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**Official Report
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Monday 28 May 2012

Lundi 28 mai 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 28 May 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 28 mai 2012

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to welcome here today Megan, the only daughter of the member from Oxford. She's in the audience, and her friend Ben Stole is here with her. On behalf of myself and all the members of the Legislature, I would like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to introduce Darlene Bowen, my constituency assistant, who has come from Temiskaming Shores to check up on me.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to introduce James Rice and Kerry Rice, representing the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm very pleased to welcome in the gallery, from Kenora, Ontario, Tannis Drysdale, her beautiful daughter Alice Johnston, her brother Rob Drysdale and her nephew Ian Drysdale.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: We have two guests from Northumberland—Quinte West here this morning, Carol Blaind and Corey Scott. We'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, would you please help me welcome Drew Phillips, who won a certificate in an auction to have lunch with me today. He's with the Launch Lab located at Innovation Park in Kingston.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, we welcome Jeff and Debbie Carr. Their daughter Annaleise is a newly installed page, and their daughter is hosting fundraisers for her upcoming swim across Lake Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome, and good luck.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Good morning. I'd like to extend a warm welcome to youth and organizers from the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, representing 45 children's aid societies across Ontario. They're here this morning to participate in their annual youth civics day, to see first-hand where and how government happens. I invite my colleagues to join me after question period in room 228 at noon for the youth civics day reception.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests?

I am very pleased that there's a lot of chitchat going on, catching up for time lost. I would ask two things.

Number one, for our guests, when we do participate here on the floor, we ask our guests, whom we value, not to participate in any way, shape or form in the debates by applauding, making noise or protesting. Next, I offer—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): They're still catching up.

In the members' gallery we have, joining us here to see page Sam in action, Sam's mother, Feng Bai, from Kitchener-Waterloo. Welcome.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. Last Wednesday, your finance minister said you need to get this budget passed because it's "what the credit rating agencies are looking for." But this is the same budget that got our credit rating downgraded and moved to a negative watch, and this is the same budget that has over \$1 billion in new taxes and spending. Premier, if you're truly concerned with what the credit rating agencies are looking for, why are you continuing to push forward a budget bill that's been completely rejected by those same credit rating agencies?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, Mr. Speaker, the credit rating agencies all endorsed the plan themselves. Their fear is that this Legislature won't allow it to pass, and I think that is a legitimate fear, given the intemperate response of the official opposition in particular.

It turns out that the official opposition decided to vote against the budget before they read it, and now we find out from the third party that they may not vote for it after they read it, and they may not have read it.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we need to pass this budget. It's the right plan for a better future for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Premier, while over 500,000 Ontarians remain out of work and our debt continues to spiral out of control, it's clear from the answer given by the finance minister that you still don't get what's necessary in order to bring Ontario back on track.

Last Wednesday, the Minister of Finance showed how out of touch he is when he warned that if this budget bill isn't passed quickly, the \$1-billion Liberal-NDP tax-and-spend scheme won't come into effect. That's the same

tax-and-spend plan that the minister admitted that he didn't want the credit rating agencies to see.

Premier, what is it going to take for you to finally realize the magnitude of the mess that you've gotten Ontario into?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The official opposition wants to cut taxes at a time when we want to get back to balance, Mr. Speaker, and protect the important gains we've made in health care and education. Our priorities are very different from theirs, and we have laid out a plan to get back to balance.

Let me just read to the member opposite some quotes from those credit rating agencies. DBRS says that they view "the continuation of the fiscal recovery plan and the increasing emphasis on cost containment as an encouraging step in the right direction." Moody's says that they recognize "that the province has laid out"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am going to start immediately naming individuals, and if you don't think I'm serious, go ahead and say something when I'm standing.

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Moody's says that they recognize "that the province has laid out an ambitious fiscal plan to return to fiscal balance," and Standard and Poor's says, "Supporting the ratings are what we view as Ontario's large, wealthy, and well-diversified economy...."

Mr. Speaker, we've laid out the right plan. It will get this province back to balance. Unlike the opposition, we're going to protect the improvements—

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The fact of the matter is, the credit rating agencies hear the words but they are waiting to see whether this government actually has the ability to put them into action, and they're very, very—

Interjection.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: This government talks about taking strong action, but all we've seen is another credit downgrade. Your government talks about getting public sector salaries under control, but your voluntary wage freeze has been a complete, unmitigated disaster. Your government talks about getting spending under control, but all we've seen are creative ways to increase revenue.

Premier and Minister of Finance, if you really believe this is an urgent problem, why will you not support our legislation on public sector wage freezes coming forward on Thursday?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Simply put, Mr. Speaker, their plan won't work. They choose to ignore court rulings; they choose to ignore the legal imbroglios other governments have put themselves into, Mr. Speaker. They want to pretend that in fact they can simply impose a wage freeze in the context of a Charter of Rights and Freedoms that has redefined the legal landscape. So we are taking careful, deliberate steps to move towards balance, working with our partners across the broader public—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —across the public and broader public sectors to, in fact, achieve balance and continue to make the important investments in health care and education that all Ontarians want us to make in the interests of a better province for all of our citizens.

1040

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Premier. For months the Ontario PC caucus has been urging you to take decisive action to get your spending under control. Your strategy was to ask government employees to make cuts to their own salaries, because you don't have the guts to do it yourself. Yet despite the fact that this voluntary wage freeze idea is blowing up in your face, you continue to dodge the issue and play games with Ontario's financial future. For months, we've been calling for a legislated public sector wage freeze, and this Thursday our party is putting forward a bill to legislate a public sector wage freeze.

Premier, will you show Ontarians that you understand the urgency of Ontario's situation and support our legislation this Thursday?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No, Mr. Speaker, we won't support it. It won't work. The Leader of the Opposition was in Alberta last week—a government that's running a deficit—and they don't have a legislated wage freeze, nor does the federal government. In fact, the federal government had a legislated wage increase, Mr. Speaker, and they are now defending that, having, by the way, consulted, having done all kinds of negotiations. They're now defending a number of court actions, the outcomes of which are at best questionable.

Mr. Speaker, we've laid out the right plan to get back to balance. The Minister of Health, for instance, has by regulation taken some important steps on capping fees for doctors. There are ongoing discussions going on with limited bargaining, very limited bargaining mandates, with teachers. The plan we've laid out is the right one and it will get Ontario back to balance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: You know, in your nine years in government you have proven that you are not up to the job of managing government spending. Public sector salaries are completely out of control. The sunshine list has grown from 20,000 to 80,000, a 400% increase in just eight years, while government employees are earning 27% more than Ontarians working in the private sector, for doing exactly the same job. Your approach to every problem is, when in doubt, spend. That is not how Ontarians manage their finances, and it's not how they want their government to manage the province's finances.

Today we are asking you to take a new and revolutionary approach. Minister, just once, don't spend at the problem; deal with the problem. This is a matter of

leadership. Will you show that the urgency has finally dawned on you and will you please support our bill to legislate a wage freeze?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No. It's a flawed bill, a flawed strategy that will result in failure, a failure that's similar—

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: You know, it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, when one goes back and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Nepean–Carleton will come to order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: When one looks back, that member was part of a government that raised the debt 40% on their watch. To date, we've raised it 32%. And they did it at a time of unprecedented economic growth, Mr. Speaker. Our plan is the right plan to get the budget back to balance, having responded to the legitimate challenges in the world economy, based on the advice given to us by the IMF and OECD. Those are the right steps now. This budget is the right step to a better future for all Ontarians.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Minister, you have proven better than most that it's easy to spend money. But one of the credit rating agencies has already downgraded Ontario's rating, and last week your government worried aloud about further downgrades if your budget isn't passed. We can sit here till hell freezes over, Minister, but facts are facts. We are staring down the barrel of a \$30-billion deficit and a \$400-billion debt. Our public sector wage freeze legislation, which we will present on Thursday, will save the province \$2 billion. You need this money, Minister. Ontario needs this money. Will you do the right thing and finally take action?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The action we've laid out in the budget is the right action to get back to balance and also to protect the important investments we have made in health care and education, because those are the services Ontarians demand, Mr. Speaker. We reject their approach. We are not going to do the sorts of things they do. We don't want to close hospitals; they do. They want to support the horse racing industry; we want to support schools, Mr. Speaker. They make up numbers around the budget deficit, Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: He just did it again. The Auditor General said quite differently about the deficit. Our plan is the right plan. Your wage plan won't work. It won't achieve what you say it will. This government has the plan to build Ontario a better future, building on our successes in health and education.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. During the election and practically every day since, I've made it clear that I believe that we can work together to get things done in a minority Legislature. Now, last

week the government ministers began rattling the election cages once again. I think there's a lot of work to be done here, Speaker, not out on the campaign trail. Does the Premier agree with me?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I appreciate the sentiment that informs our honourable colleague's observations here today. I think that on a regular basis we need to ask ourselves, what do Ontarians expect of us? They expect us to find common ground and to build on that ground together.

That's why I was so heartened by the opportunity to meet with the leader of the NDP and to establish a firm agreement that we will work together to move this budget through. Our preference is that we do this at the earliest possible opportunity, for many reasons. The fact of the matter is, I'm proud of the fact that we did, in the end, find common ground working with the third party.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, does the Premier also agree that tax measures like the freeze on corporate taxes and the NDP's fairness tax on high-income earners should be in place by July 1?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We look forward to moving ahead with the entire budget. We don't intend to pick and choose certain aspects of the budget. These were not issues that were raised by my honourable colleague at the time of our meeting. We had a couple of meetings. We had a good opportunity to put our concerns on the table. Those of this nature were not raised at that point in time.

I fully expect that my honourable colleague will in fact do what we have both agreed to do. We both added a little water to our wine. There was quid pro quo. She did make certain requests of us. We had one basic request of the NDP, which was to work with us to pass this budget, and we look forward to doing that before the House rises.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, now I'm going to ask the Premier straight out to clear the record: Did New Democrats promise to help the government shut down debate and cancel public hearings on their 300-page omnibus bill? And if not, why does he think we would want to do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, what I can say is that we have devoted considerable time to ensuring that we can have a debate with respect to our budget. We're talking about ensuring, going forward, that there also be even more time. In fact, what I can say is there will be more debate devoted to this budget than the previous eight that we had presented in this chamber, here in our province. So I think we're prepared to do what is necessary to ensure that we have all the time that we need for concerns to be expressed and recommendations to be offered. But ultimately, we must move ahead with this budget.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The people who elected us want us to keep

working on the challenges that they're facing. They're worried about parents who are waiting for health care, or whether daycare is going to be there for their children when they need it. And they don't want another mess like the one that we've been watching unfold with Ornge. Basically, they want us to do our jobs, not rubber-stamp a 300-page omnibus bill before people have a chance even to look at it.

The Premier says he won't support our move to fast-track some of those key budget measures that are going to be necessary. Is he ready, then, to look at other ways that we can get the results that people expect from us?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I want to quote my honourable colleague from her post-budget vote media availability on April 24, when she said, "We are going to allow the budget to go forward and proudly say to Ontarians, 'We did some things to make it better for you.'" She was right then, and she is right today, if she adheres to the sentiments that informed that statement.

I say this, and again I commend my colleague: We did come together; we did find some common ground; we did add some water to our wine. There was an exchange of considerations, to use legal terminology; there was quid pro quo. They asked that we make some changes; we did that, Speaker. The purpose of making those changes was so that we could move ahead with our budget.

I think my honourable colleague understands what is at stake with respect to some tax considerations. I think it's in the interests of Ontarians that we do what we agreed to do, which is to move ahead with our budget.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This morning we got a real example of why exactly we need to look carefully at the government's omnibus 300-page bill. Legal experts who looked at the bill say that it could be used to bypass—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Eglinton—Lawrence, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —the Legislature and hold a fire sale of public assets without any public debate. That's buried in that bill, Speaker.

Now, does the Premier plan to sell off the LCBO? Does he plan to sell off the OLG in a fire sale? And if not, then he should be agreeing with us that we need hearings and amendments to his 300-page bill.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, we have agreed to provide those kinds of hearings. I say to my honourable colleague that there will be no fire sales. She will know that we have in the past looked at the kinds of things that she has talked about just now; that we have rejected those.

Having said that, we do think that we can look for opportunities to better introduce private sector support for ServiceOntario. We think that's a responsible move on our part so that we can find, again, savings and efficiencies so that we can give life to the priority that we've attached to our schools and our health care.

So as we look for savings and efficiencies, let's remember what the objective is here: It is to ensure that we're protecting the gains we've made in our schools, protecting the gains we've made in our health care and, over the course of time, to pay down our deficit.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: New Democrats have been very clear. We want to get some results for the people who sent us here: the working parents who need child care or the families who are worried about losing health care. They're not going to be helped by the same old politics, and they're certainly not going to be helped by another Ornge unfolding in this province.

Is the Premier ready to do the hard work to make the minority government work, or can we expect more of the same rhetoric, leading to the exact same results?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I remind my honourable colleague that we made close to a billion—over \$1 billion, in fact, of expenditure changes as a result of the advice that we received from her. We made changes to ODSP. We added to that our increase in social service assistance, as well—

Interjection.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —and OW, Speaker.

There was a corporate tax issue which we both agreed on. There was the tax on Ontario's wealthiest, which we moved ahead with at the insistence of my honourable colleague the leader of the NDP.

The fact is, we did find common ground. I think the result of that was a better budget for the people of Ontario, and now our shared responsibility is to ensure that we move ahead with a budget that we built together.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. I believe we're getting closer to the reason why the Premier and his cabinet want the Ornge air ambulance scandal suppressed.

This weekend, I just happened to come across a document prepared for Management Board of Cabinet by the emergency health services branch of the Ministry of Health dated October 15, 2004. That document could not be more clear: Someone at a very high level was manipulating the Mazza scheme through the cabinet approvals process, against the advice and warnings of senior civil servants. According to the cabinet document, there were too many risks and the supporting arguments in favour of the Mazza scheme were highly questionable.

I'd like to ask the Premier this: Why did he and his cabinet sell out Ontario's air ambulance service to Dr. Mazza for \$1 against the advice of senior civil servants in the Ministry of Health and in the Ministry of the Attorney General?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: It's always nice to be popular, Mr. Speaker.

I find it a little passing strange that the member would stand up and say that we were somehow suppressing individuals looking into Ornge. The public accounts committee, by a motion that was supported by this side of the Legislature, is holding hearings into the Ornge matter. The public hearings have now sat for 29 hours; 33 witnesses have appeared. In fact, this Wednesday, in the morning, Tom Rothfels, former COO of Ornge International, will be appearing; at 12:30, Tom Lepine, the former COO of Ornge, will be appearing.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to stress that they have extended the number of hours that those witnesses could come forward, as is their right as a committee of this Legislature—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I have just delivered this cabinet document to the Premier, who didn't want anything to do with it, so he sent it over to the House leader. Now that the House leader has the document, I'd like to ask him this. That document gives 15 specific reasons as to why the Mazza scheme should never have been approved. I quote from the document that was before the Premier that he just shuffled off to the House leader—but they've all seen it when they were in cabinet.

It states, "The stated bases for the recommendation are insubstantial" and "don't provide a compelling argument..." The background information is "selective and insufficient..."

Surely, someone around the cabinet table would have seen this quote as a warning sign: "The critical issue of what the role of the ministry will be in the new regime and the degree of control that will be retained by the ministry has still not been sufficiently addressed..."

I call on the Premier to stand and answer for himself: Is this how he and his cabinet make decisions on all matters? Or what was—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: You know, Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite insists on conducting hearings on the floor of this Legislature, then I would like to ask some questions.

I'd like to know about how it came to pass that Ornge established—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I might just give a blanket warning.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to know how it came to pass that Ornge established a new satellite operation at Oshawa Municipal Airport. You know what we found out, Mr. Speaker, through the public accounts hearings? A former Ornge executive, the senior aviation expert there, said he opposed the move and that it was a very poor choice for a host of reasons. That didn't stop the member for Whitby–Oshawa lobbying. We've seen that

snazzy photo. Mr. Speaker, we also have a letter here from the member from Durham, who says, "I would like to briefly highlight the advantages of relocating Ornge to a base at the Oshawa airport rather than at the Peterborough site."

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, I wish to extend our condolences to the families and friends of the elderly couple who lost their lives in the Hawkesbury retirement home fire on Friday. These deaths occurred in a retirement home without an automatic sprinkler system and took place on the same day that a coroner's inquest investigating a fatal 2009 fire in Orillia recommended the retroactive installation of sprinklers in retirement homes. This was the fourth such inquest on separate fires.

How many more families will lose their loved ones before this government mandates automatic sprinklers in all retirement homes?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to second the sentiment expressed by my honourable colleague when it comes to the terrible and tragic loss of life experienced by a husband and wife, as I understand it, in a Hawkesbury retirement home.

Speaker, I want to say as well—I want to remind my honourable colleague that sprinklers have been mandatory in all retirement homes built since 1997. I will say as well, Speaker, that at this time, we are working with the Ontario fire marshal's office. We are consulting with respect to the kinds of changes that we need to put in place. I want to assure my honourable colleague opposite that the question is not whether, Speaker, but how we move ahead to ensure that there are additional safety provisions.

Interjection: When?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: And when is another important issue, Speaker. We look forward to the advice that we're going to receive as a result of this consultation process, and we look forward to receiving that at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: For two years now, I've been calling on this government to pass my bill to require sprinklers in retirement homes. Jim Jessop, chair of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs fire prevention committee, made this plea for action: "After witnessing senior citizens that are frail and were scared and were covered in smoke being carried down ladders at our fire" in Niagara Falls "in 2008 at the retirement home, it is just morally reprehensibly and criminally negligent for this not to be done."

Why won't this government listen to the experts, act now to save lives and require automatic sprinklers in all retirement homes?

1100

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, the purpose of the consultation process, which we are conducting in concert

with the Ontario fire marshal, is to get the very expert advice that we need to move ahead with this.

