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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Monday 25 February 2013

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Lundi 25 février 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 February 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 février 2013

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I would like to welcome the parents of Burlington page Vanessa Gomez, who are joining us today in the public gallery: mother, Jasmine Gomez, and father, David Gomez. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Today, I would like to welcome one of the new legislative pages as well. Mr. Joshua Vito is a student at St. Nicholas school in my riding, Kitchener–Waterloo. Joshua, thank you for your interest in serving the public.

I would also like to welcome Joshua's mother, Nina; Joshua's father, Dino; and his sister Sophia. They are all joining us in the public gallery. To Joshua and his family, welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I would like to introduce Mr. Giordano, who is the father of page Alexander Giordano. Welcome to the Legislature.

Also, Cardinal Slipyj school will be doing a tour today and will join us later in the Legislature so they can have an opportunity to listen to question period.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to introduce to the Legislature today the mayor of Brooke-Alvinston, Don McGugan, his wife, Anne, and also Councillor Frank Nemcek. Don and Anne McGugan also recently received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee honours.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to introduce Dave Baxter from the London and District Construction Association. It's the first time he's here at Queen's Park, so welcome him.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Please join me in welcoming Cathy Jonker. She's a proud parent of page A.J. and is going to join us here and make sure A.J. does it all right today.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to introduce my sister-in-law, Yvonne McDonell, who is in the gallery here. Her husband is the mayor of North Glengarry, and she's a big supporter of his and mine.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome Ashley Baker to the Speaker's gallery. She's from Madoc, and she's in the law clerk program at Sir Sandford Fleming in Peterborough. She's doing her placement at the Queen's Park

office and our Belleville office as well. Welcome to Queen's Park today, Ashley.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Ajax–Pickering, we'd like to welcome the mother of page Jessica Kostuch, Christine Kostuch. She's in the gallery this morning. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier.

Last Thursday, Ontarians learned that the billion-dollar gas plant scandal went even deeper than originally thought. We learned that the scandal was even given code names to hide documents. To date, Mr. Speaker, we've learned that the Liberals have used Project Apple, Project Vapour, Project Banana and Project Fruit Salad to describe the \$1.3-billion scandal.

Premier, can you guarantee that there are no more code names being used?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm just going to assert that at the root of this question is a genuine desire to get all the information on the table, to get it out into the public realm, to make sure that the standing committee has access to all the information that's available and that the public has access to that information.

I have said consistently for weeks now, and certainly since these questions have been coming in the House, that it is our absolute objective to make sure that every piece of information is available, and I will continue to work on that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: In fact, Mr. Speaker, there is no access to that information. The Premier promised both opposition leaders that she would strike a select committee to investigate the scandal, and she has broken that promise. She also promised that there were no more documents relating to that scandal, and we now know that's not true.

In the words of one National Post editorial writer, Premier, your decision to cancel these gas plants has "utterly blasted Liberal credibility in Ontario."

Premier, here is your chance to regain some of that credibility and honour your promise. Will you strike a select committee into the \$1.3-billion Liberal gas plant scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think it is common knowledge that the member opposite is part of a

party that agreed that those gas plants should be sited in other places and those should be cancelled.

I think it would be very interesting to know what the plan that the member opposite had for the cancellation of the gas plants and the moving of those gas plants—it would be very interesting to know what the costing was that the member opposite’s party did vis-à-vis that issue.

We have been very clear that every piece of information that is available—we are working to make sure that that is available to the public and to the standing committee. I’ve asked the Auditor General to look at both issues. I have said I will appear before a committee. The standing committees are back on, Mr. Speaker. I have said that I will appear there, and I know that the member opposite and their party will ask the questions that need to be asked at the committee.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Mr. Speaker, the Premier says that she wants to get to the bottom of the gas plant scandal, but everything that she does suggests the opposite. She has refused to strike a select committee, despite her written word. She has put up the House leader to stonewall the opposition with respect to every question that has been asked. She has refused to release documents between the Premier’s office and the OPA. She even refuses to tell the Legislature today if there are any more code names.

Today, in light of Thursday’s developments, Premier, will you do the right thing and strike a select committee today so that we can get to the bottom of this gas plant scandal—

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

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think it is really important to just sort out what’s happening here, Mr. Speaker. The party opposite is asking, this morning, to strike a select committee, which was one of the options that was on the table. At the same time, they were saying that they wanted to have a standing committee, Mr. Speaker. Now I understand that the member for Nipissing actually asked this morning—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Very edgy, but I won’t ask.
Premier.

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you, Speaker.

I understand, this morning, that the member for Nipissing actually asked for another inquiry. My understanding was that the Conservatives, the official opposition, actually didn’t agree with the notion of an expensive \$25-million inquiry, but apparently the member for Nipissing has asked for that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think the question has to be asked: What is it that the opposition is looking for? What we’re

saying is: Let’s get the information out. Let’s have the all-party committee meet. Let’s make sure that the questions are asked that they want asked.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Premier, you have said you want to “get to the bottom” of the gas plant scandal. Yet last week, your party voted against the justice committee looking into the handling of the documents. That will expose, for instance, who redacted documents, why some documents were not turned over and who directed that to happen.

Then, Premier, you denied this Legislature the select committee you promised in writing, with no strings attached. That will get to expose the true cost of the cancellations. So Premier, why are you so dead set against us getting to the facts behind these two separate issues?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, let’s start at the beginning here. We acknowledge the concern that existed in the opposition over the cancelling of the gas plants, and we sat down and said there are two choices. We will support an all-party committee over a vindictive, mean-spirited motion against a former member of the Legislature. We said to them that it’s their choice, and I will stand right here and say we will support one; we will not support the other, and they made their choice.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member stands up, obviously not having talked to his colleagues, having just gone out and called for a judicial inquiry. Maybe he should talk to his colleagues, because this is what the member from Cambridge had to say: “The cost of a public inquiry is excessive; we don’t believe that that’s necessary. We’re paid as individuals to represent our constituents and to hold”—

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

Stop the clock for a moment, please. I am doing my best to listen attentively to all of the answers and the questions, and I find myself getting to that point where I can’t quite hear it when the members are actually within very close earshot of me. And the second thing I want to make a mention of is, when somebody is asking a question and I have people on the same side making heckling noises—and on the answers coming out, people making heckling noises—I’d prefer to have quiet, as I think most people would.

Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Again for the Premier: On Thursday we received our third document dump since the Speaker ordered the release of all gas plant-related documents almost half a year ago. We learned some of your other secret code words to go along with the ominous-sounding Project Vapour. As my colleague said, we found the secret Project Apple, Project Banana and Project Fruit Salad files. Speaker, they sound healthy until you realize they cost the taxpayers \$1.3 billion for not one megawatt of power.

Premier, will you strike the committee you promised so we can see the rest of the files buried under secret code names?

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member seemed to forget in his question the opposition of his party toward the establishment of this gas plant. In fact, Mr. Speaker, just to remind him, here is the text. Let me quote the text—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Simcoe–Grey, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —of the Mississauga South PC candidate's robocall in September 2011: "Hi there. This is Geoff Janoscik, your Mississauga South Ontario PC candidate. I'm calling about the McGuinty-Sousa power plant that the Liberal government decided to build in your backyard. I'm against this power plant, and as your MPP, I will fight to stop the power plant from being built.... Our team has been out knocking on doors every single evening for several months, talking about the power plant and making sure that we defeat the Liberals in this riding and put an end to their bad decisions. On October 6, choose change"—

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: To the Premier: On September 25 you stood in this House and said that "all of the documents that have been released are the documents that were available." Yet 2011 documents, released three weeks after you said that, include "Confidential Advice to the Cabinet"—a cabinet you served in. The subject line was Project Vapour, the secret code name for the Oakville gas plant cancellation.

Premier, you knew of this secret file over a year ago and you knew it wasn't in the documents that were released. Why would we ever believe a word from you again?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we've heard different things from the opposition today. The first thing that we've heard is that the issue of a gas plant that they didn't want has taken priority over education, health care and the economy; and the second is their calls for transparency.

The fact of the matter is, I just indicated that their own candidate, their own leader, their members opposed this gas plant. Obviously, they did detailed policy analysis and costing. So in the interests of transparency, I'm wondering when the Progressive Conservatives will be tabling their policy analysis and will be furnishing the committee with their costing, and calling their experts forward to talk about their decision to cancel this gas plant, one that was echoed in robocalls throughout the riding of Mississauga South and which their leader stood beside during the most recent election.

Mr. Speaker, all of us look forward to those documents and those witnesses coming forward in the coming days.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Will the Premier agree to move the gas plant can-

cellation issue out of the Legislature by sending it to an open, transparent and affordable public inquiry process?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've been clear that we believe that all the information that is being asked for should be made available. That is why we've asked the Auditor General to look at both the Oakville and the Mississauga issues. That is why I have agreed to come before the committee and that is why the standing committee, an all-party committee, is going to be looking at the issue of the gas plants.

It is not our intention to set up a very expensive public inquiry process. I do not believe that that is necessary because we have other mechanisms in order to get the information into the public realm.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Mechanisms that have thus far failed, I may remind the Premier.

Unfortunately, more than a year later, we're still looking for the answers. Last year, New Democrats requested all of the emails from the Premier's office about Project Vapour, one of the many code names, of course, that's been used to discuss the cancellations. We were told that no such documents existed, which was shocking since we actually had emails in our hands from the Premier's office that had already been released by the Ministry of Energy and the OPA.

There's a new Premier in town. Can she shed light for us?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, I am going to do everything in my power, working with the Minister of Energy, working with the House leader, making sure that we access all the information that is available.

It would have been my wish that all the information could have been available at one time. The Ontario Power Authority had a press conference last week. They talked about the process whereby they accessed information, and it has been ongoing. We will do everything we can to make sure that every piece of information—it is in our interest, in the interest of the public and in the interest of the opposition that this information is available. We are going to do everything we can to make sure that information is out in the public.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, something's just not adding up. At their press conference on Thursday, officials at the OPA, the Ontario Power Authority, made it very clear that they had informed the government last November that they were still looking for documents. Government ministers in the meanwhile had been insisting as recently as last week that no more documents needed to be released, that they were all released already; everything had been released. That's what government ministers were saying.

Can the Premier explain the disconnect here?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the House leader will want to comment on subsequent questions about this, but here's the issue: At every point when I stood in this Legislature, when my colleagues stood in this Legis-

lature, we were talking about the information we had. When we were told that all of the documents had been made available and that all of the information was available, that is what we reported. That was as we understood it at that moment—and that is the case: that every single one of us said what we believed at the moment, what we had been told.

1050

I agree with the leader of the third party. It would have been much better if all the information could have been available at one time. That would have been my preference. That would have been our preference. That was not the reality, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue to work to make sure that every piece of information, wherever it is, is available to the all-party committee that's going to be looking at this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, what part of “We’re still looking for documents” don’t they understand?

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The next question is to the Premier.

Here’s what people see. The government, one day, swears that they’ve disclosed everything, but the next day more disclosures come. The Premier’s office denies the existence of emails and documents, including the ones that we already have in our hands. The Premier says an inquiry is not needed. Given their track record so far, Speaker, does she really think that the status quo is going to work?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The simple fact of the matter is, we have a committee of the Legislature which is seized with this issue. They will be examining a number of issues. Obviously, we saw the press conference from the OPA on Thursday.

I think the most important thing, Mr. Speaker, in the interests of transparency, is to remind everyone that it wasn’t simply the Progressive Conservatives who were opposed to this gas plant.

Let me quote for the NDP here, from the Torstar News Service, September 16, 2011: “Etobicoke–Lakeshore NDP candidate Dionne Coley also pledged to fight the plant.”

The National Post, September 29: “...local NDP candidate, Anju Sikka, soon issued statements concurring with the new Liberal cancellation.”

Mr. Speaker, obviously, with the importance the leader is giving this, her party did, I’m assuming, a very detailed policy and costing analysis, and I’m wondering: When is she going to be sharing it with the Legislature and the committee?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I have to tell you that I’m extremely concerned that the Premier who wants to work with the opposition is dismissing good ideas out of hand. She dismissed the idea of an affordable public inquiry into the gas plant scandals.

