adults in the room to hear how the system was failing.

Some of these kids, some who are now adults, had been through 30 homes while others had found a forever home in the first placement. But the most telling story overall was that this system was broken and had let many of them down.

The main purpose of the hearings began with the Extended Care and Maintenance program. Currently, the legislation states that at the age of 18, they are no longer a crown ward or under the supervision of this province. They're on their own. They're able to apply for ECM to assist with their financial needs until the age of 21.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as you and I and most of the people in this room know, at age 21, most children are not leaving home. Some are still in school. They do not have jobs and are not mentally ready to face the world on their own. In actuality, most people are not leaving home until their late 20s.

Kids in care are no different. They are not ready to leave at 21. They still need supports to help them manage. Raising the age of Extended Care and Maintenance to 25 would give them a chance to finish school, to better prepare to take on life's challenges as an adult.

Remember, Mr. Speaker, that the province of Ontario is the only parent to most of these youth. So when they are cut loose, it's forever. There's no one to call when the car breaks down, when they run out of money and they can't pay the rent, when they just need some guidance or advice. Quite simply, there's no one else in a lot of these kids' lives.

Today, the full report from the youth hearings has been handed over to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, as well as to both the member from Burlington and myself as the critics for children and youth services.

The report is specific in what it asks for. If I go through all of them, I know I'm going to run out of time, but the number one recommended action is for the fundamental change to be developed by November of this year, and the report kindly helps meet that target by offering an interim deadline, that is, within 60 days of today, for the naming of a working group to create the action plan.

I was really pleased to hear that the minister committed to fulfilling that recommendation, and I look forward to working in whatever way I can to help us get there.

The report also called for the declaration of Children and Youth in Care Day, and I'm pleased again that a

private member's bill is being brought forward to the Legislature. I am more than willing to support that.

I want to commend and congratulate all the youth involved in the creation of My Real Life Book, led by the Youth Leaving Care team of Shanna, Rasheeda, Wendy and Oneil. They have painted a picture that cannot be ignored. They are expecting us, as adults in their lives, to make sure we get it right. They're counting on us, Mr. Speaker, and together we need to make sure that their voices are not only heard but acted on, and we cannot let them down.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to thank all the members for their comments.

I would also like to personally welcome the Minister of Transportation to the House. Thank you for being here.

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd also like to recognize the grade 10 students from Bowmanville High School. Welcome.

The petition I'm presenting is from my riding of Durham, and it's from Eva and Harri Sagur, who have a bed and breakfast in my riding. The petition reads as following:

"Whereas under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario regulation 319/08, public health inspectors are required to undertake risk assessments of small drinking water systems;

"Whereas many of these small drinking water systems are located in homes operating bed and breakfasts in rural Ontario;

"Whereas private homes that are the sites of bed and breakfasts already have potable drinking water used by the homeowners and their families every day;

"Whereas many of these bed and breakfasts have established the quality of their drinking water through years of regular testing;

"Whereas these home-based businesses are facing high costs to comply with the new requirements of regulation 319/08;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health amend Ontario regulation 319/08 to give the testing track record of a small drinking water system greater weight in the risk assessment process;

"Furthermore we, the undersigned, ask that bed and breakfasts operated within a private home with a drinking water supply meeting all the requirements of a private home not be subject to regulation 319/08."

I'm pleased to sign and support it, and present it to page William.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas subsection 6(2)8 of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act identifies dental hygienists as persons deemed to be qualified to operate an X-ray machine; and

“Whereas dental hygienists in independent practice need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

“We, the dental hygienists in independent practice, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by the member from Richmond Hill that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.”

I fully support these petitions, Mr. Speaker, sign them and pass them on to page Carley.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: This petition reads:

“Whereas the report from Ontario’s Auditor General on the province’s air ambulance service, Ornge, found a web of questionable financial deals where tens of millions of taxpayers’ dollars have been wasted and public safety compromised; and

“Whereas Ornge officials created a ‘mini-conglomerate’ of private entities that enriched former senior officers and left taxpayers on the hook for \$300 million in debt; and

“Whereas government funding for Ornge climbed 20% to \$700 million, while the number of patients it airlifted actually declined; and

“Whereas a subsidiary of Ornge bought the head office building in Mississauga for just over \$15 million and then leased it back to Ornge at a rate 40% higher than fair market rent; and

“Whereas the Liberal Minister of Health completely failed in her duty to provide proper oversight of Ornge; and

“Whereas the latest scandal follows the eHealth boondoggle where over \$2 billion in health dollars were wasted; and

“Whereas current committees of the Legislature have no ability to subpoena witnesses;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The government of Ontario immediately appoint a special all-party select committee to investigate the scandals surrounding Ornge.”

I affix my signature in support.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’ai cette pétition qui me vient de partout en Ontario.

« Attendu que la mission du commissaire aux services en français est de veiller à ce que la population reçoive en français des services de qualité du gouvernement de l’Ontario et de surveiller l’application de la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que le commissaire a le mandat de mener des enquêtes indépendantes selon la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que contrairement au vérificateur général, à l’ombudsman, au commissaire à l’environnement et au commissaire à l’intégrité qui, eux, relèvent de l’Assemblée législative, le commissaire aux services en français relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario de changer les pouvoirs du commissaire aux services en français afin qu’il relève directement de l’Assemblée législative. »

Je suis en accord. Je vais y apposer ma signature et je demande à Sabrina de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

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HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim McDonell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

“Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario’s horse racing and breeding industry;

“Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

“Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.1 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

“Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Call on the government of Ontario to protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect

the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program.”

I agree with this, and I will be signing it.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Andrew to bring it to the Clerk.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services’ Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

“Whereas the community of Markdale rallied to raise \$13 million on the promise they would get a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner.”

I support this petition, will affix my name and send it with page Safa to the desk.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Val Caron and Hanmer, in my riding.

“Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario,” including Nickel Belt;

“Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario’s horse racing and breeding industry;

“Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

“Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.1 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in” Ontario;

“Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion” and 60,000 jobs;

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ... to protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Talin to bring it to the Clerk.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. John O’Toole: I have another petition today from my riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

“Whereas the provincial government’s announcement regarding the eastward extension of Highway 407 indicates construction will end at Oshawa;

“Whereas ending the highway at Oshawa will mean undue traffic on smaller roads leading to Highway 407, while delaying the benefits of a completed Highway 407 for commuters, businesses, tourism, public transit and all stakeholders;

“Whereas the environmental assessment has not considered impacts of a partial completion of the highway; and

“Whereas the completion of the eastern extension of Highway 407 to Highway 35/115 is supported by citizens, businesses, communities and elected representatives;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the eastward extension of Highway 407 to Highway 35/115 in a single stage, as promised by the Dalton McGuinty government” several times “in previous infrastructure announcements. We request that Premier McGuinty respond with a commitment for the completion of Highway 407” on time, as specified initially.

I’m pleased to sign and support this, and present it to Gillian.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sudbury.

“Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service...; and

“Whereas” since “October 2009, insured PET scans” are “performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with” the Sudbury Regional Hospital, now named Health Sciences North, “its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through” Health Sciences North, “thereby serving and providing equitable access to the” residents “of northeastern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Dia to bring it to the Clerk.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim McDonell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas industrial wind turbine developments have raised concerns among citizens over health, safety and property values; and

“Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approvals;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ministry of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments; and

“That the Minister of the Environment conduct a thorough scientific study on the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines.”

I agree with this petition and will be signing it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONG ACTION FOR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2012

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 10, 2012, on the motion for second 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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When this government order was last called, we heard from the member for Durham. Now we're going to move to questions and comments with respect to the presentation from the member for Durham.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I had an opportunity, although I was not in the House—I was watching part of his speech on the television in my office when the member spoke. As always, he spoke eloquently and well about the pitfalls of Bill 55. But then he, to the surprise of no one—and I'm not doing this; I'm just commenting about it—called for an end to the debate and the end of the House for the day. He said something in there that I think was poignant as well. It was because he was frustrated, and I think that, because he feels that voices from the opposition are not being listened to, he felt compelled to say that and to try to end the debate and the House sitting for the day.

What he had to say was that he found it frustrating. He found that the government wasn't listening and that the government wasn't paying attention to what he had to say. But I want to assure him, for those of us who were watching on the television, for those of us who were here in the House—we listened intently to what he had to say, because he does bring a very unique style and a very unique talent, especially around economic issues, to what is said each and every day in this House.

I don't want the member to be frustrated; I don't want the member to think that his only avenue is the actions which precipitate the ringing of the bells, because we would, in this House, I think, very much like to hear more of what he has to say, particularly on economic issues; and I do believe, although I am not always in total agreement with the positions taken by those in the official opposition, that they have much to say around these issues and other issues, and that the people of Ontario who sent all of us here need to have our voices heard, but more importantly, they need to have them listened to.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to rise today to respond to the speech from the member. I'm not quite sure, after three or four days, exactly what was said and whether there was any merit in it or not, but I'll take this member's message that there was.

I'd like to say what this government has done to improve the business competitiveness of Ontario. Our tax plan for jobs and growth has positioned Ontario as one of the most attractive locations in the industrial world for new business investment. Forbes magazine ranked Canada as the best country for business, crediting Ontario's reformed tax structure as one of the key factors. KPMG ranked Toronto as the second-cheapest major city in North America in which to do business.

Since 2009, Ontario has moved from having one of the highest provincial corporate income tax rates to the fourth lowest in Canada. The general corporate tax rate has fallen from 14% to 11.5% and will continue to fall to 10% once the budget is balanced in 2017-18. The corporate income tax rate for manufacturing, processing, mining, logging, fishing and farming has been reduced from 12% to 10%. The small business corporate income

tax has been reduced from 5.5% to 4.5%, and the small business deduction surtax has been eliminated, as everyone knows, which extends the lower CIT rate to growing small businesses. The HST removes the embedded sales taxes, providing additional savings to businesses.

We see the results. In March and April, Ontario created 38,000 new jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I too want to add some comments with regard to the presentation of my colleague from Durham. Just before the House rose last week, he concentrated, to a great extent, on comments by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. The chamber is bringing up the fact that the government of the day has not done what it touts it has done vis-à-vis innovation. Innovation is basically the grist for the mill that is going to turn Ontario around, and not until we become more innovative are we going to find ourselves in the position that we want to be.

We heard on Friday that unemployment had risen now to 7.8% in the province of Ontario. That was particularly what my friend from Durham was predicting when he spoke on Thursday. Not that he presents himself as being a prophet, but it's pretty obvious. When people like Roger Martin, also quoted by the member from Durham—says in his report, “Ontario’s manufacturers shed 300,000 jobs. While the hemorrhaging has stopped, there is no evidence that these jobs will be coming back soon,” he’s referring to exactly the same thing.

We know, Speaker, and I said this in my own presentation a week ago, that the budget of Ontario is founded on some principles that we in the Progressive Conservative Party do not agree with, and I’m using a very muted way of putting that point across.

They’re talking about austerity and spending \$2 billion more than they did last year—hardly austerity where I come from. In terms of the job numbers, I talked about percentages, but the fact of the matter is, nearly 600,000 Ontarians at this point don’t have any jobs at all—men and women who want to work, who want to supply the bread for their family, put meals on the table and pay for the mortgage or the rent and don’t have the opportunity to do so.

It is for the government of the day to take responsibility for that. That’s what my friend from Durham said, that’s what I say and that’s what our party says.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you, Speaker. I’m pleased to stand and rise on Bill 55 and to call attention to folks watching at home today and folks in the chamber that there are some real problems in this bill.

Buried in Bill 55 are some changes that are drastically going to affect the future of this province and the country when it comes to the environment, and I want to highlight that. I think people are well aware that the federal government right now does not understand the

importance of environmental protection. They barely acknowledge that climate change even exists. But people tend to think more of the provincial government here, that they have an understanding of and appreciation for the environment, which is why it’s surprising and really upsetting to see that a lot of environmental protection is going to be gutted in Bill 55.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: That’s not true.

Mr. Jonah Schein: It is true. Look at it. It’s absolutely true.

If you look at this, we are weakening environmental regulation here. What Bill 55 does is it amends very significant laws that are administered by the Ministry of Natural Resources. The ministry is already drastically underfunded. The Environmental Commissioner has said that we barely have the resources to protect the environment as is.

In fact, this goes further. The laws that are at risk here include the Endangered Species Act, the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, the Public Lands Act, the Crown Forest Sustainability Act and the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act. All of these are being undermined.

I think what’s most troubling is to see that we’re looking at the environment not in terms of protection but mostly just about cost savings. I think it’s time Ontarians knew that we’re blessed in Ontario to have such incredible natural resources. If we don’t protect it, we have no environmental future and we have no future on this planet. But there are also economic costs to neglecting the environment.

We need to have this discussion about the environment in Bill 55 and to pull these things out so that we can have a proper debate and discuss this further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Durham for his reply.

Mr. John O’Toole: Yes, thank you very much. I’d like to thank the members from Beaches–East York, Ottawa–Orléans, Thornhill and Davenport.

It’s a good reminder, as we start the debate this afternoon, that this bill is 327 pages long. It has 69 schedules and amends over 50 pieces of legislation. This is an omnibus bill. I’d be very suspicious of it, and remain that way.

The other speakers have all commented, I think quite honestly—and I’ve tried to refer to third party commentators, and I’m going to conclude my remarks by looking at the Canadian Council of Chief Executives. This is what they have to say about it. We know that the Canadian Council of Chief Executives is none other than John Manley, present chief executive officer and a former finance minister of Canada. What he says here, in an open letter to Finance Minister Duncan, is, “The single most important thing you could do to secure the future of the province is to rally your caucus and the population of Ontario” and declare a war on the provincial debt before it’s too late.

There you have it, by an independent executive person with a great deal of insight into the economy of Canada and, you might say, Ontario, telling Dalton McGuinty and Dwight Duncan, the Premier and his finance minister, to deal with the debt. The cost of debt now is about \$10 billion-plus annually of money that doesn't go to service. The third most expensive spending in Ontario is to service the debt, and it's growing. Even Don Drummond told them that if they don't do something, the debt is going to double and the deficit is going to go to \$30 billion.

Interjection: Shameful.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is a shameful response from a government that doesn't realize that Ontario is on the precipice of a cliff.

I know that our critic Mr. Shurman has spoken frequently on this—it's alarming—and even in question period, and yet they're asleep at the switch.

Unemployment in Ontario is growing, and that's a symptom of a deeper disease.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings to announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader indicates otherwise.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we wish this debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I call for further debate. The member for Essex.

M. Taras Natyshak: Merci, monsieur le Président. Comme toujours, ça me donne un grand plaisir et c'est un honneur de me tenir debout dans cette Chambre afin d'ajouter mes commentaires à ce débat.

As always, it is an honour to be here on behalf of the residents of my riding, Essex, to add my commentaries and what I've been hearing about the budget, titled G55, the Strong Action for Ontario Act.

I guess I'll start with a little bit of a history lesson. I got here in October, as all of the brand new members did, of course. It seems like a long time ago, at this point. But our eyes were quickly opened quite widely to the nature of the operations in this place. One of the things that struck me was indicated to me by my predecessors: Things don't really happen too quickly here. That became all too apparent in the early months of the life of this House, this minority government. I will remind the viewers of TV today: We are in a minority setting, something that hasn't happened in the Ontario Legislature for quite some time. What that meant is that we all knew that there was going to have to be a tone of compromise, a tone of collegiality, where ideas were respected, and ultimately implemented, not only for the benefit of this Legislature, but because that was the will and the mandate given to this government: to take other ideas than had been previously implemented in the past eight years of their majority tenure.

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So here we are in a minority setting—new members, new ideas—and we're ready to get to work here. One of the more fundamental aspects of this Legislature is the striking of committees, one of the things that actually is necessary to allow this House to work. Ultimately, what we found was that, right from the outset, the government side was unwilling to compromise in the striking of committees, which therefore led to months and months of negotiation back and forth. I'll simply say that they finally came to their senses and struck a little bit of a balance on committees, where it was representative of the actual distribution of seats in the House, where the government side no longer had the majority in committees, which meant that those ideas could then pass through this House in first and second reading, get amended if need be and come back as bills that were well nuanced and worked out.

One of the things that happened during those debates was that we missed an opportunity, maybe by design, to discuss the nature of the future of this province, and no more important than the nature of the budget, which we believe not only is an exercise in austerity—my colleagues to the right of me may disagree, but New Democrats certainly see it as something that isn't moving us forward in a progressive way. But we also believe that the nature of the budget was preordained by Don Drummond, who was their expert financial analyst, their expert fiscal guru, from the Toronto Dominion Bank, who laid out a series of reforms that addressed costs, the costs and the nature of running the operations here in the province. In a business-like fashion, he strategically went through the operations, identified measures where he thought—solely him—that the government could do a better job, potentially, or could cut costs.

We respect the fact that that is an important exercise, and I don't think there's a member in this House who doesn't think that we have to evaluate the operations from time to time and to ensure that we are doing everything that we can in the most efficient and effective way. Yet, because we didn't have functioning committees, we missed an opportunity to take the recommendations from Don Drummond, we missed the opportunity to do pre-budget consultations through the Standing Committee on Finance, to bring those ideas to the people on the ground, in our ridings, in this province. It is a massive failure right from the outset in terms of ensuring that we've gotten all the best ideas, that we've gotten a fully articulated vision of what the people in this province need.

Of course, we are concerned about rising costs. We're concerned about the debt that this province carries, not only our budgetary debt but our ongoing fiscal debt. And it's particularly difficult to take the recommendations of one individual on such an important aspect of the future of this province seriously. We understand that he's a professional, and he certainly had the resources at his disposal. But that exercise, as it was, again, missed the whole point. You're not doing this for a select group. You're not carving out one aspect—or you should not,

rather, carve out one aspect of the operations and focus on that solely. There is a large segment of people in this province that had some input, valuable input, to make to the budget discussions, which really was neglected. And here we are today, with a large portion of the debate missing.

In that light, Mr. Speaker, New Democrats identified that things were going off the rails quite quickly and that we had an active role to play. One of those roles was not only to evaluate the budget, this bill, G55, and also the budget motion, the declaration from the government, specifically the Minister of Finance, on his intentions and the government's intentions, but we took our ideas and delivered them to the people, but also listened. We did a little bit of a road trip. I know that my colleague from Beaches—East York came down to my riding, Essex, and also into the Windsor ridings, the neighbouring ridings. We had some good, frank discussions with stakeholders, not only from labour but business, the chambers of commerce, agriculture, rural representatives, folks who were passionate about environmental issues, and small business representatives. We had a really great gamut of input on those particular discussions. I know that he carried them around Ontario to different ridings. We were able to develop some really clear ideas, coming from the people.

That's why I think, when we presented our amendments—amendments that, I will add, were made in a respectful way; amendments that we believed were pragmatic and responsible—they were genuine, because they weren't only coming from us; they were coming, again, from the people of the province. It's a role that we took seriously, but it's a role that we believe the official opposition missed an opportunity on. I can only surmise that the reason they didn't add any input or didn't pressure the government to make any formal amendments was because they ultimately agreed with the vast majority of the content of this bill. That's the only conclusion I can come to: that the cost-cutting measures and tax-cutting measures for the select few and the exercises in privatization were actually exercises that the opposition side agreed with and would actually like to see.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, we were able to add some amendments that we think not only will help but were widely popular, one of them being a modest 2% tax increase to those in Ontario who make over \$500,000 a year. I would say that even two years ago this type of amendment wouldn't be as widely accepted as it is today because it has been sacrosanct to talk about the rich in this country and that we shouldn't ask them to do their part; we shouldn't be targeting them. But lo and behold, the nature of our economy has changed, where people are starting to understand that everyone has to do a part, everyone has to play their part, and those who have been benefiting the most, particularly in the toughest of times—maybe the laws have allowed them to escape some of the wrath of a massive downfall in our economy relatively unscathed. Why is that? Because we have, over

the years, protected those in that income bracket and insulated them from what we've all felt on the ground as the middle class in this province for decades. So we presented a modest idea, widely supported by 78% of the people in this province.