I'll remind my honourable colleague once again that as a result of retirement homes legislation, which I think we put into place a couple of years ago, Ontario, as I understand it, is the first province to regulate retirement homes. We've put in a number of new measures, some of which address fire safety. So we look forward to receiving that advice at the earliest possible opportunity.

I'll say something to my honourable colleague as well. I have a concern about the length of time devoted to this consultation process. I'm going to be speaking to the minister to see what we can do to accelerate that.

Again, Speaker, the issue is not whether but when we move ahead and in fact what kind of retirement homes we put those sprinklers in. I thank my honourable colleague for pushing this issue.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This past Friday, I was very pleased to join the minister for an important affordable housing announcement in my riding of Ottawa Centre. It was fitting that the announcement took place at Beaver Barracks in my riding which, with 254 new affordable housing units, is not only Ottawa's newest affordable housing complex, but it is the largest project in the eastern region. The minister announced a \$144.9-million investment to create 1,282 new housing units across Ontario. Speaker, in addition to providing affordable housing units in our communities, it will create over 3,000 jobs.

I'm exceptionally proud of our government's commitment to safe and affordable housing in Ontario. By working together with other levels of government and the community, we are seeing real results.

Would the minister please tell us, Speaker, through you, what more our government is doing to work with the federal government to ensure that there is a strong commitment to affordable housing in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very happy to be able to talk about this project. As the member for Ottawa Centre knows—because he has advanced this and worked with the community to make this a reality—it supports so many diverse segments of the population: seniors, people with disabilities, single-parent families. Mr. Speaker, it's really a microcosm of communities from across the province.

I was very pleased to be joined by Diane Finley, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development. As you know, six months ago, Minister Finley and I signed a four-year agreement to invest almost half a billion dollars in communities across Ontario. That's the Investment in Affordable Housing program, which is part of our government's long-term affordable housing strategy. But the federal funding ends in 2014, Mr. Speaker, and one of the things that we're dealing with across the country is not knowing after 2014 where the money will

come from in order to be able to continue to work with the federal government and with municipalities to continue to build these projects.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It is incumbent upon us to work with all levels of government to make certain that our communities are healthy and vibrant places that Ontarians can be proud of.

Speaker, places such as Beaver Barracks assist so many different and diverse groups in society with affordable housing. As we all know, a home is much more than a roof over our head. A safe and affordable home can open up so many other opportunities. However, we must acknowledge that often some of the most vulnerable in our society—for example, disadvantaged women—face challenges when it comes to taking that first step out of poverty.

Speaker, through you to the minister: What are we, as a government, doing to ensure that disadvantaged women in our province can benefit from the investments we are making in affordable housing?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member is absolutely right. Our government's priority has been to provide a range of affordable housing because there are people who often get left out of those equations.

Last week, I was at the official opening of the YWCA Elm Centre here in Toronto. That centre created 300 units for low-income women and their families, and 50 of those are dedicated to women of aboriginal descent.

Mr. Speaker, often when we speak about housing, we start talking about bricks and mortar and we move to, what are the supports that are necessary in order to keep people housed? Examples like Beaver Barracks and the Elm Centre are just that: They have the units, but they also the supports in place.

Mr. Speaker, we need to be able to continue to work with the federal government. We call on the federal government to continue to work with us to provide the kinds of housing that are necessary across the province for people from many, many different backgrounds.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Front-line staff at the Ministry of Health, and specifically at the emergency health services branch, have lost faith in their minister and in this government as they witness the intentional avoidance of the truth about why Dr. Chris Mazza had free rein to defraud the public and destroy our air ambulance system. They know, and they know that the minister knows, that shortly after the government signed the Mazza deal, the then associate deputy minister of the emergency health services branch wrote to the emergency health services branch to stand down on its oversight responsibilities of Ornge.

I ask the minister: Why was that letter sent from the Associate Deputy Minister of Health, actually asking the emergency health services branch not to oversee Ornge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, what's important to me is that Ornge get back on track. We have new leadership in place, a new board, new administration.

I think it's important that we actually acknowledge EMS Week. Last week was EMS Week, and the front-line paramedics deserve a big thank you from this House for the work they do on behalf of Ontarians every single day.

It is vitally important to me that people can count on those emergency services, and that's why we have introduced legislation, on top of other steps we have taken, that we are very hopeful the member opposite will support. Bill 50 is a bill specifically designed to strengthen oversight and transparency at Ornge. I look forward to his stopping blocking passage of this bill and actually supporting it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Why is it that everyone at the Ministry of Health knows what's going on except the minister?

The reason that Dr. Mazza and his band of thieves were able to defraud Ontario taxpayers and compromise our air ambulance service is because, as the Auditor General said in his report, there was a lack of oversight on the part of the Ministry of Health. Now we know that that lack of oversight was intentional on the part of the Ministry of Health. It was not because of a faulty performance agreement or any of the other excuses that the minister has spun for the last number of months. It was because Hugh MacLeod, the then Associate Deputy Minister of Health, directed in writing the very department of the ministry that had those oversight responsibilities to stand down and leave Ornge alone.

I want to know this from the minister: Why has she kept this information secret? Why has she not disclosed that critical information, knowing that she knew about that letter? This minister—

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

Interjections.

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

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I understand the member opposite has his job to do, but my job is to make sure that the people of this province get access to excellent health care, and that includes emergency care when they need that.

We have made big strides—the member opposite has actually described them as “aggressive steps”—to actually enhance oversight and transparency and improve patient safety at Ornge. Under the new performance agreement, there will be a new patient advocate. There will be a publicly posted complaints process. We're initiating annual public surveys on performance—

Interjection.

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

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We're improving the reporting of emergency dispatch information because we are now including cancelled calls, declined air and land ambulance calls. We're creating quality improvement committees so, just like our hospitals, we will be publicly reporting quality improvement plans.

We also have given ourselves, under the new performance agreement, the ability to have surprise audits, unannounced inspections. We're linking executive compensation to public performance. We're tying Ontario's funding to key performance indicators. We're giving the government control over Ornge's assets—

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

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Internal notes provided to cabinet in 2004 show that experts within the government raised alarm bells about the new ambulance structure. Those alarm bells included: “the degree of control the ministry will retain in the new entity has still not been sufficiently addressed.”

Why did the government ignore the warning signs coming from within?

1110

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, right now there are hearings that are going on in public accounts to talk about some of the challenges that have been faced by Ornge, and I think this side of the House, the government, has admitted that we need to take steps to strengthen that. The minister acted promptly when she heard about the problems at Ornge in terms of administrative changes, in terms of a series of measures that have been taken.

The most important piece of the puzzle that's missing, however, is Bill 50, which has been held up by the opposition. Bill 50 is responding to the report of the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature, and I certainly call on the honourable member, indeed all members of this House, to get behind Bill 50 and see it go through second reading and then committee so that it can address that missing piece of challenges that are being faced by that organization.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Back to the Premier: Civil servants shared with cabinet a long list of concerns that they had with Ornge's new structure; those included questions about how much control the ministry had in the new Ornge entity. In other words, red flags were being raised before Ornge began operating for-profit services and paying its executives huge salaries.

Why did the government ignore its own warning signs? Why did they look away?

Hon. John Milloy: The strong action that has been taken by the Minister of Health is a matter of public record: We have a new board and a new CEO at Ornge; she called in the forensic auditors, which unfortunately

uncovered some information which led to her calling in the OPP, the responsible thing to do; she has replaced the performance agreement and, as I said, introduced tough, new legislation.

But if the member wants to hold hearings on the floor of the House, we can talk about what happened in Oshawa and why members lobbied to have the airport go to Oshawa over Peterborough, despite the fact that senior Ornge officials were opposed to the deal. We can talk about Kelly Mitchell, who was paid tens of thousands of dollars to lobby the Progressive Conservative Party, to make sure that the Progressive Conservative Party was aware and, to quote from the document—I don't have it right in front of me but I remember—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. John Milloy: —to make sure that they knew that Ornge was in line with the Progressive Conservative Party manifesto they were putting forward in the election.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question this morning is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Last week, in conversation with farmers in Peterborough riding, questions were raised regarding the Grain Financial Protection Program. In December 2010, in response to industry concerns about grain farmers, your ministry approved a short-term amendment to allow deferred payments, which means payments outside the timelines specified in regulation. The amendment is in effect until July 1, 2012, so it will expire at the end of June this year.

I know that many farmers in Peterborough riding were supportive of this change of the regulation and are eager to see it continue. Speaker, through you, can the minister please update this House on the status of this amendment and whether your ministry has considered making the change permanent?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his question and take this opportunity to inform the House about changes to the Grain Financial Protection Program that will strengthen our agri-food business and, indeed, our economy.

As the member may well be aware, the program protects the financial interests of Ontario producers of grain corn, soybeans, canola and wheat who sell their crop to licensed dealers. It also protects owners who store grains and oilseeds with licensed elevator operators. I'm pleased to say we are, in fact, going to extend this protection, which is the essence of your question and the essence of standing up for our farmers in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Minister, thank you very much for that wonderful answer. It was very detailed and comprehensive.

I know that the farmers of Peterborough riding will be pleased to hear that the short-term amendment has been extended beyond June of this year. These changes will modernize the regulations to reflect current industry practices, provide clarity around compensation for deferred

payment arrangements and bring consistency to compensation rates across the industry, and will treat canola and soybean producers consistent with grain corn and wheat producers. It also authorizes payment on a sliding scale to producers entering into a deferred payment arrangement.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please inform the House of the stakeholder consultation that took place to develop these changes and some of the effects of these changes?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd be delighted to do that. We had a deferred payment steering committee, which examined these issues, which included representatives from the Grain Farmers of Ontario, the Ontario Agri Business Association and the Grain Financial Protection Board. They were very, very involved in developing some of the options.

In fact, Henry Van Ankum, chair of the Grain Farmers of Ontario, has stated, "This has been a rewarding process to go through.... The government" needs to be "commended for how quickly" they have "resolved this issue."

The solution developed a more balanced approach, and it did so in direct consultation with our stakeholders. I think that speaks highly for our stakeholders and the move forward—

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

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is for the Minister of Health. We know, as of today, that there were 154 documented incidents where no ambulances were available for the residents of Waterloo region. In fact, the Waterloo Region Record has called this an ambulance crisis, but I call this a crisis in the Minister of Health's leadership. Once again, the Minister of Health has proven she cannot manage her own ministry and has put the lives of people in Waterloo region at risk. Can the minister assure us that this problem does not rest in her ministry?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I thank the member opposite for the question, and I think it's important to acknowledge that land ambulance services is under the responsibility of the municipality. Having said that, we, at the Ministry of Health, do provide oversight. We also have made significant investments in ways to support ambulance services. Ambulance off-load nurses, for example, are being funded in our hospitals specifically to care for patients who have come in by ambulance so that those ambulances and paramedics can get back on the road caring for patients. We monitor response times and responses carefully, and we are always working with our municipal partners to improve ambulance services for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Again to the minister: Minister, you know full well that dispatch centres are under your control as well as land ambulances. Don't pass the buck.

Speaker, the same reports show that ambulances were unavailable up to 17 times a month since July 2010.

Patients and paramedics in Kitchener–Waterloo have been forced to wait over 10 hours in the back of ambulances due to your colossal failure of leadership. According to the Waterloo Region Record, the figures released show the ministry has not been able to keep emergency wards operating in a manner to provide the timely service that patients expect.

I ask the minister: Given that this was a situation more than two years ago, is she even aware that the situation has gotten worse?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It occurs to me that this actually is a spend question coming from the opposition; they want us to spend more on ambulances. I understand that, and I think the member's question actually demonstrates the importance of protecting spending on health care, and that includes the uploading of a significant portion of our land ambulance expenses.

Now, I also understand that the party opposite would have cancelled our plan to continue with the uploading of costs for land ambulance. I think the question demonstrates the sheer folly that that would have entailed.

We will continue to work with municipalities. We continue to monitor issues related to ambulance off-load times, response times and so on, and I look forward to working with the member opposite to ensure that his community, in addition, has access to appropriate emergency service.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. This morning, People for Education came out with a report on the state of education in Ontario. It shows half of Ontario high schools continue to charge fees for core courses. Your guidelines prohibit this. When will you actually ensure that students don't have to pay to go to school in Ontario?

1120

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I welcome the report, referenced by my honourable colleague, from People for Education. That group has been around for some time now. They've become a very important part of the process that we rely on to take soundings outside of government as to what's happening inside our schools, so I really appreciate the effort that they continue to make.

I want to draw to my honourable colleague's attention the fact that, as well as some concerns raised in the report, which we always expect and listen to, there also was some celebration of some of the success that we have enjoyed when it comes to full-day kindergarten, for example; our higher graduation rates, smaller class sizes and increases in test scores.

School fundraising, I think, does remain an issue. We have taken some steps, but obviously we're going to have to do a little bit more to ensure that all schools are in fact paying attention to the strongest possible advice that we've given them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, the Premier has picked some points out of the People for Education report, but he has ignored the fact that People for Education say there has been a reduction in grants for arts and physical education and that the government failed to make sure that opportunity grants for the disadvantaged were actually spent on them. Half the schools are capping the number of students who can have access to special education supports.

Will the government act on the recommendations of the organization that they just praised and actually ensure that all students, regardless of family income, have access to the full range of education supports?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I believe, as my honourable colleague does as well, that the single most important thing we can do to guarantee a bright future for all our families is to ensure that all our children have access to the best possible publicly funded education. That's where it all starts.

That's why, since 2003, in the face of declining student enrolment, we've hired over 10,000 new teachers. We've hired over 10,000 education support workers. We have reduced class sizes. This September, I believe, there will be an additional 3,000 new teachers working in the Ontario education system.

That's why I'm counting on my honourable colleague to do everything that he can to ensure that we pass our budget at the earliest possible opportunity so we can freeze those corporate taxes and instead devote those kinds of resources into our schools, where they really matter.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. About one in seven people in Ontario have disabilities, and this number is anticipated to grow to one in five within 20 years, due to our aging population. By 2036, the number of seniors is projected to be more than double the 2009 number of 4.7 million; that's quite a bit. Personally, I know first-hand the challenges and opportunities that exist with accessibility in our province, and I speak with constituents in my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East all the time about this.

This is accessibility week, and it gives us an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to building an accessible province for people with all kinds of disabilities. My question is: How is this government addressing accessibility to truly make Ontario inclusive?

Hon. John Milloy: I do want to single out the member for her advocacy and leadership on this very important issue.

Mr. Speaker, each May we recognize National Access Awareness Week to honour achievements in building an Ontario that's accessible for all its residents, regardless of ability. I think all members of the Legislature, on all sides of the House, should be very pleased with the efforts that we made in 2005 when, unanimously, a bill that we had

brought forward, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, was passed by this House. This act establishes a framework under which standards are brought forward for people with disabilities to make our society more accessible. These are standards that come in over time through a series of benchmarks. I'm pleased to say we have developed and implemented four of the five standards that have been recognized.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank all those people involved in putting together these standards, the individuals who have been part of the standards development committees and my ministry's advisory council.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you to the minister. As the former chair of the Accessibility Standards Advisory Council for our province, I appreciate the advice we do receive from our local advisory councils throughout Ontario. These local advisory councils continue to inform me, as a past chair, and our government about accessibility needs in my community, and they provide feedback on how our government can help.

I understand, though, that time is needed for businesses to adapt new accessibility standards, and as they are developed, it will take some work. However, some businesses are still concerned about the costs of becoming fully accessible. Through you, Speaker, to the minister: What are the economic benefits for businesses that improve accessibility?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think everyone who's involved on the business front and the non-profit front, everyone who's trying to make their place of business or their place more accessible, realizes that not only is it a matter of, call it corporate responsibility or doing the right thing, but it also makes good business sense. Study after study—one of the most famous ones was done by the world-renowned Martin Prosperity Institute—is indicating that improving accessibility is good for business. In fact, that particular study said that improving accessibility could bring Ontario up to \$1.6 billion in tourism dollars, and retail sales could grow by another \$10 billion.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, we have a large number of individuals in the province of Ontario who face challenges through disabilities. With an aging population, that number is set to grow. We have to make sure that we're the most accessible society, not simply because it's the right thing to do but because it makes good business sense.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Premier. Premier, your idea for economic development involves more taxing, more spending and more consulting. Businesses today need immediate action to fix the job crisis that you created. Under your mismanagement, unemployment has been higher than the national average for more than 64 months. It seems that the only people who have a job in Ontario are those in government that create crafty schemes to actually spend more money.

Premier, rather than putting money into a slush fund earmarked for Liberal supporters and creating your so-called jobs panel, can you stand up today and tell residents of Kitchener–Waterloo how your inaction has resulted in a reported loss of 6,000 jobs at Research in Motion?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely delighted to stand up today and tell the people in Kitchener–Waterloo and the people throughout southwestern Ontario that the PC Party is standing in the way of jobs for their region. They're not moving forward with the southwestern Ontario development fund. That fund worked in eastern Ontario: 12,000 jobs created in eastern Ontario. We want to give people in southwestern Ontario access to those funds, access to their jobs. You, sir, and your party are standing in the way of jobs for Kitchener–Waterloo, standing in the way of jobs for Windsor, standing in the way of jobs for Sarnia, standing in the way of jobs throughout southwestern Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex will come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: You know, Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

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

Mr. Rob Leone:—what this minister doesn't understand is that we'll never be ashamed of standing up for 6,000 jobs in Waterloo region.

The first step to treating their addiction to economic underperformance is to actually admit that they have a problem. I just hope that the Premier and the government actually admit that, before there's yet another credit downgrade.

Premier, this is just not another layoff. This is big. This is a big deal for Canada and it's a big deal for Kitchener–Waterloo. RIM is one of the largest employers in Waterloo and now, as a result of doing business under your leadership, RIM is having to resort to layoffs just to stay afloat.