People don’t want vague promises of answers on the gas plant issue any more than they want vague commitments on creating jobs or fixing the health care system. Is the Premier ready to take action and actually establish the public inquiry?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the New Democrats asks that we listen and work with the opposition. Well, in fact, we’re following the good advice of the member from Cambridge, who said, “The cost of a public inquiry is excessive; we don’t believe that that’s necessary. We’re paid as individuals to represent our constituents and to hold the government. And that’s where we expect this, this hearing to take place. And, we’re calling on, on the incoming Premier to call a legislative committee immediately.”

Again, I find it strange that the leader of the New Democratic Party ignored my question as to when she and her party will be tabling the information about the policy analysis and the detailed costing they did when they stood and promised the cancellation of these plants and fought the election on it.

Mr. Speaker, we have provided tens of thousands of pages of documents. The least we can get from the NDP is a similar costing and policy—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people want to see action on job creation; action that improves our health care system; action that builds our economy. But they also need to know that they can count on the government to act responsibly on their behalf and not as though public money and public records are the personal property of the governing party and their campaign team.

The government handed hundreds of millions of dollars to private power companies to make a political problem go away for them. Will the Premier agree to move this issue out of the Legislature by sending it to an open, transparent and affordable public inquiry process?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I’m hoping the member can explain the difference between the New Democratic Party’s opposition to the power plants, the PC Party’s opposition to the power plants and our opposition to the power plants, because as far as I’m concerned, all three went into the election opposing them. Perhaps she can explain this by making available to the committee the policy analysis that was done by the New Democratic Party, the costing that was done by the New Democratic Party, as well as furnish the committee with witnesses, experts, members of her own caucus who could come forward and talk about the detailed work that went into their call for the cancellation of them, which they fought the election on and which she seems to have forgotten in the questions she has posed here this morning.

SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR
ACTIVITIES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Last night I obtained a confidential memo that was leaked to me. It was a memo from the OSSTF; I'm going to have it brought over. Incredibly, OSSTF takes credit for the NDP win in Kitchener–Waterloo, Dalton McGuinty's resignation, Laurel Broten's demotion, the repeal of Bill 115, and changing your party's education policy.

Given that context, Friday's announcement is a stark change in tone and direction by the union leadership.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I wouldn't be too excited if I were you.

What would you suggest led the OSSTF to change their position? Was it the Ontario Progressive Conservatives' policy on getting extracurriculars back into our schools tomorrow, or is it the guarantee after they gave her tens of thousands of dollars to support her campaign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm trying to get quiet, and while I'm getting quiet, it's not the time to pipe up.

Five-second wrap-up.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The question is: They gave you tens of thousands of dollars; what did you guarantee in return?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: During the leadership campaign, I spoke repeatedly about the need to reopen a discussion with our education partners to get back to a respectful dialogue. That's exactly what we've done. Good process has led to what I thought was a good-news announcement that we would be able to look forward to the majority of students in our secondary schools returning to extracurricular activities.

I think it's unfortunate that the member for Nepean–Carleton sees that as a bad-news story. I would have thought she would be happy for the young people in the high schools in her riding being able to look forward to soccer clubs, robotic clubs, student council and orchestras. I would have thought that would be a good-news announcement for the member for Nepean–Carleton—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not going to get you my attention any better.

Minister?

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That was interesting. I wouldn't be popping the champagne or patting myself on the back if I were an Ontario Liberal at the moment, because actually—if I may, Speaker—Ken Coran said today,

“There's a genesis, a change, a metamorphosis. We're going to go back to the way business was done.”

What does that mean? What does that cost? We already know Ken Coran also told us that 20% of his teachers aren't going to go back and deliver extracurricular activities. We know that ETFO hasn't joined the table to say that those extracurriculars are back. We have no guarantee from this government that extracurriculars will stay in our schools if there is another labour disruption. That's why the only plan that works—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —is the Ontario Progressive Conservative plan that will restore extracurriculars—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —that will make sure union leaders stop bullying their students and bullying their teachers, and they can't fine and sanction their teachers.

I ask this government—this Premier—one more time: You benefited from tens of thousands of dollars in your campaign. What did you give them?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

For both sides, I was trying to be attentive. As I'm speaking, I'm hoping everyone is listening—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm hoping everyone is listening.

I was listening intently, and I do believe I'm hearing a kind of tit-for-tat thing in there that is not parliamentary, and I would ask the member to withdraw.

1100

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn, Speaker.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The question still remains—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. To all members: When I make a ruling, it's my ruling, without any of the editorial. The member will withdraw only.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn, Speaker. Do I still have time on the clock?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Have a seat. We'll try it again. Withdraw, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. No, your time is up.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Here's what I know: For decades in this province, teachers and support workers have delivered extracurricular activities voluntarily. I graduated from high school in 1971, and one of the things that got me to school in the morning was the 7:30-in-the-morning basketball or volleyball practice. I know that's what enriches the lives of students, and it's what enriches the lives of teachers and support staff.

I worked as hard as I could when I was appointed leader to make sure that we engaged the leadership of ETFO and OSSTF. We have gotten to the point where

OSSTF is working with its members now, and I have a huge amount of faith that the majority of those extracurricular activities are going to be available. The member for Nepean–Carleton should be celebrating that.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Experts have consistently estimated the cost of cancelling the gas plants at over a billion dollars, and yet you have used numbers far less.

On Friday, the Premier refused to back up the government numbers that have been used for months. Will the Premier clarify whether she has any faith in the numbers that were used by the former Minister of Energy and former Minister of Finance in this matter?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: All parties in this Legislature supported the relocation of the gas plants. We were fortunate enough to be re-elected, and we relocated the gas plants.

The OPA has conducted an objective, independent assessment as to the cost. The OPA has provided the \$230-million number to this government, and we made that number and the documents public with respect to the costs.

What is important is that, yes, the OPA did attend a media availability last Thursday. The question was: “At any point during these searches—we are talking about all of them, not just this one—did you feel you were under a great deal of political pressure to either produce or not produce records?” The answer from the CEO of OPA was, “No.”

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Premier, the member for Ottawa South stood in the Legislature on October 15, 2012, and with reference to the Oakville gas plant said that on the matter of the cost, it’s \$40 million. Premier, do you stand by that number?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I can only repeat what I just said: that we promised, as they did, to relocate the gas plants. We were elected. We relocated the gas plants.

We asked the Ontario Power Authority to provide us with the cost of the relocation. They provided us with the \$230 million—the \$40 million for the relocation of Oakville. We stand by that number, unless and until the auditor, whom we have asked to look into this issue, comes in with a different number, or the OPA comes in with a different number.

We have been straightforward, we have been honest, we have been direct, and we did what we promised to do. We did what they promised to do. We relocated the gas plants.

SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Education. Many of us in this House know the value of

extracurricular activities in our schools. Not only do they build self-confidence in our students, but they also make our students into great actors—across the floor—musicians and athletes. Extracurricular activities allow our students to gain strong leadership skills, which will allow them to compete in the global economy.

Many of my constituents want to know when extracurricular activities will resume in our schools. I know getting extracurricular activities back in our schools is a top priority and that progress has been made with Ontario’s secondary school teachers. Could the minister please update this House on the progress of extracurricular activities in our schools?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I’d like to thank the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for his question and for his advocacy on behalf of students in his riding. You know, he’s got it absolutely right: This is a good-news story, not a reason to get angry. This is a good-news story that collaboration with our teachers is working.

One of Premier Wynne’s first actions as Premier was to reach out to the teachers’ unions and to re-establish a positive relationship. One of my first actions as Minister of Education was to reach out to our unions, to our teachers’ leaders, and restore that relationship, because we know that working together collaboratively is what produces results. I’m very pleased that OSSTF has voted to lift their—

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

Mr. Grant Crack: Merci, monsieur le Président. Ma question est encore pour la ministre de l’Éducation.

Minister, it’s great to hear that extracurricular activities such as acting will be returning to our secondary schools. I’m also pleased to hear of the progress that’s being made through working collaboratively with our teachers and our support staff. But we all know more work needs to be done to get extracurricular activities back in all of our schools, and we need to continue to build on the gains that we’ve made in education over the past nine years.

Can the minister please tell this House about the government’s plan, moving forward, to make our education system one of the best in the world?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think it’s important, as we think about the return of extracurricular, to understand that extracurricular activities have always been voluntary. Whether it was the third party, the official opposition, or us, for everyone those activities have been voluntary. I have great faith that our teachers will be returning, because part of what makes a great education system is having our teachers engaged in extracurricular.

But we’ve got other things that we can do together with our teachers. One is to fix the process of collective bargaining, which clearly has got some problems in its structure. We’re going to work with our unions, with our school board associations—all four unions, all four school board associations—to fix the process. But we also have some other priorities. We’re going to work

with all of those people on aboriginal education, to support youth at risk.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Premier. We know full well that 28 members of your government caucus stood in their place and told this House that all documents had been tabled, despite the fact that the pages handed over were either incomplete or heavily redacted. Since then, somewhat magically, two separate document dumps revealed over 20,000 additional pages, many still blacked out or heavily redacted.

My question to the Premier is this: Since members from Mississauga–Streetsville, Mississauga East–Cooksville, York Centre, Ajax–Pickering, Ottawa–Orléans, the Scarboroughs, Sudbury, Thunder Bay–Atikokan and others were more interested in playing politics than presenting facts, will you ensure that these members will not sit on the justice committee, as we cannot be assured that they can be trusted to get to the bottom of this scandal?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the House leader, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First and last time.
Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The member raises the issue of documents. We have a committee of this Legislature which will be looking into the issue of documents.

But again, the calls for transparency from the Progressive Conservative Party lead me back to the 2011 election. I'd like to quote a PC press release, September 24, 2011. Listen to this: "...the only way to guarantee this power plant does not get built is to elect a Tim Hudak Ontario ... government. A Tim Hudak government will cancel this plant."

1110

My question again, Mr. Speaker: Obviously, the Progressive Conservative Party did detailed policy analysis and costing. Will the member guarantee that that will be tabled at the committee and the experts that the PC Party spoke with will also appear in front of the committee?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: This is complete and utter nonsense. You haven't even presented the documents yourself on how and why you put the plants there to begin with. This is your decision. You can't deflect from it. There are no documents that show why you did it, so before you ask for some accountability on our part, let's see some accountability on your part.

If you won't form a select committee and if the government members of the justice committee are more concerned with protecting the government than getting to the bottom of your billion-dollar scandal, how can the people of Ontario be assured that the new government and their obstruction tactics are any different than the old

government? Or do you call it another half-baked project name?

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member talks about playing politics when his leader has announced that he will vote against a budget that's not even written yet. Give me a break.

But again, let's go to the Twitterverse. On September 24, Geoff Janoscik, Mississauga South PC candidate: "An Ontario PC govt will stop the plant for good." September 25, the same individual: "@timhudak government will cancel this power plant."

Again, it is obvious, with the importance that this party has put into this issue, that they must have done detailed analysis and costing, so will they commit to tabling with the committee that detailed analysis, that costing they did, the experts that they consulted? They were 100% behind the cancellation of that plant. They had robocalls; they had Twitter; they had press releases. Will they come clean in front of the committee once and for all?

HOSPITAL FUNDING

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

Last week, during question period, the minister reaffirmed her intention to move services from hospitals to the community, and suggested that hospital cuts would fund programs like home care. We've already seen cuts at hospitals like Windsor, London and Ottawa. Should other communities also expect to see cuts to their local hospitals in the near future?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the opportunity to talk about the transformation that is under way in our health care system. The status quo is simply not an option, not if we want to pass along universal health care to our kids and to our grandkids. We need to change how we deliver health care in this province, and the action plan that I released a little over a year ago outlines how we have to do that. Part of that is holding our base increases to our hospitals at zero.