It seems as though it has taken, because it's one of the measures in this massive omnibus bill that we see the government has actually listened to. We applaud them for doing that. It's one of the reasons why we indicated that we were not going to force an election on this, because we saw that the government had a little inkling to infuse some fairness, albeit a New Democratic proposal, into the budget. There are other issues where we are happy that they have taken our ideas.

However, the vast majority of this bill is, as I said, an exercise in austerity. It is also an exercise that we would raise some red flags around. One of them is the privatization of ServiceOntario. We all are familiar with the nature of the Ornge helicopter scandal that has happened in this province, and I'll tell you about it.

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Here's what's happened. The delivery of air ambulance services was outsourced to a private entrepreneur who saw an opportunity to take this service and turn it into, potentially, a lucrative money-making venture where it was not ever designed or should not ever have been designed for that reason. Lo and behold, the actual service delivery plan and the model was brokered in the backrooms of this Legislature by insiders who knew the workings, who knew all of the mechanisms and were able to not only skirt some of the oversight that would have potentially stopped this, but also benefitted personally from devising these types of schemes.

We see that happening again. After all the lessons that we think the government should have learned by now, we see it happening again. Schedule 28 creates a new act, the Government Services and Service Providers Act, 2012. It's a new piece of legislation that opens the doors to privatization of ServiceOntario and any other services provided by the Ministry of Government Services. This could be Ornge times 100 because, first, it enables the creation of a holding company, similar to Ornge Peel and all the various spinoffs that we saw coming out of Ornge, and a network of for-profit or non-profit subsidiaries, and secondly, because it enables the private sector to leverage a public asset—for example, renewing your health card—into private profit by trying to get you to buy additional products provided by a subsidiary or new entity.

Here we are again; we're heading down the same road under the full sanction of this government. You would think that they would have learned their lesson, but yet they have not: one of many really cautionary tales that we offer in this House today, that I have the pleasure to offer in this House, in trying to have the members of that side really take a look at what's in this budget, because if you don't want to get yourselves in trouble again, you may want to take this portion out.

Number two, and here's another part that I've been fortunate enough to particularly focus on: The Minister

of Finance, I think single-handedly, under the advice of the head of the OLG, has made the decision to eliminate the slots-at-racetracks program. So, under the guise of a new revenue stream for health care and education and all of these wonderful social programs that they seem to want to tout themselves as being the protectors of, here's what they're doing. In eliminating that program, which runs around a \$345-million cost structure each and every year, what they are doing is, they are going to kill 60,000 jobs in the province of Ontario. And for what reason? I can only surmise that they see a massive cash grab, a \$345-million bag of money that they want to access quickly, a one-time hit, to pay down—you know what? That will pay for Ornge operations for a year and a half, or maybe it will pay for a third of a boondoggle of a gas plant in Oakville. They need that money. We know they need it because of all the failures that they've made in years previous and also for some of the ongoing failures that we see.

But what they're doing is, they are eliminating a very lucrative and beneficial plan that helps support rural Ontario and jobs in rural Ontario. For what? Why would you dismantle, destroy, a wonderful industry that has been self-sufficient? That was never any of your money. There was not one dollar of public coffer money that went into that program. It was all generated through revenue from the racetrack, from the slot machines that were actually placed into the horse racing facilities to support horse racing, not the other way around. But you're going into that without any regard—no consultation with the industry, no care for rural Ontario. We can only surmise that it's because you're so inept at the financial management of the province that you are willing to do that without any regard.

This adds \$1.1 billion to our provincial coffers each and every year. So it's a \$345-million program that adds \$1.1 billion to your coffers. Why would you ever want to dismantle that? What sense does it make?

Again, I can only surmise that the actions we see in schedule 28, where privatization reigns supreme in the delivery of services, is the mantra you're putting on the delivery of the OLG. You ultimately want to privatize all aspects of our lottery facilities here in the province. It is a recipe for failure, Mr. Speaker, not only for those workers but for the breeders in this province, who are already making investments four years out. We have article upon article—one in the Guelph Mercury—quotes from breeders who made substantial investments.

I'll point to a small victory that I had this week in Windsor, in my riding, by shining some light on one of the absolutely boondoggled aspects of our OLG, where this province was actually sanctioning the promotion of a casino in Cleveland, Ohio, through sending out promotional materials to rewards participants through Caesars casino, which is a public-private entity—that's a P3 there. You guys over there have to raise some flags here, because you're privateers as well. If you want to be sincere about protecting the industry, then you've got to step up to the plate. If you want to protect it, then own it. Don't shift the responsibility.

Here is what Caesars was doing. They were sending out promotional material saying, "Come and gamble at the Horseshoe Casino Cleveland," when we were laying off workers at the Caesars casino operation in Windsor—also particularly egregious in the sense that the Minister of Finance justified ending the slots in Windsor to protect the jobs at the casino in Windsor. Three days later, 27 layoffs, also coming on the tail of this notice. It was disgusting. I held a press conference on Friday morning in front of Caesars Windsor. Two hours later Caesars corporation issued a full apology, and I thanked them for that. I thanked them for coming to their senses. Even the finance minister came to his senses after the press conference and said it was a boneheaded move. Why, in fact, would he dismantle this entire industry? That's a boneheaded move.

Another thing the finance minister said was that investments at racetracks, in terms of the breeders and the owners, come primarily from American investors—they're American horses—yet he wants Americans to come and gamble at our casinos in Windsor. He wants them to do that, and maybe some will win, but he doesn't want Americans to come in and keep their horses at our tracks in Ontario. He says that the majority of that money goes back to the States, because there are some American breeders. Well, if the minister is that good at picking the ponies—because no one is guaranteed to win here. They may be American investors and American owners, but they're not guaranteed to win the race. If he's that good at picking the ponies, I would suggest he consider another profession. There is no way that those investments in our facilities don't have a massive return in dollars in our rural areas. They help local farmers with feed and farriers and veterinary services—all the services.

Mr. Speaker, it is a shame. There are so many issues in this budget that I could speak about, but those two, certainly the revenue side they have missed but also dismantling one of the most important industries for rural Ontario, are a shame, and I'm pleased to highlight those issues for the House today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to be responding to the member from Essex. His issues weren't quite the issues I've seen generally discussed here, so maybe I will just turn to some of the things we should look at that come from our 2012 budget.

The single most important step—we all agree on that; I've heard it from all the parties—is to balance the budget. We have a plan. Our party has a plan that will balance the budget in 2017-18. It's a five-year plan, and five years is going to be a tough period for the province of Ontario. But looking at our overall gains in employment since the major recession, looking at some of the things that we have been doing with the tax rates—the tough decision of the HST, which is in and which is producing the results that we expected—we're not only going for \$17.7 billion in savings, but we're going to

contain the cost increases. So there's \$17.7 billion in savings and \$4.4 billion in revenue-raising measures.

We are taking strong action to manage costs and transform public services, and that's going to need the support of this House. That's the next stage, that's the big stage in saving dollars. Rather than flash and burn, which has happened in the past, we are going to take a measured approach with that.

So, Speaker, I think that what we are doing here is the right action for Ontario. It will come up with jobs, come up with savings and will come up with a balanced budget in five years.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my privilege and pleasure to speak to the member from Essex. I generally find him a pretty balanced and well-informed new member; as he suggested, he has been here since October, the same as many of us. I agree with him on many of his points. The failure of the Liberals to even have pre-budget consultation: I mean, it's always talk and spin about "We want to work in collaboration," and, "We want to talk in partnership"—and Mr. Crack, I'm sure you'll agree with this—but, you know, at the end of the day, they didn't even set those up so we could have some truly substantive discussions.

Their lack of ability to make tough decisions: I think, again, we agree there. He talked about the debt and the need for the governing Liberals to get it under control. I think we both understand the reality, as in our own household. You can't continue to spend more than you bring in every day and not go off the cliff at some point. We're getting perilously close to going off of that debt cliff, yet they still didn't make the decisions in this budget to move this quickly. We can't take the eight years that they've taken to get us into this hole to get out. We need to take drastic action.

We do, however, sometimes have a differing of opinions. He made a comment about some of their ideas being wildly popular. One of my concerns, Mr. Speaker, is that the wildly popular ideas aren't necessarily what we need. It's easy to pander to the general public that will jump on board and say, "Yes, just go tax more people."

At the end of the day, I think you have to do things that are more substantive. We have to look at what's pragmatic and what's really going to turn this place around. We, fundamentally, as a PC caucus, went into the budget thinking that we have to reduce spending—it's out of control and there have to be drastic measures taken. We have to ensure that there's a jobs plan. If everybody is working in this province—there's 600,000 people unemployed—we'll be a prosperous province once again. We definitely have to reduce our debt. Some 50% of our costs are wages. We can't continue to add more government jobs. We need to set up the environment for a vibrant economy and let business drive our economy.

While I support many of his thought processes, I think there is a clear path between the Conservatives, the NDP and the Liberals.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I'd like to thank the member from Essex for his presentation. He touched on a lot of areas where there are problems in this budget, but the one in particular that really sticks out is the horse racing industry.

I look at this, and if I was making an investment in the province—they called it a subsidy; actually it was a deal they cut, but that's besides the point. They put out over \$300 million, they said, to support the harness racing and flat racing, but they don't talk about the 75% they make; they don't talk about the \$1.2 billion they made.

They talk about job creation. They want to create jobs in our province. They want to help people who are out of work. So you're going to put 60,000 people out of work, plus all the secondary industries that support those industries, which will be another 30,000 or 40,000, so you're going to put 100,000 people out of work. In a lot of these situations, the people that are involved in racing, if they're third- and fourth-generation people, they aren't university grads a lot of them; this has been their life, this has been their income. It has been their family income—their farms, their investment. They put their whole lives into this, and this government doesn't take that into consideration.

They want to open two casinos, one in Toronto and one in Ottawa. Well, even the people don't want it. But they are going to close the ones where it's the lifeblood of the community. It just doesn't make sense.

They said the revenues are down. They only made \$100 million off those three tracks down there that they want to close; \$100 million isn't bad for one year. Now they're saying that the forecast was \$400 million they should have made, but they didn't. But we're in a recession, and a lot of Americans weren't coming over because their dollar was not as good as it used to be here. But those things could turn around and will turn around. But you don't go at it from the top up and hammer everybody at the bottom—social, people working, hard-working Ontarians; whether it is horse racing, whether it is steelworkers, whatever it is, from the bottom up.

This government has a tendency to work from the top down. They help everybody at the top. They hand out \$4 billion to industry that leaves after two years. They've got their priorities all screwed up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to have an opportunity this afternoon to speak in support of the government's Bill 55. The government has taken strong action in the 2012 budget to protect public education. As many of you know, I was a former school board trustee for the Toronto District School Board. There's is one thing my constituents in Scarborough—Agincourt have consistently said to me: Public education is the most important thing

in terms of public services that Ontarians rely on. We have a plan to make sure our education is considered the best according to the OECD.

Our budget ensures that we will continue to have full-day kindergarten. Finally, everybody in this House agrees that full-day kindergarten is the best thing for our young students. We continue to maintain our classroom size to be small—

Interjection.

Ms. Soo Wong: You know, Mr. Speaker, there would be others who don't agree with full-day kindergarten. I can tell you from experience that full-day kindergarten is the best thing for our students. That's what this budget is about: ensuring that every student in Ontario is given an opportunity to succeed and an opportunity to learn. Our government also continues to allow the 30% reduction of Ontario tuition fees for families that make less than \$160,000, once again to ensure that students have access to post-secondary education who otherwise wouldn't be given the opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, we're here to ensure that our values of public education get across and are shared across the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I give the member for Essex time to respond, I think I'll remind all members that questions and comments are intended to relate back to the original speech that was given.

I will now return to the member for Essex, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thanks to the members from Ottawa–Orléans, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and Scarborough–Agincourt, of course. I guess my speech here today was focused on what was missing. The revenue side of the equation is one of them. We've proposed some remedies for that: our modest tax increase on those making over \$500,000 a year and also a freeze on the corporate tax structure at 11.5%. We think those are good things.

We think that revenue from some operations, particularly the horse racing industry, is and can be a great addition to the operation and fiscal stability of this province. It adds the revenue that the member from Scarborough–Agincourt is asking for, for education and full-day kindergarten.

Those are things you need money for. Here was a wonderful program that not only provided good, tangible jobs that you can't outsource, you can't ship out of town, but also added sustainable revenue. Of course it suffered from some of the pressures that every enterprise did throughout the last recession, but it was there and continued to be there, and those investments continued to be made until you pulled the rug out from under them and dismantled the industry. You left them absolutely in chaos, and what you did to rural Ontario is a disaster.

I cannot wait to talk to the Minister of Agriculture, because he has not felt an ounce of heat on this. He has abdicated his responsibility to rural Ontario without even a whisper of the impact this decision is making. He has toed the line with the government. I don't know what his

thoughts are. He's trying to maintain his seat, but he should be in as much jeopardy—he should be feeling as much pressure and be in as much jeopardy as the members of the horse racing industry are with this decision. I am looking forward to talking to him about this as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

1430

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to stand in my place in the Legislature today to speak to the budget bill, Bill 55, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts.

The budget presented in March 2012 is an important budget as it addresses very important matters for all Ontarians. I'll start with education. We've just heard, in one of the responses to the last speaker, the importance of education. We all know how important education is. This budget protects all the gains that have been made since 2003 in education. We have changed Ontario's position in the world education ratings to number one in the English world and the top five worldwide. And so this budget protects the class sizes. I know that wasn't what the Drummond report said, but we felt that that was extremely important.

By 2015, we will have completed full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds. This is extremely important as well. I've said in the House before that the first-hand knowledge with my oldest grandchild, that he will be completing his second year—his school got it the first year and so he will be completing it this year. Not only has he prospered as a kid—and he loves the school; we can't go by it any time without him pointing it out—but as well, he speaks French. He didn't speak French before. He went into full immersion and now he speaks French. There are so many things that children can learn in the grade 4 and grade 5 kindergartens that's not costing that much more than what it does under daycare. It's costing more, but in the end there will be a lot of results from that kind of education. It's something that I'm very proud our government has brought in, and I think probably brought in because of the women's caucus over with the Liberals—extremely important.

We're not going to go into our schools and slash and burn and get rid of a lot of teachers and a lot of support workers. We're not going to do that. If we followed the Drummond report with education, we not only would have forgone some of the major gains that we've made since 2003, but we would have had to let go of 20,000 of our young teachers and support workers. It would have robbed our children of a better education. It would have left 10,000 of our young teachers without jobs. That wouldn't be a positive thing to do. Not only the teachers, the young teachers who have difficulty getting that first job—not only would they have been in jeopardy, but our kids would have been as well without all the additional teaching.

Because of early intervention to help struggling students, because of recognitions of students' technical and

other strengths, the graduation rate of our high schools has increased from 68% to 83% in the last seven or eight years. And what that means is that there are 100,000 more Ontarians out there, kids—it's extremely important: 100,000 more kids are proud that they graduated from high school and they are pursuing careers and trades and are making a much greater contribution to this economy than they would have had they not graduated from high school. I think that is tremendously important: 68% up to 83% and about 100,000 kids now since the program was put in place a few years ago.

The children in our system benefit, 20,000 of the youngest teachers—mostly youngest teachers—benefit, the support workers keep their jobs and all the public workers in the education system share the pain. There's no doubt that there will be pain as Ontario moves forward to balance the budget in 2017-18. It's how do you balance what each of us as Ontarians gives up? As MPPs, we've extended the freeze on our salaries for five years. That's not too much of a hardship. If everyone does their share, it's going to be much better.

Health care was the second important issue that we had to protect as part of this budget. Since 2003, we've gone from the longest wait times in Ontario to the shortest. That's amazing, but that didn't come easily. That came about by the work of our doctors, our nurses, our other hospital workers. We're in a situation now where the health care system is providing much better services but the costs are going up too quickly. That's one of the things now: We have to go into health care and make sure that we can balance the budget in that five years but maintain the health system that has been built up over the last five or six years.

The budget for aging at home or the services for keeping people at home—that is so important. We all know what a bed in a hospital costs and how we can keep people in their homes, where they want to be. I go back to Alex Munter asking the question—there were 600 seniors at a meeting in Ottawa, and he asked the question, “How many of you want to end up in an acute-care bed in a hospital or in long-term care?” Of course, not one hand went up. So we know where people want to stay. It's a matter of making those improvements in the delivery of systems so they can stay in their homes. There are a lot of new ideas coming out and ideas that I've certainly pushed forward with the Ministry of Health.

Again, health care professionals at all levels will be expected to make sacrifices so that a better health care system results and we all do our share and reach that balanced budget in five years. That is mandatory. That has to be done, and we all have to share that. If we all do that, then we will end up with a very strong province.

The third area, with education and health care, where this budget and predecessor budgets have invested is, of course, jobs. When we brought in the harmonized sales tax, the federal Conservatives knew it was the right action to take. I'm not sure what the figure was, whether it was \$4.3 billion or \$2.3 billion—that's about three

years ago—but the federal government stepped up and gave Ontario those dollars, significant dollars, in order to make that transition. Everyone knew it was going to be a tough transition, but they knew it was essential. This gives our manufacturers in Ontario a level playing field when they market their goods in Canada and overseas. We did it for the right reason: to help Ontarians to create jobs. And what did the party opposite do? Did they care about making Ontario competitive? Not a bit. They knew it would not be popular and they ranted and raved against the legislation. It was the most difficult piece of legislation to get through, but it was necessary. We persevered, and in the end Ontarians have accepted it, our businesses have benefited from it and we are creating jobs—a net 38,000 jobs in the last two months. Conservatives were for it; then they were against it when the going got tough. We took the tough and proper action. Ontario is better for us toughing it out and getting the HST legislation in.

The year 2009 was the greatest economic downturn since the Great Depression. We all know that. The Canadian dollar, in a few years, increased by 50%. Do you remember the 67-cent dollar? That's what we had. Now it's at parity with the US. Manufacturing switched to China and India. Our largest trading partner, the US, is in terrible economic distress as a result of wars, subprime mortgages and Republican debt. They had a balanced budget in 2000.

How is Ontario doing, in spite of all these pressures? Well, Speaker, we lost a lot of jobs in the recession, but since the bottom of the recession we have gained 300,000 jobs and, as I said, in March and April of this year, another 38,000, if you take the total and divide it by two.

These are tough times, and we must all be part of a solution to balance the budget. Our government has a plan. The Conservatives seem to support a freeze on wages and support what we're trying to do. We want to do it in a manner that we don't get challenged in the courts. We can make this a team effort and achieve a balanced budget, protect education and health care and continue to create jobs.

If you look at the economic situation for Ontario right now, if this minority government can bring outside the Conservatives, who want to see wages for public servants kept in check, we can all do it; we can succeed and meet that very important balanced budget.

1440

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a privilege to get up and respond to our colleague from Orléans.

I think it was pointed out that our leader met last November with the leader of the government to put forth what we needed to do to support any budget. We talked about a control of spending and a jobs plan, and, of course, we saw neither.

When you're looking at a government that's got spending out of control, you're looking at—you know, they have no regard for public money. Look at Ornge, the

hundreds of millions of dollars—we're talking \$700 million wasted there; the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga power plants—arguably another \$2 billion, and now a billion-dollar lawsuit against them for lost contracts; eHealth—another billion dollars. Just think of what we could do with that money.

We've got a government that doesn't know a good plan when they see it. We've got the horse racing industry that contributes over a billion dollars annually to this economy—not to this economy, but to this government's plans, and now that's cancelled. They contribute over another \$50 million to local municipalities; that will be gone. This is money that people in Ontario are freely giving, that's freely being turned back into the economy. Then we look at the 60,000 jobs that are gone as well. I mean, we're not only looking at a jobs program; we're looking at job losses.

We listened to the Auditor General's report, where they talk about health care waste, that 28% of health care is wasted. So I think it's very difficult to support a plan like this.