Minister, will you finally admit that you have mismanaged the economy and that you haven't the slightest idea of how to prevent more jobs from bleeding from Kitchener–Waterloo?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We on this side of the House are very proud of the things that RIM has accomplished over the years: the hundreds of millions of dollars that they've contributed to our economy, and the thousands of jobs. We remain confident in the future of that company.

I'll tell you something we're proud of, Mr. Speaker. Over the last five years, we have been having more business start-ups than ever before. In fact, the greater Toronto area, including Waterloo, is now number four in the world when it comes to business start-ups, behind New York, the Silicon Valley and London. That's because of the commitment we've made to innovation in this prov-

ince, a commitment that you oppose. That's because of the support we provide to places in Kitchener–Waterloo like Communitech, which is putting companies out every single day, creating jobs.

1130

We will create the next RIM in this province, but unfortunately it's without your support, because you're opposing—

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

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, the auto insurance industry has reported huge profits while insurance premiums in Ontario are the highest in the country. For example, the Co-operators reported profits of \$150.3 million in 2011, a 100% increase from its previously reported \$72.7 million in 2010. The Co-operators provided an explanation for this. They said, "Significant improvements year over year can be attributed to favourable claims experience in the Ontario automobile insurance portfolio...."

Basically, the reforms that this government has made have made profits increase, but our premiums are still the highest in the country.

Minister, will your government finally acknowledge that the auto insurance industry is flawed and it's time to bring some fairness to the system here in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd like to read the member a letter from Andrew Murie, the CEO of MADD Canada, with reference to his bill respecting auto insurance. He says, "The bill will force responsible drivers to subsidize the insurance premiums of dangerous drivers."

Here's what MADD goes on to say to the NDP: "MADD Canada would strongly advocate that this bill be rejected. In our view, the bill sends all the wrong messages, punishes responsible drivers, rewards dangerous drivers, and will increase the risk to Ontario road users." That's Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

We ought to reject his bill and his approach. It's flawed. It's failed. He'll be hearing from a lot more people like that in the next few days at public hearings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: While I have great respect for MADD as an organization that speaks about not drinking and driving, MADD is clearly wrong on this issue.

I have in my hand an article from a professor at the University of Waterloo, an actuarial scientist who refutes that claim and all the claims of IBC and will present that today at committee. In fact, the Auditor General and the Fraser Institute both indicate that insurance premiums in Ontario are the highest in the country.

This afternoon, the general government committee will begin a review of the entire auto insurance industry. It's our sincere hope that this government will work with us to inject some fairness into the system.

Let's be honest here. The auto insurance industry in Ontario is a complete mess. Will the minister commit his government to working with the NDP to bring some

fairness to Ontario, to bring the premiums down, to look at the fact that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh:—insurance is making so many profits and the people of Ontario are—

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would urge the member's colleagues from northern Ontario to heed the advice of consumer advocates who suggest that insurance premiums in northern Ontario will go up 30% as a result of that member's bill.

Let's just review a little bit more. The member opposite wants drunk drivers and other reckless drivers to pay less insurance. The driving safety record as defined in his bill only includes actual accidents. If you get caught drunk driving but don't get into an accident, your premiums won't go up.

He also favours rich drivers over poorer drivers. He wants to not take into account the make, model and year of the car—very understandable, given the vehicles the member himself drives.

His approach is wrong. It will raise premiums in northern Ontario. Even Mothers Against Drunk Driving have rejected your party and your—

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

Interjections.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member was kind of stepping on his own member's toes here, because—I will allow the first question. The member from Ajax–Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Speaker. In this knowledge-based era, education and innovation will be the key to prosperity for Ontarians. That's why our government has positioned Ontario as a leader in post-secondary education in the competitive global economy. Our government's goal is to enable our students to succeed in this new economy so they have the ability to think critically, to express those thoughts clearly, and to adapt and apply knowledge to new areas and tasks. By adopting new technology, we can give students the experience they require to prepare them for their workplace.

What support are we providing to our universities and colleges through the recent Ontario budget so they can continue to build a strong knowledge economy workforce?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, a more insightful question has never been asked in this House before.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Don't insult your member. You shouldn't do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's not too late to name someone.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, it's sheer brilliance compared to anything that I've ever been asked by the member for Nipissing–Pembroke.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's just—let us—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, thank you. You said it for me.

Please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I guess we've lost our sense of humour. It's only Monday.

We have actually increased operating grants, Mr. Speaker, to our colleges and universities by 77%. This is the largest investment since the Bill Davis government and the expansion of higher education. This has resulted in 210,000 additional seats, which means that there are 210,000 families out there, when they go down to the mailbox to get an answer that used to be a no, it's now a yes. For probably four times that many people, when you count the families, that's a life-changing experience. Thank you so much.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

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

Mr. Frank Klees: Yes, Speaker. I rise to correct my own record. In my question to the Minister of Health I referred to the individual who wrote the letter to the emergency health services branch to stand down on their oversight of Ornge as the associate deputy minister of the emergency health services branch. It was in fact the Associate Deputy Minister of Health who wrote that letter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is a point of order, and the member does have a right to correct his record. I thank him for that.

This House does not have any deferred votes. It therefore stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to recognize Diane Urquhart and her husband, who are here, I believe, to listen to the proceedings today. I know her through her work in pension reform.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'd like to introduce the students from Biidaaban Kinoomagegamik School from Sagamok First Nation, in the riding of Algoma–Manitoulin. They are touring the Legislature today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. John O'Toole: I rise today to call on the government to stop their mandatory WSIB increases, which are being forced on the Ontario small business community.

Recently, I had the opportunity to meet with many small construction companies and other independent businesses in my riding of Durham. I'm referring to people like my constituent Rudy Kraayvanger, president of Kraco Carpentry and Contracting, who are very concerned about the changes coming to their WSIB premium structure.

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board premiums are really a tax on jobs. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimates that changes to WSIB premiums "will cost the average small construction company \$11,000 a year...." This will force small business to "raise prices, cut jobs or even go out of business" entirely or go underground. I'm quoting from a December 30 Hamilton Spectator article.

This change amounts to a big tax hike on small businesses, who have to pay high premiums for workers who may not even set foot on the construction site at all—such people as office staff, managers and business partners who may never be on the site.

Speaker, it's worth mentioning again that WSIB's third quarter figures showed a massive unfunded liability of \$12.3 billion. Small businesses in my riding feel that they are the ones that are being forced to bail out the WSIB from this fiscal mess.

I encourage members to support Bill 87.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise to highlight a serious issue facing our communities. Rising youth unemployment rates and the subsequent lack of summer jobs available to post-secondary students is an issue of great concern which must be addressed immediately.

Despite how bad the Premier's HST—on everything from keeping the lights on to filling up the gas tank—has been for families and for jobs, there's been slow and steady growth in some job markets in both this province and across the country, but not all workers of our respective communities are benefitting equally from this growth. In fact, youth are the only demographic group that has not benefitted.

As the summer job season gets under way, the jobless rate for young people between 15 and 24 years old is roughly 14%, which is almost double that of the total population. That is shocking and unacceptable.

We, as elected members of provincial Parliament, must do everything we can to tackle this issue. Youth are the future of this province, and we cannot simply leave them behind on our journey back to a prosperous Ontario.

I call upon all of my colleagues in the Legislature to make this issue a priority as we move forward. Let's get these kids to work.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise today to deliver some great news for Ajax–Pickering and all of Durham which was

announced by Premier Dalton McGuinty during this past constituency week. Premier McGuinty, along with MPP Tracy MacCharles and I, met with reporters at the 407 site on Thursday for the announcement.

In my riding of Ajax–Pickering, the Highway 407 east extension has remained a top priority with our residents and, therefore, a top priority with our provincial government. Now motorists through Durham region will be glad to hear that construction on the 407 east from Brock Road to Harmony Road—and, I add, in Oshawa—is starting very soon.

With the construction from Pickering to Oshawa set to begin this fall, this three-year, \$1-billion project will create 900 direct construction jobs, and this, in turn, will boost the local economies within Durham region, including Ajax–Pickering. Over 20,000 spinoff jobs could be created from this investment in our local infrastructure.

This phase of the extension is scheduled to be completed by 2015, and the entire completed extension will stretch all the way to Highway 35/115 by 2020. Our Premier refers to this extension through Durham region as the people's highway, meaning that the ownership of the 407 east extension will be retained by the taxpayers. Rates will be set by the government, not a private corporation, as is the case with the existing 407, with a 100-year—

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

YOUTH BOWLING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. Jim McDonell: Today, I wish to recognize and congratulate the winners of the Youth Bowling Canada National Championships, which took place May 5 to 7 in St. John's, Newfoundland. They're a team from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and I'm very proud of them.

The Olympia Bowl bantam girls of Cornwall, the youngest team at the nationals, brought back the gold trophy and are wonderful advocates for youth bowling in our area and beyond.

Congratulations to the members of the team: Alyssa MacGillivray, Sophia Dorie, Elysium Villeneuve, Shayla Lascelle and coach Marilyn Desrosiers.

They overcame great odds and finished ahead of 11 other teams at the provincial tournament in Hamilton, and ahead of eight teams in St. John's. They were cheered on by the other Ontario teams and won the trophy in a three-way tie-breaker with Alberta and BC. It truly was an amazing feat.

Speaker, we should all be impressed by both their achievement and their composure in victory. These are the Ontario leaders of tomorrow, and they give us excellent reason to see a bright future ahead for everyone in this province.

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: This morning, the city of Thunder Bay and a number of municipalities and townships across northwestern Ontario declared a state of

emergency due to major flood damage that occurred overnight.

In less than 24 hours, hundreds of homes and businesses have sustained significant damage due to heavy rains that continue to hit the region. These rains are forecast to continue for the next few days, further complicating an already difficult situation. It goes without saying that our thoughts and prayers are with those who have been impacted by this situation.

At this time, I'm asking all members of this House to offer their support to the region. Damage to property and infrastructure, including roads and highways, is extensive. We in this House need to work together to ensure that the needs of these communities are met in the short and long term. I am asking members on all sides of this House to commit to working together to assist the members from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Thunder Bay–Superior North to ensure that the communities affected are provided with the assistance they need to battle this situation now and in the weeks to come.

PHYSIOTHERAPISTS

Mr. David Zimmer: May is National Physiotherapy Month. I want to acknowledge the important work done by Ontario's 7,500 physiotherapists to improve the quality of life in Ontario.

Physiotherapists practise in most health care delivery venues, including hospitals, community health centres, long-term-care homes, home care and community clinics, and in the workplace. I suspect that many members of this Legislature and their families have, from time to time, made use of a physiotherapist at least once in their lives.

Physiotherapists contribute to the health care system in important ways. This was recognized and enhanced by a major expansion in the physiotherapy scope of practice and authorized acts, which were approved in 2010 by this Legislature.

As people venture out into their yards and the golf course, and out for recreational runs and walks, physiotherapists want to ensure that you can participate in these activities, that they will improve your personal mobility and that you will generally lead a healthier and injury-free life. So, a sincere thank you to Ontario's physiotherapists, and best wishes from this Legislature to the physiotherapy profession in the month of May.

STRATFORD SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: This evening is the opening night of the internationally renowned Stratford Shakespeare Festival. From an outdoor tent on the banks of the Avon River to today's three world-famous stages, the festival has impressed audiences since 1953.

I congratulate director Antoni Cimolino, artistic director Des McAnuff and every actor, artist, musician, employee, volunteer and contributor who help bring this artistic excellence to Stratford.

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Yesterday, Jane and I were pleased to attend the annual Stratford Shakespeare Festival garden party.

Earlier this year, I was privileged to meet with Antoni and other festival representatives. It was great to go behind the scenes to see first-hand what goes into a successful production.

Just recently, Frommer's—what many consider the top international travel guide—ranked Stratford as one of the top 10 Canadian destinations this summer. No doubt the festival was a major factor in that impressive achievement for the city.

I look forward to attending the Stratford Festival, just as I enjoyed attending the Drayton Festival for its opening night on May 15.

I want to wish the Stratford Shakespeare Festival a triumphant opening night and continued success in this, their 60th season.

EVENTS IN OTTAWA

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It's a wonderful time of year for me, as the MPP for Ottawa Centre, where I and my community get to visit and enjoy all the beautiful, interesting, vibrant and exciting festivals that take place in our wonderful nation's capital.

While residents of Ottawa get to enjoy these activities year-round, we also welcome thousands upon thousands of Canadian and international tourists to our city.

These festivals not only make a tremendous cultural and entertainment contribution to our city's lifestyle, but also are a huge economic boost for local businesses and hospitality.

Most of these festivals rely and thrive on the hard work and generosity of volunteers. I would like to offer my appreciation to all those volunteers throughout our community who make these festivals world-class, safe and enjoyable for all of us.

Ottawa Festivals lists 60 festivals and community events. I wish I could name them all, but here are just a few highlights: the tulip festival, Bluesfest, the Ottawa International Jazz Festival, the dragon boat festival, HOPE Volleyball Summerfest, Capital Pride, Westfest, GreekFest, the Fringe Festival, Italian Week, the Ottawa Turkish Festival, the South Asian Festival, the Rideau Canal Festival, the children's festival, the chamber music festival, the Folk Festival, the Capital Vélo Fest for bicycles, Carnival of Cultures, Festival franco-ontarien, the Summer Solstice Aboriginal Arts Festival, the Music and Beyond arts festival—the list goes on and on.

I encourage all members to come visit Ottawa for this great summer festival season.

CANADA-WIDE SCIENCE FAIR

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to rise today to celebrate a national breakthrough by a group of young scientists from eastern Ontario.

In their best-ever showing at the Canada-Wide Science Fair, students from the Rideau-St. Lawrence

region went “five-for-five,” in the words of local science fair organizer Rod Charlton. All five local students who earned their way to the national competition in Charlotte-town earlier this month came home with medals. It's an amazing achievement, considering they were up against 500 of the brightest grades seven to 12 student scientists from across the country.

The record-setting medal haul was headlined by the junior gold medal earned by 12-year-old Christian Au of Brockville, a student at St. Lawrence Academy. Au's project was titled “BBs: Ballistics Gone Bio” and examined biodegradable BBs. He obviously hit the mark with the judges and earned a \$1,500 prize to go with the gold medal.

Brockville Collegiate Institute's dynamic duo of Nathan Heuvel and Adrian Au won an intermediate bronze for their project called “Exhaustive Energy.” Adrian is Christian's big brother, so I imagine there was a big celebration in the Au household.

The other winning partnership was Smiths Falls District Collegiate Institute students Robert Fournier and Logan Burns, who won a senior bronze medal for their project “Distraction Factor.”

Speaker, I'm so proud to honour these five outstanding students, who I'm certain are just getting started doing great things with their inquisitive minds.

It's my hope news of their success will see more local educators encouraging students to follow in their footsteps and get involved in the annual Rideau St. Lawrence Science Fair.

PETITIONS

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents of the riding of Durham which reads as follows:

“Whereas the government of Ontario and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) are forcing a mandatory premium increase on small business in the province of Ontario, specifically small construction companies and independent operators;

“Whereas the Ministry of Labour has a responsibility to protect workers and ensure workplaces are safe, but should do so in a way that respects a small business's ability to be profitable and successful;

“Whereas the government of Ontario has, unilaterally and without consultation, forced a mandatory premium increase on small businesses which will cost the average company an additional \$11,000 annually;

“Whereas this single source of workplace insurance has become an expensive monopoly, forcing many small business operators to lay off staff or close their doors permanently;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the government of Ontario to cancel its current plan to increase and make

mandatory WSIB premiums for employees, such as office staff, managers and business partners, who are not directly involved on construction sites” and may not be on the work site ever in their work time.”

I'm pleased to sign, endorse this and present it to one of the new pages, Sam.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission provides services which are vital to the north's economy; and

“Whereas it is a lifeline for the residents of northern communities who have no other source of public transportation; and

“Whereas the ONTC could be a vital link to the Ring of Fire;

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

“That the planned cancellation of the Northlander and the sale of the rest of the assets of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission be halted immediately.”

I fully agree, and I would like to hand it down to Alexander.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

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

“Whereas the horse racing industry employs approximately 60,000 people, creates \$1.5 billion in wages and \$2 billion in recurring expenditures annually; and

“Whereas the partnership that was created between government and the horse breeding and racing industry has been a model arrangement and is heralded throughout North America, with 75% of revenues going to the provincial government to fund important programs like health care and education, 5% to the municipalities and only 20% goes back to the horse business; and

“Whereas the horse business is a significant source of revenue for the farming community and rural municipalities;

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

“That the Ministry of Finance continue the revenue-sharing partnership with the horse racing industry for the benefit of Ontario's agricultural and rural economies.”

I support this petition and will send it with page Kyra to the clerks' desk.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

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

“Whereas the Ontario government” has made PET scanning “a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; 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” Health Sciences North, “its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

They “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 the northeast.

I fully support this petition, Mr. Speaker, will affix my name to it and ask page Dana to bring it to the Clerk.