We are transforming how we fund hospitals. Every new opportunity we have for investment, we are investing in the home care and the community care sector. It's the change that the system needs in order to support our aging population and to support our growing population. It has had overwhelming support from the health care sector. It is difficult, and I understand that for some people it is difficult, but it is the right change.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: New Democrats have a plan to ensure that home care is available when and where it is needed and within five days, but our five-day-home-care guarantee looks at efficiencies like lowering administrative costs in LHINs and CCACs and capping hospital CEO salaries, not at hospital cuts. Why is the government choosing to cut hospital services rather than looking at administrative savings?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There are many changes under way in our health care system right now. I acknowledge that for some, doing things differently is a challenge, but we simply must invest more in the home care sector. We're committed to three million more hours of PSW care and 90,000 more personal support workers. There's a lot going on in the health care system, but at the very foundation of it, we must provide the right care at the right place at the right time. All of the changes are doing that. It's better for people because people get better care. It's also better for our health care system because we'll get better value for the money that we spend.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Minister, the condo community in York South–Weston includes residents who have been living in condos for years and residents who have purchased new units that vary in size and type. Many of these residents have ongoing concerns and have raised questions with me personally about the Condominium Act. They are encouraged to hear that the government is taking concrete action by conducting a comprehensive review of the Condominium Act instead of applying a thin patchwork of changes that will not solve the problems that they are facing. They are especially interested in the innovative public engagement approach that the ministry has been using to identify the issues and build solutions. Could you provide an update to this House on how these condo consultations have progressed so far?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker.
Applause.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you.

First, I want to thank the member for York South–Weston for her question. I appreciate her overall interest in the Condominium Act review.

As MPP for Pickering–Scarborough East, I attended one of the consultation meetings. It increased my appreciation of how important it is that we review the Condominium Act. For example, Speaker, half of all new home purchases in Ontario are condos. That's a significant number. To put it in more perspective, almost 1.3 million people in Ontario live in condos. That equals the size of the population of Saskatchewan. This speaks to how important it is for us to look at this act. As minister now, I'm excited to be moving this forward.

I'm pleased to inform the House today that the stage one review is now concluded. On January 22, the Public Policy Forum, which has been leading this engagement process, released findings on stage one.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I also would like to take this opportunity to congratulate her on her new appointment as minister.

This review of the Condominium Act, as the minister pointed out, is really extremely important to the over one million Ontarians who live in condos. I'm glad that we

are taking a comprehensive and thorough approach that leads to long-term solutions to the issues. I support the engagement that the ministry has been having with everyday citizens who make up the condo sector and who are actively involved in developing those solutions.

Can the minister please share: What are the next steps in this public engagement process to review the condo act?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: We've now moved to stage two of the condo review process. We are gathering the public comment on the findings report. It has identified five top issues so far, related to governance, dispute resolution, financial management, consumer protection and the qualifications of condo managers. We're aiming to collect all formal public comments by March 11 of this year. In this stage, we'll have condo experts review the findings report and the public comments we received, and we'll prepare options and recommendations.

Finally, in stage three, we'll reconvene the residents' panel to review the experts' report and turn it into an action plan. In the fall of this year, the public will then have another chance to review and validate the action plan before it is presented to government.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is to the Premier. Throughout your leadership bid to take over this scandal-plagued Liberal Party, you made grand commitments about restoring government transparency. You came through southwestern Ontario, and that was one of your planks. In fact, on February 14, you publicly announced that you were prepared to call a select committee to get to the bottom of the gas plant scandal.

Premier, we know you were proud to embrace the McGuinty legacy; we just didn't think you would embrace his schemes to bury the biggest scandal in Ontario's history this soon into your premiership.

Premier, will you follow through with your commitment to Ontarians and restore transparency in government and immediately strike the select committee you promised, with no strings attached?

1120

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the House leader will want to speak to the supplementary, but I just want to be clear once again that I have absolutely followed through on the commitments that I made during my leadership bid. I said clearly that I was going to work with the opposition to make sure that all of the documentation was available, and that we had a forum in which those questions could be asked and those documents could be made available. I have asked the Auditor General to look at both the issues. I have said I would appear before committee.

There was a discussion with the opposition, with the House leaders, among the House leaders about which path to follow, whether there would be discussion at the standing committee or whether there would be a select committee. The opposition made a choice.

We have said very clearly that all the information that is asked for at the standing committee will be made available.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Back to the Premier: I find it rather ironic that your government has chosen to use fruit to circumvent FOI requests, especially when last week it was proven that food was an absolute afterthought for you, especially when you had to have a secret swearing-in ceremony to officially become the Minister of Agriculture and Food. The secrecy continues. You just can't be trusted.

You were a key player in the campaign team and cabinet inner circle that decided to stick Ontarians with a \$1.3-billion bill to save two Liberal seats. You promoted the \$1.3-billion man to Minister of Finance in your overloaded cabinet that we can't afford.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Now you're continuing your mentor's history of secrecy and broken promises. Again, you just can't be trusted.

Reverse this—

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm going to take this opportunity—because it was embedded in this question, the issue of my being Minister of Agriculture and Food. I want to just say I am so honoured to be able to play that role.

Mr. Speaker, it's true: There was an administrative glitch in the swearing-in—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron—Bruce. The member from Oxford, come to order.

The member from Huron—Bruce, listen, because you asked the question.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There was an administrative glitch. When I was sworn in, I was sworn in as the Minister of Agriculture. Subsequently, we corrected that administrative glitch and I was sworn in as Minister of Agriculture and Food.

I know how important the agri-food business is to this province. It's a \$34-billion industry; it's the second-biggest industry in the province. It is a priority of this government to make sure that it has the support that it needs.

HOSPITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. For far too long, Windsor residents have been stuck looking at the Grace Hospital site, which is really nothing more than an eyesore, a pile of rubble at the heart of their community.

Last week, the member from Windsor West stood in her place—in fact, she stood in front of the Grace site itself to announce that she was fairly certain cabinet will approve funding for the cleanup.

Cabinet met since that photo op. My question is a pretty simple one: Will the Premier please tell the people of Windsor when they can expect the help they have been promised again and again?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The answer to the question is yes.

Interjection: She said “when.”

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Oh, when? Very soon; as soon as it can be done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The question I was going to ask in my return is, we've heard these kinds of promises over and over again from the government. The people of Windsor have waited over and over again for the reality to come to fruition.

The question is a simple one. Is it going to happen during the by-election? Is that when that money's going to flow?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, obviously polite, to-the-point, friendly answers aren't working.

We're not, in every answer we use, hyphenating Windsor and London. From the party that always accuses this party of politicizing things, you got a very non-political answer—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I think that the people in Windsor and my colleague from Windsor West have worked very hard to find money in a very difficult time for this hospital.

These are the kinds of things, Mr. Speaker—because I have huge respect for the leader of the third party and I think we share a lot in common on the health care agenda—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

I'm actually having difficulty because I have to start raising my voice, even when the microphones are here, in order to ask for some calm. So I'm asking that that stop; bring it down. Particularly for those that are asking the question and those that are answering—I'm still hearing people, while someone's asking a question, starting to heckle, and when somebody is answering, to heckle. That only encourages the rest of it. So, please, focus on the answer and the question.

Minister, wrap up.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is something that's very important. This is something that I think both of our parties agree is a critical piece. I'm hoping it's something that we can work on. We'll have a budget shortly that will outline these kinds of things.

Mr. Speaker, in concluding, I just want to say this: At ROMA and OGRA I've been inviting members of the opposition to sit in with their municipal leaders and to do that in a non-partisan way. I hope the leader of the third party—

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

GREAT LAKES WATER QUALITY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Here in Ontario, we have the privilege of being co-stewards of nearly 20% of the earth's fresh surface water: the Great Lakes. Conserving our Great Lakes water supplies and protecting our water quality is essential to ensuring the health of our families, our communities and our economy. But recently Ontarians have been hearing about algae in Lake Erie and declining lake levels.

Speaker, through you, I'm wondering if the minister could provide details to the House on what the government has done to protect the Great Lakes.

Hon. James J. Bradley: An excellent question—members of the House would know that over the years we've made progress in cleaning up some of the polluted areas around the Great Lakes, reducing the inputs of toxic substances and restoring natural habitats. We continue to be a strong partner—people will agree with that—in protecting and restoring the Great Lakes through our work with federal, municipal and US partners.

Thanks to these efforts, water quality has improved in some areas and fisheries are recovering. There's been progress in reducing toxic substances such as PCBs and mercury in the Great Lakes, and the cleanup of historical contaminated sites has continued.

The Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund, which offers modest grants to grassroots groups that are undertaking improvement projects in their corner of the lakes, is being helpful. Projects range from scout troops cleaning a river valley, to a fish club planting trees along a stream bank, to a local conservation foundation tackling invasive species.

We have made progress; we need to make more.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: As you recognize, Minister, the Great Lakes are vitally important to Ontario families. They provide us with drinking water, quality of life and prosperity. As one of the most ecologically diverse regions in North America, we need to keep the Great Lakes healthy now and for our children, our grandchildren and future generations. Ontarians want measurable reductions of pollutants in the Great Lakes.

Speaker, through you, I'm wondering if the minister could provide details to the House on how our government will continue to protect, conserve and restore the Great Lakes.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Indeed, the Great Lakes are facing threats, including population growth, climate change, invasive species, blue-green algae blooms, pharmaceuticals and new chemicals of concern. Clearly our job is not over; more needs to be done. New challenges are overwhelming old solutions. That's why we need new initiatives to help the Great Lakes.

Later today, as I've indicated to my opposition critics, I will reintroduce the Great Lakes Protection Act, which is designed to restore and protect the Great Lakes so they are drinkable, swimmable and fishable. The proposed act

would provide new tools to restore and protect priority areas. Protecting and restoring the Great Lakes will enhance the quality of life for Ontarians and leave a strong environmental legacy for future generations to enjoy.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on all sides of the House to move this bill forward.

1130

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Premier. On Friday, I received a letter from your government House leader. In it, he states that he learned on September 27—and, in his duties as House leader, immediately informed members of the government caucus—of the possible existence of more documents related to the power plant cancellations in Oakville and Mississauga.

So we're clear, were you informed—as the government House leader suggests that he informed the government caucus—that there could be more documents back on or about September 27? Were you informed about that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm troubled on two fronts. I'm troubled, first, because this is an active point of privilege, which is under consideration by you. I'm also troubled because the honourable member is misrepresenting the submission that I brought—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know my job. The member will withdraw.

Hon. John Milloy: Withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

We've been through the facts of this case. Myself and the former Minister of Energy, Mr. Bentley, were made aware that there was a potential for more documents—merely the potential for those documents. When that was confirmed, steps were taken to inform the House. I stood in this place, as did the Minister of Energy, to correct our record at the first available opportunity when it was confirmed. That interim period, as I said, is now the topic of a point of privilege that you are looking at.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: The government House leader can't have it both ways. Either you informed the members of your caucus on September 27, as you stated in your letter, or you didn't. If you did, then several members of your government caucus, including a number of cabinet ministers, stood up in the House on October 1—and after that—stating that all of the documents were released. If you didn't, then your letter of last week was incorrect.

What I want to know, government House leader, is: Which John Milloy should we believe?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

I thank the members for their patience. The member has raised a situation that I believe—because I did not

know the identity of this letter, which could have been a response inside of the act of privilege that's happening right now—should not have been asked. Because I did not catch it immediately—and I had no knowledge of what letter you were referring to—I'll have to let it go. I'm going to ask the minister to respond. However, I also will ask you to withdraw the last part of your question, as it was unparliamentary.

Mr. Todd Smith: Withdraw.

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

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I will try to be parliamentary and simply say that the honourable member has selectively read the letter. We have been through the course of events in here a number of times in the Legislature, and in writing, in a submission that I made to you on the point of privilege, to point out that myself and the Minister of Energy were told that there was the potential for more documents. We stood and corrected our record once we knew there were more documents, which was several weeks later. We did not involve other members of the caucus, Mr. Speaker. That has been outlined in the letter that I submitted to you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock.