There's not a program that people in this House don't want. It's a matter of affordability and setting priorities, and this government is unable to do that. So we're looking at reasonable spending and bringing Ontario back to where it should be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Speaking to what the member from Ottawa–Orléans was saying just a few minutes earlier, and speaking to the budget bill, Bill 55, sometimes in this House I think we run the risk of lulling anybody who's out there to sleep on what's happening here in Ontario. Again, just to kind of raise some alarm bells about what is happening here: To me, we have put the fate of this province in the hands of a banker, who's the adviser. That might be good if you're investing in some stocks, but when you're looking after the environment, when you're looking after the future of public education or public health care, I think we should let people who understand those sectors participate. So when the member from Essex was earlier speaking about the lack of consultation on the budget process, this is exactly what we're seeing right now.

The member from Ottawa–Orléans was raving about the government's success in education. In fact, in Toronto we're losing tonnes of schools. There are hundreds of schools at risk of closure right now. Boasting about full-day child care, which of course we support—sorry, full-day kindergarten, which of course we support. Because of the way this program was implemented, we've seen a lack of child care spaces, and there are people who are struggling. This is a very serious issue. When people can't find child care for their family, they can't go to work. It's a crisis.

At the same time, this government has cut off some of the benefits to the most at-risk folks in this province. We didn't move ahead with supporting people, kids, with the Ontario child benefit this year, and so more kids are

going to school without having had breakfast, because their families couldn't afford to feed them in the morning.

The whole approach to this budget only looked at one side: It only looked at how to save money. It didn't talk about making the kinds of investments that would make this a fairer province going forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I only caught the last half of the speech by the member for Ottawa–Orléans, but I know the first half would have been as informative as the second half.

The facts of the matter are—I always look at the Stats Canada labour force analysis, which anybody can get from the research library—for March and April of this year, Ontario: in March, 46,000 full-time jobs; April, 23,000 full-time jobs. That's 69,000 in two months. That's quite a pace of full employment labour growth.

It was this party that made the decision to provide the transition dollars for both General Motors and Chrysler, significant players for Ontario's economy. Just last week, there was a study done for the United States government talking about the future of the auto sector in North America. In fact, that study indicated that we're going to run out of production capacity in North America because of the downturn in 2008-09. We have ramped production capacity back up, and as we get towards the latter part of the end of this decade, there is going to be a lack of capacity in North America to produce automobiles. Now there is talk within General Motors of taking that truck plant in Oshawa that's currently idle and perhaps bringing that back in production. They're looking at ways to expand the parts production here in North America. So one of the great pillars, the auto sector, seems to be moving ahead with great pace, with positive optimism.

OISE just recently did a study of the benefits of full-day kindergarten in the province of Ontario. That study clearly indicates that full-day kindergarten is the way to go to prepare those young students as they move from kindergarten into grade 1 and the rest of elementary school.

So many of the things that my colleague talked about are very positive things in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank my Conservative friends for not standing up.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay, thank you.

I listened intently, as I always do, to the member from Ottawa–Orléans, but you need to be more than a cheerleader to be in this place; you need to be more than just someone who says, "Rah, rah, rah," and talks about the government's successes over the past eight years, because along with those successes came many failures. Along with those came this budget.

One has to talk about the process that led up to this budget. This was the first budget in the modern history of Ontario where there were no committees that went out

and listened to ordinary people. This was the first time in the history of Ontario that ordinary people didn't have a say or an input into what went into the budget. There was only one person who had a say and that was Don Drummond. And even then, although the government talked about him and how he was going to be their guru and how he was going to do everything right, when the member spoke about him, he had to first of all admit that all of Don Drummond's recommendations were not met. Don Drummond stood there with a straight face and recommended to this government that they get rid of all-day kindergarten because they couldn't afford it. This government didn't do it.

Now, I'm not saying that that was the wrong thing to do, but you cannot stand there and put all of your eggs in the basket of Mr. Drummond and ignore all of the advice of ordinary Ontarians who had a great many good things to say and then say, "Fine, we did the right thing." The government has to decide: Are the people supreme here? Are the people the ones who we should be listening to, or is it Don Drummond? Because, obviously, you chose not to look at most of his recommendations. You cherry-picked a few out that you liked and you ignored the rest.

My Conservative colleagues think that that's a mistake because they want you to balance the budget sooner than you seem to want to do it, but I would say, on the other hand, it was a mistake because you have neglected to have a dialogue with the people who matter most: the ordinary people of Ontario who are, in part, going to be hurt by what you've done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I now return to the member for Ottawa–Orléans, who has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you to the members for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Davenport, Peterborough and Beaches–East York.

We have a difference of opinion, of course, on how we're going to reach that end of the deficit in five years, 2017-18. We disagree on that. I would just say that the guidelines from the Drummond report were excellent to have, and we know that we have to change our course. We were able to manage the years after 2009, the significant recession, a very significant recession, when so many jobs were lost. We've managed that, and we're now going on to—we've done what other governments did. Our infrastructure spending saved I think it was 80,000 jobs in a report I saw. This was important; this was done. The federal government did it; we did it; municipalities did it. And, of course, as you get to the end of the recession, as you come out, you're looking for ways now to pay that back; you have to. We could have used slash-and-burn, and that slash-and-burn doesn't help anyone.

1450

We're moving forward in a very systematic, a very planned and a reasonable approach. I hope that the party opposite—to obtain the same reductions, you can do it by slash-and-burn or you can do it through negotiations or through legislation. I'm looking forward, as we move

down the line to put in place this budget—first of all, to pass it in this Legislature and then put it in place—that there is co-operation with the party opposite, that we will get a good plan together that will result in a prosperous Ontario in 2017-18, with a balanced budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate.

Mr. Michael Harris: I rise today to address Bill 55, the so-called Strong Action for Ontario Act.

You know, Mr. Speaker, here we have again another Liberal bill that has a fancy title but provides no leadership, no foresight and no plan for Ontario. It's the height of Liberal arrogance to think that they can table a budget without a blueprint for the future while disguising their future with a clever name that doesn't really reflect its reality. Providing Ontarians with a reversal of meanings at every turn comes naturally to the Liberal Party. Just review the title of almost every other bill they've brought forward.

We in the PC Party, however, believe that government needs to be honest with the Ontario public. That means calling a spade a spade. That means when the province is facing a crisis, the government must address what's wrong instead of pretending everything is okay.

I truly believe Ontario can lead again, can lead our country in job creation and economic growth once again. But to make that happen, our province requires prudent financial management, a visionary jobs plan and, most important, a government that does what it says and says what it does. If Bill 55 is proof of anything, though, it's that the Liberals are incapable of doing any of this.

First off, let's consider the Liberal government's claim that its budget will eliminate the deficit. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you right now that their budget does no such thing. How on earth can the Liberal government seriously think that anyone can believe they'll balance the books when the budget increases spending in 14 of 24 ministries?

After talking to many of my constituents, I know that as soon as anyone learns this fact, they no longer believe the Liberals, as do I. In fact, I remember speaking to a constituent of mine, Bob, who lives in St. Jacobs in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, last month about Bill 55. He asked me why the PC Party had chosen to reject the budget in its entirety. I first told him that the PC team went over the budget line by line, section by section, searching for any indication that this government was serious about fixing the mess they've created over the last eight years. But what we found was nothing more than Liberal doublespeak and more spending.

Once I let him know that Bill 55 actually increases spending by nearly another \$2 billion this year, Bob more than supported my decision to vote against the failed partisan budget. In fact, he was also encouraging me to let more people know the truth about this budget, and I have since so done that. That's my point. As soon as people can get access to the facts and get past the Liberal doublespeak, they can see that this budget in no way lives up to its name and fails to take the so-called strong

action. All Ontarians have is the Premier's word, and we all know what that's good for.

In previous elections, the Premier said one thing and, of course, did another. He raised taxes, let Ontario's hydro rates skyrocket and recklessly increased spending, all while promising the opposite. Now he has the province on a collision course with a \$30-billion deficit and a total debt burden of \$411 billion—and it gets even worse.

Last month, two major credit rating agencies told us we cannot afford to continue down this road. Right after the McGuinty budget passed its first vote, Standard and Poor's put the province on a negative credit watch. One day after that, Moody's downgraded the province's actual credit rating. We all know that the lower the province's credit rating is, the higher the interest rates will be on the province's debt, and when interest rates rise, more money will be diverted away from priorities like hospitals and schools. The fact is that just a 1% increase in interest rates would cost Ontario \$500 million. Do you know what that money could buy? Roughly 250,000 MRI exams.

We have got to change course because generations of Ontarians cannot afford to continue to bear this debt burden. Consider that today interest payments on the province's debt are now the third-largest expenditure behind health and education. That means that if interest payments were a government ministry, it would be Ontario's third-largest, worth more than \$10 billion. I can only think who would want to be the cabinet minister of that portfolio. When my party's leader recently met with a group of business leaders, he was told that Ontario needed to do three things to get our economy back on track: "First, rein in spending, balance your books and pay down your debt. Second, rein in spending, balance your books—and pay down the debt! And third, bring down taxes on businesses and entrepreneurs."

In a botched attempt to control the government's spending addiction, the Liberals have chosen to target teachers and doctors. This is not the right way to solve Ontario's debt crisis. All public sector workers need to do their part to ensure that Ontario can return to a more sound financial footing. That's why the PC Party has been calling on the government since last year to implement an across-the-board mandatory public sector wage freeze. This isn't about picking winners and losers, which the Liberals like to do, of course, so often with their corporate welfare schemes and green energy social experiments; this is about fairness and asking all public sector workers, whether they are a firefighter, police officer, teacher or doctor, to do their part to ensure Ontario can be great once again.

Addressing Ontario's debt crisis is only one part of the equation; we also need a serious, concrete jobs plan to get back to work the nearly 600,000 Ontarians looking for a job. Alarming, Ontario's unemployment rate has been higher than the Canadian average for 64 straight months. That's more than five years, which means that Ontario's job crisis began much before the recession. The

Premier has got to take some responsibility for the mess that he and his government have created. While things continued to worsen in the private sector under his watch, the Premier just ramped up public sector hiring. In fact, since 2003 the Liberals have increased the number of public sector positions by 23%, or 246,000 jobs. That's 40,000 more people than in the city where I live, Kitchener. And the Liberal government did this while the private sector grew just 5% over the same period.

Enough is enough. Ontarians don't want to hear any more excuses. They want strong action from their leaders. So while this government drifts, we in the PC Party will take strong action to restore Ontario as a leader of Confederation once again. That starts with creating the right environment for private sector investment. We in the PC Party want to make Ontario the best place to do business in Canada. We don't want companies to choose to go elsewhere in order to avoid excessive regulation and taxation here in Ontario. That's why we need to introduce more competitive business taxes and power up our economy by introducing solid policy proposals to help the nearly 600,000 out of work.

The PC Party would take immediate action to overhaul Ontario's outdated apprenticeship system and create over 200,000 new skilled jobs. In my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga I have met several young men and women looking to get a good-paying, quality job in the trades but can't because the apprenticeship-to-journeyman ratio is only 1 to 1. Business should be able to hire more young professionals looking to develop their careers.

Mr. Speaker, Ontarians understand the importance of budgeting. We all know we can't spend more than we take in today if we want to provide a future for our children tomorrow. I know that my young lad Murphy is watching on TV and he'll want us to be standing here talking about just that.

The same goes for small business.

Interjection: Twenty-one thousand dollars in debt.

Mr. Michael Harris: He's only three months old, so he's not quite there yet.

I want to go back to small businesses, because they realize that if they don't make enough profit to cover their expenses, they will go out of business. I'm sure we wouldn't mind getting that nice, shiny new car or big-screen TV or even a new iPad for the family at home. But we understand that putting these purchases on our credit card only delays the inevitable. Eventually, we have to pay up, and if we don't, the debt collector will be coming after us all. I hear Dog, the bounty hunter, is in fact looking to diversify his portfolio.

But this government obviously doesn't understand this principle. With each successive year, the Liberal government has managed to dig the province deeper into debt. Ontario needs a plan, Ontario needs real leadership, and most importantly, Ontario needs a government that understands that what we do today will shape our future.

1500

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for his points as he touched on Bill 55, the budget.

I'd just like to go over some of the things that have happened in the last few years since I've been here. I remember when I first got here, Speaker, the Premier stood up and he said he was going to create 600,000 manufacturing jobs. Well, it didn't happen. He has downgraded it three or four times, and I don't know what we're at now.

He promised 50,000 green venture jobs—didn't happen. I don't think it's even anywhere near 5,000.

Then he signed the Samsung deal with Korea. When I asked for the details, they blacked out the entire contract on any money or any deals they had signed. Imagine that: A member of provincial Parliament asks for the details of a deal they signed with another country, and it's blacked out. What are you afraid of? Why won't you show the people and the opposition parties what's going on?

Then they blew \$388 million on an electronic health care system for the province. I dug around and found out what we got for that. We got about \$100 million worth of hardware, software, consultants and all the other things that we got. But they blew 60% of the budget on Liberal-friendly consultants—\$288 million. And we still don't have an electronic health care system for Ontario.

Then I heard the Conservatives talk about the ratio of tradesmen. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm a tradesman. They haven't said what ratio they'd like: 5 to 1, 6 to 1, 4 to 1? I haven't heard anything. When I do, then I can analyze it, because 1 to 1 has been around a long time. I know working on the tools, I had enough trouble keeping an eye on one apprentice let alone six apprentices or whatever they want. They'd better come out with more specifics. I've got a couple of trades, actually, and I'd like them to come and work for me for a day and work safely. If I had five apprentices, I don't know if I could keep an eye on all five and have them work safely. I think they'd better do a little more homework when it comes to trades and crafts because I don't really think they've got a handle on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It's my pleasure to give my feedback or response to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga. The member was talking about the need to create a strong economy in Ontario, a strong foundation for businesses. I want to really highlight that our government has been working on this for some time.

What we have seen again and again from the Conservatives, from the party of the member for Kitchener–Conestoga, is that when we brought in those measures, for example, if you focus on taxation, the party opposite always voted against them.

When we brought in the harmonization of sales taxes, the GST and PST, which creates a huge benefit for businesses, especially small businesses in terms of cost savings in taxes, what did the Conservative Party do? They voted against it.

When we lowered the corporate taxes not only just for large corporations but for small businesses, what did the Conservative Party do? They voted against it.

When we got rid of the capital tax in the province—the first province to do so—what did the Conservative Party do? They voted against that.

When we lowered corporate taxes for manufacturing and resource industries to 10%, what did the Conservative Party do? They voted against it.

We've got a circumstance where they stand up in the House and say one thing, but when it comes to real action, when it comes to voting and supporting the measures that actually create a stronger economy—such as a 4.5% corporate business tax rate, which is the lowest for small businesses anywhere in Canada—the party opposite has voted against it. When it comes to getting rid of capital tax, the party opposite voted against it. When it comes to lowering the manufacturing and resource-based corporate taxes to 10%, the party opposite voted against it. It's time for them to step up to the plate and really endorse the kinds of positions the government has taken that enhance the economic climate in the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I would like to take a few minutes to comment on my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga, who spoke directly and affirmatively that this Liberal government is out of touch. I've been here eight months, and I notice that the government in power, the Liberal government, tends to continually talk about the past. It's time we look at now and the future, where we're headed in the province. By looking at the past, you're putting today's problems onto my kids' problems and my grandkids' problems and my great-grandchildren's problems. It's time to take a look at it, and let's deal with it now.

We've forwarded recommendations since we started here last November. The government didn't listen. We went away at Christmas vacation, hoping the committees would be set. The government didn't set the committees, so we couldn't put our input to the finance committee, nor could anybody in the whole province. We came back, and again we were to meet with the minister. By the time he called our finance critic, Peter Shurman, the budget was already to print. So I really don't know what they wanted us to participate in.

We looked at the budget when it came out—we had ample time—showing that they're heading on a wrong trajectory for this province. There are many things that we put forward—definitely a public sector wage freeze. The best thing about the PC Party is the fact that we want it fair and across the board, not just picking winners and losers. We are not ones to pick out a group and vilify them, like the government is doing right now to the doctors or the teachers. We want it fair and concise.

We're going to fix the apprenticeship rules. The member for Hamilton–Stoney Creek asked what the ratios are. We've said 1 to 1 for every type of apprenticeship. We'll wait to hear what you say. Don't comment now. You can think about it.

We're going to reduce red tape that is bunting up the system of starting a business or actually creating a business to have money to make jobs. We're going to cut that back at least 30%. And we want to get hold of our energy rates, something the government today doesn't seem to really care about. They think that businesses can afford the rates continuing. They can't, and we need to get them under control and make an environment for businesses to create jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to follow the comments of my colleagues here. Number one, I know I can't correct the record of another member, but I will point out to the member for Ottawa Centre that the small business tax rate in the province of Manitoba, an NDP-led government with eight successive majority terms, is 0%.

One of the reasons they've had so much success attracting business there is that they have had control of their energy rates. It's a public utility, and they utilize it as a strategic asset, something we haven't done here. We followed through with a series of privatization measures enacted first by the Harris Tories, followed up by Ernie Eves and successive Liberal governments, who have seen that as a way to go with our energy resource. We should see it as a strategic asset as well and move toward that direction, something we've proposed as a party here.

My colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London brings up some really valid points. One that I would disagree with is the ratio for apprentices. Having run the apprenticeship program for the Labourers' union, LIUNA Local 65, having spent 10 years in the field in the heavy construction sector building bridges and roads and culverts and sewers, I would double your pay to come with me for a day on the job on the road, on the 401, and play Frogger, like the labourers do, dodging transport trucks. I challenge you to keep an eye on three apprentices as a journeyman, to make sure they are not only doing their job correctly but doing it safely as well.

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yeah, I know you want 1 to 1.

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Three journeymen to one apprentice; that's what we have. What you're saying is that you want one journeyman—

Interjection: —and one apprentice.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, one apprentice. We've got three journeymen looking after one apprentice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Time's up.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga, who has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Harris: I would like to say thanks for the feedback received from the members from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Ottawa Centre, Elgin–Middlesex–London and, of course, the member from Essex, who ran out of time.

1510

Mr. Speaker, during the election I had an opportunity to travel my riding and speak with a lot of business and community leaders, of course. I heard some awfully troubling stories about the red tape and the regulatory burden here in Ontario—a manufacturer in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga and New Hamburg, making a great product that is used all over the world, talking about moving machines across the plant here and there, and just the bureaucracy that they had to deal with. Plenty of them talked to me about hydro rates here, and Ontario being one of the most expensive jurisdictions to make an investment in, with our hydro rates. That, at the end of the day, disallows these folks to hire people, when the rates of hydro are costing them more and more each year.

We talked about the business tax rate. In fact, our party called for a motion to hold the Liberal government to its promise of reducing that corporate tax rate down to 10%—of course, another broken promise.

One thing I would like to reiterate, and that's something that our party leader, Tim Hudak, who recently had the opportunity to travel to New York and meet with business leaders there, who told him—and I'll remind the members opposite, the Liberals, of this, just for the record: They said the three things that we need to get the Ontario economy back on track would be to, first, rein in spending, balance your books and pay down the debt; second—you guessed it—rein in spending, balance your books and pay down your debt; third, of course; bring down taxes on businesses and entrepreneurs. Those are the reasons that I've highlighted. It's unfortunate we didn't have an opportunity to take committees across the province of Ontario to hear this feedback that I'm relaying on to you today in terms of business owners across the province. I do hope the government will adhere to some of the advice I spoke to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I would love to say that I'm happy to stand today to speak on Bill 55, but there isn't really much to be happy about inside this bill. Nonetheless, I'm here to stand on behalf of my constituents of Hamilton Mountain.

You know, coming and being new in the Legislature here, we had some expectations. As has been previously said by my colleagues before me, we expected to be able to take a budget and travel with that budget into our ridings, to be able to speak to the constituents of Ontario so that they knew what was coming forward before them. Unfortunately, the government of the day, the minority government, decided that that wasn't how we were going to be doing it this time around. No committees were struck right up until—we were already gone for Christmas break and still no committees were in place to be working on behalf of Ontarians. That was really disturbing, Mr. Speaker. But the New Democrats knew that the voices of Ontarians had to be heard, so we took the matter onto ourselves. I know in my own riding I was doing community meetings. I put out a mail-out to listen

to what people had to say; I made phone calls; I knocked on doors.