DISABILITY INSURANCE

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

“Whereas Nortel disabled former employees meet the literal meaning of the defined term ‘consumer’ in the Ontario Consumer Protection Act; and

“Whereas disability insurance services supplied by Nortel and Sun Life met with the literal meaning of the defined term ‘consumer transaction’ in the Ontario Consumer Protection Act; and

“Whereas terms and conditions of employment or disputes arising in the context of workplace relationships are not on the long list of exceptions for which the Ontario Consumer Protection Act and regulations do not apply; and

“Whereas disability insurance services supplied by Nortel and Sun Life are within the spirit and the object of the Ontario Consumer Protection Act, as expressed by the Hansard transcript of the Ontario Legislature and the Ontario Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; and

“Whereas the Ontario government supported the March 30, 2010, Nortel settlement agreement, whose legal release prevents the Nortel disabled from undertaking their own civil litigations to remedy wrongdoings in respect to Nortel's disability insurance and health and welfare trust, and whose court approval relied on a single Nortel disabled court-appointed representative agreeing to the settlements without having the informed consent of Nortel's disabled group; and

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“Whereas the federal Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act enables the priority payment of a court restitution order prepared by the regulatory body when a viable compromise of the debtor is unaffected and the public interest is served—for example, the recent court approval of the non-bank ABCP regulatory settlements to the paid owners; and

“Whereas the Nortel disabled former employees have had an at least 65% cut in their disability income when the Nortel CCAA proceedings to date and, on March 31, 2012, the Ottawa Citizen defined these court proceedings

as ‘a glaring example of everything that is wrong with the justice system’;

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

“To instruct the minister of consumer affairs to use her powers under the Ontario Consumer Protection Act to enforce its provisions for unfair business practices and false and misleading and deceptive representations and to seek a court restitution order for the damages to the Nortel disabled former employees caused by these offences.”

I will be handing this off to page Stavroula.

TOURISM

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas tourism is a vital contributor to the economy of northwestern Ontario, bringing hundreds of millions of dollars into the province’s economy from other provinces and the United States, unlike other regions in the province whose target demographic is people who already reside in Ontario;

“Whereas northwestern Ontario’s tourist economy has been under attack by government policies such as the cancellation of the spring bear hunt, the harmonized sales tax (HST), the strong Canadian dollar and difficulties passing through the Canada/United States border; and

“Whereas studies have shown that tourism in the northwest nets significantly more money per stay than other regions of the province, in part due to visitors frequenting historical sites, parks and roadside attractions that they learn about through travel information centres;

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

“To keep the travel information centres in Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River open permanently to ensure that northwestern Ontario maximizes the benefit of our tourist economy.”

I support this petition and will give this to page Tameem to deliver.

RADIATION SAFETY

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

“Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is in serious need of modernization;

“Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is not in harmony with all the following acts, regulations, guidelines and codes: the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario, the radiation protection regulations of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the safety codes of Health Canada and the radiation protection guidelines of the International Commission on Radiological Protection;

“Whereas dental hygienists 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 undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by Dr. Reza Moridi, 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, 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 agree with this petition, sign them and pass them to page Daxime.

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 to it and send it with page Alexander.

REGULATION OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to submit this petition on behalf of my dentist, Dr. Denny Jezdic, from Belle River.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, as currently legislated by the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, a dentist can be charged with sexual abuse for treating their spouse;

“Whereas the equation cannot be made between placing a filling, scaling a patient’s teeth or reading a patient’s X-rays and sexual abuse;

“Whereas dentists support zero tolerance as it relates to sexual abuse;

“Whereas, in rural and northern underserved areas of Ontario, dentists prevented from treating their spouses may create a barrier to access;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly ... as follows:

“That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care immediately exempt dentists from the sexual abuse

provisions under the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, to allow dentists to provide dental treatment to their spouses; and

“That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return the authority to review and exercise discretion on a case-by-case basis any complaints involving spousal treatment to the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario.”

I agree with the petition, affix my name to it and submit it with our new page Dana.

RADIATION SAFETY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas there are risks inherent in the use of ionizing, magnetic and other radiation in medical diagnostic and therapeutic procedures; and

“Whereas the main legislation governing these activities, the Healing Arts Radiation Protection (HARP) Act, dates from the 1980s; and

“Whereas neither the legislation nor the regulations established under the HARP Act have kept pace with the advancements in imaging examinations as well as diagnostic and therapeutic procedures; and

“Whereas dental hygienists in Ontario are deemed by subsection 6(2)8 of the HARP Act to be qualified to ‘operate an X-ray machine for the irradiation of a human being’; and

“Whereas dental hygienists in Ontario need to be designated as radiation protection officers and to undertake X-rays of the orofacial complex on their own authority in order to fully function within their scope of practice; and

“Whereas dental hygienists fully functioning within their scope of practice provide safe, effective, accessible and affordable comprehensive preventive oral health care as well as choice of provider to the public of Ontario;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care establish, as soon as possible, 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 to bring it up to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and covers all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.”

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with page Katie.

MALE BREAST CANCER

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here signed by a great many of my constituents.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, each year, an estimated 45 men will die of male breast cancer in Canada, a number that is expected only to increase; and

“Whereas breast cancer is widely believed to be a disease specific to women, and due to a general lack of awareness that men can also develop breast cancer, men are typically diagnosed at a late stage; and

“Whereas promoting awareness and education about male breast cancer is crucial to improving the health and well-being of men throughout Ontario, facilitating earlier detection, improving the prognosis of men who have been diagnosed with the disease and ultimately preventing further loss of life; and

“Whereas, in remembrance of the many men who have lost their lives or are fighting for their lives,

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

“That the third week of October be designated as Male Breast Cancer Awareness Week in Ontario.”

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to present this petition on behalf of my constituents.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It gives me great pleasure to present this petition here today. I have 1,000 petitions. I’ll be presenting 1,000 a day until the end of the session. The petition reads as follows:

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Auto insurance reform needed: Protect consumers.

“Whereas auto insurance rates are too high in the province of Ontario and continue to increase;

“Whereas families across the greater Toronto area (GTA) are facing unfair insurance premiums that have more to do with where they live than their accident history or driving ability; and

“Whereas insurance premiums across the GTA differ by as much as 150% for drivers with the same driving record;

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

“That the Ontario Legislative Assembly undertake auto insurance reform that protects consumers, ensuring that premiums are based on a fair assessment of a driver’s known ability and history, rather than unfairly targeting drivers on the basis of where they live.”

I fully agree with this petition, will affix my signature, and present it to page Sam.

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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 17, 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): Further debate on Bill 55? I recognize the member for Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: Thank you, Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak to this bill. Let me say, before I get started, that there are two premises to my remarks. The first premise in the remarks I want to offer is that passing this budget bill is the most important thing that we as legislators here at Queen's Park in Ontario can do to ensure the revival, the strengthening and the comeback of our economy here in Ontario. That's what I hear in my riding, in Willowdale, and that's what I hear when I travel in other parts of the province. People want to get our economy back on a strong footing. The first step in getting the economy on a strong footing is to get this budget bill passed, so that we all know what the ground rules are for the next year, and no matter what our position is here in Ontario—whether we're working persons, whether we're professional persons, whether we're legislators, whether we're homemakers, whether we're teachers, whether we're business persons—we can all get started to rebuild the economy.

The second premise of my remarks is that, in rebuilding our economy and addressing the issues raised in the budget, everybody in Ontario has a role to play, but an especially important role is the role played by members of this Legislature. And an especially important role for all members of this Legislature, particularly members of the opposition, is to stop this business of grinding the work of this Legislature to a halt, whether it's bellingering in this chamber, whether it's shutting down committees.

What the members of the opposition, particularly the PC opposition, are doing is preventing this budget bill from going through, and to the extent they are preventing it from going through, they're just holding back the start of our recovery, which is outlined in this budget. I urge everybody to do their bit. I especially urge the members of the opposition, I especially urge the PC members to get off your proverbials and work with us on Bill 55, so that we can start to rebuild Ontario's economy.

I want to speak to five things in Bill 55 that I think are critical. First, it's important that we balance the budget to make the economy stronger and that we create jobs, because a balanced budget gives everyone in Ontario—workers, bankers, teachers, doctors, everybody—the confidence that our economy is going to work. Bill 55, our budget, is designed to meet that need. It's designed to balance the budget in five years, by budget year 2017-18. At the same time we are balancing the budget, we're going to maintain a low rate of growth in spending and we are going to beat our budget deficit targets as laid out in the 2010-11 budget. By doing that, and by creating that stability, that in turn will create confidence in the business sector, that in turn will create confidence in the

investment sector, and that in turn will create confidence among the people working in our economy.

The second thing I want to highlight in our budget—this is very, very important; this leads to the stability and to the balanced budget targets. For every additional \$1 in proposed new revenue measures—for every \$1 in proposed new revenue measures—there are \$4 in savings and cost-containment measures.

When we take that \$1 in proposed revenue and balance that against the \$4 in savings and containment costs, that's a significant step along the way to balancing the budget.

Bill 55 of the budget also includes \$17.7 billion of savings and further actions to contain cost increases. There's also \$4.4 billion in revenue-raising measures—that's the \$1 in the \$4 that I talked about. But more importantly, at the same time that we're leading with those financial initiatives, we are going to take strong, strong measures to transform our public services. The way public services are delivered in Ontario is a major, major piece of the budget. It's a major, major piece of the cost structure here in Ontario.

What are we doing to manage costs and to transform our public service? Let me just walk you through a few of the things.

We're going to manage current and future compensation costs in the public sector. We're proposing legislation to make arbitration more transparent, accountable and efficient.

That's something that we've heard about from all sectors of our economy, particularly in the MUSH sector—the municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals. They are crying out for reform of the arbitration system. They want it more transparent and accountable and efficient, and why do they want that? They want that so they can work with us in addressing their cost issues.

We are consulting with stakeholders on a legislative framework that would make public service pensions more affordable for taxpayers and more sustainable—that's the other part of it—for plan members.

As members of the Legislature, we are doing our bit. We are extending the MPP pay freeze for another two years, for a total of five years. It has been three years since the members of this Legislature have taken a pay raise, and we're going to extend that for two. That's a way that members ourselves, all of those who sit in these desks and these chairs in this room, can personally exercise some leadership and a sense of commitment to containing our cost structures here in Ontario.

The Ontario drug benefit plan, the ODB, is going to be reformed so that 5% of senior ODB recipients with the highest incomes pay more for their prescription costs. That's fair. All we're asking is that those people, high-income seniors, contribute a little more to our health care program and our cost structures. There are 1.9 million seniors living in Ontario, and this additional cost on the ODB change will only affect about 75,000 of the highest-earning seniors.

We propose to freeze the corporate income tax—*Interjections.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Please take your seat just for one moment. I would ask all members of the House to quieten down a bit so that I can hear the member for Willowdale.

Member for Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: Thank you. We are proposing to freeze corporate income tax and business education tax reductions. That, again, will provide us with some additional funds to meet our balanced budget targets.

We are going to transform the way we deliver support to business, and this is important because one role the government does have is supporting our private sector business entities so they can prosper and create the jobs that we want our people in Ontario to have. What we're doing there is, we're going to create the jobs and prosperity fund. It will be under a panel of leadership of distinguished Ontarians who understand business, who understand the economy and who understand the social needs of our province, its hospitals and schools. They're going to take a broad overview and give advice on structuring the economy so that Ontario can remain prosperous, can become more prosperous, that we can hang on to our jobs and that we can create more jobs.

We are going to continue to have the world's best-educated workforce because, ultimately, down the road, the higher the levels of education of our workers, our professional people, our engineers, our doctors, our business persons—they're the people who are going to create and manage the social structures and our economy. So we're starting right at the base level. We are maintaining full-day kindergarten. We're going to have smaller class sizes. When we move up the scale to colleges and universities, we've got a 30% Ontario tuition grant for families, and we're integrating various training programs. It's all of a piece to provide our economy with the infrastructure that it needs to grow, to create jobs so that people are paying taxes, so that we can deal with our deficit.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to respond. I think when the member first started speaking he did leave some suspicion about what he would be responding to, but this motion by the government with respect to Bill 55, the budget—we've made it very clear, as you know, this budget does nothing to resolve the issues facing the province of Ontario. We have an escalating problem of the economy and jobs. This budget does nothing about the job function. In fact, as you would know, Mr. Speaker, it increases spending in a time when even Don Drummond was recommending restraint. So I put to you that this motion that we're debating today is a clear admission by the McGuinty government—they just don't get it.

Right now, when I look at businesses in my community—and not just Research in Motion, the most recent victim of the McGuinty policies—all you've done is increase spending and increase the risk to oppor-

tunities, especially for young people in Ontario, the ones graduating from college and university. Where are the jobs? They're graduating with the highest debt load in history, and the opportunities are bleak at best. It's absolutely frightening. I'm going to a commencement, a graduation exercise—I believe it's this weekend on my schedule—and we're asked to bring greetings. What greetings can I bring to the youth who are graduating into this future of Ontario where we have chronic unemployment, we have a structural deficit, and this member gets up there and reads the trite that's been handed to him by the finance minister that has taken us close to the cliff?

I can't possibly support what's being said here, and I'd recommend people even on the government side take a close look. Hold your breath, close your nose, close your eyes and vote against Bill 55.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I listened to the member from Willowdale and his presentation, and he certainly focused on what he feels are the most important issues to the Liberal Party and their agenda, but what he didn't talk about was the budget—it was no jobs. They claim that they've created 140,000 jobs, but with all due respect, Speaker, most of those jobs are either part-time or minimum wage. So I really wouldn't be bragging. I remember when this all started, they said they were going to create 600,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector, 50,000 green venture jobs. They are nowhere near it. They've retracted about six times on the 600,000; I think we're down to about 40,000 now. And the 50,000 jobs in green venture? It's non-existent, a pathetic number; I think it's less than 1,000 jobs. So all these forecasts that they make on how things are going to turn around sound great—it's a great thing for the media; it's a great thing, they think, to boost their popularity—however, it's not realistic.

When you're going to create jobs in Ontario, you don't attack the horse racing industry, which has between about 60,000 full-time jobs and probably another 100,000 support jobs in small business—harnesses, veterinarians, suppliers, grain, all kinds of other secondary industries that are affected. So I think it's probably in the neighbourhood of 150,000 jobs they've lost there by attacking the horse racing industry and calling it a subsidy, when actually it was a deal that was cut with the horse racing industry. It was not a subsidy. They get 75% of the revenue and they don't have to do anything to get it. Why would you cut your throat and take all that revenue out of the people of Ontario for their hospitals and all the other things that they brag about wanting to fix? It just doesn't make sense.

This budget is terrible, lousy.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to comment on the remarks of my colleague from Willowdale. I totally agree with the member from Willowdale when he says that the single most important thing that we can do right now to grow our economy, to recover fully

from the recession, is to balance the budget, and in order to do that, we need to pass this budget bill.

What I have found very interesting over the last week, when I, like you, have been in my constituency, is that as I talk to people in my community, they assume that the budget issue has been resolved. People out there think that when we pass the budget motion, we all have an agreement on how the budget was going to unfold and that it's all done. They're very surprised when I tell them that, no, there's a budget bill which actually implements that budget motion and needs to be passed, and the opposition—both parties—are blocking the passage of the budget bill.

We need to get on with agreeing on the timing of how we are going to get this budget passed. Then we can do the good things that need to be done. We can make sure that we return to balance by 2017. We can implement the tax measures we've all agreed on, we can introduce the new revenue measures, and we can make sure that we get Ontario back in top-notch economic health.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I rise today to talk on Bill 55, the budget bill. I guess I'm a little amazed that there's anybody in this House that could support the bill that's before us.

I listened to the press gallery report last week, with the Minister of Finance and the House leader, with all their rumblings and talk about how we're blocking this bill. But really, when you look at it—and we've been very clear in this—we're willing to co-operate, maybe not in the passage of this bill, but with the running of this Parliament, if they'd simply follow their agreement to put together the select committee on Ornge, a very basic commitment they made to the House, and we took them at their word for that. I guess we shouldn't have done that—it was a mistake—because now, after the House voted on it, they've reneged on that decision.

You look at this motion, and it is an issue for us. It doesn't supply any jobs. It continues to increase spending at a time when their own consultant talked about the need to get the deficit to zero. This budget is between \$2 billion and \$3 billion more than it was last year. So I don't know how they stand here and say that they've actually cut spending.

We're looking at areas where they've affected the horse racing industry, which actually contributed \$1.1 billion to this government, and now they're losing that, with the idea that they're going to open up casinos in other areas when we're already closing them down because those stand-alone casinos aren't making money. Times are not good in Ontario, and people don't have the money they used to have. We're gambling on the people who actually go out and gamble and are willing to give away this money that they used to have available to them for discretionary spending but no longer have. So we cannot support this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: I come back to my point that the most important thing we can do to get moving in our economy is get this budget bill passed.

I just want to go over the PC record on that. I was in this chamber. The Minister of Finance introduced the budget bill at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. It's a thick document; there's a lot of stuff in there. The leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, literally within the hour—so he couldn't possibly have sat down and reflected on that budget in any thoughtful, mature, respectful way—within the hour, just off the top of his head, without giving it a thought, committed himself and his party to voting against it. Now, is that responsible? Is that a responsible exercise of the responsibilities of the opposition? I remind the opposition that the full name of the opposition is Her Majesty's loyal opposition. They just rejected that—

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Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the opposition members to come to order, please, so that I can hear the member for Willowdale make his summation.

I'll give you some extra time, member for Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: They just rejected that bill out of hand, without even having the courtesy—or exercising their responsibility—to at least read it through and think about it carefully.

Not only did they not do that, but since that budget bill was introduced by the Minister of Finance, there's been no effective movement or debate. They haven't come to us and said, "Well, here, we've got some ideas on the budget. We don't care for that, but we like this." Sit down and talk to us about it. They won't even talk about the budget. They won't negotiate the budget. It's just flat-out, "No, no, no," for the sake of being obstructionist.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to speak this afternoon on the budget bill, Bill 55.

I should just respond to the member from Willowdale to say that, of course, in the budget lock-up, there's a team of experts locked up for the day looking at the budget in detail, but it didn't take long to see that the government's plans were to go from a \$15.3-billion deficit in the current year to a \$15.-2 billion deficit in the financial year we are now in, and that is simply unacceptable.

The government has dug this province into a very deep economic hole, with years of excessive spending, and this budget makes clear that they have no intention of making the decisions necessary to pull us out. As I mentioned, the \$15.3-billion deficit makes it more difficult to provide services, it makes the province an unappealing place to invest, it hurts our credit rating—we've seen downgrades—and it drives up our interest payments and puts prosperity for future generations at risk.