With the interaction that just took place, I'm going to inform the House that those kinds of questions will be assumed to be about an active point of privilege, and I will deny the question or the answer.

New question.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. Since taking office, the Premier suggested that she is ready to take the north seriously. Northerners are still reeling from the government's decision to divest Ontario Northland and cancel our passenger rail service. As we speak, the communications division is on the block, and the refurbishment shops, the bus lines and the freight will follow.

Will the Premier halt the divestment process and give northern stakeholders like the mayors and freight customers a chance to come up with solutions that work in the north and benefit the rest of the province as well?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I think it's fair to say that probably one of the more difficult decisions made by my predecessor in this was the decision in terms of the divestment of the ONTC. Certainly increasing subsidies and our fiscal challenges made it difficult to maintain a strong business case for it. The work that we've been doing since that time is very, very crucial.

One thing the Premier has made very clear to me is how important an integrated and strategic transportation strategy for northern Ontario is, and the Premier has asked us to follow through on that. Certainly, in terms of

the relationship that we have with our municipal partners, particularly the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities—we're looking forward to meeting with them this afternoon. I've also tried to signal as strongly as I can that we want to have a process by which we can work more closely in terms of the decisions that are coming out of this.

Again, our priority is economic development in northern Ontario, prosperity in northern Ontario, working through the growth plan to implement those measures as well, and certainly developing a transportation strategy for the north. So we continue to work closely with—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I stand, you sit.

Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, to the Premier: During her leadership campaign, the Premier said she would create a transportation plan for the north. Okay, but selling off and closing vital ONTC infrastructure while talking to northerners about creating a transportation plan is like closing the barn door after you let the horse out of the barn. Premier, will you please halt the ONTC divestment process and give northerners a chance to determine their own future?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: If there's one thing that Premier Wynne has made very, very clear, it is that northern Ontario is an incredible priority for this government. We are holding a northern cabinet meeting, Premier, this coming Friday in Sault Ste. Marie. We'll be setting up a northern cabinet committee, whose priorities will be to look at the opportunities that are there. Certainly, I think those opportunities are there. It's a priority for our ministry, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, a ministry that is focused on economic development and jobs creation in northern Ontario, and that's something that we're going—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle:—certainly, the Premier has made it very clear how important it is that we get the transportation strategy in northern Ontario right. We recognize how important that is for the economic development needs that are going to be happening, particularly the Ring of Fire and those opportunities. So our commitment is to take that seriously, to work closely with our municipal stakeholders, to work closely with the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, and we'll be doing that on a daily basis.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Phil McNeely: This question is to the Minister of Rural Affairs. Minister, as you know, this week councillors and staff from rural municipalities from across Ontario are gathered in Toronto for the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and the Ontario Good Roads Association Combined Conference.

As representatives of their communities, they'll be bringing many issues that they wish to address with our

government. As a consulting engineer for 30 years, I attended the Good Roads for over 25 of them, and I know how important this conference is to the rural and small urban communities.

Mr. Speaker, through you, could the minister please update this House on what his ministry is doing to address concerns and engage with rural Ontario?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from Ottawa–Orléans, a hard-working member who does a great job for the people of Ottawa.

In fact, I was in Ottawa about a week or so ago, and I had the opportunity to meet the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper. Our daughters were actually playing volleyball together in a tournament in Ottawa, so it was a great opportunity to be with the Prime Minister and chat with him about a number of things.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to get to the answer here, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Minister, thank you very much for that response.

Laughter.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Congratulations to you on your new duties. You have always been a champion of rural Ontario, even as an urban member from Peterborough. We look forward to that.

I also know that I've been hearing about the dual ministers for Rural Affairs and Agriculture and Food. Can the minister please be more specific about the distinction between the two ministries?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member for Ottawa–Orléans: I think this is a wonderful opportunity. Rural Ontario offers so many opportunities, and this government has worked closely with rural Ontario, small towns and villages—an opportunity for infrastructure development and agriculture. So this will give us the opportunity to have a laser-like focus on issues in rural Ontario.

Interjections.

Hon. Jeff Leal: A laser-like focus. So I want to take this opportunity to work with all members in this House to provide that focus for rural Ontario—all kinds of opportunities—and we're seeing that at ROMA—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Laughter is good for your digestion.

As there are no deferred votes, this House stands adjourned until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a great pleasure for me to introduce some municipal officials from my great riding of Leeds–Grenville. From the township of Front of Yonge:

Mayor Roger Haley. From the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands: Mayor Frank Kinsella, Deputy Mayor Heidi Conarroe and Councillors Geraldine Dickson and Brigitte Lesage-Tye. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CASINOS

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise to call on the Premier to keep her promise that Ontarians get a say before a casino comes to their community. She needs to listen, because that's not happening in eastern Ontario.

Kingston council and OLG are pursuing a new casino that would devastate two communities in my riding and go against the will of the vast majority of Kingstonians.

The front page headline in Saturday's Whig-Standard shouted what's in the hearts and minds of Kingston residents: "Poll shows 60% oppose casino." This poll also showed an astounding 78% insist citizens get the final say in a referendum—not OLG, not city council, but the people. I remind the Premier that these people agree with the three members of her cabinet who supported our casino referendum bill.

I would like to thank both the town of Gananoque and the township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands for their support. For 10 years, their communities have had a great partnership with OLG and the 1000 Islands casino. Both sides prospered. I want to thank the two councils for their great growth plan for the future.

Instead, OLG is determined to plunder this casino from two communities who welcomed it with 59% and 62% support in a referendum and take it to a city where 60% don't want it. Speaker, that is wrong, so I join Mayors Demchuk and Kinsella, their councils and their residents and the people of Kingston in calling on the Premier to ensure it doesn't happen. Don't let OLG break your promise, Premier, by forcing a casino on Kingston.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members' statements? The member from Kenora–Rainy River.

Ms. Cindy Forster: This past weekend, I was on the picket line in Stevensville with my federal NDP MP Malcolm Allen and members of CEP Local 425-G. These 100-plus office and plant workers were notified of a permanent layoff by their employer, Vertis Communications, a printing plant, in mid-January. They were laid off immediately. This US company filed for bankruptcy in the US, and now these workers, many of whom have 30, 35 years of seniority, are being denied severance pay, to the tune of \$2.7 million in total. The office workers have had their pension plans gutted by 50%, and all had promised health care benefits reduced. In some cases, both husband and wife have lost their jobs.

These workers are guarding this plant 24 hours per day because it's their only ace in the hole. The printing

equipment, paper and ink still remain inside the building—a building that was purchased by another US company, Quad Graphics.

Speaker, if US Vertis Communications is not responsible for the workers' severance pay and Quad Graphics is not responsible for the workers' severance pay, who is going to ensure that Ontario workers' rights for severance pay are upheld?

What are the Wynne Liberal government and the Harper Conservative government going to do to ensure that when foreign companies invest in this province and open in this province that workers' rights are protected under provincial and federal employment legislation?

The government is supposed to be there for the people.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member from Welland, and I correct my record. I misinformed the House of your riding. I now stand corrected, and I apologize to the member from Welland.

FAMILY DAY WALKATHON

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I rise today to talk about what leadership and the coming together of a community can look like. On Family Day—as many of you will recall, Family Day was very cold—hundreds of Mississaugans came out to take part in a walkathon to raise funds for the local hospital: Credit Valley Hospital.

The walkathon started three years ago, and is organized by the Mississauga Muslim Community. In a short three-year period, they have raised 70% of their stated goal of raising a quarter of a million dollars. This is good money for the Credit Valley Hospital, but as important as this money is, I think what is really even more important is the leadership, sense of community and desire to give back that the Mississauga Muslim Community has demonstrated. For that, I congratulate them and thank them for making Mississauga a better place to live.

None of this would, of course, be possible without the work of hundreds of volunteers, and while it's not possible to name all of them, I would like to mention a few: Abdul Qayyum Mufti, Azrab Khan, Ovais Iqbal, Amaan Khan, M. Zahid, Dr. Bajwa, Dr. Shafiq, Masrur Shaikh, Salman Faruqi, Abdullah Daad, Arshed Yaqub—and the list goes on. Once again, thank you so much, Mississauga; thank you so much, Mississauga Muslim Community.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Many northerners, including myself, were very disappointed to hear the recent comments from the Premier and the new northern development minister that they plan to continue, full steam ahead, with their fire sale of the Ontario Northland.

Last fall, I wrote to the Auditor General detailing how this fire sale will achieve no savings, yet the government continues to press forward. I plan to move a motion at committee this week to ask the Auditor General again to

formally investigate the government's sale plans to examine the true financial picture.

Thorough consultations my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka and I undertook last summer provided us with many facts. Ontario Northland rail freight is strategically critical infrastructure to economic development in the north and to private job creation in the north, and they must remain publicly owned—something that I wrote to the new minister and to the Premier as well.

One approach is the new deal for Ontario Northland, which proposes a publicly owned rail transportation solution for the vital Ring of Fire mining development. The best way to transport ore, in my opinion, is by rail; an economic analysis study released on Friday supports that position. The ONTC can and should play a vital role in developing this once-in-a-lifetime mineral discovery.

MUSLIM SOCIAL SERVICES OF KITCHENER-WATERLOO

Ms. Catherine Fife: Last week, I was pleased to present the Ontario Trillium Foundation grant award to Muslim Social Services of Kitchener-Waterloo. This not-for-profit organization was founded in 2007 in response to the need for a culturally and spiritually sensitive community agency in Kitchener-Waterloo. Their founder, Idrisa Pandit, has worked hard to foster a just, equitable and peaceful community by bridging the gap in understanding and compassion between faith communities and cultures through the delivery of social services.

The model Muslim Social Services has adopted from its inception was one of co-operation and partnership with other mainstream agencies, faith groups and counselling centres that have well-established social service infrastructure. Their motto has always been to treat anyone approaching Muslim Social Services for its services with dignity, respect and compassion. Their core programming includes community outreach, counselling, refugee settlement and the Safer Families project, which raises awareness about issues of abuse and violence.

This funding, provided through the grant, will provide some physical infrastructure for the work of Muslim Social Services and some needed stability for the community. It is a well-deserved grant which will only strengthen the growing and changing community of Kitchener-Waterloo, a community which is quickly learning that our diversity is our strength.

COURAGE CANADA HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Last week, I was thrilled to attend the first Courage Canada national blind hockey tournament, right here in Toronto at the Mattamy Athletic Centre. The tournament saw, on ice, young hockey players from all over the country who are blind or visually impaired. This incredible achievement is the long-time dream of one of my outstanding constituents from York South–Weston, Mark DeMontis.

1310

Some may remember that I recognized Mark in this Legislature back in 2009, after he completed the incredible feat of skating 5,000 kilometres from Toronto to Vancouver to raise awareness and money for blind youth hockey teams. Last fall, Mark skated another 2,000 kilometres from Halifax to Toronto to complete his journey from coast to coast.

Mark was diagnosed with Leber's optic neuropathy at the age of 17. He became legally blind, which ended his dream of playing in the NHL.

In 2008, he founded Courage Canada, a charity that teaches blind youth to skate and play hockey.

Mark's story is one of triumph over adversity. His courage and spirit have raised awareness and funds for blind youth programs while inspiring Canadians of all abilities.

This season, Courage Canada hopes to reach 400 children and youth in 30 communities across Canada. I am extremely proud to congratulate Mark on yet another astonishing accomplishment.

ACADEMY AWARDS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Last night, Burlington-bred composer Mychael Danna edged out heavyweight rivals like Thomas Newman and John Williams to win the Academy Award for Best Original Score for his work on Ang Lee's *Life of Pi*. The Nelson Secondary School grad's Academy Award will be in good company, joining his recent Golden Globe for Best Original Score.

Mychael was also Oscar-nominated in the Best Original Song category last night, but lost out to Adele's James Bond theme, *Skyfall*.

Burlington enjoyed more Oscar attention when *Brave* won for Best Animated Feature. Steve Pilcher, M.M. Robinson High School grad, was production designer for that acclaimed Disney Pixar movie. Steve's Oscar will also stand alongside a Golden Globe in the same category earned a month earlier.