Here's what some people had to say: Eric responded to me and said job creation was very important, as was maintaining public services. He thought it was somewhat important to put limits on CEO salaries. Colleen said available and affordable child care was most important to her. Overwhelmingly, we heard that people wanted a balanced approach to balancing the budget. Since the budget was introduced, I've continued to hear from people in Hamilton Mountain, as I've been speaking to them on their doorsteps, and emails, all of that kind of stuff, making sure that they're being heard. I know New Democrats were doing that across the province, Mr. Speaker, making sure that we were picking up where the government was failing them.

It did a little bit of good, because we were able to make the budget a little bit more fair for the people of Ontario by implementing an extra 2% tax on people over \$500,000. You know, people at the top can afford the little bit that the people at the bottom can't. It's the people at the bottom feeling the everyday heat of this budget. When we have a freeze on our social services, Ontario Works and ODSP—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Shame.

Miss Monique Taylor: That is shameful—thank you to my colleague here—that is really shameful.

The government brings forward another bill that says it's okay to raise the rent by 2.5% but in the budget bill we're saying we're putting a freeze on our most vulnerable. It doesn't really balance out very well, Mr. Speaker. So we seriously had some concerns about that and we were able to fight for a 1% increase, which isn't a lot, but at least it's only putting them 1.5% behind on their rent increase, instead of 2.5%. So it's a little bit of a gain.

Another thing that I heard the other day regarding this budget: I have a six-year-old child in my riding who's in the IBI program. I'm sure you've heard a lot about that in the House these last few days. It's a program for autistic children, severe autistic children. This child was in the school system Monday to Friday, not doing very well. How does a six-year-old get suspended from school? I'm not really sure, but this child was suspended for four days. The other days, when he wasn't suspended, he was sent home every day because they weren't able to control him. He's autistic. He has needs, right? What happens, finally, after years and years waiting on the wait-list for the IBI program? He was able to get into the IBI program. That was a huge win for the family, Mr. Speaker.

So he's in the program. He still has to go to school on Mondays, because that's part of the educational portion of this, and he isn't working out so well on the Mondays. So the IBI program says, "We can work with the Ministry of Education and we'll be able to give him his education within the IBI program." Well, now that the budget cuts have come through, people are seeing that that portion is going to be cut out. He was getting the education in the IBI program, the education's being cut,

through the budget, and under that education portion that's being cut, he's also losing his transportation costs, because the Ministry of Education was paying for his transportation to and from the IBI program. So he's got a huge loss. That's a six-year-old child facing that in the budget.

Has anybody heard or read about that in this budget? That's the stuff that we have hidden in this very big, big, big budget. It's hidden in here. I know I personally hadn't read it. It took a family to face these difficulties to bring it to my attention, to say that's what's happening to them. That's a cut happening in this budget. Is that something you're going to brag about? I don't hear it. It's unfortunate.

Like I said, Mr. Speaker, there's lots missing in this budget. We haven't been dealing with jobs. We know we have huge job losses when it comes to the horsemen in this province, with the OLG workers in this province. Families don't know which way to turn any more. They're losing their homes, they can't afford the rent, the HST on the hydro. Everything else is barrelling in on top of them, yet we just continue to cut and cut and cut.

Now we've got the privatization of ServiceOntario—another sad day. What are we going to do with this? Is it going to become the next Ornge fiasco, like we heard from my seatmate here previously? We're really concerned about that over on this side of the House because we're opening up a can of worms and just saying, "Have at it." There's nothing in place to ensure that people's information is kept private. We could be selling off their information to other sectors. Why do we have a do-not-call list? I don't know, because I think we're opening it up really wide there.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on and on about the challenges that are being faced in Hamilton Mountain and right across the province of what's happening here. We really seriously need to make sure that we're reading all the fine print in this budget and that we are trying to make it somewhat decent for the people of this province. They've worked hard. They don't deserve to be treated like this because of years of waste on your side of the bench, and it has been.

1520

Yes, we're all about all-day kindergarten too. We think it's a great program if you can afford it, but when we can't afford these kinds of things, that's what makes me wonder, is it worth it?

Grade 13: Those kids need those programs. They need to be able to have that to get into university and into the college programs, but that's being taken away from them too.

We're going to charge kids to take a school bus to school?

Mr. Speaker, every day families are falling further and further behind. The rich are getting richer in this province and the middle class doesn't really exist much these days. I know I'm hearing from a lot of families that you wouldn't expect are living from paycheque to paycheque

to paycheque, and it's only getting worse as the days go on.

Thank you very much for allowing me this time. I can't believe how quickly 10 minutes does go, but I'll be looking forward to hearing the comments from other members of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I appreciate the comments made by the member from Hamilton Mountain, but I'm left a little confused, a little puzzled as to the position of the NDP, and this is the challenge I always get.

On one hand, the member from Hamilton Mountain said that she supports full-day kindergarten because it's a good thing and hopefully, in her view, it will help the middle class—I can tell you it does help the middle class—but then she said we cannot afford it so therefore we should not do it.

I don't understand that point of view, Speaker, because I think what budgets are about and this particular budget is about are making those very important, tough choices. One of the big choices we have made in this budget is to ensure that we continue to invest in our health care, especially at our community level, that we continue to invest in our education system, especially when it comes to the implementation of full-day kindergarten, because we know study after study has demonstrated that it benefits our four- and five-year-olds. It makes them better prepared to go into grade 1 and beyond. And also our investment in post-secondary education in terms of the 30% off tuition grant, which helps low- and mid-income families—those are the kinds of choices that we're making in this budget, while we're also working towards a strong plan to eliminate the deficit in the next five years, by 2017-18. I think these are the right choices to make. These are tough economic times; there are no ifs, and or buts about it.

I'm really glad that we had the opportunity to work along with the NDP to bring more improvements to this budget in terms of providing for social assistance increases in ODSP and OW, and the tax idea they had in terms of surtax, which will help offset and pay off the deficit as well. I think we need to continue to work together, but when it comes to key things like paying for full-day kindergarten, when it comes to key things like supporting our post-secondary education and investing in our community care where people need the most help, those are the priorities of this government. That's what we're focusing on. The other big element is the Ontario child benefit that helps lower-income families across the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to address the comments by my colleague from Hamilton Mountain.

She started out with something that we wholeheartedly agree with: There's not much to be happy about in this budget. There's just a whole lot of deferral. There are a lot of things that are going to go down the road that,

again, basically burden our kids and our grandkids, and it's just something that we can't continue to accept. They talk on that side of the House about strong debt. That's nothing to be proud of. What we needed to do was reverse that debt.

She talked about the lack of consultation with stakeholders. That's happening time and again. The horse racing industry: no consultation, "Here's what we're doing." The doctors today: "This is what we're doing"—no consultation, no willingness to work with them, although lots of rhetoric about partnership and working in collaboration. It's becoming very evident that that's the trend: "We know best and that's what is going to happen."

She talked about cuts, and I have empathy for those cuts, because people are going to get hurt through all this. Unfortunately, that's the reality of what happens when you overspend and mismanage the finances of our great province for eight years, as the Liberals have done. You can't continue to spend more money than you take in without somebody getting hurt down the road. It has been eight years of this and now we're in a heck of a hole. We're in a challenging time and tough decisions need to be made. The 2012 budget adds \$2.3 billion more. Think of the cuts and service challenges and the programs we're going to lose. If that interest, as my colleague from Kitchener-Conestoga raised, happened to increase—and they will, with those two recent downgrades by Moody's and Standard and Poor's. The inevitable is coming. Those interest rates are going to rise and there's going to be even more money. The third-biggest expenditure of our province is servicing the debt: \$10 billion. We cannot afford to do that.

We needed to take drastic action. We needed to create jobs. We needed to cut spending. And we needed to have a plan to reduce the deficit and the debt. None of those things are in the budget, despite us having those chats with the government about that. Peter Shurman, our finance critic, and Mr. Hudak did have that discussion, and nothing was taken into account. They still came out and said, "It's all good." Rose-coloured glasses. We couldn't support and we will not support the budget in its current fashion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for a good presentation. She certainly touched on some points, but I think one sore point that got the attention of the member from Ottawa Centre was about costs. If he wants to take a look at costs—he lives near the Quebec border, I believe, near Ottawa. He's leaving, I guess. If I'm not mistaken, it's \$7 a day for daycare in Quebec—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to remind you that it's inappropriate to make reference to the absence of any member, as you know.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm sorry, Speaker. He's still listening down there. It's \$7 a day for daycare in Quebec, and now students in Quebec are on strike because they pay a

little over \$2,000 and they're going to negotiate with the Quebec government to lower that. For the average person here in university, it's \$6,000 a year, and they've actually had riots in Quebec over \$2,000 a year. So I'm a little confused about how—he's doing daycare; he believes in that, and that's good, and he's spending money on daycare, but what about the university kids? What about daycare for the parents that want to go back for career training or adult training? It's \$7 a day in Quebec to put your child in daycare—and quality daycare.

I think this government has got all their functions screwed up. I think they're completely in confusion. They need some direction. Maybe they should listen to the opposition parties occasionally in committee and get some good direction. Speaker, with all due respect, I've been here five years now and I think maybe I got half an amendment passed in one committee in four years, with five Liberal members, two Conservatives and one NDP—one half of an amendment. But then I see, Speaker, that all our ideas start showing up under a little bit of change, and it's all of a sudden their idea. But when we brought them forward when we could have saved money five years ago, they wouldn't even deal with it. They were too busy playing with their BlackBerrys and not paying attention to what was going on. So I really get frustrated when I hear examples of standing up and saying how wonderful his programs are.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It is my pleasure to rise in this House and speak to the budget, Bill 55. The budget which the finance minister brought to this House is a balanced budget. There are certain fundamentals in this budget. I'm just going to explain a little bit about the basic foundations of this budget.

First of all, according to this budget, we will keep investing in our basic infrastructure, including our education system. We are going to keep investing in our kindergarten, full-day kindergarten, which is about a \$1.5-billion investment per year, because education is very important for our society, for our country, for our province. Also, we are going to continue giving a 30% reduction in college and university fees for students so that our students can continue their education with peace of mind. Once they graduate from university, they will enter into the workforce and contribute to the economy of this province. These are some of the major foundations of this budget, Mr. Speaker.

In the meantime, we had it in mind that we were going to eliminate the deficit by the year 2017-18. That is one of the principles behind this budget brought forward to this House. The budget in 2012-13 includes \$17.7 billion in savings, which is quite considerable, and in the meantime, \$4.4 billion in raising the revenue for the government. When you add these two together, it comes to a figure of close to \$22 billion less in borrowing this year, according to this budget.

So this is a budget which basically looks forward. It's an action budget, Mr. Speaker. It aims to eliminate the

deficit by the year 2017-18, in the meantime, investing, as we have been doing in the past eight years, in education and health care.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain has two minutes to respond.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague here from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, the member from Richmond Hill and the member from Ottawa Centre.

I would like to respond to the member from Ottawa Centre saying that I said we shouldn't have full-time kindergarten. I never said that.

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: Exactly. We need to know how we're going to pay for it. I think it's a fabulous program. I think a lot of children are going to enjoy being in all-day daycare. We know they're going to have to have afternoon naps, and there's going to be some difficulties along the road. But the problem is, we're robbing Peter to pay Paul, I believe, for that program at this point in time. We're cutting back on child care subsidies to help pay for those costs, and we just have to really ensure we're doing the right thing at the right time. It may have been a better time before this budget came forward that we were initiating programs like that. But looking at the budget, again, like I said, it's kind of brought a different day on to it.

I would like to thank all of the members for their comments regarding my debate. I was happy to bring the voice of Hamilton Mountain into this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette): Further debate?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: On behalf of the residents of Mississauga–Brampton South, I'm pleased to put forward my thoughts on the 2012 Ontario budget.

Every budget is about making choices, whether it's your own household budget, your business budget or the finances of the provincial government. Making the right choices is never easy. There is never enough money to meet our needs, so we have to set priorities. We all do it with our own families, and government is no different.

Budget 2012 lays out a five-year plan to keep Ontario on track, eliminate the deficit and balance the budget at the same time by 2017-18. What is most important is, it explains that the choices we are making are the right choices and why we are making them. We firmly believe that the choices we made in the 2012 budget are the similar ones that people would like to make in their own homes in Mississauga–Brampton South.

People want a strong education system because they recognize it is the best possible investment we can make in the future of our children. By working together, we have made great changes over the past eight years, in contrast to chaos, cuts and confrontation under the previous government.

Others would choose to do it differently. They would scrap full-day kindergarten. They would get rid of the

30% tuition reduction in post-secondary education. They would raise class sizes, and they would fire teachers. Those would be wrong choices. Those wouldn't be the right choices.

We have been making the right choices since 2003, and this budget is also about right choices. The people of Mississauga–Brampton South have seen the positive impacts of right choices. The new Sheridan campus in Mississauga is the result of a right choice which will help not only our youth, adults, seniors and newcomers, but it will also create jobs and drive the local economy. The new med school in Mississauga, at UTM, is the result of a right choice which will provide access to more doctors. The launch of full-day kindergarten is the result of a right choice. In my own riding, more than five schools have full-day kindergarten, and I have never met a parent who doesn't like full-day kindergarten, because it provides a seamless day both for the parents and children and saves \$6,500 per child in daycare for the parents, and it enables our children to get the best start possible in their schools and enables them to be competitive in the tough world economy.

Increasing grants for student needs, which has been almost \$4,000 since 2003, per student, has made our publicly funded education system the best in the English-speaking world.

People want a strong health care system, because when someone we love is sick, nothing else matters. Eighteen new hospitals are the result of positive choices, including the redevelopment of Peel Memorial in Brampton. And 200 family health teams are the result of right choices, and more access to doctors is the result of right choices. The launch of a comprehensive strategy for mental health and addiction is the result of right choices. Our government allocated \$257 million and laid out a 10-year strategy so that we can have a coordinated and responsive mental health care system.

Last week, I was at Associated Youth Services of Peel in my riding. By 2013, \$1.3 million will flow to that riding, which will work alongside the teachers in the schools to help our children. What is this? This is a result of right choices, positive choices.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada has also given its recommendations, and I urge the federal government to implement its recommendations as soon as possible so that we can work together to help our youth, to help our children. We do not want to leave them in the lurch.

Mr. Speaker, because of our government's right choices, we have made Ontario very competitive. Ontario has become the second place, after California, in the world to attract foreign investment, and we have already lowered more than \$8 billion a year in business taxes, which is working. Everywhere in Ontario—and in my riding many businesses, such as Concept Plastics, Silfab Ontario, Hydrogenics and many more in my riding and in Mississauga and across Ontario, have seen the benefits of that tax reduction. As a matter of fact, I was talking to the CEO of Concept Plastics this past week. They advised

me that they are working 24-7 and they are creating jobs as a result of lower taxes.

We have created 371,000 jobs since the recessionary low in June 2009, despite the sluggish US economy, the high Canadian dollar, rising oil prices and ongoing uncertainty in the global economy.

1540

Mr. Speaker, this budget is all about the right choices we have been making since 2003 and we have made in this budget—and we will continue to do so. We have created a Jobs and Prosperity Council so that we can stay on a sustainable path. Last week, the CEO and president of the Royal Bank, Gordon Nixon, was appointed as the chair, and he has already started working on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is a real plan, it's a positive plan, and this is a strong action plan. It's more than an economic document; it's all about the values we believe as Ontarians: to have good schools, to have good colleges, good universities and good hospitals. This budget will eliminate the deficit and at the same time balance the budget by 2017-18 and protect the gains we have made in health and education. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the speech from the member from Mississauga–Brampton South. She talked a lot about right choices, as referenced in the budget bill. Mr. Speaker, last year the deficit for the province of Ontario was \$15.3 billion. This year it's going to be \$15.2 billion. So we still have this huge deficit. The government had their own economic adviser, Mr. Drummond, who I would say was more of a stall tactic to get beyond the election than anything else. But he spent many months looking at Ontario finances. What he said was that if the government continues to spend the way they've spent the last eight years, status quo is that by 2017 we won't have a balanced budget, as the government has predicted; we'll have a \$30-billion deficit and we will have a tripling of the debt in the province, to \$411 billion. Mr. Speaker, those are scary numbers, and that's what this budget is putting forward: scary numbers that we continue to spend way beyond our means.

Mr. Drummond's report put out a lot of recommendations—there were 360-odd recommendations—and then the government very quickly started to say, "We won't do this. We won't do that. We won't follow that recommendation." But they haven't replaced it with anything else to save money. So despite talking a good game about balancing the budget, so far we've seen very little action, and that's of great concern.

In 2010, I remember the finance minister talking about freezing wages, and that has just not happened. We hear a lot of talk about right choices. Well, I see bankruptcy for the province of Ontario on the path we're heading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnett): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just want to reiterate some of the comments that the member from Mississauga–

Brampton South had started with, which is making choices and what those choices are going to be, making the right choices. Let's review some of the choices that this Liberal government has decided to make.

The choice they made in regard to the budget is no discussions. The choice they made in regard to the horse racing industry is no discussions. The choice in regard to the ONTC—no discussions. Again, we're following that through, following the pattern, and we're going to talk about the casinos—no discussions. ServiceOntario—there may be some discussions, but we're going to privatize it and we're going to open up a much bigger problem, which is a very big concern for communities that I represent in Algoma-Manitoulin. You have to remember, Algoma-Manitoulin is not a bike ride away from community to community, and it is not just a Tim Hortons cup to get from one community to the other. It's a large and vast area. When you start eliminating some of these services and taking them away from those communities, it is a very scary thought for those individuals. You have seniors in these communities who are very dependent on these services, having them close by in their communities, where they can have access to renew their health card, where they won't have to drive two hours down the highway. These are very important issues to people in the community. So it all comes back to choices.

Again, I like hearing when the government is saying that we're making choices, but when you're making those choices, they have to be followed by discussions where you're actually engaging people who are living in these communities, not just making an announcement in a local coffee shop or making an announcement on a random piece. You actually have to sit at the table and engage in those discussions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Mississauga-Brampton South for her comments. I think she did a good job early on in her remarks of characterizing exactly what it is that a budget is all about. That's what's being debated here today. Of course, my view of it is that it does, to a large degree, set out the priorities and the plans of the government moving forward. Historically—I think it's fair to say since 2003—the priorities of our government have been primarily health care and education, and I think this budget once again exhibits a very clear commitment to health care and education.

We've heard the name of Mr. Drummond mentioned today in the debate as it unfolds. He made some very strong recommendations that we have not followed when it came to education especially. This budget reconfirms our commitment.

I would say to the people interested in this debate, and especially those in my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, that there are some obvious numbers, and even though we all have too many numbers floating around, when you can say we have 3,400 more doctors working in Ontario

today than we did eight years ago and when you can say we have 15,000 more nurses working today than we did in 2003, I think that very clearly articulates a commitment to health care.

Just last week, in my riding, we had an announcement province-wide, of course, of 900-plus more nurses; 66 of those will be in my riding. A nurse practitioner clinic is an example of our commitment. It has 3,200 formerly orphaned patients now rostered in the nurse practitioner clinic: a method of delivering health care that's transforming health care, that is rostering people who previously did not have access to a primary care provider. We're making great strides in this regard, Mr. Speaker.

There's always more work to be done, but this budget clearly articulates our commitment to health care and education.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I stand and respond to the member from Mississauga-Brampton South.

Her talking about her party's commitments to education and health care, and then going on to compare Ontario to California, is interesting, because our debt per person is more than 10 times what it is in California, a state that's considered to be bankrupt.

We look at our deficit this year that they somehow brag about as being a spending cut. In actual fact, if you take the combined total of all the other provinces—the nine provinces—we're over three times that total. There's definitely no signs of any strategic planning.