For all the government's rhetoric and hoopla, this budget reduces a \$15.3-billion deficit to a \$15.2-billion deficit. The budget talks about the importance of taking strong action to address difficult financial realities brought about by the recession, yet there is no strong action evident in this bill. We would be running virtually the same deficit this year as we did last year. That is not strong action.

We have seen the report from the government's own economic expert, Mr. Drummond, that I think was more a delay tactic than anything else. He came out with an in-depth report, with over 300 recommendations. He also, at the beginning of it, said, "This is the real financial situation in Ontario." The status quo is, if government spending continues the way it has been the past number of years, we're not looking at a balanced budget in 2017-18. We're looking at a \$30-billion deficit and we're looking—the other really scary number—at \$411 billion of total debt.

In your budget document, you mention that the province spends more money on interest each year than on colleges and universities. That scary statistic will only get worse under this budget and this government. Lower credit ratings and ballooning debts will see the province's interest rates continue to skyrocket. Those are hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars spent each year on interest instead of on providing services that the province very much needs. The current number is about \$10.6 billion, at, I might add, historically low interest rates.

Just as an aside, I just spent the week visiting our daughter Renee in England and Ireland. If you're in Ireland, you can't help but notice signs all over the streets with either a "no" vote for a referendum—vote against the referendum on their financial agreement—or "yes." It's a huge topic of discussion there: that essentially the government's debt has created such a problem, they are now having to agree to a contract about how high a deficit they will be able to run in future. So, on May 31, they will have a big vote on that in Ireland.

The other scary statistic coming out of Ireland that I heard about was that 10% of households are in 90 days of arrears on their mortgage payments—10%. Well, that's where this province is heading if we keep on piling up a \$15.2-billion, \$15.3-billion deficit. Those are huge numbers, and the government just doesn't get it. They don't understand. You need to go and visit some other places. You see all the news about Spain and the banks there. You hear a lot about Greece. This government is willing to just keep on going and spending and doesn't realize the road we're on.

The government's budget also leaves people in northern Ontario feeling forgotten and exploited. Mr. Speaker, I visited Kenora in April to attend the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association conference. Also, I was in North Bay a few weeks after that for the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities annual general meeting. These are important meetings where all the northern municipal officials get together to talk about important issues and concerns that they have, and they

also use it as an opportunity—there are bear-pit sessions to question members of the government. You would have thought, these being the two biggest northern conferences of the year, that the Minister of Northern Development and Mines might attend them, but he missed both—particularly when at the FNOM one they were flying the flags at half-mast because of decisions of the government, as noted in the budget bills, to do with the divestment of the Ontario Northland transportation corporation, which is of course vital transportation infrastructure in northeastern Ontario. The Minister of Municipal Affairs, to give her credit, attended both conferences, but the person that the municipalities and those attending really wanted to talk to was the minister responsible for the north, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Nipissing and I will be touring our northern communities in June to talk to affected stakeholders and those that depend on rail transportation in the north, to get input from them on what needs to be done to provide that essential infrastructure going forward, because the government made this decision without any consultation and without any notice, really, to these businesses.

We've already seen businesses leaving northern Ontario because of high energy rates. We've seen Xstrata move 700 jobs from Timmins to Quebec because of high energy rates. I know a lot of the companies say even a 1% increase in transportation costs can be a deal breaker and make the difference between having a viable project or not having a viable project.

Again to do with the north, a few weeks ago the minister made an announcement with great fanfare about a chromite processing facility in Sudbury. It didn't take long for the varnish to come off his flashy press release to reveal that, once again, northern policy from this government raises more questions than it actually answers. The minister's press release with his mug shot on it made it sound like there was a mine opening. The title: "Thousands of Jobs Coming to Northern Ontario." You read the actual one from Cliffs and basically it's about going from a pre-feasibility to a feasibility study of a prospective smelter—so two very different announcements.

I've got a few more pages that I'd love to get through in my speech, but we, as the opposition, have been ringing the bells, and I want to just take a moment to explain why we've been doing that. The Legislature did pass, with the support of the Legislature, a motion to have a select committee look into the air ambulance situation at Ornge. The health minister, in the House, did say that she would honour the will of the Legislature, and since, the opposition has put forward a compromise to expand the terms of reference of the public accounts committee to essentially make it the select committee. I would say that the public accounts committee has been doing very good work and all members of the committee from all parties have been doing a good job on that committee. But the health minister did express that she would listen to the will of the House, and the will of the

House was expressed through a motion voted on here. That's why the opposition has been ringing bells. It's one of the few tools the opposition can use to try to get the government's attention. So, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Miller has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1400 to 1430.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All those in favour of the motion will please rise and be counted by the table staff.

Take your seats.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and be counted by the table staff.

Take your seats.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 31; the nays are 46.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka still has some time on the clock, and I'll return to the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: When we left off, I was explaining the very rational reason why we've been ringing the bells; that is, the Minister of Health, in the House, under questioning in question period, did state that she would respect the will of the House. Then there was a vote in the House to establish a select committee to look into the Ornge affair. That passed in this House, so the will of the House has been expressed.

Then the opposition, very rationally, offered to expand the mandate of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to have it essentially become the select committee and, as I stated, the public accounts committee has been doing an excellent job—weekly, there are new revelations. But so far, the government has not responded and the health minister has not honoured her commitment. So, because of that, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1433 to 1503.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted by the table staff.

You may take your seats.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise now and be counted by the table staff.

You may take your seats.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 29; the nays are 43.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: It was interesting to listen to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka as he spoke about the bill. He started off, though, with a premise that I don't think is necessarily true, and that is that the Conservative Party had an option, before the budget was released—sitting in quarantine, as I like to call it, more than anything else—for a couple of hours to look through what was contained within the body of the budget and the budget bill, and came to a conclusion. I don't have any problem that they came to a conclusion that was radically different to our own or to that of the government. That's what happens in a full-fledged democracy like ours. But what I did find difficult in what he had to say was that he knew everything he needed to know in that short period of time.

Just this morning, there was a news conference here in the Legislature talking about schedule 28 of Bill 55. Although I had read the bill, I must admit that this particular schedule had escaped my notice—the enormous import of it. What happened this morning was that a lawyer came in from a very prestigious law firm—the same lawyer who had challenged the Conservative government's sale of Hydro One all those many years ago, the same lawyer with impeccable credentials—who informed us about section 28 of Bill 55 and what it means. I think the Liberal government, particularly the backbenchers, had better take another look at what that actually says. It gives the government permission to set up a dummy corporation to sell off the entire government—and that's pretty much it—nor does anything ever have to come to the Legislature again, nor does anything ever have to be debated in this place again. It will simply be a government prerogative to sell off when and to whom they want, whether it be Canadian or even American or worldwide interests. That's something that needs some study, and that's something that we have to continue to look at.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I had a chance to listen to the remarks from the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I appreciate what he's trying to say, but, again, the underlying fact is that the Conservatives, right from the start, said they were not going to support the budget.

The budget is a very, very large document and it has addendums to it as well. I have a copy of the budget here, at least the main part of the budget which does not include the addendums, and it's over 300 pages long. On the day of the budget, when you have a chance to go to the budget lock-up, you can get briefed on the budget. I think that the Leader of the Opposition and the finance

critic did get briefed during the budget lock-up, and later on, they came out and immediately said, “No, we’re not going to vote for this budget,” without looking at the finer details of the budget.

When you dig into it—even if you don’t dig into it—you find that the theme of the budget is to try to balance the budget. We’re trying to do that fairly quickly within the next few years. I think you need to read the document properly to understand why we’re trying to balance the budget as soon as possible.

The main themes are to grow the economy, create jobs and keep education and health care strong. It’s a difficult task to do but an important one to do. I think that when we try to balance the budget, there are a number of factors at play.

I don’t think in one day of budget lock-up and so many hours of budget lock-up—it’s not the entire day—to come back at 4 o’clock for the finance minister to read the budget—I don’t think that’s enough time to really absorb what’s inside the budget and suddenly decide, “No, we’re not going to vote for it,” and take a hard line, “No, no, no.” At least have a chance to look at the budget. I think it’s the wrong attitude not to look at it. For that reason, I think they need to be corrected and hopefully do a better job when they read documents.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It’s my pleasure to stand and speak to my colleague Norm Miller from Parry Sound–Muskoka—both Norm and his dad, Frank, before him were long-established tenants in this House, very responsible members with a history of sound fiscal responsibility.

1510

He brought up a lot of practical comments in his few minutes of delivery. He shared the fact that we were in lock-up. We had experts in lock-up who did review the budget and, for many reasons, sound, principled reasons, we chose not to support this budget.

He suggested that this \$15.3-billion deficit is heading towards \$30 billion if we don’t take strong action. We need to do that, not just a bunch of rhetoric.

He suggested there was a lack of willingness, that perhaps the ability to make the decisions that are necessary is not within the conviction of the Liberals across the floor, and I agree with that. They want to tamper around the edges. They want to talk about some frill things, but they really aren’t making significant action that’s going to turn this province around.

He talked about the two credit rating downgrades that we’ve experienced. This is going to add—interest is going to rise. It’s already the third-largest expenditure of this government. We can’t afford that. In my riding, I’m talking to my constituents, asking, “Would you, in all good conscience, tell your children, if they couldn’t afford their mortgage, to go out and continue to spend on 14 of 24 household items?” I don’t think that’s the way we should be going. I can’t in good conscience do that.

He spoke about the Drummond report and that Mr. Drummond, commissioned by them, had all kinds of

ideas that should be implemented, and they took none of those.

We fundamentally went ahead to the government before the budget and said, “You need to reduce spending significantly. You need to have a plan to create jobs.” There are 600,000 people unemployed across the great province of Ontario today. There was none of that in there. And they did not reduce the deficit until at least 2017-18, and that’s all a bunch of wishful thinking, in my estimation.

So, Speaker, we were very principled in our approach. We just said that we cannot support a budget that’s not going to do that. Our kids are at stake—our grandkids’ future. We need to have hope for them. We cannot support this budget in its current form.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to join the debate today.

Just in response to the member for Scarborough Southwest, who mentioned that the key to this budget is balancing the budget, indicative in that is what my honourable colleague from Beaches–East York mentioned just earlier in his statement. From the direction this government is heading in terms of schedule 28, it looks as though—and it’s a cautionary tale to the backbenchers in the Liberal Party—you are looking to balance the budget by selling off almost each and every aspect of the public service of the province, and that is driven right through schedule 28 in this budget bill.

I would strongly advocate for members of the government side to take a look at this schedule because it opens up the doors to privatizing every public service in the province, even contracting OHIP services out to an American HMO, all without the approval of the Legislature and all without any scrutiny.

I would also add that this is Ornge times 100 times 1,000. It is the mistakes that we have learned from the past about to be repeated. It’s just bizarre that the government wishes to ram this thing through. We had the finance minister attacking members of the opposition this week, by saying that we were playing obstructionist games when in fact we’re doing nothing of the sort.

We’re asking for fulsome debate, particularly given the ramifications of schedule 28 on our public services. They’re attempting to privatize or open the doors to privatization, similar to what they’ve done with the horse racing industry. This is something that obviously is a cautionary tale, coming only from our side of the benches. We’re hearing bell ringing. I would suggest you guys need a different motive here, because every time you ring the bells, we’re not able to beat them up. You’ve got to stop ringing the bells and start getting them with your words. It’s words that we create in this House; it isn’t bell ringing. The people deserve to know the truth, and that comes through words.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to respond and thank the members from Beaches–East York, Scarborough Southwest, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the member from Essex for their comments.

As I noted right at the beginning of my comments, the government is going from a \$15.3-billion deficit in last year's financial year to \$15.2 billion this year, and those are still scary numbers. We're still heading towards Mr. Drummond's predicted \$30-billion deficit and \$411 billion in debt by 2017. So we're still very much on the wrong track.

The government announced a big wage freeze in 2010, and we note that over half of the budget is spent on wages, and yet that has been a complete failure. The opposition has made constructive suggestions about a legislated wage freeze. We've also made constructive suggestions to do with having more skilled workers in the province—something very much needed. The government has not taken us up on those recommendations.

Most of the uncertainty in the world these days is being created by governments living beyond their means, by spending too much money. I've just returned from visiting a daughter in England and Ireland. That's the news over there, that governments are spending too much money. It's affecting the economy of the whole world and it's affecting things here in Canada. So this government has to start living within its means. The budget they proposed this year still has a \$15.2-billion deficit. That's not living within your means, and it's scary for our kids growing up.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: It's my privilege today to speak on behalf of the people of Davenport and Toronto and to speak to the budget bill, Bill 55.

For the viewers at home, for the general public and for members of all parties in this House, I must draw your attention to the environmental implications of Bill 55. There are two major problems with Bill 55 as it relates to the environment. The first is that Bill 55 will drastically weaken environmental standards in Ontario. The second problem is the sneaky approach that this government has taken by burying these critical environmental changes within this bill.

With approaches like these taken by government, it's no wonder that people across this province have real concerns about the viability of this political system. When I speak to voters in my riding, they feel that their votes don't matter. They feel like their voices don't matter. And why should they? They see governments at all levels that fail to serve the public. Whether they elect Conservative governments in Ottawa or Liberal governments at Queen's Park, Ontarians feel that it's well-connected insiders who are really running the show.

They see governments that allow inequality to grow and they see governments that sell off our natural resources and do nothing to stand up for the environment. We must do better. We need government to listen to the people they serve, to create good jobs and a healthy

economy, to ensure fairness and to protect the vulnerable, and to steward the commons and protect the environment.

Instead, we have a government in Ontario that refuses to listen. For the first time in 50 years, there were no pre-budget consultations in Ontario. Those who worry about the state of democracy in Ontario had their worst suspicions confirmed in the recent budget process, when the only person that this government consulted was a private banker. Instead of public consultations, they gave us the Don Drummond report.

Now Bill 55 threatens to break some of our most important environmental commitments in Ontario. Going back to 1993, the Ontario Legislature passed something called the Environmental Bill of Rights. The Environmental Bill of Rights was a groundbreaking initiative. It was a piece of public policy that was internationally respected because of its commitment to the environment.

The Environmental Bill of Rights upholds the rights of Ontarians to be aware of and to be involved in all government decisions that significantly affect our physical environment. It has meant that any changes to environmental legislation and regulations are made public so that Ontarians can weigh in on matters and have their voices heard. Obviously I believe this is a good model because it's in all of our best interests to keep the environment healthy. And we can't do it alone. We must work together, and we need the input and support of Ontarians to protect our environment. By including proposed changes to environmental acts in Bill 55, however, this government is deliberately sidestepping the right of the public to provide input as it is enshrined in the Environmental Bill of Rights.

Why is that? Why would members from across this floor support this? Why would members on the other side of this floor support this? Well, some members of the government might not even know, or they might not understand the environmental poison pills that are buried in the budget bill. You see, the environmental changes in Bill 55 are interspersed through so many different schedules that you might not have noticed. But those who do know—if you are paying attention, you'd know that if these changes were put up to the test of public opinion, if they were put up on the environmental registry, as they should be, the members of this government would have to explain to the public why they are systematically weakening environmental protections in Ontario. I believe this is why you are avoiding debate and public scrutiny.

1520

What are these changes that the government is so eager to hide? First off, the government plans to quietly weaken the Endangered Species Act. If Bill 55 passes as is, the government will remove the protection of species located on private land, and I should add that most endangered species are in fact, in southern Ontario, on private land.

The government will remove requirements and deadlines for recovery strategies for species at risk, and

finally, Bill 55 will remove the ecological tests required of industry to be exempt from the Endangered Species Act—tests that were put in place to ensure that economic and industrial activity would continue as long as it met conditions of assessing the overall benefit of the project, considering the alternatives and mitigating harm to species at risk. These tests are meant to balance the environmental needs and the economic needs of Ontario.

But now, under Bill 55, any activity authorized under any legislation can be exempt from the Endangered Species Act, regardless of the impact on the environment. Obviously, this flies in the face of the Endangered Species Act and the entire intention behind it.

The same government that passed the Endangered Species Act in 2007 is now trying to remove the timelines, the commitments and the regulations that make the act an effective piece of legislation and hold governments to account.

Those aren't the only problems. This government is proposing the same type of amendments to other environmental acts, like the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act, the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act and the Public Lands Act.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Sounds like Harper.

Mr. Jonah Schein: That's right. It sounds like Harper.

These proposals remove government oversight, widen the Minister of Natural Resources' discretion to interpret policies and delegate responsibilities to private entities while absolving the government of any liability.

Speaker, after reviewing these changes, it's very easy to see some common trends that are emerging in this current minority government. One trend is that this government doesn't want to listen. Instead, they want to unilaterally impose decisions on Ontarians, and they ignore what others have to say. We see this with how they're trying to ram this omnibus bill through without proper debate, and we see it with these amendments to the environmental acts in Bill 55 that circumvent the Environmental Bill of Rights and deliberately avoid public input to their proposed policies.

What we see here, Mr. Speaker, is a betrayal of public accountability. This is the common thread that ties together the fiasco at Ornge, the proposed changes to privatize ServiceOntario and the government's plan to gut environmental protection in our province. This government continues to reduce public oversight, to deregulate, to privatize and to divest themselves of their responsibility to govern.

On all fronts, Ontarians are not impressed. This message is very clear. We hear it from our constituents, and we hear it from people concerned across this province. The people of Ontario do deserve better. Ontarians deserve accountable and responsible government. Ontarians have the right to have their say on critical issues that affect their lives and the lives of their children. Ontarians have entrusted the government to protect our environment, only to be hit with a stream of broken promises.

As New Democrats, we know that we must do better, that we must rebuild the trust of Ontarians, and this is

what we set out to do this year. We listened, and we consulted with everyday folks across this province. We brought forward measures to make this budget a little bit fairer, we committed to making this Parliament work, and we continue to listen to Ontarians and to hear their concerns.