Although Mychael now calls Toronto home, his mother, Edith, who was in the audience to help celebrate the win, is still a Burlingtonian. The same is true of Steve. While he has lived in California since the late 1990s, his parents Don and Dianne still call Burlington home.

Congratulations to Mychael and Steve. Your outstanding work continues to make all of Burlington proud.

WOMEN'S CURLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. Phil McNeely: Yesterday, before a crowd of 4,444 people at Kingston's K-Rock Centre, Team Ontario captured the Tournament of Hearts curling title. I'm especially proud of Team Ontario because they are from my hometown of Ottawa.

Skip Rachel Homan's victory was all the more impressive because she bested four-time champion and curling legend Jennifer Jones 9-6 in the Sunday final.

In a close, exciting match, Homan never conceded the lead to the favoured Team Manitoba. The match's decisive moment came in the seventh, when Homan performed an impressive double takeout on her first shot. This sent the heavily pro-Ontario crowd wild, and Manitoba never recovered.

This is the first Hearts title for 23-year-old skip Homan, who has become known in the curling community as a fearsome competitor. I look forward to watching this young Ottawa curling star win future titles, and wish her the best of luck in her qualifying bid for the 2014 Winter Olympics.

On behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, I'd like to extend well-earned congratulations to Emma Miskew, Alison Kreviazuk, Lisa Weagle and team captain Rachel Homan. Wasn't their coach a wonderful coach? Well done, Team Ontario.

ARC INDUSTRIES

Mr. Ted Arnott: On Saturday, January 26, while some MPPs were at Maple Leaf Gardens trying to put a new face on things, I was at a different event, an event that speaks volumes about the strength of our communities in Wellington-Halton Hills. I was in Erin at the official opening of the new ARC Industries East building. ARC stands for Adult Rehabilitation Centre, and is a program of Community Living Guelph Wellington that provides employment training and support for people with an intellectual disability.

As my friend Marvin McDougall, chair of the fund-raising committee, said so eloquently at the opening, ARC Industries is in the "hope" business—hope for the future, including the hope that clients can take their rightful place in the community.

ARC Industries East's fund-raising committee raised \$1 million for the project. It was like a miracle for a small community to do this in a time of economic challenge, and it's interesting to note that they never even asked for a government grant, because they thought that route would most likely lead to nothing but delay. Instead, they leaned on local partnerships and organizations, generous local donors, a local builder and sub-trades. Everyone pulled together to make the vision of a new building a reality in just under two years. In doing so, they provided a template of how a caring community responds to show its compassion.

I couldn't wait to tell this story in this House because I'm so proud of my constituents. Everyone involved deserves our warmest thanks and congratulations.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mrs. Albanese assumes ballot item number 2 and Mr. Bartolucci assumes ballot item number 48; Mr. Colle

assumes ballot item number 3 and Mr. McGuinty assumes ballot item number 65.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION FREEZE ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE GEL GLOBAL DE LA RÉMUNÉRATION DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr. Shurman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 5, An Act to freeze compensation for two years in the public sector / Projet de loi 5, Loi visant à geler la rémunération pendant deux ans dans le secteur public.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I hear the socialists over there hollering, but the fact of the matter is my party's stance is very clear on this. We believe that we're out of control. We believe that the McGuinty-Wynne government has been giving away the store and plans to continue. We believe that the first tenet of a good jobs-and-the-economy policy is the introduction of a two-year mandatory wage freeze in the broader public sector, and we'll argue that on Thursday, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A reminder is in line. It has been recommended time and time again for members who are introducing either a private member's bill or a government bill that you read from the explanation, to avoid such debate, because debate takes place at a later time—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —and I know the member will allow me to finish—that we stay focused on what's in the explanatory note, because the debate takes place when the bill is introduced at second reading. Thank you.

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION DES GRANDS LACS

Mr. Bradley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin / Projet de loi 6, Loi visant la protection et le rétablissement du bassin des Grands Lacs et du fleuve Saint-Laurent.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Speaker, I will make my statement during ministerial statements.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY SKILLS AWARD ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE PRIX COMPÉTENCES POUR LE 21^e SIÈCLE

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to create the Twenty-First Century Skills Award for school pupils / Projet de loi 7, Loi créant le Prix Compétences pour le 21^e siècle pour les élèves.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. John O'Toole: With all due respect to education and our children, this bill is intended to introduce work that would prepare children for the future in a knowledge-based economy, and the following skills with relationship to the work would involve responsibility, organization, ability to work independently, collaboration, initiative, self-regulation and, if the pupil is involved in a French-language institution, ability to communicate orally in French. I'm pleased and I look forward to support of this bill.

1320

LIQUOR LICENCE AMENDMENT ACT (SERVING LIQUOR IN CERTAIN PLACES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES PERMIS D'ALCOOL (SERVICE D'ALCOOL DANS CERTAINS LIEUX)

Mrs. Albanese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act in relation to serving liquor in certain places / Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis d'alcool relativement au service d'alcool dans certains lieux.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: The Liquor Licence Amendment Act (Serving Liquor in Certain Places) seeks to curb the illegal sale and service of alcohol and the operation of booze cans by giving police the tools they need to deter offenders and keep our community safe. This act would create, if passed, a new offence whereby an individual caught illegally selling or serving alcohol would be subject to new stringent bail conditions and additional

penalties. This would help people feel safe on their streets, on their property and in their homes.

PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE
AND ELDERLY PEOPLE
FROM ABUSE ACT
(POWERS OF ATTORNEY), 2013
LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES PERSONNES VULNÉRABLES
ET DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES
CONTRE LES MAUVAIS TRAITEMENTS
(PROCURATIONS)

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 9, An Act to amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 with respect to powers of attorney / Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur la prise de décisions au nom d'autrui en ce qui a trait aux procurations.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. John O'Toole: This bill's intent is to actually provide protection for seniors who may be vulnerable in the latter stages of life, where they're allowed to assign power of attorney and also to register their power of attorney with the public guardian and trustee, also disclosing who can see what within their guidance with respect to personal care or financial support. This is meant to support seniors in providing arrangements in the latter part of their life.

TAXATION AMENDMENT ACT
(PUBLIC TRANSIT EXPENSE
TAX CREDIT), 2013
LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES IMPÔTS
(CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR DÉPENSES
DE TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN)

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 10, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide for a tax credit for expenses incurred in using public transit / Projet de loi 10, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts afin de prévoir un crédit d'impôt pour les dépenses engagées au titre des transports en commun.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. John O'Toole: In today's congested world, we're always relating the inconvenience to people commuting. This is an encouragement—the tax credit that the Minister of Finance could introduce would allow for a tax

credit for persons moving to using of public transit. Any expense for the purpose of using public transit would be a tax credit to a certain amount, as set by the Minister of Finance. This has been in place in San Francisco and other places where transit is an important part of the solution to gridlock.

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES**

GREAT LAKES WATER QUALITY

Hon. James J. Bradley: I rise today to fulfill our government's commitment to reintroduce the Great Lakes Protection Act. Today I have the honour of introducing proposed legislation that, if passed by the Legislature, would help restore and protect the Great Lakes so they stay drinkable, swimmable and fishable.

As Minister of the Environment, I have seen the passion of the people of Ontario and the passion that they have for the Great Lakes and their continued protection. I saw an overwhelming response to the Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund launched last summer, a fund to help grassroots groups take action to protect and restore their part of the Great Lakes.

In developing this proposed legislation, we listened to the people of Ontario. We have spoken with people from Lake Superior to the shores of Lake Huron. From Georgian Bay, Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, people spoke clearly about the need for legislation to protect the Great Lakes.

I have met with First Nations around the lakes who maintain a spiritual and cultural relationship with water. We have much to gain from effective partnerships with First Nations to help protect the Great Lakes.

We received valuable public comments when we released Ontario's draft Great Lakes strategy, which was finalized in December 2012. In our listening sessions, we heard the need for more comprehensive approaches.

The proposed act allows for local groups and others to work towards comprehensive solutions for their area. We also heard of the need for clear, science-based targets. The proposed act would allow for the development of these targets. We will continue to consider the input we have received as this bill moves through the legislative process.

Ontario has been hard at work over the last 40 years to protect the Great Lakes, and there have been many accomplishments. But population growth, invasive species, pollution, climate change and other emerging issues are overtaking old solutions, and new actions are required. This is why our government is reintroducing the proposed Great Lakes Protection Act today.

The proposed act would, if passed, give the province new tools to protect and restore the Great Lakes. Natural shorelines and coastal wetlands are essential for the health of the Great Lakes, a lesson we have learned well from our continuing work with the Lake Simcoe

Protection Plan. The shorelines are where people meet and enjoy the lakes, but also where pressures on the lakes are most evident.

The proposed act would, if passed, establish a Great Lakes Guardians Council, chaired by the Minister of the Environment. The council would include other Great Lakes ministers—they would have those responsibilities as well. It will also include representatives of First Nations and Métis communities, municipalities, Great Lakes experts and other groups who have a role to play in protecting our Great Lakes. The council would identify provincial Great Lakes improvement priorities and focus resources on addressing those priorities.

The proposed act would, if passed, authorize the Minister of the Environment to set targets and, following local input, require public bodies to develop and implement initiatives to address particular Great Lakes problems. It would also enshrine Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy in law as a living document that is reviewed every six years to coordinate action and advance Great Lakes priorities.

I'm optimistic that all members of the House will stand with us and be true guardians of the Great Lakes.

1330

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm pleased to take this opportunity to address the proposed Great Lakes Protection Act. The last time the Liberals tabled this bill, there were more questions than answers. They wanted to create another advisory board but didn't specify its membership or explain how much it would cost. They wanted to create a series of different regulations for numerous yet undetermined geographical areas, yet again without providing a price tag or detailing how this additional red tape would affect local governments, farmers and businesses. They wanted to create another regulator for Ontario's shorelines, while giving no particular reason or estimated cost. When asked about these issues, the Liberals refused to respond, leaving stakeholders scratching their heads. At first, it was difficult to determine if this lack of clarity was the result of Liberal obfuscation or incompetence, but it didn't take long for most observers to conclude that the Liberals had yet again failed to do their homework.

As always, the Liberal government remains committed to portraying diligence while in reality doing absolutely nothing. If that means rushing ahead with a proposed law that has less detail than a Liberal campaign promise, the government will gladly do so, as long as it believes the move will improve its political fortunes.

What's troubling about this trend is that the Liberals push these unnecessary policies through the Legislature with little to no forethought. With the recent signing of the updated Great Lakes water quality agreement, we must continue to work with the federal government to meet our binational obligations. This requires "action," a word that's unfortunately not part of the Liberals' vocabulary. When confronted with a real problem or issue, the Liberals almost always call for another grand

strategy, another review, another advisory body, another excuse for more regulatory powers; seldom, if ever, do they summon the courage to, in fact, act.

We all know that there are a number of challenges facing the Great Lakes, such as high levels of phosphorus, invasive species, toxic chemicals and a changing climate. Canada and the United States have all agreed to address these issues. But for Ontario to do its part, we require political will and a government that understands that the economy and the environment are not mutually exclusive. We need a government that offers a holistic approach on the Great Lakes, that protects ecosystems but also develops sustainable infrastructure for tourism, water and waste water systems; a government that understands the vitally important role that the Great Lakes play in our manufacturing sector and broader economy; a government that understands that environmental efforts for remediation and improving water quality require an economic strategy that engages the clean water technology sector and other innovative firms. What we don't need is more delay, more review, more burdensome regulation and more needless bureaucracy. I think it's more than clear that the government doesn't lack legal tools; it lacks the political leadership to get the job done.