Our condition for supporting this budget was some control on spending. It comes down to choices, really. We look at priorities, and it would be great—I think this government treats spending as if they're in a supermarket on a shopping spree, where you run around and just fill up the cart without any regard for what things cost. Sooner or later the system is going to fail and we're going to have to go back and pay this off or join some of our previous allies in Greece and Spain, where we'll actually have other people bailing us out. It's a matter of making the right choices.

When we look at some of our spending in health care, we look at the scandals in health care, whether it be eHealth or whether it be the Ornge ambulances, where billions are wasted, and we hear this time and time again.

It's interesting to note some of the history. If you go back to when we first got in here, on November 11 the Auditor General warned this government of the spending; in December, Moody's Investors Services downgraded it to negative; February 2012, the Conference Board of Canada warned that they could not reach their 2018 target; March 2012, the minister releases the budget, and then we're followed by two quick downgrades. The world is telling us we have a problem here—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

That concludes the time we have for questions and comments. I return to the member for Mississauga-Brampton South for her two-minute reply.

1550

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I appreciate the comments from the members from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Algoma–Manitoulin and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka spoke about the debt. Mr. Speaker, I wonder how he forgets how much debt they left in 2003: a \$5.8-billion deficit. You left a \$5.8-billion deficit, and you hid it. You didn't even disclose it. And the economy was booming south of the border, the dollar was low and gas prices were low as well. You forget about what you have done—what your government has done—when you were in power.

What we are talking about is right choices, the right choices, the path we can set, how we can eliminate the deficit, balance the budget and at the same time protect the values Ontarians love. We all know that Ontarians like the best education system and Ontarians like the best health system. The Leader of the Opposition, John Tory, even said that Ontario has the best education system. Under whose watch? Under this government's watch. He said it in 2008.

This is what this budget is. It's all about priorities, and we have set up priorities. We will eliminate the deficit and balance the budget by 2017-18, and we will protect the gains we have made in education and health.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I'm grateful for the opportunity to present some ideas coming from people in my area, down in Haldimand and Norfolk. Would that the circumstances were different than having to address the government's ironically titled strong measures for Ontario act. I say "ironically" because the only strong measures seem to be the words in the title.

We have here a very weak offering, an offering that will continue the steady march to an increased deficit and increased debt. As we know, we're looking down the barrel at \$411.4 billion four or five years down the road. It doesn't take the recent budget—these budget measures as well—to remind us that the fundamental building block in our province, our fiscal foundation, is not stable, something our finance critic has reminded us all of in this House.

That means that the money to pay for the things we all value—I know there's been talk of health care and education very recently this afternoon; infrastructure as well. All of this is threatened. Nobody knows this better than the taxpayer, who knows what happens when he can't get control of finances in the home or on the farm or in their small business.

Don Drummond understands this. You know, Speaker, that's the Don Drummond this government paid to give them direction on how to rein in spending on that \$32-billion deficit and that \$411.4-billion debt. That's the same Don Drummond the government continues to ignore. That's the report that's presently sitting on the shelf. I am assuming it's a dusty shelf and we have yet another report gathering some dust.

If Ontario has any chance to come close to its predicted balanced budget by 2017-18, Drummond notes,

"The provincial government must take much tougher fiscal measures over a protracted period than anyone has yet discussed publicly." He goes on to say that that means "deeper cuts to program spending on a real per capita basis, and over a much longer period of time, than the Harris government did in the 1990s." Given eight years of McGuinty spending—the excess—meeting a balanced budget target means that program spending must drop 2.7% over the next seven years; again, Drummond's figures. That's 0.4% annually, a decline in government spending that even Mr. Drummond admits is unprecedented.

I'm not necessarily an advocate of Drummond's cuts in spending; I'm an advocate of cutting wasteful spending where necessary. By and large, people in my riding and across the province are thrifty. We cannot live beyond our means without eventually hitting a wall. In my view, everyone inherently understands that there are limits. There's a difference between things we'd like to have and things we need. Sometimes you have to make a choice. Business understands this. That's what business does. Money comes in; money goes out. You live right on the line every single day. Ideally, you know how much you made that day or how much you lost. You have to stay lean, you have to compete and you have to continually do things better. You have to do things more efficiently and, most importantly, you have to do things more effectively.

Where's the plan? I see no plan in this proposal for the 600,000 men and women; they wake up each morning with no job to go to. Where is the plan, again, to steer us off that path to a \$30.2-billion deficit and a \$411.4-billion debt? Mr. McGuinty faced two paths; he took the wrong path. Normally what I've seen, when Mr. McGuinty reaches a fork in the road, he can't make up his mind and he takes the fork. At least he made a decision. There was a path that demanded urgent action for reducing the bloated size and cost of government and restoring private sector job creation. The other path was the status quo, one of mediocrity, accepting anemic growth, major job losses and a weak response to the massive deficit. As we know, Mr. McGuinty chose the second path.

This isn't an austerity budget. It's terribly disappointing. It's a disappointing response to a very serious and deepening job crisis and a spending crisis. We hear this constantly in the House. It just kicks the can down the road. It is time for a different path. It's a time to discuss some alternatives. It's time for some very, very tough discussion about the fact that we're staring down the barrel of this tremendously large debt.

Many expected much more than deferred spending, much more than voluntary wage freezes and tweaks to government pensions. We see that a McGuinty public sector wage freeze has become little more than a talking point. I find it sad. I was shocked, in the budget, when social assistance recipients had their benefits frozen. We did see Mr. McGuinty change his mind on that one. We saw the child care benefit delayed. It's obviously easier

for this government to pick the low-hanging fruit rather than to deal with one issue—for example, public sector compensation. Public sector compensation makes up well over 50% of government spending. Public sector compensation—not only wages but also benefits, pension and other stipends—makes up well over 50% of that \$411.4-billion debt that's projected by Mr. Drummond.

There is a way out of this. I spent eight years—I spent time with you, Speaker—on the finance committee. I spent time with the member for Muskoka. Discussions—it seemed like endless discussions.

Citizen participation: What happened this winter? No hearings—no finance committee hearings; the end of citizen participation for what I consider, and especially at this particular time, one of the most important issues that we need to deal with. A vacuum is left with currently a defunct pre-budget process. In opposition, we presented a number of ideas. We called for action to help kick-start the economy. Obviously, we talked about a public sector wage freeze, a mandatory freeze. We talked about outsourcing. We talked about arbitration reform. Again, with something like 55% of all government program expenses going to wages and benefits, something has got to give, and pretty soon. A fair, effective, legislated public sector salary freeze, in contrast to Mr. McGuinty's unenforceable voluntary wage freeze, is a very important first step—something that a number of other provinces have done themselves. In fact, the Premier admitted himself that he “couldn't agree more” with a Conference Board of Canada report suggesting that, “If we don't do things in a different way, we're not going to be able to balance our budget in 2017-18.”

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I'm running out of time, Speaker. I think the bottom line is, we have to get our house in order. We have to take a look at this tremendous expense of public sector compensation. We need to look at some ideas like linking public sector compensation to gross domestic product, linking it to job creation and economic growth. Now, there would be an incentive for one million public sector employees at the municipal level and the provincial level to pitch in and have a vested interest in helping to boost our private sector economy. We see the ideas, we see the innovation in the private sector economy. We have to come up with some measures to better enable our public servants to be part of some of these solutions.

What do we see on the other side? We see another round of business tax cuts, this in the middle of an economic downturn. We see this hare-brained idea to tax the rich. That's a guarantee to drive out job creators in our province. We need better ideas than that.

I put a lot of my faith in the public sector. Over one million employees in the province of Ontario—70% are unionized. They are organized, and they are there to help our province of Ontario to come out of this crisis.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you for the comments from the member for Haldimand–Norfolk. He had

mentioned that this budget that's been presented is not an austerity budget. I'm not sure what example we need to show how much of an austerity budget it is when he made the comment about this government going after the low-hanging fruit, people on social assistance. If it doesn't get more austerity than that, I don't know where else that definition may be in encompassing that.

Not to point any fingers, but just a history fact—that's all—that I want to kind of bring to light is that under the government of the Conservatives back about 16 years ago, they actually cut OW by approximately 22%. I'm glad he's sympathetic to the fact that this government didn't want to at least give the inflationary amount to people on assistance or ODSP, but there's a lot more to be done when we talk about austerity that is affecting people who can't give any more and their belts are tightened enough as it is.

The other history tidbit that brings to mind when we talk about OW and how they were cut back 22%, 16 years ago, and the minister at the time was community and social services—I hope I say his name right, Mr. Tsubouchi. He suggested that people who were on social assistance perhaps could get their protein from a 69-cent can of tuna. It's really disturbing to hear that we aren't giving more to people who need a little more because they're at the bottom of the financial scale, but yet we're trying to balance a budget on their backs as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Haldimand–Norfolk for his comments. Not surprisingly from that side of the House, from the official opposition, a fair bit of focus placed on the deficit position that we find ourselves in: That's fair; that's understandable; that's expected.

A couple of points on that, though: I would remind people, as well as my colleague just a few minutes ago did, that in 2003, during incredibly robust economic times in the United States, our primary trading partner, we found ourselves saddled with a \$5.5-billion deficit when we came to government. I think that's relevant because the times were incredibly different. We had a very low Canadian dollar. We were primarily an exporting economy at that time, and yet under those incredibly strong economic circumstances, we still inherited a \$5.5-billion deficit that subsequently required legislation on our behalf so that no incoming government could find a surprise—let's just leave it at that—when they come in.

The other thing I would say on the budget, Speaker, as well, is that in the very recently concluded provincial election, in October 2011, in terms of the commitment to bringing the province back into balance, the position of the official opposition as well as the position of our government was exactly the same in terms of the time-lines. Your party committed in your election documents to bringing the province back into a balanced position by 2017-18. That's exactly the same commitment that we've made, and we intend to meet that commitment.

The other thing I would say as well in terms of the priorities that the budget lays out is on the full-day

kindergarten piece. It's interesting here as well that in your election document in October, just six or eight months ago, there was a commitment to full-day kindergarten. Yet since we've been here, Speaker, I've heard numerous questions from members of the official opposition criticizing that position that we maintained in this budget. What a difference six or eight months can make.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's a great privilege and honour to speak to the words of our member from Haldimand–Norfolk. I agree with everything he says.

We have here a budget that is mistitled completely, Strong Action for Ontario. There's no strong action at all, except that you're strongly digging a bigger hole than we've ever seen in this country for any province before.

They ignore the hard realities that we have a huge debt and a growing deficit. They've increased spending, and their answer to all of that is to just keep the horses pulling away and spending more of our money. They carry on with green energy acts, which are a huge waste of money. They're going to carry on with the full-day junior kindergarten program, which is \$1.5 billion that we just don't have and we can't spend.

All of these things were recommended by the Auditor General and the Drummond report to be big numbers that we need to address, and something needs to be done. It would have been so easy to fix an awful lot of our financial woes—but this budget doesn't—just by doing the very obvious things. A public sector wage freeze is an obvious one; selling some crown corporations. Reducing the corporate tax rate is an obvious one. It would have been money—an incentive to create plants and jobs. It goes on and on.

They seem to ignore the realities and good examples we see—or bad examples—that are going on in Europe. We have the French. We have the Greeks, whose answer to hitting the wall is just to turn harder to the left. They continue to dig a bigger hole for themselves.

I'm pleased to speak in support of our colleague's words. It disappoints me that our member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan has nothing to say but to point at us, when it's not a problem that we created, but we're all going to have to live with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I sit here very attentively, and I look at both sides of the room. Everyone has their way of using the tool, and I use as a tool the Drummond report. Both sides seem to use it in the way they interpret it. Within the Drummond report, there was a lot of austerity measures. But in principle, the Drummond report dealt with everything that we can cut—take it out, rip it away, throw it away.

The one big question that I always fail to hear within this room is, what happened to the revenue side of it? That wasn't part of the Drummond report. I'm just wondering, if it would have been, would we be talking about the Drummond report right now? That was a big

part of that puzzle that wasn't included in there, which we seem to not be talking about.

Why haven't we been talking about where those dollars have gone? Where were they going? How were they spent? Why wasn't there more accountability on those dollars that were going out? We always keep referring to, "We're doing too much; we're spending too much. We're doing this wrong. We're doing that wrong." But that was a big part of this puzzle that was missing.

I like what the member from Haldimand–Norfolk—he actually brought up a point that this government chose to pick on the low-hanging fruit. Well, the NDP chose to look at the top of the tree. There are fruits that are lying at the top of the tree as well. Those fruits are also in a much better position to provide a little bit of assistance for the entire province, in the state that we're in right now. I don't think it was a big step that we took there; it was a small step. It was a small 2% increase so that we can balance it out for the entire province.

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So look at the tree, yes. Look at all of the tree. There are fruits all over the place that you could actually benefit from and actually bring prosperity to the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return now to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member from Davenport did talk about what I thought was unfortunate when this budget came in. They did go after the low-hanging fruit. Thanks to my colleagues opposite, Mr. McGuinty changed his mind; it's not the first time he's changed his mind in the last eight years.

I agree with the member from Algoma–Manitoulin: There are other approaches. There are some big fish that we can take a look at. I've made it very clear that I don't advocate taxing the rich, but when you see a \$411.4-billion debt—much of that attributed to wasteful spending—half of that debt is as a result of public sector compensation. It's time for us to reach out to the one million-plus public sector employees and ensure that they and their representatives are part of this discussion, part of these consultations and negotiations to help us get out of this hole.

The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan reminded us of the first Liberal budget. That was the first Liberal deficit. They couldn't balance the books then, obviously, and cannot balance the books now. It is time for this government, in conjunction with the other parties, to come up with some ideas, some options, some alternatives, some ways that we can deal with—in a very thoughtful, consultative way—to get ourselves out of this hole.

I worked for a government agency back in the Bill Davis era. I was an employee representative. Every year, voluntarily, my wife and I would take one month off without pay. There's an idea to consider again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Since I've been in the House, this is one of the largest bills that I've seen come across our desk, Bill 55, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts, the Strong Action for Ontario Act.

New Democrats recognize that when the people of Ontario spoke in October 2011, they sent a very clear message: They voted in a minority government, and they wanted to see all parties contribute and work together to make life better for all Ontarians. The message that they left us with—that I heard on the doorstep, anyway—was that life needs to be more affordable. They want to protect their health care, and they want good jobs—good, permanent jobs—with benefits.

When the budget process started, New Democrats listened to Ontarians. We listened to the message, we rolled up our sleeves and we said, “This is a minority government. Our role to play here is to contribute to this budget process and try to make life better for Ontarians.”

One of the things that our leader of the New Democratic Party did, as well as the finance critic from Beaches–East York, was that they decided to take matters into their own hands and tour the province so they could listen to Ontarians and see what they had to say—because unfortunately, this government decided that there weren't going to be any budget consultations, and the voices of Ontarians weren't being heard. We took it upon ourselves to do that because we needed to know what people were feeling so that we could contribute with some value to this budget. They went to ridings all over Ontario; they didn't just pick certain ones. They made sure they got a good segment of what people were feeling.

We also went a step further and decided that when the budget was released we were going to actually get input from people as well; so the pre-budget consultations and then when the budget was released. We had a website, and we had telephone lines for every person in Ontario to contribute. When we had that happen, we heard that people's voices were asking us to make this budget fair. They didn't want an election, but they wanted some action to be taken to make this budget fair.

Because we heard the voices of everyday folks, we came up with some proposals to the budget to try to work with this government and make life better for Ontarians. This government proposed that even the most vulnerable of our society, earning the type of benefits as low as they could be with ODSP, someone on a disability pension, take part in this austerity budget. But Speaker, I ask myself, if someone is on a budget that's as little as between \$1,000 to \$1,100, and that's the average, when they have their rent—I can speak for my riding; a one-bedroom apartment in London, if you're lucky and it's a very modest apartment, is \$700. Then, of course, you have your nutrition. You have to buy your food. If you're lucky enough to own a car, you've got to put gas in the car and you also have to have insurance. As well, if you have a couple of children—well, if you have a one-bedroom apartment, hopefully you're not going to have

your whole family living there. But if you do have other accommodations and you're on ODSP and you have your children, those kids aren't going to be participating in sports or have the extracurricular activities they could have when perhaps someone is working and has a good, permanent, paying job that can help the quality of life to raise their family in their community.

So Speaker, we asked ourselves, where is the fairness in that proposal, having a zero increase in ODSP and zero in OW? What we came up with—and my colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin touched on it, and many of my colleagues in the House recently—is that people who make more money and have a good quality of life could contribute to the deficit and it would hit their family's financial status in a much softer way, rather than someone who is already being hit hard and then it's just going to get harder with that asking to take no increase on their benefits.

That's what Ontarians were saying: The budget wasn't fair. So we looked at that piece, and we proposed that piece for fairness. To our surprise, it was actually embraced by many, many Ontarians. It's not a concept that is unreasonable. It's a very practical thing to think of when someone—if I made more money, \$500,000, half a million dollars, I certainly would want to contribute to a better quality of life for others who perhaps couldn't do it themselves. So that was one of the pieces we contributed towards this budget. That was one.

The next one that we looked at as far as fairness is corporate tax rates. Since the Liberals have been in office, they dropped the corporate tax rate from 15% to the current amount, 11.5%. Their proposal was to even further decrease the corporate tax rate. Their plan was to have more jobs created in Ontario, but that wasn't working, because when you go from a 15% corporate tax rate to 11.5% in the timeline that they were in power—it wasn't working because the unemployment rate was creeping up. And then again, that fairness piece that we talked about, Speaker, we brought a motion and we suggested in this House that fairness, again, should be—don't lower the corporate tax; let's look at keeping it stable. It was reasonable. The government agreed to that. So that was another fair piece we brought into the budget, and not just asking those who are in the most vulnerable state to contribute to this budget. Having the corporate tax rate stay the same helps businesses also contribute, and we proposed a balance to that.

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We proposed recently in this House that, let's say a business creates a job, then we want to reward job creators. So keeping that 11.5%, they're contributing back; should they go out and hire a new hire or retrain or get a new piece of equipment, then we're saying, “Let's reward those job creators.” That's fair, Speaker, because it's a balanced way of looking at revenue generating, right? We're not going to lower that 11.5% corporate tax rate any lower, so it's going to stay the same, so it's going to generate a little more revenue than lowering it. Then we're saying, “If you do create a job, that person

who's going to work in your business is going to put money back into the economy, is maybe going to take their kids out to soccer, take them out for dinner, invest in their community," and therefore we're going to reward that job creator. There's a practical, reasonable way of how to stimulate the economy.

I'm very glad to have talked on the budget. It's a big bill; I think it's 365 pages, so you can read a page a day, but we're not going to have that leisure. It certainly is something that we were proud of as New Democrats here in the House, that we were able to give a couple of proposals and inject a little fairness into this budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It certainly is a pleasure to make a few comments on our colleague from London–Fanshawe's thoughts on Bill 55. She made the comment that this is a very large bill, a big bill with so many pages. Yes, indeed, it is, because it's a very comprehensive five-year plan to balance the budget by 2017-18 while maintaining a lower rate of growth and spending and making sure that we meet our deficit targets that have been laid out previously. So, of course, it is a very comprehensive bill.

The Minister of Finance asked each ministry to look at where potential savings were. In fact, this plan lays out some \$17.7 billion worth of savings and actions to contain cost increases. There are some \$4.4 billion worth of revenue-raising measures. So, we have had a very detailed look at the workings of this government.

I would like to say that certainly the third party entered into meaningful negotiations with our government and did provide us with some useful changes, and the member referred to fairness. I think that's a very, very good point. I recently met with a number of seniors in my riding and we discussed changing the Ontario Drug Benefit Program so that 5% of senior ODB recipients with the highest incomes would pay more for their prescription drugs. Much to my surprise—this was certainly a fairly affluent group of seniors—they were wholeheartedly in favour of that.