Speaker, what I'm hearing about Bill 55 is that people are very concerned. They're concerned about the changes to the environmental protections that this government is hiding in this bill, and they're concerned that they have been excluded from this important discussion. It's a discussion that they have a right to participate in. That is why my New Democrat colleagues and I will be working hard to see that Ontarians' voices are heard and that this bill reflects their wishes too.

I have a letter here that is written to the government with 58 signatories, some of the most respected environmental groups across this province and across this country. Speaker, I want to read you just a little bit from the letter: "The weakening of environmental laws that were designed to protect the health of our lakes, forests and wildlife is deeply disturbing. To do so by circumventing the requirements of the Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993 through omnibus legislation that denies the possibility for open public debate is very troubling. We thus fully support the recommendation of Ecojustice and the Canadian Environmental Law Association, 'that the environmental statutes, particularly those related to species protection, sustainable forest operations, protected areas, lakes and rivers protection, and public lands be withdrawn.'" They say, in closing, "We would like to assert our collective opposition to environmental deregulation and our profound disappointment in the government's approach to addressing its budgetary objectives."

This includes folks from the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, to Greenpeace, to Ontario Nature, to Earthroots, to EcoSpark, to Northwatch—as I said, 58 environmental groups that have real concerns about the environmental implications of Bill 55.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have enjoyed the presentation from the member from Davenport, and what caught especially my attention is the comment alluding to the consultation process. For the benefit of the member and the House, and the public as well, I have to say, Speaker, that prior to coming down with the budget, the government goes a long way in consulting with various members of the community, institutions, agencies, bankers, professional people.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yeah, bankers. Fill the room with them.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Yes, it's important that we consult with those people as well, and the building industry, and the unions as well for their input. Of course, once the budget comes down, we always hope that it attracts the interest and support of every member in the House, but we know that it doesn't work that way all the time. The

fact is that the budget contains a lot of good things that we would like to see implemented as soon as possible, especially at this particular time when there are so many good sides with respect to incentives for the economy, and God knows we need jobs. We have summer coming up. A lot of jobs are opening up, more than ever, especially for our young people as well seeking jobs for the summer.

We have some 18 hospitals under construction. I'm very pleased that in my own riding of York West, actually, one is abutting my riding—I've been fighting for it: the brand new Humber River Regional Hospital. It's under construction. And we have the extension of the subway to York University. That's 3,000 jobs created in the north, building the cars. This is what the budget contains. So there's a lot of good things in there. I would hope that we can move it forward and get implementation of the contents of the budget.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened attentively to the member from Davenport's remarks and I'm quite in agreement with his remark with respect to the lack of public hearings. I've been here 17 years and I would say that in that time, it's the first time that a government, respectfully, did not give the people of Ontario a real voice. I'm sure there were private meetings with Mr. Sorbara and the Premier and that—probably a fundraiser, really. They had hearings with their friends, and possibly Chris Mazza bought a ticket, from Ornge.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, look, he's making over a million dollars—

Mr. Mario Sergio: John, use the riding name.

Mr. John O'Toole: You had your time. What's most disappointing here is there really is no plan. I look at the students here. Your future is what we're talking about. They're spending money like a drunken sailor, some people would say. I'd say it's irresponsible, how they're spending money. When you look at this debate on Bill 55, there's 327 pages. It's an omnibus bill; in this there are 69 schedules. Now they're criticizing in Ottawa the Harper government that's running all of Canada; some of the opposition over there are criticizing him that it's an ominous bill.

This bill needs further discussion, not foreclosure on some kind of debate. I can only say this: Our leader looked at this bill and we didn't see any response to the dilemma of the economy—no control of spending. There's no respect for the input from Mr. Hudak and the opposition on a public sector wage freeze. We know now that that's about 60-some per cent of the total spending—\$128 billion, the budget—payroll. I say he's like Neville Chamberlain: peace at any price. They've paid for this through the nose, and now it's coming home to roost. I can't possibly support this budget.

1530

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Davenport, who made a number of excellent comments around the environment and the protection of our planet and of all that we hold dear as Canadians and as Ontarians.

But before he did that—and the point that I want to stress—he prefaced his remarks by saying this is the first time in some 50 years that there were not pre-budget consultations, and he is absolutely right. There were no pre-budget consultations for the people of Ontario, the ordinary people, to come forward, the hundreds of people who come forward each January and February as long as I have been here and as long as any of the members of the House have been here, who come here to make deputation on changes they want to see.

We know, and the member from York West talked about this, that the minister consults with his friends. We know that. We also know that in order to get into that inner circle to actually meet with the minister, you have to go through a number of hoops that ordinary people just cannot do. We know, because they come to us and say they tried to get a meeting with the minister around the budget process and were unable to do so. So then they come to the finance committee because at least at that point they can be heard.

The minister meets with people who tell him what he wants to hear. That has been the reality for far too long. You meet with those bankers, you meet with those captains of industry, you meet with people who want to talk about attrition or who want to talk all of those buzzwords of today.

Ordinary people don't want to talk about that. Ordinary people want to talk about how the budget is going to genuinely affect them, whether there is a cost to them if we raise up the cost of electricity and how they're going to pay for it. They want to know that their schools are safe. They don't want to talk about these mega-issues that bankers and others—that the minister only wants to hear.

I think that the member from Davenport was absolutely right: We can never again allow budgets to be presented in this House where the people have not had a direct say in advance.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm please to take these two minutes to speak to what the member from Davenport has said. He is certainly raising concerns for the environment.

I see that we have coming up this week, later on, on Thursday, a private member's bill to back off on the ban of the cosmetic use of pesticides. I think these are issues that are extremely important to discuss and to make sure we move forward and don't move backwards. I think there's significant support for the ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides, which has been in there. It's a major issue. It's one that we should be looking for—and what had been raised is the protection of endangered species today.

So we have to, as a group in here, be interested in the environment. Certainly our record on getting out of coal

and pushing green energy has been positive for the environment, and we have to make sure that we do not go backwards.

I hope on Thursday that the third party will be looking at that piece of legislation. It's a private member's bill that's very serious because it's backward movement. Certainly, that's not where I want to see Ontario go. That's not where Ontario is going.

We paid a great deal of dollars to get out of coal. Coal is cheap. We could have gone on with it. But in 2014, when the parts per million of CO₂ in to the atmosphere goes above 400 for the first time—and it's just a continuing upward trend that is putting more pressure on the environment and on the species today—we have to be cognizant of that.

The Liberal Party has been doing the right thing for the environment. I hope that this budget passes and we get on with the important work of cutting the deficit.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you for the contributions of the members from York West, Durham, Beaches–East York and Ottawa–Orléans.

In listening to the people in this House, I do believe that people think we need to preserve the environment. I think, as a member from the Progressive Conservatives said, there are members here who believe in consultation. I know that my colleagues from the NDP and the member from Beaches–East York think it's shameful that we haven't had consultation in this budget process.

I also believe that the majority of members in this House have the absolute wrong approach on how to protect the environment. That's what confuses me. How do you believe that we can protect the environment through deregulation, through privatization and through divestment of our responsibility as folks whose job it is to govern? You can't do it.

It's clear to me that this budget bill is bearing these environmental changes because they're doing nothing good for the environment. If this did something good for the environment, you would take it out and you would speak about it with pride. But you can't speak with pride about this because you know that what you're doing here is fundamentally detrimental to the natural environment, that Ontario will be a worse-off place because of this. That's why there's no consultation. That's why you're not putting this before folks who know far more than you do about what this will mean to the environment. I challenge you to go back to your communities and ask them about these changes and ask them, "Do you think the planet will be better off because of this?"

The member from Beaches–East York and I did our own public consultation in my riding of Davenport before the budget. I have to say, people were extremely skeptical that the future of this province was being left in the hands of a banker. It was hard for us to stand up and say, "You're wrong," because from this side it looks like our natural resources, our public good, is being sold off and privatized.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure to be able to comment on Bill 55 today and talk a bit about the budget. There's a lot to say on the budget. It's a very comprehensive document.

I want to make clear from the very beginning, contrary to what some opposition members may say, that we are not afraid to discuss the budget, we are not afraid to debate the budget. But we don't like the fact that the Conservative Party, the official opposition, continues to ring the bells whenever it's their turn to speak.

Mr. John O'Toole: Ornge.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I heard someone across the aisle yell, "Ornge." There's a place for that too: at committee. There's a place to debate it elsewhere. Where else can we debate the budget? Do we just close our ears and, like the old monkey photograph, see no evil, hear no evil, do no evil? We want to talk about the budget today. We can talk about Ornge another time, but the budget is important.

The first point to make, which is very important, is that the world economy has changed. The structure of the world's financial systems has changed drastically. To go back to 2008 and companies like Lehman Brothers just defaulting on their payments and other banks saying, "We need bailouts from the government"—here in Ontario we didn't sit still. We are the largest manufacturer of cars and car parts in all of North America. We surpass Michigan. We surpass any other jurisdiction—Quebec, California, anywhere else in North America. Here we maintain the best way and the best structure and the best companies to continue to make the best automobiles in all of North America. When they got into trouble in 2008, we didn't sit by and let them go into bankruptcy, Mr. Speaker. We supported them, Chrysler and General Motors especially. And guess what? As they improved and car sales went up, they repaid us the money.

You can see what's happening in Europe, where country after country after country is having problems, from Iceland to Greece to Spain. There are so many economies. It's even reaching France now—and perhaps, at some point, Germany. For the most part, a lot of the countries in the world have been affected by what happened in 2008 and 2009. Things have improved, but there's a big question mark: What's going to happen next? We're not sitting back and saying we're not going to do anything. We went forward with our budget, especially in light of having a minority government, especially in light of the fact that there has been a lot of opposition from both parties, especially the Conservative Party, opposing us.

1540

We spoke earlier about consultation and travel. How could we possibly travel and go from town to town, city to city, to discuss this when the House leaders weren't able to agree on how to form committees? Committees are what travel. You create committees, and there's a

committee that does the travelling and does the consultation. We had opposition from the very start, from day one. The opposition said, “No, we’re not going to help you in forming committees,” so for several months we didn’t have committees, and that’s why we couldn’t travel. We’re not saying we won’t travel. We’ll travel; we’ll discuss the budget; we’ll do what’s important. But don’t get in our way.

Mr. Bill Walker: You didn’t strike the committees.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Committees were not formed. Someone from the opposite there is saying that there were no committees. They were not in place.

You are a new member. Sorry; with the greatest of respect, I will address the Speaker.

The opposition did not want committees—plain, period, full stop. How are we supposed to travel if the opposition won’t form committees? Committees travel. We don’t take the whole House and go sit somewhere else. We pick members from each of the parties, create a committee, and the committee starts travelling and getting input from town to town, from person to person, from corporation to corporation, from bank to bank. You can’t do that when the opposition won’t agree to form committees. So don’t blame us. You’re to blame, plain and simple.

Let’s talk about what’s happening right now. In spite of all this opposition, we presented a budget. We presented the budget here, in this Legislature. The key message was that we’ve got to keep the economy growing. We have to keep schools open. We have to keep hospitals open. We have to focus on the things that we decided to focus on years ago. We didn’t stop full-day kindergarten and say, “You know what? We can’t afford full-day kindergarten. Let’s shut it down. We can’t afford health care. Let’s start closing some hospitals.” Those were the days when the Conservatives were in power, when Mike Harris was the Premier. That’s when teachers went on strike. That’s when hospitals were closed. That’s when there was a crisis in education, a crisis in health care. Nurses were called hula hoops. It goes on and on.

Now the opposition tries to read the budget in one day. There’s a budget lock-up that starts in the morning, and I think it runs until about 4 p.m., in one day. The Conservatives come out and say, “We ain’t supporting this. We’re against it. I’m going to vote against it.” That’s irresponsible for an opposition party to do. When they get to speak next, and they will, I want people who are watching to know and I want Hansard to record that they will ring the bells. They will ring the bells. The Conservatives will ring the bells. Why? To waste time.

Let’s talk about the budget in front of us. Last week we had constituency week. During constituency week, I had the opportunity to meet with residents, people, on the ground floor, grassroots people who came to visit me, and I got a chance to talk to them.

I had one student come in who said, “I can’t afford my tuition. I’m afraid.” First of all, we’ve put into the budget a plan to reduce or allow the taking off of 30% of tuition—grants for families. That didn’t happen before.

We said, “You can take up to 30% off your tuition fees if you qualify.” The person in front of me didn’t know. We put them in touch with the proper places, and the guy, the man, the gentleman, the student, was very, very happy, saying, “I appreciate it. I did not know this program existed.”

Compare that, members who are here today and those who are watching elsewhere or listening elsewhere—compare that to Quebec. Look what’s happening right now in Quebec. There have been days and days and days of fighting, protests that are making international news. You can go on the BBC, on their website, and it says about Quebec continuing to fight between students and the government. It’s going beyond our borders.

What’s happening in Ontario? We passed a budget—or we’re trying to pass a budget, at least. We’re debating it today. We have the opportunity to talk about what’s inside the budget today, and inside we are discussing issues like education.

I went to three different schools last week, Mr. Speaker. One of them, for example, is called St. Joachim school. They were actually celebrating the opening of the new part of their school. They were actually having an event. They invited the school trustee for the area, the councillor for the area, who happens to be my wife, and me to see and open the new facility. First we met in the gym, and then we walked through the school, and a massive part of it is new.

How did that happen? It didn’t fall out of the sky. We funded it. We put money into the schools, and continue to, so that now they can open it. They said, “Starting next year, we’re going to have full-day kindergarten.”

We have said in the budget—the theme has been—we’ll continue to invest money in education and health care, and balance the budget.

Continuing on with schools, I had the opportunity to go to a high school in my riding. It’s called Porter Collegiate, but they also call it SATEC. There’s a large section that works on high technology. I had the opportunity to see what’s called a supercomputer. It’s being funded by our government. That’s why they invited me, as well, as the representative for the area. We went and saw the supercomputer that students from grade 11 and grade 12 are working on. There was not only the teacher of that program there, but we also had a professor from the University of Toronto present.

They watched and saw how the supercomputer worked. I was amazed at the high technology that this supercomputer works at. It actually brings several different computers together and projects what’s going to happen in the future physically if these things continue to happen. They gave me an example of the universe, our Milky Way. They had traced a number of stars together and what they did was they had a view from the top and a view from the side and they brought them together so you had three dimensional views.

I will sit down if you are standing up.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's interesting, when I hear the member from Scarborough Southwest talking about some of the issues that are before us. All I hear is more deception. We talk about the committee structure and their refusal to create—there are standing rules in this House and all we were asking is that this government follow them, and they refused to. And of course, they refused to strike that committee; it was just another chance to avoid going to the public and going to hearings before this budget. This is something that one of the honourable members was saying on this side that's never happened before in his memory. The government always goes to listen to the public. So this is just another case of them deceiving the public.

He talked about the Mike Harris government. Yes, they came in and they had a tough job because they were cleaning up after two previous governments that really took this province down to shambles, something like we're seeing today, when we're getting to the point we can't borrow money any more. They've spent so much money the banks are saying, "Enough is enough."

You know, the people of Ontario spoke then and they needed somebody to clean up this province. Of course, now, the government of the day brought—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry to withdraw his unparliamentary comment.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I withdraw.

They talk about the bell ringing and, really, the message here is very clear: We made a commitment—we believed this government when they talked about living up to a promise of striking a committee if the House voted for it. And of course, we took them at their word and we did vote for it. Now we're finding that again they're not working with the government—not exercising the will of Parliament. So we're sitting here and, yes, we're ringing bells, but if they want this to stop, it will stop in a second. Strike the committee that this House voted for. That's all we're asking for. And tell the people why we're doing it.

1550

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to add a few comments to the comments from the member from Scarborough Southwest. I've heard from many people during constituency week because I as well was out in my five municipalities in my constituency, and I heard a lot from people about the lack of public hearings. They said that is the basis of democracy in this country. That the government would have the nerve or the gall, using other people's words, to actually bring forward a budget that had no public input from anyone—not from individuals, not from partners, not from agencies, not from other municipalities—is very disappointing for a lot of people in this province.

On the issue of standing committees, yes, there was a delay in forming the standing committees, but I can say that that delay wasn't just the opposition; that delay was

the government as well. The government wanted the committee structure to reflect a majority government, and in fact we're not in a majority government. We are in a minority situation here and the government doesn't have the right under a minority to have the majority on every committee. That is the truth.

On my critic tour as well I met with some mayors, actually, from around the province over the last week. Mayors are telling me that they're kind of tired of being treated like the kids and the government are the parents, and they would like to see some multi-year funding commitments. They'd like to see the multi-year capital budgets, as opposed to just finding out halfway through their year. I don't think the municipalities are real happy that they haven't had the opportunity either to be consulted around this budget.

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: I've been listening very attentively to the well-rounded presentation by the member from Scarborough Southwest on the budget.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Well-rounded?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Well-rounded, yes.

Mr. Peter Shurman: You've got to be kidding me.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Well, I've been listening, the member from Thornhill. Perhaps he was too intent on his computer there, but I've been listening to the member from Scarborough Southwest, Speaker, and I have to say that he has delivered special attention to the economic aspect of the budget, and for good reasons. I think we are well on our way with our economic stance that we have taken over the last several months and the budget, which is in front of us today, to continue the strong role that we have on the economic front.