Before I finish, I quickly want to outline one of the PC Party's major concerns with this proposed legislation, and that's the provision for more shoreline regulations. Here's yet another classic example of legislative and regulatory duplication created by the Liberals. First of all, the Conservation Authorities Act already gives the government the power to regulate the development of shorelines for watershed management. Then the Planning Act gives municipalities the authority to prohibit development on shorelines. Now the Ministry of the Environment wants in on the action and wants the power to collect fees for violations. The jury is still out on which shorelines the ministry will regulate. That decision is being left up to the Liberals' guardians council, a faceless board that the minister can stack with his supporters and cronies. At no time have the Liberals offered a legitimate reason why the government needs to centralize regulatory power or needs to increase the size and cost of government by adding even more bureaucracy.

I know that members, at least on this side of the House, will agree that no serious piece of legislation leaves so many important questions unanswered and has no price tag attached to it.

I hope the minister has noted some of the concerns that I have raised and addressed here today and will strongly consider them.

Mr. Jonah Schein: It's a pleasure to be back in this House after a long prorogation. It's an honour to speak on behalf of my community in Davenport and speak to some of the pressing issues in terms of our environmental challenges.

I rise today specifically to speak to the importance of the Great Lakes and the need to get the Great Lakes Protection Act right. Millions of Ontarians live next to

and depend upon the Great Lakes for drinking water, for recreation, for tourism and for jobs. The Great Lakes are a key part of our shared ecosystem. There are also significant threats to the Great Lakes: We see invasive species, the destruction of shoreline habitats, pollution, decreasing water levels and beach closures. We need stronger government action to protect the Great Lakes now and for our future.

Unfortunately, the current government has failed to protect Lake Ontario from threats like quarries, from mega dumps, from shoreline development, from industrial emissions, from excessive water-taking and the shipment of radioactive nuclear waste on its waters.

Last year, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario reported that the McGuinty government's record in protecting the Great Lakes was spotty at best during the last eight years. In addition, this government has refused to listen to the over 100,000 people who have called on them to put a stop to shipping radioactive steam generators on the Great Lakes.

Comprehensive action on the Great Lakes is long overdue. During the previous election, the NDP committed to implementing a Great Lakes protection act that would designate one minister clearly responsible for the protection of the Great Lakes, and we would establish clear objectives and legislation to ensure that decisions by all ministries protect and improve the quality and quantity of the Great Lakes.

We welcome this bill, again, but we need to see more from this government. The previous Great Lakes Protection Act, while a step in the right direction, had some key things lacking. It lacked clear principles to guide decision-making, it lacked mandatory targets and timelines for action, it lacked action to protect wetlands and watersheds, and it lacked regular reporting on progress.

We must do better than this. My New Democrat colleagues and I will be working to ensure that the Great Lakes Protection Act is not just symbolic, and we will work hard to ensure that the act sets strong targets, is adequately resourced, and that it's up to the task of actually protecting our valuable Great Lakes heritage.

PETITIONS

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads:

"Whereas the price of gas is reaching historic price levels and is expected to increase another 15% in the near future, yet oil prices are dropping; and

"Whereas the real reason for the high price of gas is gas companies are putting pressure to allow for the pipeline from Alberta to Texas; and

"Whereas the" McGuinty-Wynne "government has done nothing to protect consumers from high gas prices; and

"Whereas the high and unstable gas prices across Ontario have caused confusion and unfair hardship to Ontario's drivers while also impacting the Ontario economy in key sectors such as tourism and transportation; and

"Whereas the high price of gas has a detrimental impact on all aspects of our already troubled economy and substantially increases the price of delivered commodities, adding further burden to Ontario consumers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and urge the Premier to take action to protect consumers from the burden of high gas prices in Ontario."

I affix my signature in support, Mr. Speaker.

ELECTRICITY GENERATION

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Electricity System Operator is poised to procure electricity generation valued at hundreds of billions of dollars in the coming months and years; and

"Whereas community enterprises for electricity generation are democratically controlled legal entities established for the purpose of mobilizing communities and financial resources to consider local electricity generation opportunities with a view to providing benefits to the community and Ontario as a whole; and

"Whereas the commercialization of our natural resources, grid capacity and power purchase capacity can impair Ontarians' ability to mitigate the impacts of clean energy products; and

"Whereas community enterprises provide for local control over environmental assessment processes; and

"Whereas community enterprises can develop sensible proposals and become self-sustaining without the need for more government or government subsidies by generating and selling electricity on a not-for-profit basis; and

"Whereas the proposed renewable energy on crown land policy may encourage and prioritize community economic benefits from water power development and other clean energy projects;

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

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support a community energy act to help facilitate the mobilization of communities and financial resources for the purposes of developing community enterprises for electricity generation."

I will give this to Charlie.

1340

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Jim McDonell: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

“Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

“Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

“Whereas the latest policies from the McGuinty”—Wynne—“government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

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

“To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians” to the skilled trades industry.

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

SPRINGWATER PROVINCIAL PARK

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

“Whereas we oppose the termination of the operating budget for Springwater Provincial Park in Springwater township on March 31, 2013;

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

“We ask that the park remain operating and facilities such as the animal sanctuary, cabins/shelters, playground equipment and ground maintenance remain intact and operating.”

I agree with this petition and I’ll sign it.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until an independent third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

“Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects, we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines; and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning;

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

“That the Ontario government place a moratorium on the approval of any wind energy projects and a moratorium on the construction of industrial wind projects until further studies of the potential adverse health effects of industrial wind turbines, their effect on the environment, the potential devaluation of residential property are completed; and that any industrial wind projects not currently connected to the grid be cancelled.”

I agree and I will affix my name to it.

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

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

“Whereas the United Senior Citizens of Ontario has expressed its concerns over the high costs of parking at hospitals in Ontario on behalf of its more than 300,000 members; and

“Whereas thousands of Ontario seniors find it difficult to live on their fixed income and cannot afford these extra hospital parking fees added to their daily living costs; and

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association Journal has said” in a recent editorial “that parking fees are a barrier to health care and add additional stress to patients who have enough to deal with” in their illness;

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

“That Ontario’s members of provincial Parliament and the Dalton McGuinty government”—they probably mean Kathleen Wynne now—“take action to abolish parking fees for all seniors when visiting hospitals.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this and present it to Premier Wynne.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m pleased to present a petition on behalf of members of my community. It reads:

“Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario’s automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

“Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

“Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

“Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks.”

WIND TURBINES

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

“Whereas we, the residents of Clearview township and neighbouring townships, oppose the wpd Canada Fair-

view wind farm project on Fairgrounds Road and all wind energy projects in Clearview township; and

“Whereas we support the petition of mayors and councillors from 80 municipalities, farm organizations, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, which petition requested that the province place an immediate moratorium on all wind projects until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health, amongst other things; and

“Whereas wpd Canada’s Fairview wind project violates the OLS airspace and usability of registered aerodromes in Clearview, including Collingwood Regional Airport and Stayner field, and wpd Canada’s draft renewal energy approvals reports do not recognize these impacts or the jurisdiction of the government of Canada; and

“Whereas wpd Canada is seeking final approval from the province for the Fairview wind project prior to completion of the federal Health Canada study and prior to federal actions to protect aviation safety;

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

“That the government of Ontario agree and accept that until the federal health study is completed and federal aeronautical zoning is in place, it will immediately take whatever action is necessary to give full effect to a moratorium on all wind turbine development in Ontario, including all projects for which final approval has not yet been given.”

I want to thank Betty Schneider for sending these petitions to me.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

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

“Whereas families are concerned about the proposed changes to the Special Services at Home Program (SSAH) and the Passport Program under the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act (2008); and

“Whereas the system should allow for the seamless transfer of benefits to the Passport Program when the person turns 18 years of age, and not the current unacceptable cancellation of benefits and reapplication process that puts the person with an intellectual disability on a huge waiting list for months for the re-establishment of their benefits; and

“Whereas on September 20, 2012, the Legislature passed a motion by Progressive Conservative MPP Christine Elliott to immediately strike a select committee to develop a comprehensive developmental services strategy for Ontarians that addresses the needs of children, youth and adults in Ontario with an intellectual disability or who are dually diagnosed with an intellectual disability and a mental illness;

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

“The government immediately strike a select committee to develop a comprehensive developmental services strategy for Ontarians that addresses the needs of children, youth and adults in Ontario with an intellectual disability or who are dually diagnosed with an intellectual disability and a mental illness and coordinates the delivery of developmental programs and services across many provincial ministries;

“To declare a moratorium on any changes until the select committee reports back to the Legislature and its recommendations are acted upon.”

I agree with this motion, will be signing it and passing it off to page Charlie.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 21, 2013, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker. I am very happy to be back at Queen’s Park, in the Legislature, talking about issues that are important to Ontarians across the province and, of course, to my constituents of Ottawa Centre.

1350

First of all, I just want to acknowledge how humbled I feel to be named as Minister of Labour in Kathleen Wynne’s government. It is a great honour not only to represent the people across the province, of course, but to continue my advocacy on behalf of my constituents and my community in Ottawa Centre. That’s why I felt very compelled to speak about this throne speech, because, in my view, this throne speech speaks to the values that I continue to hear in my riding of Ottawa Centre: values around creating a fair society; values around an economy that is based on fiscal responsibility; values around ensuring that nobody is left behind in our province, be it at an economic front or at a community level.

When I see messages around jobs, economy and a fair society in the speech from the throne, I am very happy to stand here and say those are exactly the kinds of things my constituents in Ottawa Centre have been talking about. Those are exactly the kinds of things they want to see out of their government, where we are strengthening the economy, we are creating jobs right at the local level, but also making sure that we are looking after each other and we are making sure that those who are vulnerable in our community are not forgotten.

As I think I have indicated quite a few times in this Legislature, I visit my constituents door to door on a weekly basis. Over the last few months I was out knock-

ing on doors at least three times a week. I do this on a weekly basis, a regular basis. You really get an opportunity to talk to your constituents. You really get an opportunity to hear what issues are important to them—not just doing this at election time, but doing it in between elections, because that's when people are talking about and discussing issues that are important. The issues that I have heard about and the initiatives that we've been working on in my riding very much speak to what has been articulated in the speech from the throne.

Let me talk about jobs, for instance, something that we're concerned about in all parts of the province. We are especially concerned about jobs in Ottawa, as we have seen up to 10,000 jobs being cut from the federal government. For most of my constituents who have been directly impacted by these federal job cuts, the question is, how do we help create those jobs? How do we reintegrate those individuals who live in my riding of Ottawa Centre back into the workforce? How do we harness their incredible skill sets so that they can continue to grow a strong economy?

I'm really happy to say that the government decided, for instance, to extend the coverage of the Eastern Ontario Development Fund, or EODF. The EODF, which has been a very successful program—brought in place in 2007, a roughly \$20-million-a-year investment in eastern Ontario—had most recently, until 2011, excluded urban Ottawa. Essentially, all of eastern Ontario and also the rural part of eastern Ontario was covered by EODF—companies and employers were able to take advantage of EODF—but not those small and medium-sized businesses that are based in urban communities. My riding, Ottawa Centre, as you can tell, is right in the heart of Ottawa, and a lot of these businesses, very innovative businesses, were not able to get access to this funding. I was really happy to see that the government expanded the coverage of EODF so that businesses in urban Ottawa can take advantage of that as well. I know that Invest Ottawa, which is Ottawa's economic development agency, is working very hard with small and medium-sized businesses, taking EODF and leveraging those dollars so that we can create jobs and particularly be able to target those federal civil servants—again, a lot of my constituents—who have lost their jobs because of the job cuts taken by the Harper government and be able to create jobs through private businesses in our community.

Another great initiative taken by our government most recently to help create jobs and a great entrepreneurial spirit in Ottawa is the announcement to build the accelerator centre, the innovation hub, in my riding of Ottawa Centre at Bayview Yards. For those who know Ottawa, Bayview Yards is a very vibrant part of my riding, but it's brownfields; it is contaminated land which has been sitting idle for some time. By working together with the city of Ottawa, under the leadership of Mayor Jim Watson, we are building Ottawa's first accelerator centre, or innovation hub, the same as the likes of MaRS, or Communitech in Kitchener–Waterloo.