So I think this budget certainly brings this measure of fairness the member talked about while, of course, putting forward a very strong five-year plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I know the member for Davenport made reference to rewarding the job creators. I think we can build on that idea. I feel we can broaden that idea to work in incentives.

Again, I know earlier this afternoon I made mention of well over a million people that work for the public sector—provincial, municipal, in our hospitals and in our education system. There are things that we can do to reach out to employees in the public sector to provide some wage incentives, or disincentives, if need be, to try to link the overarching issue of public sector compensation, which we're using borrowed money to pay for half of those kinds of bills, to reach out to the leadership to

ask the public sector to, in a more fulsome way, address the issue of overspending and the resulting deficit and the debt.

We in the baby boom crowd have created this problem. We didn't pay our bills. We ran up the debt. We've done this. We have done this most recently through the present Liberal government.

In my view, the challenge to the New Democratic Party, as they recognize, or I hope they recognize, the chickens have come home to roost, whether it's paying taxes—not that revenue is the overarching problem. But if we don't solve it, we cannot ask our kids to do this. Our kids are having trouble getting jobs as it is, and we look to the third party for some ideas with respect to reform and with respect to the transformation of how we do business in the public sector for starters.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm honoured to join in the debate. My colleague from London–Fanshawe touched on some very important parts. Essentially, the theme of her remarks and of our approach is about fairness. It's offensive that we look to always cutting those who are hard off before we look to other sources.

Touching on the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, there are those who are not the low-hanging fruit; there are those who are the high-hanging fruit. There are ways of delivering services that can save us money. There are ways of increasing our revenues so that we protect those people who are most vulnerable.

Looking at the public sector, the public sector is an example of well-paid people who deserve to be paid well, but they're still workers. They are still people who are putting in their hard-earned, daily—they are exchanging their time for money. They are people who are working hard and providing excellent services, and that's not where we should look to create savings. Let's look at public sector CEOs who are making millions of dollars. Let's look at corporations who aren't creating jobs in Ontario. Let's look at those people as a measure of fairness, as a measure of a comprehensive approach to improving Ontario, and not simply cutting services and cutting where it hurts people who are vulnerable.

As an example, the corporate tax regime in Ontario has been steadily decreasing and our jobless rate has been steadily increasing. It's clearly not working as a strategy. We need to have a shift in our paradigm so that we look at effective measures that actually impact in a meaningful way. If we want to have more jobs in Ontario, let's create a tax structure that addresses that. If we want to reduce the deficit, let's look at our costs and our expenses that are inefficient and create more efficiencies and protect those who are hard off while looking at people who can afford to pay more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to respond to the member from London–Fanshawe. She certainly speaks well for those who need additional help and obviously

was one of the ones who worked very hard to get the additional dollars for the Ontario Disability Support Program and Ontario Works. That \$55 million extra will certainly benefit those families.

I'd like to talk about what was in the budget even before that, though, for families, and the Ontario child credit. It isn't going to be increased as fast as we would have hoped for, but the Ontario child credit has contributed to lifting about 20,000 children out of poverty. That's very important, and that has been acknowledged by studies. It will be going up from \$1,100 to \$1,210 in July 2013, and in July 2014 up to \$1,310 per child who qualifies.

Of course, one of the really important benefits for all families is full-day kindergarten. That has taken a lot of the dollars, that expense, off the families and is getting the children from homes where it is more difficult for the children, taking them into full-day schools at age four and age five. It's going to be a big benefit to those families, ongoing. These are really important issues.

1630

There have been improvements with what the third party has come in and negotiated with this government. Those dollars are very important, the 1% increase in ODSP and Ontario Works. You have your heart in the right place. I support certainly what you have added to the budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member for London–Fanshawe, who has two moments to reply.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I wanted to thank the members from Oak Ridges–Markham, Haldimand–Norfolk, Bramalea–Gore–Malton and Ottawa–Orléans. I just want to maybe mention to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk that my riding is London–Fanshawe and my seatmate's is Davenport.

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Not a problem. You'll never forget that now, right?

I do appreciate the comments. The theme I was putting out there was fairness. The two pieces that I talked about certainly have made this somewhat fair with regard to a surtax on those making half a million dollars of about 2% to 3%, I think it is, and the other piece about corporate taxes to stay at 11.5%.

The other item that I didn't get a chance to speak to was the executive salary freeze. That fairness piece also came from the New Democrats. It applies to the CEO, president, board members, vice-president, chief administrative officer, chief operating officer, chief financial officer, chief information officer or others that hold any other executive position.

Ms. Cindy Forster: A lot of chiefs.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: That's a lot of chiefs.

Again, that's a leadership thing. I think that we have taken that leadership and said this budget needs to be a little fairer, and those that are better off than most could give a little more. That is a piece that I think is really

important: that we have this in this budget so that it's all shared by everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It's great to have an opportunity to speak on the budget bill, Bill 55. May I say, as a northerner, I'm very proud to be part of a government that brought forward such a strong budget, a budget that indeed seeks to protect the actions taken to see that our health care system continues to be one of the best in the world and to be part of a government that also focuses so strongly on the gains we've made in the education sector. It keeps those priorities but also makes it very clear that one of our clear goals needs to be our commitment to eliminate the deficit by the 2017-18 fiscal year. That capacity allows us to focus on our very clear priority of jobs and the economy: creating jobs and certainly building our economy all across the province.

I know that the members in this House are well aware of the recent very good news in northern Ontario related to the developments of the Ring of Fire, and many other opportunities that are there as well. We want to continue to seek those opportunities.

I'm also very pleased, in my position as the Minister of Natural Resources, to have various aspects of our ministry become a significant part of the budget bill as well. I think, as most people know, that the Ministry of Natural Resources is an incredibly important one all across the province of Ontario. When I was asked to take over the responsibilities by the Premier—obviously, it's a great honour, being a northerner, to be the minister responsible for this great ministry with such an iconic status but also to learn, as I have, how important the ministry is all across the province. May I say that the reality is that the ministry is facing some real pressures and has to contribute as part of the fiscal plan to the responsibilities we have to help eliminate the deficit.

I think many people in the Legislature know and understand that the Ministry of Natural Resources is responsible for 46 different pieces of legislation. It was more like 28, I think, in the mid-1990s. We have 300 different permits or authorizations that are part of the work that our ministry people do—very, very labour-intensive. So we are using this opportunity, certainly, of the budget exercise to also begin a three-year transformation of our ministry so that we can actually deliver services in a more efficient and better manner, recognizing that those core principles of our ministry will always be important to us, will always be a real priority for our ministry. But we need to find ways to do it in a fashion that will continue to be well received by the people in the province of Ontario, but we can also do it in a better fashion.

This bill proposes to amend nine laws, nine of our 46 pieces of legislation administered by the ministry. We believe that the amendments that are being brought forward, the enabling legislation, will enable us to deliver on our mandate to manage and protect the province's natural resources in a way that truly serves Ontarians better.

We have, I think perhaps with the best of intentions over the years, created processes that I think most people would agree perhaps take too long, and they cost a fair amount to administer as well. So whether you're a homeowner planning work on your property, whether you're a forestry company working to create jobs all across the province or you're working to help protect endangered species, we have been told by a lot of people that the ministry's rules and their processes don't always work for them.

What we're looking for in terms of the potential amendments to the legislation would help us streamline the approvals processes so that the ministry can provide faster, more responsive services with the reduced financial resources that we have, but also help us maintain our core priorities, because that is absolutely our bottom line. I want to be very clear on that. Make no mistake about our ministry's commitment to our core principles and priorities: fish and wildlife, endangered species protection, forestry crown land management, water parks, protected areas—Ontario parks are all opening up this weekend, of course, Victoria Day weekend. We're excited about that. It's very exciting news—non-renewable resources and public safety. Our commitment to those core priorities is unwavering, and we will certainly make sure that that is maintained.

So the transformation plan itself will certainly help preserve, but it will also, to some degree, reshape the ministry's role in natural resources management, something we are incredibly proud of.

It will also support economic growth and job creation, and it will allow the ministry to achieve financial sustainability over the course of the next three years. Nobody will tell you for one minute that it's going to be easy to do that, but we think we can do it in a fashion that, with the help of everyone here in the Legislature or the public, we can deliver on that.

The realization of this plan—and again, I'm glad to have an opportunity to talk about. I certainly hear people reference it a great deal. I think it will create a modern and more strategic ministry, and we are proposing some amendments to a variety of acts. I think I've got probably enough time just to go through some of the pieces of legislation that we are looking at amending, and we'll look forward to having an opportunity to discuss some of them in more detail perhaps.

The Crown Forest Sustainability Act, for example: We're going to propose amendments to that that would provide some flexibility in forest management planning and permit a shift towards more cost recovery and user-pay models.

Under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, we are proposing amendments that would allow for a reduction in the number of authorizations and licences that are required. Again, we have heard from people. We think that it has become somewhat unwieldy, so what we are looking at—and your thoughts will be appreciated—is setting some standards which individuals or organizations would then need to meet. So when we set a standard and you meet that, you are able to access your licence.

Under the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act, we are proposing some amendments that would streamline water management planning and dam operation requirements. The proposed amendments would also allow for different delivery models, such as the opportunity, potentially, to have a private association oversee the construction and operation and the maintenance of dams, something, again, that we would love to hear your thoughts on.

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We're proposing amendments as well to the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act that would provide more flexibility in areas such as park management planning and would streamline the approvals process for even establishing a park or a conservation reserve and potentially making some changes to the boundaries.

With respect to the Public Lands Act, we're proposing amendments to allow the ministry to delegate selected functions to persons or to organizations outside of government. The amendments could, for example, allow the ministry to enter into an agreement with municipalities to manage crown land within municipal boundaries, something that we've certainly heard from municipal leaders in the past about. We think that could be something that would make our ministry run in a more smooth fashion with that kind of work and co-operation.

Clearly, one of the most important industries that we have in the province is the forest industry, which is obviously under our mandate as well. To support jobs in the forest industry in northern Ontario we're proposing amendments to the Ontario forest tenure modernization legislation we brought forward a year or so ago. Those amendments would give the sitting Minister of Natural Resources the authority to make loans to Ontario local forest management corporations. We have one pilot project set up right now in northwestern Ontario that's moving along in a very positive way. We have authority, and agreement, may I say, for us to move forward on another pilot local forest management corporation, and I'm looking forward to that as we are also in the midst of having discussions with the forest industry themselves, the Ontario Forest Industries Association, about moving to a model of enhanced shareholder forest licences as well, and those conversations are going well. These particular amendments would allow us to help out the local forest management corporations getting going.

There's been a fair amount of discussion—how much time do I have left?—about the Endangered Species Act. I want to be very clear: We are very much going to maintain our commitment to protecting species at risk while we speak about the opportunity to potentially streamline approvals and permitting. I know there was a private member's bill last week that was brought forward by my critic. While I had real concerns about that perhaps going too far, I do think that what we are looking at under the Endangered Species Act is a classic example of being able to find that balance. We talk about finding a balance. It's crucial. We need to help industry, help endangered species, protect our species, and we're going to continue to do that.

It appears I've run out of time, Mr. Speaker. Thanks so much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's an honour to get up to respond to the minister. I'm glad to hear some of the changes they're bringing out and I think they're well overdue.

I hear every day from my constituents how issues like the endangered species need to be looked at. We heard that again from the Environment Commissioner when he talked about how the ministry had basically gone overboard with what they were trying to do as far as regulation, because some of these species, although they have been in the area, are essentially outside of their habitat. So sometimes, by trying to look after every last one, really—I think his comment kind of hit home when he said that the biggest problem they have is the domestic house cat. We are chasing things that really can be perceived as a waste of time. But he brings up a lot of things that are just a good news story.

In my own riding, the crown land—we have a long stretch of about 40 kilometres between Cornwall, South Stormont and South Dundas that's been sterilized by Ontario Hydro with the Seaway. This is land that's growing up now in just brush along the water, the St. Lawrence River, which would be a real asset to that municipality if it could be used for even parkland, which is in short supply. It could be turned over and developed and generate assessment that would help the township out in many of its bills.

I would also comment, not on this—something that the minister said—but something said by the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan when he talked about inheriting the deficit. I'd like to remind him that really the deficit was zero when they came in, but it was overspent. That was just a warning sign of what we can expect from this government when they drove that spending up to more than \$4.5 billion. I think the people of Ontario deserve better. They deserve the truth, and that's something we've been—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you to the Minister of Natural Resources for your comments. However, I kind of find it interesting that you're looking for our input and consultation now, kind of at the end of the process, where historically there would have been public hearings before the budget was set. The budget might have looked very different had that happened.

There was no public consultation. Basically, the public was ignored, with the exception of the NDP's outreach to about 50,000 people. There was no input or consultation with the non-profit sector, but I think there was potentially some consultation with the business sector, because certainly in question period each day, when the budget issue comes up, we hear the Premier or the finance minister speaking to the wide support that businesses are giving this budget. So that leads me to believe that they were consulted when the rest of us weren't.

Now, people in my riding and people in many of yours are not happy with this budget. Even with the amendments that we were able to make to the budget, they're not happy. Seniors are falling behind, 100,000 seniors living in poverty, many of them accessing food banks in this province. People on ODSP and OW—although they are getting a 1% increase, what is that? Five bucks a month. You know, the increase in the cost of milk will eat up that \$5 a month for people on ODSP or Ontario Works. So people are struggling in low-paying jobs that this budget is not going to support. I read an article, actually, in the paper last week about a man who was doing six jobs to try and earn \$30,000 a year here in the city of Toronto. That's shameful.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's always a delight for me to listen to the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North, the gentleman who's doing such an incredible job as the Minister of Natural Resources for this government. I know he's been in my community on several occasions. We have a large contingent of MNR employees at Water Street in Peterborough. The minister took the opportunity to visit with them and solicit their opinions and use their expertise in the field to formulate the kind of plan that he's bringing forward in that ministry.

But I want to touch upon the great work that he's been doing along with his colleague the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. I just did a bit of quick research here. In 2003, Bombardier in Thunder Bay employed 250 people; right now, Bombardier in Thunder Bay employs 1,400 people. That's a dramatic increase in manufacturing, and that was brought about by having a competitive tax structure in the province of Ontario. Bombardier, who could locate in any country in the world—they have operations around the world—chose to make a considerable investment in Thunder Bay. When you go to Thunder Bay today and you visit that Bombardier plant that is building subway cars for all over the world, you see a skilled workforce—second to none—and you can see the fingerprints of the two members from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Thunder Bay–Superior North putting the right policy framework in place to push forward the expansion of Bombardier and creating those high-value jobs that are so important to the people of this province.

Somebody asked me about the deficit, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. The reason we have the deficit? We borrowed money; we borrowed money to save General Motors and Chrysler. If we hadn't done that, there would have been disastrous consequences for many communities right across the province of Ontario. It was the right decision to do that then.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to add a few comments with respect to the remarks that were made by the Minister of Natural Resources. I did listen very carefully to what he said, and a lot of the things that he talked about with respect to some of the amendments that

fall within the purview of his ministry make a lot of sense: streamlining procedures, eliminating things that don't make sense any more.

We did have a very good private member's bill that was brought by my colleague last week, the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, that made some amendments, and it was passed, actually, which was very pleasing to all of us. But I think that also helps to streamline some of the processes and procedures that are no longer necessary.

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But I would like to also speak about his comments concerning the development of the Ring of Fire. I think that last week's announcement certainly was very welcome, and we welcome anything that moves this project forward, because this is a project of huge potential for the province of Ontario. But I would say that anything that's happening in this area is really happening despite this government efforts, not because of them. It's really quite disappointing that there is a coordinator that apparently hasn't done too much. This is something, a huge chromite deposit, that can really bring jobs to the north, particularly to our First Nations people. It's really, really important to develop that to replace the jobs that we have lost, particularly in the forest industry, over the last number of years. Let's face it: This bill really doesn't have any kind of a jobs plan, not for the Ring of Fire development or for anything else.

We continue to lag behind the rest of Canada with respect to our unemployment rates. This has been going on for some five years now. It's really too little, too late. And now we have a council that has been recommended, a Jobs and Prosperity Council. Certainly that's a good idea, and I'm sure that Mr. Nixon is going to do a very good job, but why hasn't this government been on this before? This is something that should have happened years ago. We know that we lag behind in productivity, we know that we lag behind in innovation; it's time to get moving.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I return to the Minister of Natural Resources for his reply.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much. I want to thank the members for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Welland, Peterborough and Whitby–Oshawa. I wish I had a bit more time to respond.

Let me respond to the member for Welland first. By no means is it the end of the process. We're in a position where we are bringing forward enabling legislation. If the budget bill is passed, we are then able to move forward with consultations and discussions with all of our stakeholders and with the public. We look forward to doing that. We do quite seriously invite your thoughts on all aspects of the process. We really believe that this transformation in our ministry is incredibly important, and we want to make sure we do it right. We're going to maintain our core principles, and nothing will change that. As I say, any regulatory changes that go through, they will be put in the Environmental Bill of Rights registry. There

will be an opportunity for public comment. I just wanted to address that.

The member for Peterborough, I can't resist—well, thank you, because you're so right in terms of the opportunities that we're seeing with Bombardier. I appreciate your noting that. My colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and I are very, very proud of the incredible amount of employment that's come to Thunder Bay. This is as a result of this government's commitment to public transit, something the previous government completely abandoned. I know that the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and myself, for Thunder Bay–Superior North, are looking forward to more good news related to Bombardier, in fact, we hope very, very soon.

Quickly, if I may, to the member for Whitby–Oshawa, here we have an investment by a company of \$3.35 billion in northern Ontario and 1,100 direct jobs, 2,000 or 3,000 indirect jobs and the opportunity to massively expand the supply and services sector, which is already a huge, \$5.5-billion to \$6-billion industry. So I think this is great news for northern Ontario. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 55, Strong Action for Ontario Act, although I think that's a bit of a misnomer, because if you're going to add \$2 billion more to this act, you needed to be taking \$2 billion off, not doing this and extending it out to 2017-18.

I want to take a few moments to just dispel the whole spin that the Liberals have spun, the disingenuous and inaccurate depiction of the PC approach to the 2012 budget. Our leader, Tim Hudak, and our finance critic, Peter Shurman, did in fact meet and offered many ideas, bold, decisive ideas to address the unfortunate and stark reality of our dire financial situation. The Premier and the finance minister unfortunately dismissed these ideas, and I would suggest, without any true consideration; this, combined with the fact that the budget failed to take the action required to prevent the \$30-billion deficit we're heading towards and is doing nothing to create jobs in the economy. More so, the budget failed to create jobs and stimulate the economy, and at precisely the time we need to make Ontario more competitive, this budget kicks the can down the road in government debt and throws up a brand new, \$1.5-billion roadblock to job creation by cancelling the tax cuts for business.

Mr. Speaker, at this moment, Ontario is in terrible financial shape. This is pretty clear—well, it is to most people. The Liberals seem to think that a \$30-billion deficit and doubling the debt is okay. After years of missing deficit targets and spending money it didn't have, this government has arrived at a crossroads: tax increases or cutting expenses? I think we're probably going to see more of the former than the latter.

When it comes to slaying out-of-control deficits, such as Ontario's shameful \$15-billion deficit, projected to go to \$30 billion, we know we have to tame the beast that eats up half of our treasury's revenues: public sector wages. You will recall that Dalton McGuinty failed to

deliver a voluntary wage freeze in 2010, so why should we believe and trust him that he will do it this time? For this reason, the government must immediately legislate a freeze on the wages, benefits and pensions of all 1.2 million public sector employees—no more pitting non-union versus unionized employees.

Furthermore, public sector pay and benefits have to be aligned with the private sector pay and benefits schedule. Everyone should be treated equally. If we don't, then our treasury faces an even bigger predicament—a \$411-billion debt that would require deep and severe spending cuts to public services. A wage freeze could save taxpayers \$2 billion annually.

What would seem like a no-brainer for this 2012 Ontario budget, considering the predicament they've dug us into, was not so to the governing Liberals, who are too stubborn to give up their voluntary approach, which can only be described as a failure to get our fiscal house in order.