The member has alluded to the budget, the \$15 billion, 2017-18 elimination, and we can only do that if we continue to grow economically. We have to take a look at the world economic situation to catch the message and say we have to be very careful. I think our position has been to create jobs. In the month of March alone, we created some 46,000 jobs. Speaker, it speaks well for the action of this government, the direction we want to go, and it's not only in one particular area. We have made a commitment to continue with the implementation of full-day kindergarten. This is important for all our families in Ontario. It's not for one particular area of our province. We have said that our students in college and university will be enjoying a 30% tuition fee cut. This is to help them out, Speaker. We have competition coming from out of Canada, throughout the world, and we want to give them the best education. The budget is an important document, and I hope that we can continue to support it.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to rise and speak to the comments made by my colleague across the hall from Scarborough Southwest. It's very important, I think, that I reiterate again that this is the first time in over 50 years there wasn't pre-consultation to a budget. The people of

Ontario deserve that. The opposition parties, out of respect, deserve that. Had we had that, maybe we'd be in a different place today and we would already have a budget and we would be paying down some of the debt and deficit that we find ourselves in.

He referenced very specifically Mr. Mike Harris. Mike Harris made the tough decisions. He got our province out of debt that the two previous governments had left and back on track, something that the Liberals are not prepared to do or are capable of doing: making the hard decisions that will get us back to where we need to be. I'm proud of Mike Harris, as many people across Ontario are.

When he was Premier, Mike Harris did not have a \$15-billion deficit. Mike Harris did not have a \$411-billion debt—bigger than the rest of the provinces of our great Confederation combined. That's shameful, Mr. Speaker, and something we can't continue to move forward, or we're never going to give our children and our grandchildren the hope they should have, like we had growing up.

Mike Harris was straight with the people of Ontario. He told them what he would do, and he did it. He didn't make promises and then renege. He didn't go to stakeholders and just pull the plug from them.

Should I talk about the horse racing industry? I would ask, are the doctors happy currently? Are the teachers happy with the negotiation and consultation of the current government? I would suggest that that is not the case.

The third-largest expenditure is financing the debt, paying the debt service. Just think of all the programs, services, health care, education and industry we would have, how many jobs we would be creating, if we weren't wasting \$10 billion. With that \$10 billion that we're spending, there are no jobs created, there's no reduction in energy costs, they're not reducing spending. This budget was never, ever designed to do what the province needs.

We stand firmly where we are on our conviction: We need to make bold change to make this province the leader of Confederation once again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Scarborough Southwest for his two-minute response.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I appreciate the comments from all the members. I do apologize: I was just getting into the budget discussion and needed more time, but maybe when we get into third reading I'll have time. Let me make just a few quick comments here.

I wasn't around during the Mike Harris years, but I heard from my colleagues. My colleagues told me—and I can be corrected on this—that there was very little committee work done. I remember the megacity—we debated that. I think they only met for a little bit of time. This was a very big issue at that time. I won't go into details, but the NDP member—he was present here earlier—was the former mayor of East York, and there

was little time to discuss whether or not his municipality and the rest of Scarborough all the way to Etobicoke should be torn apart and made into one megacity; no proper consultation there.

Third readings: very little third readings. You can go through the Hansards. I've gone through some of them. Almost no third readings and very few committee hearings on very important issues. They left health care and education in the worst shape I've ever seen in the 50 years I have lived. I remember that the first thing they did was to create a crisis in health care.

Let me speak again to the economy for the last 30 seconds I have here. Always remember: We did not step back. We brought forward a budget that we plan to balance, I think, by 2017-18, and we're committed to that. But we're not going to back down from education. We're not going to back down from health care. We're not going to back down from all the other things we have placed on the table here in front of this Legislature.

I would only say, let's hope the Conservative Party debates this issue and doesn't ring the bells, because they're up next, and I want to hear what they have to say about the budget.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's an honour to rise in the House this afternoon to debate the Liberal government's proposed budget, Bill 55. It seems to me that the only priority the Liberal government should have at this point in time is to address the economic crisis and the challenges we have in this province. Jobs need to be created, and the debt needs to be reduced. The reckless spending must stop, and the books must be brought into balance.

In the case of the Liberal government, they have a spending problem. More importantly, they have an extreme lack of respect for the tax dollars coming in from hard-working men and women right across the province. I think it's fair to say that we would have a lot more respect for this government, for the Minister of Finance and for the Premier of the province if they admitted that for the last nine years they have mismanaged Ontario's finances.

Currently, Ontario is staring directly in the face of a \$30-billion deficit and a \$411-billion debt. We have almost 600,000 men and women out of work in Ontario, Speaker. These are major problems. No matter how you spin it, Ontario is facing some tough times ahead, and they will be even tougher if the problems of today continue to be ignored. It is impossible to solve a problem if you never admit that you have one.

1600

The government is not addressing the issue at hand, and because the government is not addressing the issue at hand, they cannot and will not solve Ontario's debt and jobs crisis. The budget fails to take the action required to prevent a \$30-billion deficit and does nothing to create jobs and grow our province's economy.

Speaker, jobs, debt and economic growth are impossible to separate. If Ontario continues to increase its debt, it will fail to attract businesses and fail to grow the economy.

My colleagues and I in the PC caucus have been very clear about these things and the problems that Ontario is facing, and the party opposite must do something to solve these problems. We have a clearly defined plan. We're willing to face the current fiscal challenges head on. An Ontario PC government would have brought in an immediate mandatory public sector wage freeze—no exceptions and no special rules—and a plan to fix our broken public sector salary arbitration system to respect the ability of taxpayers to pay the bills, to respect local economic circumstances. We certainly encourage the Liberals and all members in this House to support our PC bill that was presented by my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London, that's going to be voted on later this week. We encourage all members to support that bill.

While private sector unemployment has reached, as I said previously, over half a million people, public sector salaries have increased by 46%, Speaker. As a small business owner who employs over 65 people, I know that when things were slow in our family business, we couldn't afford to hand out bonuses or give raises to employees. This is the reality of running a private sector business. Every business owner knows you must make tough choices to keep costs and revenues in balance. The current government refuses to make these difficult choices, choosing instead to borrow and borrow and borrow. It's simply unsustainable.

I believe that we should be fair. If we can't afford raises, then there should not be raises handed out. As elementary as it sounds, money does not grow on trees. Government has to remember that the money they are spending will run out and they need to be good fiscal managers. If a province is suffering financially, then there should not be raises handed out to public sector employees.

We on our side of the House also believe that there should be competition in the delivery of government services. I don't believe that the same public sector unions should get the same contract each and every year. Open it up for competition. Let the best quality of service at the best price to the taxpayer reign supreme. Whether it's the public sector unions, private sector unions, small businesses or not-for-profits, we want the best quality of services at the best price for the taxpayers who pay the bills and depend on those services.

Speaker, the government opposite has no jobs plan and no debt control plan. This budget is trying to get off the ground without having either a pro-growth jobs plan or a deficit reduction plan. It has no jobs policy and no plan to deal with Ontario's crippling debt that they themselves have created.

Of course, we woke up this morning to hear the sad news about RIM possibly reducing a billion dollars in company costs, potentially eliminating 6,000 jobs within their company, which will hit the K-W region particularly hard.

It's not business as usual for the private sector, and this Liberal government needs to make change in the public sector as well.

I said it yesterday, I say it again today, and I'll say it tomorrow, for however long it takes: There is no need for Ontario to be condemned to a \$411-billion debt; there's no reason Ontario should be condemned to a continuing stagnant economic growth regime. So I will continue—and my colleagues beside me, as well—to promote our Ontario PC plan to reduce the size in overall cost of government, to build and grow our economy with new jobs, and we will ensure that Ontario will lead again.

We owe this to the people of Ontario. We owe this to Ontario businesses of all sizes. We owe this to all those who chose to make Ontario home, as well as those born and raised here. They've invested their lives in this great province, and they know, like we do, that Ontario is capable of becoming great again, the leader in Confederation.

At precisely the time we need to make Ontario more competitive, this budget throws up a brand new \$1.5-billion roadblock to job creation by cancelling tax cuts for businesses. How is this helping bring business to Ontario? As I meet with stakeholders and small business owners and with my constituents, they're very concerned about the direction that this government, in this budget in particular, is taking Ontario on.

Of course, we're faced with this financial crisis in the province, staring directly in the face of a \$30-billion deficit and a debt that could reach \$411 billion through the Liberals' mismanagement. Of course, we've seen billion-dollar boondoggles like eHealth and the Ornge scandal now—

Mr. Bill Walker: Mississauga power plant. Oakville.

Interjection.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: And the Mississauga power plant, as my colleague reminded me, and the Oakville power plant.

So, Speaker, we need a select committee on Ornge, and therefore I call for adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. McNaughton has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1607 to 1637.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while the table staff count.

Thank you. You may take your seats.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted.

Thank you very much. You may take your seats.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 30; the nays are 40.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex still has the floor.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Again, I'm pleased to rise to debate the budget bill presented by the finance minister. As we've said over and over again, electricity prices for the average Ontario consumer have doubled under this government—doubled—and they're projected to rise another 46% in next five years.

Sadly, Speaker, on May 3, Sobeyes in downtown Wallaceburg in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex announced that they would be shutting their doors and laying off 70 employees, a sad day for families in Wallaceburg and in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. Company representatives have stated that after “an extensive and careful review” of the operation, it was determined that the store is no longer a viable option, with a major factor being the skyrocketing increase in energy costs that are facing the store. It's clear that the Liberal government's policies have cost Ontario yet another 70 jobs in my riding.

Businesses are closing, energy prices are skyrocketing and nothing is being done to deal with this. We cannot support a budget that is blatantly ignoring the reality that Ontario is facing.

And we can't ignore it when the government doesn't keep their word. They agreed—the health minister herself agreed to a select committee to study Ornge. Because of this, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. McNaughton has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1640 to 1710.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted by table staff.

You may take your seats. Thank you.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing while you are counted by the Clerk.

You may take your seats. Thank you.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 25; the nays are 37.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I was encouraged to hear some of the discussions that have been held on this Bill 55 from our Conservative member and on behalf of the government of the day that they are concerned with jobs. Essentially, we need to look at how we're going to be creating jobs. Unfortunately, I don't think that our colleagues have the answers, because the walls that they're looking to build are only going to create more

problems for individuals looking at developing jobs. The government of the day doesn't seem to have those answers.

But I'm optimistic when they're talking about their jobs and prosperity fund that they're seriously going to consider the proposal that we have developed as the NDP as far as rewarding individuals who actually create a job, which will be a step forward. But in creating jobs, when the government is also looking at privatizing and cutting back jobs, it's really concerning with the Ministry of the Environment and also the Ministry of Natural Resources, two really big parts of Ontario where we're going to be cutting back jobs.

A lot of the concerns that I keep hearing are about the privatization that's going to be happening. Again, during constituency week, when I walked through some of the ServiceOntario offices, their biggest concern was what they are going to be able to do and what services they're going to be able to provide, ongoing, to the communities that they serve.

When you look at some of the changes that they're looking at bringing in through the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, the Public Lands Act, the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, these are all acts that are going to be changing and we need those public consultation periods in order to have those discussions with all of our communities.

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

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you for the opportunity to address Bill 55, the budget bill. I have listened with great interest to all of the members in this House this afternoon who have spoken to this important bill and who have spoken about the issues that are affecting their ridings. This is what we're here to do.

Before I do that myself I must express my confidence in the path that we are taking to grow Ontario's economy and to balance the budget. These are two fundamental steps to the well-being of all Ontarians. As we have seen in recent days, we are asking everyone to play their role in helping us to tighten the belt, including those who are high-income earners and public sector workers. At the same time, we have also committed this government to protecting the important gains that we've made, both in education and in protecting our public health care system. These are the issues that are important to me as a resident and as a representative of my riding of York South–Weston.

These are the issues that are also important to my neighbours and to my community. Allow me to mention just a few of these issues: full-day kindergarten, maintaining small class sizes, supporting students with the 30% off Ontario tuition grant and the grants for student needs—that's very important to many of my constituents—and finding more value for money in our health care system as it comes under increasing pressures from our aging demographics. More home care is tremendously important to the seniors that live in my riding.

We have to continue to prioritize our needs. We need to find ways to do things better and more efficiently in the climate that we are living in and reduce our debt so that the Ontario economy can continue its recovery.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Out of respect, I want to stand and respond to the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex because he put a lot of thought and time into the very elementary pieces of the budget that seem to disappoint him and, I would say, most Ontarians.

It was quite interesting: I read an article this week—I was just reading it while he was speaking, actually—that says the Ontario budget 2012 is a missed opportunity. Now, what this article does go on to say is that Dwight Duncan, the Minister of Finance, respectfully, missed an opportunity to do the right thing. I looked at the references here and there are people like Don Drummond commenting and Angus Reid opinion polls.

What it says is, “Ontario needs to take sweeping action if it is to avoid crisis. With \$10 billion in increased spending,” and five years of deficits will add \$77 billion to the existing debt and Duncan needs to find some personal resolve to do the right thing, as Paul Martin did in 1995.

I think the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex was on that track when he was talking about, “The evidence is there.” In fact, the member that just spoke from York South–Weston, I think it is, has been reading the stuff that Dwight and the Premier are giving you to read. Most of it is not correct.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I wrote it myself.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it's totally incorrect. All of the people in Ontario know that there's no action on jobs. The economy has gone south. Research In Motion, in their time, has gone from first to last. Most of Ontario has gone down. You should quit working so hard on these things. Stay out of the way of business and let them do the job. What you're doing, really, in Ontario is ruining the economy—highest unemployment ever in the province.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to take this opportunity to comment on the words from the member of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. He spent a lot of time talking about jobs, and jobs are very important for this province.

There's one thing that he mentioned that I would really like to point out. He said, “We should have a new way of doing things regarding public service jobs.” Sometimes I wonder why the Conservatives and the Liberals aren't on this together because what he's talking about is, if you want to go into the private sector, then you have to have a request for proposals, and those jobs go all over, like the MNR jobs going to Tennessee. That's a decision that, if you're going to do a new way of doing jobs and you want to go for the lowest bidder—because once you take those jobs out of the public service and go to open requests for proposals, because of

the North American free trade agreement, a few people have signed that—you no longer have control where those jobs are going. In the long term, that's going to hurt you—

Mr. John O'Toole: John, there's a seat for you right here.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, no. But in the long term that's going to hurt you, because you take our MNR jobs, with our fishing licences, with our moose tags—and people already didn't trust the moose tag system when it was administered in our country and now they're wondering. They don't know where it's going to be administered. That is a huge problem.

1720

With public service jobs, you can't have it both ways. You can't say, “We're going to keep jobs in this country; we're going to create jobs in this country,” but open them up for requests for proposals. That's one of the problems with this budget.

The new way of doing jobs in Ontario is one of the things that we're ringing the bells about. Ornge: We're ringing the bells a lot about Ornge, but that's also a new way of doing jobs, and do we really want to go there? Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return now to the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to thank the MPPs from Algoma–Manitoulin, York South–Weston, Durham and Timiskaming–Cochrane for their feedback in response to my remarks.

The government needs to balance the budget to encourage business in this province and to create jobs. This is something that the government can no longer ignore, nor can it be placed on the back burner. Of course, this budget is doing nothing to get the fiscal house in order, which is what I talked about previously. There needs to be an immediate action plan on behalf of this government to solve the financial disaster that they themselves have created.

It's a simple concept: If there is a problem, you address it. If you have run out of money, you stop spending. If you keep spending, eventually you will become bankrupt. You will be the Greece, the Portugal, the Spain of Canada, and surely that's not what the members opposite really want to create in their time in government.

There is only a small window of time to solve these problems. If you wait too long, eventually there is nothing that you can do to solve the problem. With the path we're on, I fear that Ontario will become another sad story of economic failure.

As I've stated here today, I'm going to continue, and our caucus will continue, to oppose this budget bill and this legislation and this strategy laid out by this government. We are staring at a deficit that could hit \$30 billion and a debt that could hit \$411 billion. This government, this Premier, Dalton McGuinty, and his finance minister have to get their fiscal house in order. They've created

such a disaster in this province that investors are fleeing; they're running in opposite directions.

Speaker, I encourage all my colleagues to oppose this budget. It does nothing to get Ontario back on the right track.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 55.

I'm going to just talk about three things today, because I only have 10 minutes, and there's, like, 350 pages of that bill and I won't have time to speak to them all.

Those three issues that I want to talk about, though, are about protecting and enhancing public service, as opposed to privatizing it and potentially selling it off. I want to talk about interest arbitration, because I think that there is a real misunderstanding of interest arbitration by some members in this Legislature. I want to talk about the community and social service budget increases that the minister has been talking about each time we're in question period. We hear we're improving health care, we're protecting health care, we're protecting education, we're hiring teachers and we're increasing the community and social service budget. Those are the three areas that I'm going to spend my time on.

The Minister of Community and Social Services has told us that he's increasing the budget by 2.7%. That's the only budget that is seeing an increase. But in fact, this past week, when I was doing my critic tour, and today, actually, when the Niagara region was in for their Niagara Week, I'm hearing about the community start-up fund and the cuts to it. This is a fund that helps recipients who may find themselves in a situation where they're being evicted or they've had to move. It provides some minimal funding each two-year period to assist people with children—I think it's \$1,500, or up to \$1,500 in two years, and for singles, it's up to \$750. That fund is being cut by 50%. What I'm hearing from the mayors and what I'm hearing from the Niagara region and what I'm hearing through my colleagues from the city of Hamilton is that they can't take these cuts—\$2.5 million in the Niagara region. Our Ontario Works rolls are at the highest they've been in many years. I understand that in the city of Hamilton that they have something like 59,000 people on Ontario Works and ODSP, and they're going to realize a \$1.8-million cut. The minister has said he's actually increasing the budget, but in fact he is decreasing the budget for those most vulnerable in our society.

At some point, I hope I'm going to have the opportunity in question period to actually ask that question, because the people I've talked to who work in community and social services in those areas said that they don't know what they're going to do about these cuts. They can't increase taxes. We don't have any jobs in those areas. We have no huge job increases on the horizon, and they don't know how they're going to absorb those cuts. They don't have the ability to increase taxes because the taxpayers can't take any more of that.