Given the size of our city, we did not have such a centre, and I'm very excited that the province is investing

\$15 million to build an innovation hub right in my riding, in Ottawa Centre, at Bayview Yards, which is just a great place to build such a centre, to create the creative cluster. It's right on the LRT station that will soon be built in Ottawa as well, thanks to our government's \$600-million investment in partnership with the federal government and the city of Ottawa. Also, the O-Train station goes to Bayview Yards as well. It's a central location which is going to help all across the city and create jobs, especially jobs for youth, and helping those youth to create businesses—another very important theme in the speech from the throne.

Another issue, a second important issue that I continue to hear, of course, is education. Speaker, we know that all parents want to make sure that their children receive the best education. We want to make sure that they go to good schools, be they in junior kindergarten, senior kindergarten or doing their postgraduate work at Carleton University.

I'm very fortunate to have some of the best schools, some of the best teachers, located in my riding—actually, I would say three boards: the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, the Ottawa Catholic School Board and the French Catholic school board. All these schools have been very active in the community. Of course, the kids are very engaged, doing a lot of different, exciting things.

Given that we are in a downtown riding, we do have a challenge around school infrastructure. A lot of the schools located in my riding—some of them are celebrating their 100th year. They were built around the turn of the century. They are iconic buildings, beautiful architecture, but of course they are showing age. Given the technology that we are so used to and putting in schools, it's important that we invest capital dollars in renovating these schools.

I'm really happy that Mutchmor Public School, which is located in the Glebe, in my riding, is receiving \$4.6 million to build a permanent addition. We've had some serious challenges in terms of accommodation of students, especially in French immersion and regular classes. The work that we've been able to do with the school board—this investment is going to ensure that both students from First Avenue Public School and students from Mutchmor Public School will be able to be accommodated properly. It's a very exciting announcement.

But that was a very small part of the announcement, because if you look at the English public school board, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, we're investing in Ottawa \$47.9 million in schools across the city in the English public system: \$15.4 million for Longfields-Davidson Heights public school; in addition, \$10.6 million for Earl of March school; \$5.3 million for South March Public School; and \$12 million to build a brand new school in Kanata North. I know that through the French board we're making investments in Ottawa–Orléans, in the riding that's represented by MPP McNeely, and across the city. It's important investment because it ensures that our students have good places to

learn, that they have healthy environments in which they can get a good education. An extremely important priority for this government is investment in education.

I also have the great fortune to represent Carleton University, which is located in my riding; in fact, I don't live too far from Carleton University. There, again, we continue to see some incredible investments that are going on, keeping in the true spirit of this speech from the throne. One in particular I will mention is the almost doubling in size of the library at Carleton University, the MacOdrum Library. It has been there for some time, and of course the university is growing because of our continued investment in the post-secondary sector through the Reaching Higher plan. We need to double the size of the university, and I'm really happy to note that the Ontario government is investing \$14 million in the library at Carleton University. Actually, the architecture is beautiful. I've seen the design as I pass by every day when I'm home. Through Carleton University, you can see the incredible construction that's going on.

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Of course, all of this work also creates jobs. They're creating real, meaningful, tangible jobs right in our community.

The other area which is, of course, very important to communities all across—and my community is no different; it's something that I hear often about—is health care: making sure that we've got good health care available to our communities. On the health care side, in my end, there are two things that I hear about. One is on the prevention side of the equation, to make sure that we are making investments to ensure that people are not getting ill, that they are taking all the necessary steps to be healthy. I do a lot of work with community health centres in my riding, which are just an amazing ambassador around prevention—looking at all the social determinants of health, taking the necessary steps so that our community members are healthy, especially those who come from vulnerable backgrounds.

At the Centretown Community Health Centre, Speaker, most recently, we announced the SCREEN program, which is a diabetes prevention program. In fact, the day of the announcement, I went through the whole process as to what members of the community go through to determine whether they are susceptible to diabetes or not. The day that I was there to announce the additional funding for the SCREEN program, the Spanish-speaking Latin American community was targeted. You had all the nurses, the physicians, the social workers who were there—the dietitians who were there were fluent in Spanish—going through the whole process to determine the risk factors, to be able to, if risk factors are high, work with these community members so that they can prevent getting diabetes and all the subsequent negative impacts of that. So that's an important thing around prevention, and there are many examples like that in my community and in communities across Ontario.

There are also things like making sure that we get good primary care right at the community level. A great

community initiative that I'm really proud of—something that my community in Ottawa Centre and particularly the neighbourhood of Hintonburg has been advocating for—is to create a community health centre hub, a Hintonburg Hub, as we are calling it, where we can bring the primary health care providers, we can bring social workers, we can bring dietitians, we can bring support for seniors all in one place.

This particular neighbourhood in my riding is rather unique because there was a lack of health care services. The closest thing was a hospital, and the last thing we want when people are not feeling well is going to the emergency room, because that's not the place for them to get care. By making an investment in the Hintonburg Hub, we are actually creating a one-stop shop in my riding where local residents can get care.

This particular hub, which is getting roughly about \$350,000 a year in operational funding through the Champlain Local Health Integration Network, or Champlain LHIN, which is responsible for Ottawa, will allow roughly 1,200 new patients to be looked after per year. That's a very significant outreach to a vulnerable community, making sure that they have health care services available to them just down the street, as opposed to going somewhere farther.

If I look at the location of the Hintonburg Hub, which is being placed at Rosemount Avenue, you've got a seniors' residence literally half a block away, so those seniors—it's community housing—are able to walk and to get services right across from the location of the Hintonburg Hub. We have a nursing home, a long-term-care facility, that's also available. There are homes or residences that are run by Salus for people with mental health challenges. That's right across the street, really a great location where people can get services, especially those who are vulnerable and more susceptible to getting illnesses. We can work on the prevention side by making this very important investment. I want to congratulate my community. I want to congratulate the board and the executive director of Somerset West Community Health Centre for their advocacy in making this very important investment.

Another important issue is looking after seniors or people with disabilities, again ensuring that they continue to live in their own homes as long as possible, because that's where people are healthy. As I am out in the community, knocking on doors, talking to seniors and their children, they all tell me that they want to live at home. They want to make sure they are able to get services closer to home as opposed to going to a nursing home or a long-term-care facility.

Most recently, through Champlain LHIN, we announced \$11.1 million toward community care in Ottawa, really going to the essence of the action plan on health care that Minister Matthews laid out, which is part of the speech from the throne, where we are again ensuring that people are living at home longer. They're getting care within a community setting at the right time, at the right place, as opposed to going to the hospital, which is another expensive model of getting care.

This additional \$11.1 million, which is on top of what is already being invested, is a very significant investment to ensure that various agencies in my community of Ottawa Centre are able to provide community care through health care providers and social services providers on a community level. Again, I congratulate the Minister of Health for that very important investment through the action plan on health care.

The last thing I will mention on the health care side of things, Speaker, which I think is also very exciting, is that you may recall Minister Matthews announced two birth centres to be created as a pilot in Ontario for low-risk births. One is in Toronto, and most recently, the minister announced that the second will be hosted in Ottawa—an amazing initiative. The community is absolutely excited that another alternative model of delivering babies is being acted upon and the second site is located in Ottawa. Ottawa is very suitable as the second location, because we are a bilingual city, so we can obviously collect data and can serve both English-speaking and French-speaking communities, not to mention that we have a huge rural part to the city of Ottawa that can also have access to this birth centre.

So again, a lot of exciting things are happening in my city of Ottawa, and particularly in my community of Ottawa Centre, all speaking to the core values of this speech from the throne, and that is to build a sustainable economy, an economy that is creating new, innovative jobs. The high-tech sector, of course, is an important element in Ottawa, creating things like an innovation hub—the one I mentioned at Bayview Yards—but also putting the seed for building a fair society, where we look after the vulnerable, where we look after our elders, to make sure they have the services they need so much.

So when we're making investments in things like birth centres or expending funding for community care for patients with Parkinson's or Alzheimer's, we are really making sure that members of our community are getting care at home where they are most comfortable, where they can live with dignity—investments in places like Hintonburg Hub, of which I can speak for hours, because it's the kind of project that I think we need all across the community. We're bringing different community service providers to one location and are able to then serve our residents.

That's how we create a fair society. These are the practical aspects of that translation, so to speak, by which we can create a society that looks after the vulnerable, to make sure that nobody is falling through the cracks. I'm really excited that we have seen these core values outlined in this speech from the throne, and I encourage all members to vote in support of it. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have questions and comments. I look to the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

1410

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm proud to rise and comment on the Minister of Labour's issues with the throne

speech. I looked hard at the throne speech and looked for something that would give us some reason to support this government, but all we see is more spending.

It was a little over a year ago that this government received a report from a hand-picked consultant of theirs, Don Drummond, who had over 300 recommendations. We've seen a government here that ignored almost all of those recommendations on how to get their finances in order.

I think they're ignoring the point that this province is in serious trouble. We've got a province that's got a debt that's escalating—they've doubled the debt in nine years. They've got a deficit that is out of control. They have numbers that show that they're going to get it in control by 2019, but there's no evidence of what's going to happen after 2014, as the individual department numbers are missing. I think that just speaks for the lack of a plan.

The province of Ontario deserves a government that stops mortgaging our future, our children, and tackles the jobs issue. I have a son that had to go out to Alberta to look for a job. He received a good education in Ontario from Queen's University—he's an engineer. His friends in Toronto—no jobs. We're talking about a federal system that's short on science and technology jobs, but engineers can't get a job in Ontario. It just shows that all our industries are moving out west where the price of power is less—all the inputs, all the things that make us competitive are less.

It's time that we take action and look at making Ontario competitive again.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I am so pleased to be back in this chamber after a prolonged period of prorogation—the three Ps—a terrible period of which I don't think has ever cast this legislative body in a deeper shadow.

I'm here to respond to the response from the throne, or the response from the new minister—and I congratulate you, Minister, on your new portfolio. You would mistake him easily for the minister for Ottawa because he concentrates solely on the specific benefits and positive aspects of Ottawa, but I ask you, Mr. Minister, to broaden your horizons now that you have gotten into the big chair, and realize that the challenges that face this province are ultimately at your feet as well. I look forward to working with you on that file; of course you know that.

Some of those challenges, members would know, are still present, even after prorogation, those challenges in regard to unemployment. I come from the Windsor-Essex county area, where unemployment levels are at nearly 10%—stagnant growth, an enormous youth unemployment rate; an issue that hasn't been addressed by this body in a tangible way in nearly a decade.

We have had a mass exodus of manufacturing from our area without a tangible response and a manufacturing strategy from this province, and the government absolutely abdicating the responsibility to our manufacturing in this province, as they have abdicated the responsibility

to the people of the province through prorogation. They left. They shut the doors, shut the lights off and walked away from their responsibility.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that New Democrats are anxious to bring about some of the more tangible remedies to the problems that the people of this province face, and we look forward to doing that in the coming weeks.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: Certainly it's the first time I've ever heard a member of the opposition criticize a member for speaking about his own riding. I mean, that's what we're here for. We're representing our people.

The Minister of Labour—the member from Ottawa Centre—is in love with the city of Ottawa. He's in love with Ottawa Centre, and he's talking about all the great people who live in Hintonburg, the great people who live in the Glebe. Although, I was upset he didn't mention the people who live in maybe the most exciting part of his riding, and that's Westboro.

You've never been to Westboro? Everything is happening in Westboro. The streets are filled with people; there's restaurants. The only bad thing that's happening in Westboro—you wouldn't know this—but we're losing a landmark in Westboro.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The Newport.

Mr. Mike Colle: The Newport is closing down. Shame, shame. The Newport is closing down. I don't know how they let Moe close the place down, especially when Elvis was there a couple of times. They saw Elvis there twice. He was there twice. The best—

Interjection: Did he leave the building, though? We want to know: Did Elvis leave the building?

Mr. Mike Colle: Hey, listen, the deep-dish pizza at Moe's place in Newport is to die for. It's worth the drive to Ottawa to go to Westboro to go for the Newport pizza. Even in Sudbury, you can't get pizza like that. It's an exciting place. In Ottawa Centre, things are happening: great neighbourhoods, seniors living beside young people. It's an active, vibrant part of this province; it's a great part—great universities.