In a pre-election report by auditor Jim McCarter, he stated, "Most collective agreements negotiated since have still resulted in wage increases"—not decreases; increases, Speaker—proving the Liberals' plan to be both time-consuming and costly to the Ontario government. Numerous pressing fiscal circumstances signal that there's more that needs to be done—much more, and today, not five years down the road. Currently, more than half of all public expenditures are public sector wages. The total amount paid to workers has increased 46% since 2003. It cannot continue, Speaker.

With a growing deficit, the government is unable to focus on priorities such as economic growth or protecting core services such as health care and education. Heavily indebted governments, such as the Liberals are today, cannot afford the things they need to expand, invest or relocate to, such as competitive tax rates and good infrastructure. Having sparked a credit downgrade—two, actually, in the last month—is more than enough feedback that this government needs to rein in the public sector payroll and spending in general.

Ontario's public sector wages seem even more out of control when compared to the sacrifices made on behalf of their private sector counterparts. The private sector has had to cut back; however, the public sector earns 27% more, according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Interjection: They know.

Mr. Bill Walker: They do know. They've got stats and the facts; it's something we should try.

Interjection: That could be fixed.

Mr. Bill Walker: It can be fixed, it should be fixed, and we will fix it at some point.

The proposed negotiations allow for exceptions to be made to various parties. If exceptions are given to all parties, then how will we get any closer to eliminating any portion of this monumental deficit?

The Liberals keep stalling for time with excuses in the face of these substantial economic deteriorations. Yes, we've gone through a decline in the economy, but so has

every other province, and yet we are in the worst shape of all. At the end of this, if they do not make drastic changes, we'll have more debt in this province than the rest of Confederation—absolutely despicable. The truth is that the Liberals' 2012 budget continues to lack any tool to ensure that a wage freeze occurs for anybody.

Another significant issue is the fact that 600,000 Ontarians are unemployed. The number one thing the government can do is create jobs and grow the economy. Simply put, this can be achieved through balancing the budget and paying down the debt if they have the conviction to take strong, bold and decisive action, not bringing the government to the stalemate that it is at right now, and dithering and moving all of our debt out another five years to try to buy another term in office.

The Ontario PCs are proposing more than one active change towards kick-starting the economy and creating jobs by first balancing the budget and thus reducing the size and cost of government. This will effectively encourage businesses to expand and hire. At the same time, we recognize the need for a more competitive business environment, which can be achieved through a lower business tax rate—again, a decision that could have been made very easily and had a huge benefit, but was outvoted.

If the Liberals want to create jobs for the more than half a million Ontarians out of work, they must enable the environment that attracts businesses and encourages investment. Reducing the tax burden is another step in a positive direction—one the Liberals, again, chose not to take. Unfortunately, the 2012 Ontario budget does the opposite by cancelling the legislated business tax reduction and creating a new tax bracket for entrepreneurs and individuals with investment capital. We have to be very cautious to not chase those people with money who want to take risk, who want to invest their capital in our great province.

As a result, job-creating businesses took a double hit in the budget with higher taxes and a counterproductive high-income tax bracket, and I would be remiss if I didn't add a 46% hydro increase, which is driving more businesses yet again out of our province. This drives investment capital and entrepreneurs away from jurisdictions where it has been tried.

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Queen's Park, and more pointedly, the Liberals, need to acknowledge the scope of the crisis Ontarians face. The budget already details a shrinking working-age population due to aging demographics. It is unnecessary to further add to the burden by making Ontario less attractive with higher tax rates. By reducing the business tax rate to 10% by 2013, Ontario can rival competition such as British Columbia and Alberta—booming Alberta—which have already reduced their rates to 10%.

The Ontario government must push for future job creation and enable struggling businesses to thrive by, as an example, making energy affordable, modernizing the apprenticeship system to create 200,000 new skilled-trades jobs and permanently reducing Ontario's 386,251 pieces of regulation by at least a third.

Energy is the cornerstone of economic growth. The government can achieve this target by cutting off subsidies to the production of electricity in Ontario. We know the subsidies are driving up the cost of electricity and making this essential service unaffordable for the average Ontarian, and driving those businesses I referenced earlier out of the province.

You will recall the most recent Auditor General's report found that Ontario was actually paying other jurisdictions almost \$2 billion to take our surplus energy, thus making those entrepreneurs more competitive against our own manufacturing sector. So why are the Liberals approving more power sources—and intermittent, I might add—while continuing to subsidize the production of electricity and paying others billions of dollars to take our excess energy? This is not a common-sense approach to managing either our taxes or our long-term energy needs.

Speaker, let's just talk for a moment about the state of rural Ontario, where I'm proudly from, where unemployment is consistently lower than in urban centres. While the unemployment can be contributed to the aging demographic, it does not help that the policies of this government keep driving young adults out of rural areas and into metropolitan areas. After nine years of Liberal rule, Ontario's rural communities are looking more like ghost towns and less like the economic engines they once were.

Our jails are gone. Our abattoirs are gone. Our small businesses are bracing for more regulatory burdens. The B&Bs, for example, are facing challenges with the implementation of Ontario's new water regulations, forcing some of them to consider going out of business.

Our tourism industry is being challenged by the proliferation of industrial wind turbines, turbines that rural Ontario does not want. But rural citizens can't stop them because your government, the Liberal government, has taken away our right to have a say in these development projects and, I would suggest, our democratic right.

Now you're shutting down rural Ontario's horse racing industry, the second-largest job creator in the agricultural sector; 60,000 jobs are at stake and \$1.1 billion in revenues that seem to just get left off of most of the talking points.

Speaker, much of rural Ontario continues to be up in arms. This will impact our urban cousins, in time. The cost of food, the cost of energy and the lack of jobs is not restricted to rural Ontario.

I think municipal leaders made their distaste of your regime pretty clear when they walked out of Premier Dalton McGuinty's speech at the Good Roads conference last February.

Speaker, this budget did not address the three fundamental things that Mr. Shurman and Mr. Hudak went to talk about: reduce spending, which was way out of control; ensure that there's an actual jobs plan, a plan that produces, not just defers down the road; and reducing our debt so that we don't put our burden on to our kids and our grandkids and these great pages in your front row, for generations to come.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Again, though I have great respect for the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound—I know that we have a vision that we want to see Ontario in a better place, but our vision of how to achieve that is quite different.

Where it comes to the public sector, it troubles me that we always look to the hard-working people of Ontario, and we look at them and say there's something wrong with that: "There's something wrong with hard-working people being paid a living salary. There's something wrong with that." What's wrong is having public sector CEOs making millions of dollars. That's where we need to cut, not the working people who are working in offices, working in outside facilities. Those people need to be protected. In fact, we need to encourage the private sector to increase their wages, not say, "Let's cut the wages for the public sector because they're doing okay." In fact, they're not doing amazing; they're just doing okay.

We need to look at other things in terms of progressive taxes. Let's look at Manitoba. Manitoba has a small business tax of 0%. So if you make up to \$500,000 as a small business, you have 0% tax. But if you're a corporation making billions of dollars, you have the regular corporate tax. That's a progressive way of looking at addressing the fact that small businesses create jobs in Ontario—create jobs everywhere. And if we targeted our taxes to encourage job creators, to encourage small businesses, that would be a progressive step to addressing the job issue as well as addressing the revenue side.

It's addressing what really comes down to fairness. We look at this society, and we need to encourage more fairness. We need to encourage more responsibility. Those who have exorbitant profits need to share as a part of their civic duty, and those who are just getting by need to be protected, and small businesses need to be encouraged. That's the direction we should be heading in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his comments. He made a reference to a \$30-billion deficit. I think it's important to remind people that that, in fact, is not the case. That's a number that Mr. Drummond referenced would be the case four or five years out if nothing was being done, and of course, that is simply not the case.

Mr. Grant Crack: Tories mislead.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I also remind members that the commitment to get the province back to a balanced budget position—our commitment is 2017-18. In the election in October, six or eight months ago, the commitment of the party opposite, the official opposition, was exactly the same.

As well, when speaking about budget issues, in this particular bill—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize. I'd like to ask the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell to withdraw his unparliamentary comment.

Mr. Grant Crack: Withdrawn—apology.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: As well, I would mention the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry made a remark as if, when they were concluding their term in office in 2003, they did not leave the province with the \$5.5-billion deficit. His language was unusual, I must say. It's not a government number. It's a number from the Auditor General of the province of Ontario: a \$5.5-billion deficit. We brought in legislation so that an incoming government and the taxpayers of the province of Ontario could not be fooled like that again. That \$5.5-billion number, in fact, would have been \$8.5 billion had the Conservatives not sold a public highway just a very short time before the election. That \$5.5-billion number would have been an \$8.5-billion number.

I understand for the Conservatives that it's difficult coming to taxation issues. We're the government that has reduced corporate income tax to a very competitive level. We've lowered the small business tax rate by about 20%. We eliminated the capital tax. We brought in the single sales tax. In northern Ontario, we're the ones that are bringing the northern business education tax rates down to the provincial average, left there by the Conservatives when they were in power for six or eight years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I've got to say, Speaker, I just wonder what the flavour is of the Kool-Aid they serve at that caucus.

This debate has deteriorated to a point where we're listening to the speaker from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and then we listen to a plethora of comments that are really directed one member at another, two minutes at a time. I don't really understand it. Maybe we've kind of run out of steam.

Let me just say this: The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound is a new member, relatively new, elected last October. We're very happy with the addition of this member to our caucus. I was a seatmate of his predecessor. The former member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound also made a contribution in a very different way. We miss him, but we're very welcoming of this member, because he understands what it is we're up against here.

He spent a fair amount of time talking about our proposal for a wage freeze, a freeze for all broader public sector workers. You know, it's rather interesting that we presented that idea back election time. We pressed it very hard with the government in discussions that they would prefer to deny having had with us before the budget. Now we see the same government looking to embrace a public sector wage freeze. I find that rather strange—positive, if they really want to get their arms around it, because it's something that not only is required to save the kind of money that we have to save and stop the bleeding in the broader public sector and the \$55 billion that it's now costing per year to operate that; but the fact of the matter is, we have to stop things somewhere. In my conversa-

tions with people in the broader sector, they would welcome it. They understand, generally speaking—people I'm speaking with—that a two-year hold is not really very different from what's going on in the private sector. They're prepared to do it.

What do we get instead? We get a selective but across-the-board cut on fees in the medical profession that threatens some of the specialties that we depend on.

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I think this government's got to wake up and smell the roses and understand that there are problems that this budget is leading them into.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for his comments.

I want to talk a bit about public sector workers as well. I was a public sector worker for about 20 years, and these people work really hard. These are the people who work shift work. They are the 24-hour-a-day workers. They work shift work in their hospitals; they put their lives at risk fighting fires; they put their lives at risk in domestic disputes if they are policing; they are people who work weekends to keep our communities running. I thank God we've had public sector workers during this recession, because many of them were married to people who worked in the private sector who lost their jobs. If we didn't have public sector workers, we'd have had a lot more people on the Ontario Works rolls. I know in my community the numbers doubled during that recessionary period. So I don't know that we need to try and balance the budget on the backs of public sector workers. That has happened many times over the last 38 years that I've been working. I think that we need to be respectful of them.

With respect to the arbitration process, we're now trying to change the arbitration process. Well, many public sector workers don't have the right to strike, so their alternative is to go to arbitration, and if we try to neutralize that process, then we're going to have to give them back the right to strike. Otherwise, there's no point in being in a collective bargaining process, if you don't have the right to exercise your option to strike and if you can't get a fair settlement at the bargaining table or you can't go to arbitration to make that happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Again, I'll remind the members that questions and comments are intended to relate back to the member who has given the presentation and speech, and I think it's important, again, to point that out for the second time this afternoon.

I'll return to the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker.

Ontario needed and needs a responsible budget to reduce the cost of government and focus on job creation, but that's not the path of this Liberal government. The 2012 budget includes spending increases that will steer

the province toward a \$30-billion deficit and a \$411-billion debt while more than half a million people remain out of work, a supposed austerity budget that sees 14 of 24 ministries getting increased spending despite expenses exceeding revenues by \$15 billion. This deficit is three times the size of all other provinces'. These numbers, bluntly put, are a threat to Ontario's economic security and further thwart public sector job creation.

So I think the members on the opposite side of the House need to borrow from our common sense ideas: Fix the apprenticeship system to create 200,000 new skilled trades jobs; treat affordable energy as a cornerstone of economic growth, not as an experiment; lower taxes on job-creating businesses; balance the budget by reducing the size and cost of government. Live within your means.

The cost of delaying these immediate measures is only adding to our deficit and to our debt. At \$29 million in daily interest fees to service a monstrous debt, we cannot afford to delay changing the path the Liberals have put us on. We must take a new path, a bold and innovative path, a PC path. The future of our children and grandchildren is at stake. We must act now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's my honour to rise to add the voice of my constituents to the debate on Bill 55.

On March 27, we were presented with a budget entitled Strong Action for Ontario. Once again, kudos to the title department at the government document division. I would have called it A Document Designed to Divide—to divide urban and rural, north and south, rich and poor.

We were faced with some tough choices. We could have walked away, thrown our hands up in disgust, used all the same tired, worn-out lines, and forced another election seven months after the people of Ontario sent a minority Parliament to Queen's Park to work together. But we decided to roll up our sleeves and try to make this budget a little fairer for all Ontarians. Ontario is facing a deficit and debt problem. We all know that. We believe that all Ontarians should share the burden in shouldering the load to rectify the problem.

The government wants to focus the restraint on the middle- and lower-income classes, especially the people at the bottom of the income pyramid, essentially further dividing the rich and the poor, a division that has been growing ever wider. We believe that everyone should pay their fair share and the proposals that we put forward and that the government ultimately accepted went a little way towards doing that.

Do we believe that the more fortunate members of our society should pay everyone's freight? No. As a small business owner who risked everything several times during my career, I certainly believe that risk takers and job creators should reap the rewards of their efforts. But contrary to the fearmongering of some, a 2% surtax on personal income of over \$500,000 will not cause a mass exodus of people from Ontario. I am certainly not in that tax bracket, but I want to pay my fair share, as do they, I am sure.

This budget is sorely lacking in several areas. One of those is job creation or retention. In fact, some of the initiatives it contains are the exact opposite: job-killing. A good example is the cancellation of the revenue-sharing agreement with the horse racing industry. This program created thousands of jobs and actually made the government money, something that you would think would be important when fighting a deficit and coming out of a recession. But once again, without warning, the program was cancelled, once again causing a division between rural and urban, or creating a bigger one.

Both the government and the official opposition were feeding that fire. We were lobbied heavily by many in the industry to bring down the government to stop this decision. But would an election have solved it? Perhaps in their comments the opposition can clarify whether or not they would reinstate the agreement if they formed government. It would be interesting to know. We did the best we could to provide a transitional program to soften the blow from what we still believe is the wrong decision.

There are other agricultural cuts in the budget. The risk management program, which producers from across the province fought for, was capped. We are now at a profitable part of the crop cycle, so this change is going to go largely unchallenged until the inevitable crash, and farmers will wonder what became of the program they fought so hard to create. One change that should be made right away is that the program should stand alone so that funds don't further disappear in the budget-cutting process.

There are other issues, the potential of which have yet to be recognized by the people of Ontario: the privatization of ServiceOntario and the deregulation of regulatory powers throughout the public service. Has the government not learned anything from the ongoing scandal at Ornge? We have seen the results of the privatization six-pack and the resulting hangover, but instead of moderation, it would appear the government has decided to go for the party pack or even the keg size on privatization. They're trying to slip it by in technical jargon in sections 28 and 16, but the results will be more problems. Privatization does not save money. In the end, it creates situations for greed and graft.

Once again, as a small business person, I believe that a person who takes risks with his own money should reap the benefits of those risks if they're successful, but people should not be allowed to take risks with the public's money and trust, and that is what the budget is encouraging and it has the potential of creating more Ornge-type scandals.

I would like to focus on the ways that the budget will impact my riding as an example of what the government has done to further divide the north from the south. The divestment of the ONTC is a very good example of that concerted effort. For four years, northerners participated in the government's northern growth plan consultation process, which included a transportation component.

As president of the Temiskaming Federation of Agriculture, I, as did many others, put a lot of work into this

proposal, even though we all had become cynical. Government growth plans in the north typically follow the election cycle: release plan before election, consult after election and release plan before next election.

In reality, northern growth is dependent on the boom and bust of various commodity cycles: gold, nickel, wood fibre and even wheat. But this plan was different, we were told. This was a 25-year plan, no politics involved in this one. So just in case this was the real thing, we took it seriously. And guess what? Not once in that process did anyone bring up the topic of divesting the ONTC. Northerners would have appreciated the chance to consult on this issue. We would have had lots of suggestions on how to make the ONTC work better for all of us. But no, the government just announced its divestment—a nice word for yard sale. We have heard several times from the Minister of Northern Development and Mines that this is not a foreclosure but a divestment. Once again, high marks to the Liberal spin department. In northern terms, it's a yard sale.

1720

It has come to my attention that most Ontarians, including some members of this House, do not really know what the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission is. It owns—no, actually we as Ontarians own the rail lines north of North Bay, the passenger and freight equipment that run on those lines, the fibre optic cables that run along that line that serve northerners, ferries and a railcar refurbishment shop in North Bay. These services are owned by the province because, at the time, no one in the private sector could or would provide them, and we believe that has not changed. So the Liberal buzzword “divestment” actually means “sell what we can and close the rest.”

Without passenger service, how will people like Lise Lachapelle—and I have a whole letter from her about how she has a son and they've had to take the train so many times. I don't have the time to read the letter. The son can't be on a bus for 12 hours; he needs to move around. And she doesn't want to drive around in Toronto. She's gone 20 times for operations. Not once in this divestment process has anyone explained how that's going to be replaced, and that is a crucial problem, because you know what? Public transportation is subsidized all over the province. The only place it isn't going to be subsidized is us, and they wonder why we're upset.

What about the freight side of the ONTC? Who will pick that up? If no one does, what will that mean? More trucks on Highway 11, more accidents, deaths and road closures. A road closure in our part of the province—we've got the one part of the Trans-Canada Highway where there's no detour. If the road's closed, no one is getting by. We're isolated.

What about the employees of the ONTC? We were all shocked about the actions of Caterpillar in London, but they were a private company. ONTC is not; it's Ontario. So we are treating the employees of the ONTC and the clients and customers of the company like second-class citizens. We get the feeling—and people wonder why

northerners get upset. Well, I guess because we're only northerners.

Then somebody will say, “Well, John, why didn't you vote against the budget?” We could have voted down the budget. But we've got two parties that both want to sell. So voting against the budget wouldn't have solved the problem. We're hoping that the government does come to their senses because we're in a big fight on this one.

I'm going to end this on one of my favourite topics, and it's actually part of the budget. It's bears, because they're going to gut—and they're doing a lot of gutting. I'm glad you're back, Minister Gravelle, because with the Bear Wise program, I know we're taking out the technicians—we had a real big problem with bears in 2007. I'm a farmer, and I have a couple bears in the back 40 all the time. We get along fine. They eat a bit of my grain, eat a bit of my corn, have a good life, and I enjoy watching them.

But, in 2007, I didn't have one or two; I had like 40 or 50. I called the Bear Wise program and they said, “Oh, no, that can't be because bears are territorial.” That's what they told us all. So you know what we did? We started shooting, and we didn't report because we were told those bears didn't exist. That's a problem that's going to happen because when people no longer have faith in the system, when people no longer have faith in endangered species, when they no longer have faith in the Bear Wise program, we're going to do what we have to do, and we're not going to report them. You're going to lose focus on what's actually happening. By transferring it to the OPP, all you're doing—if you call 911, they're going to do the same thing, shoot and shovel, but then the cost is going to go to the municipality because the municipalities pay. So you're just transferring on that one. You're just transferring the cost from one taxpayer to another. So I'm really glad you're here because that's an issue that we should have a long discussion about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have enjoyed the presentation by the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. He touched on a couple of things that are very interesting, especially the economic situation, jobs and the last comment with respect to municipalities and various transfers and so forth.