On the issue of interest arbitration, there's this misnomer that the system is broken and that we have to fix it, that the time frames don't work and that people do better because they're able to go to arbitration than if they negotiate a settlement. The people who have the right to go to arbitration are the same people who don't have the right to strike. There's a reason for that. Do you want your police, your firefighters and your registered nurses and your health care workers having the right to strike when they're providing such an essential public service? No, you don't. So the option for them is to go to interest arbitration. It's a system that has been in place for many, many years, and it has worked up until now.

I took the opportunity to do a little bit of research around arbitrated versus non-arbitrated settlements over the last 11 years. If you look at firefighters, for example, they had 49 collective agreements that were negotiated or arbitrated over the last 11 years across this province. In fact, with the exception of three years, the arbitrated settlements were actually less than the negotiated settlements, except in three of 11 years.

If you look at the police agreements—many of you may have had the police in to visit you the week before last for their lobby week. In fact, in the last 10 years, for police only 6% of all the 38 collective agreements that were negotiated were settled via interest arbitration. So 94% of those contracts were actually freely negotiated between the police association and the police employers. So, I don't think that the system is necessarily broken.

For many years, I actually negotiated with the Ontario Nurses' Association in the hospital sector, in the community sector, in the homes sector. In fact, in many cases—and I'll give you a couple of examples. A charitable home for the aged, for example, in the Niagara region, which was unionized—and the nurses in that charitable home were making \$6 an hour less than their counterparts in, say, the Niagara regional homes or other homes in the area. We went to arbitration for four different contracts, and it took four years to get them up to parity with the nurses in the homes for the aged in the Niagara region. So, arbitrators are looking at the ability to pay, and I think it would be a mistake trying to interfere in that neutral process. If employees do not have the right to strike, then they have to have the right to go to some process that will be fair and neutral to them.

The third issue I want to talk about is privatization and potential sell-offs. There is a myth here as well that, in fact, public and private sector wage increases are really different. If you look at the last 20 years, they're not; in fact, they're very close. The only area where there is a little bit of difference is that women tend to make a little bit more in the public sector. Men tend to make more in the private sector. When we talk about low wages, do we want everybody making 12 or 13 bucks an hour?

1730

I have friends who actually work in the bank, people who have worked in the financial industry for 30 years, who are still making 20 bucks an hour. After 30 years of employment, they're making \$20 an hour with the same

bank that they've worked for all those years. Those people surely didn't get 3% increases in all of those years. And new employees going to work at the banks—I know people who are starting at \$12 an hour, and they come from a financial institution, maybe have been off for a couple of years to have a couple of kids and come to the bank to make 12 bucks an hour. How do you raise families in today's economy?

This austerity-type budget and the short fix of potentially selling off our public services to the private sector or moving public sector jobs into the private sector is going to be a short-term fix. It isn't going to do anything in the long run for people in this province.

You know, if housing prices weren't going up, groceries weren't going up by 4%, hydro up by 50% and expected to go up even higher, our gas bills, our water bills—everything's going up and yet we're expecting employees in this province, whether it's public sector or private sector, to do more with less money. And that just is not right.

I don't know how we sit here as legislators, making the amount of money that we make, and can justify saying, "We're going to move this off to the private sector because we can save some money in the short term," knowing that when it moves to the private sector, all it's going to do is drive those wages down.

Many people are working two and three jobs in this province. In fact, I read about somebody in the newspaper about a week ago who is here in Toronto. He was a permanent immigrant from another country who was working six jobs, 20 hours a day, six days a week. The only day he didn't work was Sunday, so that he could actually go to his church and spend time with his family. He was making \$30,000 a year on those six jobs. And then, he actually went and got some training in farm implementation and now has a job making \$50,000 a year, but he still has two part-time jobs to get to that \$50,000, trying to raise a family, trying to buy a house in this province.

I hesitate to say that selling off our public sector or moving our public sector employees to the private sector is going to be good for Ontarians. Thank you.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: One of the problems when you have only 10 minutes is that you're unable to cover as much territory as I know the member would like to, because she would have mentioned how happy she was to see Highway 406 extended, at a cost of a \$110-million investment by this government, right through to Welland. I know, as a former mayor of Welland, that she would be delighted to see that happening. That was despite some very challenging economic circumstances and in a riding which is not represented by a member of the government, either federally or provincially. That was strictly a provincial project in that case.

And she would have been happy to see, as the people from Niagara would, the YMCA being approved for funding out in Grimsby, the riding represented by Mr.

Hudak, the leader of the Conservative Party. The water treatment plant taking place, a big project in Grimsby, the new hospital in St. Catharines, which will serve much of the Niagara region—a host of things happening in the Niagara region designed to boost the economy.

There is a dilemma: Governments, at a time when the stimulus is required, have to expend those dollars in the stimulus. But there comes a day when governments have to deal with deficits as well.

I recommend to the member a very good book that I've read. I hope my own treasurer doesn't read it. It's called *Minding the Public Purse*, by Janice MacKinnon, who is the former NDP finance minister in Saskatchewan. She was going through the kind of dilemma that government faced, somewhat similar to what our government faces, and the many challenges there. For instance, the NDP was forced—they would say forced—to close 52 rural hospitals in the province of Saskatchewan. They're not mean-spirited people. They didn't want to do this. But they looked at economic circumstances and knew that services had to be delivered in a different way.

I just wish the member had the full 20 minutes to be able to expand upon her thoughts—

Ms. Cindy Forster: I wish I had an hour.

Hon. James J. Bradley: —because they were very good thoughts for the members of this House.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member for Welland just said she wished she had an hour, and I could use a bit more time on this hit as well.

In commencing your presentation, you talked about program cuts and explained the value of a program and the unfortunate circumstance that it may be threatened, and you posed the question, how do people absorb these kinds of cuts? As you've indicated, people feel they can't handle any more taxes and tax increases, and I fully agree with you on that point. Oftentimes, we know how it works: Cuts to government programs during tough economic times do lead to layoffs, so you're looking down the barrel of program cuts and you're looking down the barrel of layoffs.

The member mentioned, I think, union negotiations with the nurses' association. I would hope that government unions are looking at this and looking at alternatives. I would hope nurses and other government unions aren't merely waiting almost flat-footed for the threat of layoffs, for the threat of government program cuts. Maybe that's the old-school way of doing things. I would hope all organizations are looking at alternatives. Of course, "wage freeze" has been bandied about for a number of months now, both voluntary and mandatory.

You mentioned privatization—not a fan of privatization, but there is a case to be made for contracting out, for outsourcing. We do have to do more with less money. We have examples in our riding as well of people who do hold down three jobs. Oftentimes there is light at the end of the tunnel, but—

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank my colleague here from Welland, who sometimes I wish would talk a little bit more than 10 minutes because she does articulate a lot of the needs. She does have the experience and the knowledge to back up a lot of the strong words that she uses.

We're just returning from our constituency week. One of the issues that came up repetitively while I was going through the communities was exactly the one point she brought up, which is the community start-up fund being cut by 50%. We use words like it's a government program; it's something that is essential. But really this is an opportunity for certain individuals to have a new life. When we're dealing with individuals who are grief-stricken through our First Nations or people that are in women's shelters, or even men's shelters, these funds go a huge way to starting a new life for these individuals. It gives them an avenue where they don't have to go to the abusive or the challenged environment they were in. This is something that they had in order to move on with a new life. It's really difficult for them to look at that as an option. So now the choice is, "I won't have that fund. I won't have that ability to move on," so what we're essentially doing is forcing them back to an environment that was not beneficial to them to start off with.

The other point that she brought up really briefly is the concerns that we have with privatization, where this government is going. Yes, it will drive down wages, which will take away from our economy. But it would also drive the cost up, and we're going to lose sight, because once we make this privatization, once we make that move, it becomes about profits, and when you deal with profits, you lose the services, you lose that aspect of bringing that service to our communities, and it really is a detriment to us all. We need to keep that in mind.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I want to start off complimenting the member from Welland for actually engaging in debate today and not ringing the bells.

1740

I think the issue in front of us today, the budget, is a very important issue. I cannot think of a more serious issue than how our finances are going to work for the next few years and making decisions on where to spend, where to cut and how to grow our economy. She touched on some very important points. I know some of them had to do with labour. I think it's a difficult decision around the world: Do we spend or do we cut back with austerity measures?

I think her points were very valid about the contracts and making sure that we keep arbitration on the table. When you look at situations such as those in Wisconsin, where the governor decided that he was going to intervene and limit collective bargaining rights for most state employees, as well as force them to contribute more money to their health insurance and pensions—I caught a bit on television, and read about it. Our government is not doing that. We are keeping labour issues front and

centre. We're doing our best to maintain that collective bargaining still exists.

I also wanted to touch on what we are doing—I only have 30 seconds here—with the budget. We are, first of all, more than anything else, trying to balance the budget and complete that by 2017-18, which I think is very important. Everyone has a role to play in this budget. For every additional \$1 of new revenue outlined in this budget, there are \$4 in savings and cost-containing measures. Over three years, the plan will make a number of changes and hopefully bring better prosperity in light of the worldwide conditions that exist today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Welland has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, and thank you for your comments. I think I'm just going to use my two minutes to talk about an example of privatization that happened—I think it probably happened under the Harris government, but it has continued under the Liberal government, and that's the issue of home care. Our home care system is in a mess, to put it mildly. It is fragmented. The care that our seniors and our clients being discharged from the hospital are receiving is piecemeal. It's almost sometimes like—I remember when I was a teenager and worked in the canning factory. You've got a different worker, whether it's a nurse or a personal support worker or a health care aide, seeing these vulnerable people at home on a daily basis. We've got numerous readmissions to hospitals because there isn't enough money in the system and the money that is in the system is strained because somebody is making a profit off of home care. The government has had the opportunity over the last two terms to actually change that system and move it back into a not-for-profit system so that all the money is actually going to provide care.

We heard that privatization is really pushing wages down for health care workers, who find themselves in a position that they can actually make more working in Tim Hortons than they can caring for seniors and the ill in our province, because they don't even get paid travelling time, even though their distance between clients may be half an hour or 45 minutes. That's what privatization has done to home care, and I suggest that that is where it may end up if we move to privatizing other public services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to get a few words on the record today on Bill 55, the budget bill. If I may start off, I have a news release here. This is certainly relevant to the budget, the capital portion of the budget that is allowing for the extension of Highway 407 from Brock Road in Pickering to Harmony Road in Oshawa. Just this afternoon, this was dropped on my desk. It happens to be a news release from the regional municipality of Durham, and it's such a good release. I know people will be watching. I just want to quote from it. It said:

"Durham Region Celebrates the Province's Highway 407 Announcement."

May 24, 2012, Whitby, Ontario—"Durham region is celebrating today's announcement by Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and the provincial government, which will see essential work move forward on Highway 407 through Durham region.

"We are very thankful to Premier McGuinty and his government for today's commitment to the required Highway 407 work through Durham," said Durham regional chair and chief executive officer Roger Anderson. "Premier McGuinty's agenda includes a heavy focus on jobs and the economy, and this is a significantly positive step."

It goes on to say: "The commitment to this work has strong support by regional elected officials; local councillors from the eight area municipalities; residents; members of Durham's many chambers of commerce, boards of trade, business associations; individual companies; and other organizations that have long viewed this investment in infrastructure as crucial to the economic success of Durham region and the province.

"I recognize that this project is a big expense for the province, but the jobs that will be created during construction, and as a result of construction, will greatly benefit not just Durham region but the GTA and Ontario as a whole," said Chair Anderson. "As Durham regional chair, I want to thank everyone who was involved in making the Highway 407 expansion a priority, and I want to especially acknowledge Joe Dickson, MPP for Ajax-Pickering, and Tracy MacCharles, MPP for Pickering-Scarborough East, and all of Durham's MPPs"—"I guess that includes members of the opposition, from Whitby-Ajax, Oshawa and Durham—"and MPs for their help and support."

"Construction of the Highway 407 east extension is essential to enable access to Durham's supply of employment lands, which in turn will lead to long-term job creation. Today's announcement indicates that the province of Ontario recognizes that economic growth in Ontario depends on this vital east-west transportation corridor."

That's very good news, as part of our budget bill, Bill 55. By this press release, I assume that the members from Whitby-Ajax, Oshawa and Durham are supporting this, which means they should be supporting the budget, Bill 55, which indeed contains the provision of the capital program to extend 407 east from Brock Road to Pickering, to Harmony Road in Oshawa. I assume that they may be standing in support of our budget when we have a vote on Bill 55. I look forward to their support, the three of them, in supporting this initiative, which is included in our budget. Mr. Speaker, they may be breaking ranks in order to support, as indicated by this press release. I take this press release at face value, that they will be joining us to make sure that we make those strategic investments in infrastructure in the province of Ontario.

I want to get on to something else. This is the Thursday, May 17, 2012, edition of the Peterborough Examiner, a great newspaper—owned by Sun Media, but it's a very good newspaper.

The title here is: "Belleville to Get 400 Call Centre Jobs." It goes on to say that OLS On-Line Support services, which is headquartered in Prince Edward Island, was looking right across Canada and looking at every province in order to establish their sixth call centre, and they looked to Belleville, Ontario, as a great place to do business in Ontario, because Ontario is a great place to do business, as exemplified by this company that is coming to Belleville, Ontario—indeed, 400 new jobs.

I'd just like to quote the mayor of Belleville—a great guy; I had the opportunity to meet him; Neil Ellis:

"This is just fantastic," Mayor Neil Ellis said, recounting the city's ongoing work to assist OLS as it attempted to establish a call centre right here in Belleville. Mayor Ellis was beaming that day, with the announcement that they chose Belleville for these 400 new jobs. I'm sure we join with the member from Prince Edward-Hastings in welcoming OLS On-Line Support to Belleville, with 400 new jobs—very important.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to go on. Of course, Bill 11, that we have here before the House—and within our budget, we have funds set aside for several development funds. We anticipate the southwestern Ontario development fund. We already have a development fund in eastern Ontario.

I just want to read a letter that was sent to me from Bill Davie. He's vice-president of Dynacast in Peterborough.

"Dear Jeff"—very personable.

"Re: Eastern Ontario development fund (EODF)

"The EODF program has come to a successful conclusion for us.

"We are grateful for the financial assistance that we received, which helped support investment in capital assets with respect to the Montreal business transfer and investment in automation equipment and facility improvement as well as other important initiatives. These initiatives have had a positive influence on the Peterborough plant in terms of revenue growth and increase in head count.

"On behalf of Simon Newman, our CEO; Adrian Murphy, our CFO; Herve Mallet, our general manager and everyone at our plant in Peterborough," we want to "thank you for your support."

That's a good indicator, Mr. Speaker, of the success of the EODF. In fact, another company in Peterborough, last Wednesday, McCloskey Brothers, received two grants under the EODF. They were having a job fair in Peterborough last Wednesday, which would have been the 23rd. They were advertising for assemblers, machinists, welders, other high technical skills. They had this job fair; a lot of people turned out. In fact, Mr. Speaker, they had a billboard in front of their company on Highway 28, just outside of Peterborough, advertising that they were going to have this job fair and everybody was indeed welcome to attend—again, economic growth that we're moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, I tend to always subscribe to the words of Mark Carney. Mark Carney is the governor of the

Bank of Canada and is recognized around the world as being one of the best of the central bankers. In fact, he gave a very interesting speech to the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce on April 2, 2012. He was giving a review of what's happening in Canada and, indeed, Ontario's economy.

If I may, I want to just quote here from page 2 of his speech. He said, "Our labour market has bounced back too. All of the 430,000 jobs lost through the recession had been recovered as of early last year, and a further 180,000 jobs have been added since then. Most of the jobs created" here "have been in the private sector and in industries paying" well "above-average wages."

Look, Mr. Speaker, that's non-partisan. I mean, who could really challenge the words of the governor of the Bank of Canada, who is doing continuous research on what's happening in Canada's and Ontario's economy?

I'd also like to make reference to another article from Mr. Carney of Thursday, April 14, 2012, when he anticipates that the Canadian economy is on track to regain its full production capacity sometime early in 2013. That means the economy could be going full tilt, and the economy will be soaking up all the spare resources, which now has occurred. The slack would be taken up—and look forward to more job creation.

One thing that's also very important to my riding, Mr. Speaker, is the auto industry. General Motors represents about 25% of the economic activity in Peterborough riding through active employees, retired employees and those companies that make up the General Motors supply chain.

Just recently, there was an extensive report done by the United States government talking about the future of the auto industry in North America. The title of that

article is, "Auto Makers Set to Rev up Recovery." In fact, the bouncing back of vehicle sales is anticipated to be about 15 million in North America this year. It certainly shows that the auto industry is bouncing back. Indeed, they're saying that in North America, there could be a desperate need for increased production capacity as we go forward. And it just happens to mention in here maybe looking at the GM truck plant that currently sits idle in Oshawa, Ontario, and other facilities that could indeed be cranked up as anticipated demand is growing very quickly in the auto sector.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just gave a bit of an overview of what Bill 55—and needs in my part of eastern Ontario. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on a point of order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. I rise on a point of order to clarify a statement I made in question period on May 15, 2012. In my response to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt, I referred to a nursing announcement. The nurses announcement I was referring to are 900 new nursing positions for the 2011-12 fiscal year. Thank you, Speaker.

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

It being close to 6 of the clock, the House is adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1754.

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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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COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Grant Crack, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Cindy Forster, Monte McNaughton
Yasir Naqvi, Teresa Piruzza
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
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Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: David Zimmer
Sarah Campbell, Michael Coteau
Joe Dickson, Rosario Marchese
David Oraziotti, Laurie Scott
Todd Smith, Jeff Yurek
David Zimmer
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Gilles Bisson, Donna H. Cansfield
Steve Clark, Garfield Dunlop
Jeff Leal, Lisa MacLeod
Jonah Schein
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Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Reza Moridi, Jerry J. Ouellette
Liz Sandals, Jagmeet Singh
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

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