I know the member is new, but I have to say that since we have taken power, the municipalities have enjoyed more uploading than ever before. We have given not only the uploading benefits but also the decision-making process. We have given them more power to spend whatever money the province was allocating to municipalities, including money for infrastructure, which is in the billions of dollars. We have said that they are the ones who know best where the money should be spent, which project is ready to go, where they can create more jobs quickly, and we gave them that authority.

Let me say that when it comes to jobs and the economy, in April we created some full-time employment of 23,000 jobs, with 30,000 part-time jobs less. Ontario

unemployment is down to 7.8%. The March jobs increase was 46,100; the 2011 jobs, 121,300; and net jobs since 2003, 547,000 jobs—since 2003. That is a commitment that we have made to create jobs. I think we are continuing building on that very strong foundation that Premier McGuinty initiated some time ago, and I think we are in the right direction. I hope that they will support, indeed, the budget and go on with the application of those regulations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity to comment on the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane’s debate.

First of all, in regard to the bear issue, he was talking about the territorial aspect. I just wanted to let you know that bears are very territorial when there isn’t an abundance of food. The difficulty is in some places where there’s strong competition, but the problem comes into place now where, if you go to dump sites, you’ll see a large number of bears. I’ve been to Foleyet—I assume the member knows about Foleyet—where you see 30 to 40 bears at one site. That’s because there’s an abundance of food there and they don’t have conflicts or problems and all of them get along. It’s very much similar to what takes place when people go watch the brown bear on the west coast, where they stand in one area and there are so many bears there that are so large. That’s because there’s an abundance of food and they don’t conflict with each other and they get along.

So you’re going to find that where there’s an abundance of food—and the spring bear hunt actually is a negative reinforcement aspect, where bears, once upon a time, were negatively reinforced to stay away from people during peak periods of time, being the summer-time, when people were out in the fields or in the bush or on the lakes and rivers etc. Now they lose that negative reinforcement.

But back to the bill that we’re talking about, I hope to debate it a little bit later on, depending on the time that’s allowed. Alexander Tyler, from 1887, was a Scottish professor in Edinburgh, and he went on—those who haven’t seen that, just Google it, you’ll find it: Alexander Tyler, 1887. He was a professor at the University of Edinburgh. He went to talk about: “A democracy will continue to exist up until the time that voters discover they can vote themselves generous gifts from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority” will always vote “for the candidates who promise the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that every democracy will finally collapse over ... fiscal policy....”

I think that’s the concern here. We talk about these things that are happening now. It’s the things that need to be in place for the 2018-20 sort of time frame to ensure that the province of Ontario remains strong—and that’s what we hope to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I’m glad to have an opportunity to respond to the member from Timiskaming–

Cochrane, who I know speaks always very much from the heart. We’ve come to know each other a little bit in this term. I know how sincerely he cares about his riding, as I think all northern members do.

I do want to reference a couple of things in the short time that I have. In terms of the Bear Wise program, the priority continues to be public safety. The Bear Wise program is continued. We of course still have our 1-800, seven-days-a-week, 24-hours-a-day hotline, and we’re still encouraging, asking people to use that line. The plan has been, or the protocol has been, for many, many years that when there is an issue related to public safety, indeed we do suggest that you should be calling the police. If there’s a real public safety issue, the police are the ones who can manage that. There are more of them than there are of us in terms of managing that.

We will continue to work with the police forces, particularly in situations of an emergency, and in fact, there’s a situation going on right now in southern Ontario, which always draws a lot of interest, when you have a bear down in southern Ontario. Our ministry people are working with the police force, in fact, in Halton right now. So the long and the short is that if indeed a decision is made, where it’s clear that there is some assistance required to potentially immobilize—i.e., tranquilize—the bear, we will still be in a position to do that. The Bear Wise program has been a real success in the sense of educating people. I appreciate the comments from the member for Oshawa as well, as a former natural resources minister.

1730

In terms of northern Ontario, our government, the Liberal government, is incredibly supportive. Whether one talks about the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp.—a \$100-million program, a program that, indeed, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane’s party actually took money out of in the mid-1990s when they were looking to deal with their deficit. Our incredible spending in terms of northern Ontario highways—record spending; unprecedented amounts of dollars, because we know how important that is to northerners.

I wish I had more time, Mr. Speaker, but thanks very much to the member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Sarnia.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for acknowledging me. I want to comment and commend the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for his comments. As I talk about the bear hunt and bears and the minister mentioned about southwestern Ontario, it brought back memories. I guess it was before I got elected, now I’m thinking back. We’ve had two occasions in my riding, and it’s certainly southwestern Ontario, when you get down on the edge of St. Clair River just south of Lake Huron. We had a moose down in our area that wandered around for quite a while and finally wandered back up north. I’m not sure exactly how far it got—I call it the north. Somewhere up in the Bruce or somewhere, it got hit.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We're sending them down here.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, you're sending them down, perhaps. We'll feed them. Anyway, it got partway back home. It was unfortunate, but I think it got hit by a transport truck somewhere. It's unbelievable that it would have found its way down to Sarnia–Lambton somehow—I don't know how. It wandered back up north as well.

Also, we had a bear in our community which was sighted by a number of OPP officers and other members of the public. I'm sure that was accurate as well. It was just outside of Petrolia, the town where I live. This bear spent a number of days there. I think it went down to the creek bank during the daytime and had water. I don't know whether someone was feeding it or not. Over time, this bear disappeared. I don't know whether some of our erstwhile hunters may have done away with the bear. I'm not sure, but it disappeared. No one was any the wiser on where the bear ended up.

I understand what the member was speaking about. Not that we have a lot of them down there, but I could certainly see where it would be a problem in northern Ontario, where they are coming into people's fields and backyards. Another member told me that he knew a family that shot a number of them that had come out of the mountains on to their back fields.

Thank you, Minister, and thanks to the member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the members from York South–Weston and Oshawa, the Minister of Natural Resources and the member from Sarnia.

Just for the record, 99% of the time, northerners live fine with bears. We like bears probably more than anybody else. It's just once in a while, if we have a big frost or something—I live in a huge valley, 400,000 acres—and all the bears come visit.

I actually want to bring this back to the budget discussion. The biggest one is consultation. I'm going to go back to the ONTC. You make the announcement: You're going to kill ONTC, or whatever word you want to use, and then the same month, you start another consultation process. MTO just started a consultation process—it was started in Thunder Bay, Minister Gravelle—about how to improve transportation in the north. Again, how about giving northerners a true picture and saying, “Okay, here are the things we are hoping to do. Now let's talk”? Or say it two years ago: “Here are the things we are hoping to do.”

You wonder why northerners get—and I think all rural people, but I'm a northerner. We hear about all these consultation processes. We participate because we think, “This might be the one.” Once again, it wasn't the one.

On the northern growth plan, we all spent—individual, like the federations of agriculture—thousands of dollars going to the Think North Summit and doing all of the

things you're supposed to be doing. Yet when the really big decisions get made, it's “divestment; end of discussion.”

This is before I was partisan. I'm pretty non-partisan, but this is way before I was partisan. We try, and each time, we get a wall. People are getting very, very—a pox on us all. But it's going to get ugly before it's done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are dealing with perhaps the most important document that the government brings out on a yearly basis. It's very interesting to hear the—Peter, do you agree with me that it's the most important document?

Interjection.

Mr. Mario Sergio: No, but I would wish that you would support it. Yes, I think it's important, Speaker, because he knows better than most members of this House, especially in his role, how important this document is.

Mr. Jeff Leal: He was a talk-show host, a very good one.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Yes, and I'm sure he had plenty of opportunities to deal with issues affecting not only his but everybody's constituents.

Speaker, we look back at past governments, we take a look at the present government and we can even look into the future at future governments. I have to say—and this is by listening to colleagues on both sides of the House—there never was and there will never be a government that will appease the needs of every single Canadian or Ontarian—never. I wish that would be the case. If we were so fortunate to be so precise, if you will, Speaker, or so perfect, the good Lord would want us to be somewhere else and not in this particular House. So it is important that we, as members on both sides of this House, understand sometimes the actions of the government of the day. We have good intentions.

We come from one of the worst recessions in many, many years. I can remember the debate, for example, when a few years ago we were facing the shutting down, the layoffs of some 400,000 jobs in the auto industry, perhaps the biggest industry in Ontario. I remember the debate of those days, when the opposition said, “Don't give them any money. Close them down. Let them go on welfare.” And we said, “It is unbelievable that we have to deal with such a mentality,” when some 400,000 direct jobs, without taking a look at the other sectors, manufacturing parts for automobiles and stuff like that—it is all of the families involved in that particular industry.

Our Premier said, “No, we are not going to abandon some 400,000 workers and their families.” And we decided to go ahead and give them a lift, so we had to borrow money. But we didn't send them on welfare. You know, Speaker, with all due respect, we can look back and say that was a very wise decision. It took the auto industry less than three years to come back, to be on top again. Not only did we save those 440,000 jobs, but now they have become, already within the term of only three years, leaders in the industry again. We are building more

cars in the province of Ontario than Detroit, than the rest of the States. So not only have we saved those jobs, we have seen the automakers increasing and opening up new plants, creating new jobs for our people. That was one particular area.

Look at the building industry, Speaker. Someone said, “We never saw so many cranes in Toronto”—more than the rest of Canada, perhaps, if you will. Those are jobs. The last month—I think it was March, if I recall well, we led in Canada, with some 46,100 jobs, and those were full-time jobs.

Do we lack in some other areas? Perhaps, but we are still continuing in the very healthy direction of providing good health, good education and the direction to create jobs, and we are seeing it on a daily basis.

1740

When people are working, they are spending, and when they are spending, the government becomes strong. It gets money to continue other projects. We have seen the largest investment in infrastructure, and my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane earlier brought up issues with municipalities. I have to say that the municipalities were so happy when we could sit down with them, and I remember the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing sat down with the Ontario municipalities and said, “What can we do to assist you during these particular very trying times in our economic situation?” We said, “We have some money. We want to give it directly to you, but we want the money to go to projects that are ready to go.” They said, “Give us the money. We will put it to work. We will create jobs.”

I have to say that if we look around our province, let alone Toronto and what we did for our city—if it wasn’t for the assistance of this government, Toronto would be in very different shape, with all due respect to the rest of Ontario, because our people are people. It doesn’t matter if they are in Cochrane, if they are in Sudbury, if they are in southeastern Ontario or Toronto or southwestern Ontario. It doesn’t matter. The fact is that we have three million people, maybe five million people, in the GTA. It is the engine of Canada, without any doubt.

When we look at Canada, and when we look at Ontario, especially the manufacturing sector, we know that if Ontario is lagging behind in that particular sector, the rest of Canada is going to feel it. So it is important to move on with the debate here. It is important that we move on with approving the budget. No, it doesn’t contain everything the opposition wants, but it is important that we move on so we can continue in providing the needs to our people in Ontario, especially in health care and in education.

I have to say, when we speak of education, Speaker, we’re not just talking about the four- and five-year-olds, that we are giving them this wonderful lift at a very early stage; we are providing for those in college and university who are about to come out and join the workforce. They need some assistance at this particular time. When we have members saying, “Don’t give them the 30% in tuition cuts,” we are saying, “We have to give them that

particular assistance, because we want them to graduate as quickly as possible and with the best education so they can compete with the forces coming from the outside.”

Speaker, I don’t have to tell you that we can look at the Europeans, we can look at the Asians, we can look at China, we can look at Japan, and how quickly they are moving, how technology is moving quickly. I have to say that in my own riding of York West, I’m very proud of the funding we provided to York University to establish the new engineering and science building. What does that mean? It means, not only for York West, not only for those particular students, but wealth for the province of Ontario, because once those students graduate, they will not be finding—I wish that they would all be finding jobs in York West, but we know that they will be going throughout Ontario. They will move out where the jobs will be. They will be bringing that knowledge to those communities. So, Speaker, we cannot have this narrow mentality.

As I said before, and I will repeat it again, there will never be a government or a budget that will appease the needs of every member of the House. So it’s incumbent upon the opposition leaders and the members on the other side to understand and say, “Let’s take a look at this budget and what it does.” I think it keeps us on the right track, moving in the right direction. We are applying money in a variety of ways to create jobs, and we are showing that on a month-to-month basis.

I hope that the opposition will take a good look when a vote is going to come on this particular item here, which is the budget. They will assess the content of the budget and they will really—with their heart, they will vote and say, “It is not what we want, but it is the best for the people of Ontario, and we can support it.”

I thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member from York West, in his debate, makes a case to link jobs with his budget. There obviously is a link between economic activity and the workings of government. Regrettably, we have a debt that threatens investment and private sector job creation. When you have a very high debt like we have in the province of Ontario, and a debt that is going to continue to grow, that threatens investment in any of the infrastructure that you mentioned with respect to infrastructure that’s needed to attract business and to attract jobs.

I know there was an interjection from your seatmate: “shovel-ready.” Well, we have the evidence of the dollars that were spent provincially on shovel-ready stimulus projects. I have yet to see the evidence of permanent private sector jobs created by the province of Ontario’s stimulus funding.

When you have a high debt like we have in the province of Ontario, you cannot cut taxes. We see this reflected in budget measures: the increase or the stalling of any tax breaks for business and a kind of a desperate measure to, as people refer to, tax the rich, which is exactly last thing you want to do in a budget if you’re

trying to make any link at all between budget policy and trying to lure investment to the province of Ontario, let alone keep what we have.

However, there is a potential for this government and for the million people who work in the public service. There are incentives that could be made to ensure that our public sector helps all of us to bring back the jobs and bring back the economic activity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to the member opposite for York West for his thoughts on the budget. He mentioned the words, and I kind of bring that to the attention of the House, “good intentions.” There’s a saying about good intentions; I’m not going to repeat it, but that’s what good intentions are. Sometimes they’re paved to the road of where we don’t want to go.

One of the good intentions maybe that the government is referring to is the privatization of ServiceOntario. I’m looking at this suggestion or proposal on schedule 28, which creates a new act, the Government Services and Service Providers Act, 2012, which basically enables the government to enter into service agreements with any person or entity or non-share capital corporation for the provision of Ontario government services. Further, the legislation enables one or more corporations or partnerships to set up the purpose of providing the service under this act.

So those good intentions we have to be cognizant of, because those good intentions are going to lead to another situation like Ornge, where we’re going to have holding companies and subsidiaries that could be for-profit or not-for-profit partnerships or public service partnerships, and there’s no structure specified for those private companies. People are expecting the government to deliver a quality service under ServiceOntario, and if they’re going to pass that on to the private sector, where is the structure with regard to that?

When I looked at this act, on page 116, in five parts of that, they talked about the word “may.” We need to have the words “shall” and “will.” We can’t leave it open to “may.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: My colleague from York West delivered a very good speech here this afternoon in a very articulate, straightforward fashion, and highlighted a number of things that are targeted in this budget as we move forward to balance in 2017-18.

1750

He noted about the construction industry, and I just happened to pick up an article here. It was in the Toronto Star of April 3, 2012, and it says, “Construction Hiring Set to Soar in Ontario,” with 120,000 tradespersons needed in Ontario over the next nine years.

It says, “Ontario’s construction industry will need to recruit an additional 120,000 workers over the next nine years, the Construction Sector Council predicts.

“Demand will be driven by mining projects in the north”—private sector—“nuclear power plant”—public sector in Darlington—“and transit systems in the Toronto region,” something I know my colleague from York West and my Toronto caucus have been cheerleaders for in moving these projects forward, “and,” of course, “the Pan American Games,” under the great leadership of Minister Charles Sousa to make sure that great event that all Ontarians will take great pride in will be on time and on budget.

The member from York West talked about those construction jobs, so important right here in Toronto. We all know that the success of Ontario is based on the success of Toronto, and driving these various projects forward, like the transit system, like the Pan Am Games, like projects in northern Ontario, will be tremendously helpful in order to keep Ontario moving ahead—and the leadership from my colleague from York West.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Harris: I’d like to respond to the member for York West briefly. I had some comments today already on Bill 55, and I’d like to share some more concerns of folks who live in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga.

The last little while, I’ve been out speaking with residents, and they’re awfully troubled about the size of the deficit and the debt. Many members here have children. We’re passing that along to our grandchildren, Bob Bailey having those already—the member from Sarnia—of course.

Folks don’t mind paying their fair share of taxes, but they’re awfully concerned on how their dollars are being spent. Recently we’ve seen the troubling disclosure of the Ornge scandal, the waste that seems to be happening and continues to be happening in agencies such as Ornge, the eHealth scandal. I was at the hospitals recently as part of the RAO day, where I spoke to front-line health practitioners concerned with the amount of dollars that are being spent in the local health integration networks: a lot of bureaucracy, red tape. In fact, the one in my area seems to be housed in a very fancy part of town. So they’re concerned that those dollars are being diverted from the front lines and not being spent wisely.

As I was mentioning to my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound today about finances, we kind of use the analogy that leaving Dalton McGuinty in charge of the finances is something similar to leaving your girlfriend in the company of Tiger Woods. It’s troubling at most. Nonetheless, again, this deficit will remain basically unchanged this year. Some 14 of 24 ministries will receive increases year over year. In fact, I hear the minister from Kitchener Centre often brag about the fact that his ministry is receiving more money this year. Austerity is something they talk about a lot, but it’s clearly not in the documents.

Thank you, Speaker, for the time permitted to me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Now the member for York West has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I want to thank the members for their contribution: London–Fanshawe, Haldimand–Norfolk, Kitchener–Conestoga and my colleague from a beautiful part of our Ontario, Peterborough.

I have to say to the member that Mr. McGuinty comes from the riding of Ottawa South, I believe, and members should always be addressed by the area they come from and not by name. But I know he didn't mean it in a derogatory way.

Speaker, let me say that the money we have allocated went, indeed, for ready-to-go projects. I have a long list here which takes me more than two minutes, but I look at the Cambridge Memorial Hospital expansion; the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital expansion in Burlington; Wellington–Halton Hills, the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Fergus as well, Perth–Wellington, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Elgin–Middlesex–London, Leeds–Grenville—those in health care, Speaker.

Then we go to something that we can really see on a daily basis: transit and road projects. In Burlington, the rehabilitation of the Burlington Skyway; and in Barrie, in Wellington–Halton Hills, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Durham, Oshawa, Simcoe North, Chatham–Kent–Essex, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Simcoe–Grey—this is where money is being spent. This is where jobs are being created, Speaker. I know they do travel in their own riding. I know members are very active in their own ridings and they travel on a regular basis. I can see the construction. Sometimes they complain about the traffic, and it's because of the emphasis that the government has put on creating jobs. We know they are there, and I know they mean well because they know where they are.

I thank you, Speaker, and I thank the members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I understand that the member for Kitchener–Conestoga has a point of order.

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes. Actually, Speaker, I have two points of order today.

The first: Earlier, in my remarks on Bill 55, I said that I've met several young men and women looking to get a good-paying job, a quality job in the trades, but they can't because the apprenticeship-to-journeyman ratio is 1 to 1. What I meant to say is that I've met several young men and women looking to get a good-paying, quality job in the trades, but can't because the journeyman-to-apprentice ratio is not 1 to 1. In fact, the ratio of journeymen to apprentices is as high as 5 to 1 in some trades, and our party would reduce that to 1 to 1.

On the second point of order, if possible, I will rephrase: Clearly, leaving the member for Ottawa South in charge of Ontario's finances is as bad as leaving Tiger Woods with your girlfriend. So I'd like to make that correction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: The last point is not a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Community Safety on a point of order?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: The last point that the member did is not a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I accept that it's not a point of order, but he corrected his record at the outset.

It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1757.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
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
Brotten, 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	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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	
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	
McDonell, 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	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	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)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	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 Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
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
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	
Vacant	Kitchener–Waterloo	

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Rob Leone, Taras Natyshak
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Rod Jackson, Mario Sergio
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Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

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Ted Chudleigh, Dipika Damerla
Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
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Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
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