Anyway, the member from Ottawa Centre is proud of Ottawa Centre and he's proud of the Ottawa Senators. The only mistake he's made is that he's let Moe close down the Newport, and I say to him, shame on him for allowing that to happen.

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's a pleasure to stand here in this chamber once again, actually getting back to work and coming here to try and impress upon the government how important it is to actually make some real changes. Unfortunately, from the speech from the throne, we haven't heard anything new. In fact, what was disturbing to me was to hear the new Premier say that she is going to continue the legacy left behind by Mr. McGuinty. That is very concerning. When you woke up this morning and there were 600,000 Ontarians without work—the min-

ister, I'm sure, has great intent. I know him, obviously, as well-spoken, but words are as hollow as an old tree that has been standing there for too long—too long, like nine years. Here we have hollow words, but we don't see any action from this government.

Unfortunately, this is what the province of Ontario needs: We need a government that's actually going to implement policies that are going to address the job crisis and the debt crisis that we are facing right now. Unfortunately, this throne speech does neither of those. It doesn't address the 600,000 people that are out of work in the province of Ontario, and it doesn't address the \$12-billion deficit that we have this year.

I'm very concerned with the way this government is going to steer this ship, again, in the wrong direction. It's the wrong direction. The minister knows it's in the wrong direction, and we need some real measures.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We return to the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. Let me first thank the members for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Essex, Eglinton–Lawrence and Northumberland–Quinte West for their comments.

Let me just get this straight, for the record: Newport in Westboro is not closing; it's just relocating down Churchill Avenue. You can come by, and that pizza is still there. The sister of the good member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke also lives in Westboro, in the great riding of Ottawa Centre; she's very active in the community, so I thank her for her service to the community.

Mr. John Yakabuski: She moved.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: She moved recently?

Mr. John Yakabuski: She moved; I told her to get out of your riding.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: But this is exactly what I was doing: I was giving concrete examples, just from my riding, as to how this speech from the throne is reflected. You can see in action the kinds of great things happening on the jobs front, on health care and on education in my riding of Ottawa Centre. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence is right: I will never get tired of talking about my riding of Ottawa Centre and all the people in Ottawa, because that is my number one priority and so it will remain, but I think it is also important that we work together. Collaboration is key.

Let's not kid, from any side of this House: This is a minority Legislature, which means that the people of Ontario want us to work together. The people of Ontario are saying, "Find common ground and put that in action." Nobody is saying that we are all going to agree on every single thing; people are smarter than that, but when I'm out in my community—like I was just last Saturday—when I'm knocking on doors and talking to my constituents, they are telling me to work with the opposition, as I'm sure their constituents are telling them to work with the government. That is what we need to do, and as a member of Premier Wynne's government, as the Minister of Labour, I'm telling all my colleagues on all

sides of the House that I look forward to working with you. I look forward to working with my labour critics and I look forward to working with all members.

1420

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on the throne speech? The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Before the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has a small coronary, I'll be splitting my time with him as well on this 20-minute rotation.

Where does one start? I did attend the throne speech; I copiously took notes. They said 56 times in this speech—"the new government"—there's nothing changed. That's the cynicism of the remarks. Even the media response to that was clear that, in the light of prorogation of the House for almost four months—128 days—under a very deep shadow cast upon the whole energy file—and the Premier resigned and subsequently the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Energy have left.

So it certainly tells you that there's something wrong in the state of Denmark. If you look at it, the broader public would know from the media's thorough reporting on the Ornge scandal—the great work done by Frank Klees, our member from Aurora—and then the whole issue of question period has been consumed by the issue of the gas plants. What's missing there is any fragment of a real report.

Three times they've had three different implementations of new-found information. Now we find some of the information was filed and classified under a code name. I think it was called Vapour—that was just one of them—and Banana was another one. It leads me to be completely suspicious of this government. In fact, I have to say publicly to my constituents that there's an element of lack of trust here, completely, on anything they say—and that, in the first few days, is losing trust, losing confidence in a government.

In the sort of deflection, from trying to change the channel from the scandals that were here, the new leader has really replicated pretty much everything in the past. She's still deflecting the questions on contempt to the House leader, and some people are saying here, "The worst House leader ever." This is what I hear often in the Legislature.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would have to say—but in fairness—Mr. Speaker, with all the noise here, I've struck another chord. It's clear, where there's that kind of reaction, spontaneously, we know there's some kind of—I wouldn't say cover-up, but I would say there's something wrong here.

I would say that it was the Ornge helicopter scandal, the gas plant scandal, the contempt motion, the complete mess-up of the energy file, completely—I could speak at length, all of us—and my colleague, Mr. Yakabuski, could speak on the file with some knowledge as our critic, Vic Fedeli, does every day here.

Even more locally, the Slots at Racetracks Program was cancelled for very suspicious reasons. Some are

suspecting that there's a collusion between OLG and the government—I won't get into that. But there is so much at risk here that the people of Ontario want answers; they want transparency and accountability.

Mr. Speaker, I look in my riding of Durham: How do these things relate to the people that I serve? Each of us should always drive back to the people that brought us here. In fairness, Ms. Wynne—and I congratulate her on being the leader, the first woman; those are achievements—could make a difference here. She should just say, "Look, from now on I'm telling the truth as I know it." And I think people would understand that.

But in my riding, here's what I see is wrong: The Slots at Racetracks Program is very devastating for veterinarians, for trainers, for dealerships that make trailers or sell trucks, the breeding stock. I think of Tara Hills, the fine breeding farm, one of the finest breeding farms in Canada, almost put out of business overnight through no fault of their own but from a change of policy by a government with absolutely no consultation.

The continual promises to deliver GO Transit to the people of Durham failed, and it's still not there, and I don't see it even in the capital plan, the Big Move plan, the \$50-billion plan that they're now out consulting. Where's the money? They have no idea. The energy file is screwed up; the transit file is screwed up as well.

The 407 east is another slap in the face to Durham region. It was promised in the election that it would go right through to 35/115. What have they done? They've broken it out. I put to you, Mr. Speaker: That's another promise to Durham that has failed, and Highway 407 will not be to Durham until after the next provincial election, if at all. I've lost confidence, quite frankly.

I would like to give the new Premier—well, the partner of Premier McGuinty; she was in cabinet, so she knew all this stuff was going on—a chance here. The only way she can do that is to stand up tomorrow and say, "Look, I'm resigning." Well, not resigning but, "I'm going to start again." I would put to her on the record now that she should say, "I want to start all over again," and have a new throne speech, do you understand? Because what she's doing now is just continuing the litany of failed promises and obfuscation, if that's permissible.

I would say the other thing that I find is the refurbishment of the nuclear plants, and not only that, but the commitment to close Pickering by 2015. That again is completely false. That's not going to be closed until about 2020, if at all. You can't actually trust this government. Now, what our leader—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to caution the member for Durham: There are a number of members who are concerned with a comment that the member for Durham made, and I would ask him if he would consider withdrawing it, please.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll withdraw, if it offends them, and not conditionally as well.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, has said this very clearly and very politely, I should say—I'm surprised at his decor-

um, that he's not completely outraged. When you've been lied—pardon me, when you've been dealt with—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to again caution the member that he has to be careful with his language so as to allow the debate to take place with a degree of—I know he would want to ensure that his language is consistent with absolute decorum in this House. I'll ask him to withdraw, and return to the member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Withdraw. I've got a laser-light focus from now on.

Here's what I say: We want a better Ontario. What our leader is saying all the time is that we want a better Ontario, and to accomplish this, we need to change the team.

They have a bigger cabinet, and I would say—I didn't say a better cabinet; I said a bigger cabinet. There's Rick Bartolucci leaving; obviously, it's not better. When I look at the papers here, I want to say that there are several things in the media that the public should pay attention to—not because I said it; I'm just repeating it. For instance, one example of the way they do government is back-loading contracts. I think this is what's happening in the public sector. There's going to be a two-year wage freeze, and then they'll back-load it. What they'll do is give them retroactive increases.

What they're doing now—this is on the record. They gave 8.5% to the OPP as a kind of top-up at the end. They also had—most people would know this—with OPSEU, in 2009, 2%; in 2010, 2%; in 2011 and 2012, 3%. Then they slipped in an extra, secret 1%. This was found by the auditor, I believe. These are the kinds of things that undermine the people of Ontario's confidence in this government, new or otherwise. It's the same old government. Nothing has changed.

Another big one that people need to pay attention to is the whole issue that's been written about as the pension Ponzi by the writer Tufts. Here's what happened. Right now the public sector sunshine list under McGuinty—these are over \$100,000—has moved from 20,000 to 80,000, okay? Anybody making over \$100,000 who retires at 55 and actuarially lives to 84 will make \$1 million. Pardon me, they'll make \$2 million. Where is that money coming from, because the OPSEU pension—all the pensions—are in deficit at the moment. These are very disturbing consequences for the people of Ontario.

I can only say this: The evidence is in. In their own commission report from Don Drummond there are 362 recommendations. There's enough in these recommendations that should serve as a very informed guide to what you need to do. And I can tell you that on the very last page in the last remarks—before the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke steals the show here—Drummond says what action is needed fiscally: Health care has to be held to less than 2%; education to less than 1%; post-secondary, excluding training, to 1.5%; social services to 0.5%; and all other programs by -2.4%. The

evidence is in. Even Drummond is saying it and everyone is saying it: You can't spend your way out of this. It's time to hold the line on new spending, and that's not what was in the throne speech. There's no hope for the future until we have a new team on the field. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

1430

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much. It's always a pleasure, though not easy, to follow the member for Durham, because he comes here with a breadth of knowledge that is unparalleled in this Legislature and covers a lot of different subjects in very great detail.

I'm not going to correct him because I think it may be just a math issue. I know my good friend John was probably making a point, but I can factually say that in this throne speech—and I highlighted and counted them. I really felt bad for the Lieutenant Governor that he actually had to deliver this document, because part of the convention is that the Lieutenant Governor, whoever he or she may be, delivers the throne speech on behalf of the government. It had to be pretty tough for the Honourable David Onley on this one because, my goodness gracious, what a vacuous document. It's an empty vessel. An empty vessel, Speaker: If you fill a drum with stuff and you bang it, it kind of goes "clunk," but if you have an empty drum and you hit it, it just goes "bong." There's this big echo because it's an empty vessel. That's exactly what we had with this throne speech—full of platitudes.

Getting back to the new government's big announcement by the new Premier—yes, she is the new Premier. She's the 25th Premier in the history of this province, and I congratulate her for that. It is not a new government, but it was in this throne speech no less than 16 times, where they addressed it as "the new government," "your new government." There's nothing new about this government. As my good friend Bob Runciman, now an honourable Senator in this country—and, I would put it to the folks on the other side, maybe the best opposition House leader in the history of this province—said, "McGuinty or McWynety: no difference; no change." That's a scary thought. Yet she calls this "the new government" no less than 16 times.

Do you know what they're trying to do? They're trying to put a new coat of paint on an old house, but it's not going to work, because the people of this province are on to you. They are on to you. While you folks were on holidays for 127 days, trying to decide who you're going to saddle with the next mess that your last guy gave you, while you were on holidays touring around your ridings—or the member of Ottawa Centre, now the Minister of Labour, was knocking on doors—you see, the people of Ontario were actually tuning in. They were starting to pay attention to the abject mess that you have created and that you want to leave them with.

Don Drummond, your handpicked philosopher, says that my friend John O'Toole has it right. You can't spend your way out of this, yet you want to try to convince

people with these hocus-pocus phrases like “a fair society.” It reminds me of Trudeau, going back 40-some years ago: the “just society.” Well, now we have the “fair society.” Do you know what people really want to know—what kind of society? Have they got one that they can pay the bills in? Have they got a society where they can actually make ends meet? Have they got a society that will offer them some hope, maybe a job, if you’re not working for the Ontario public service? Is there a job out there that does not include working for the Ontario public service in the McWynnety Ontario? Is there one? I don’t know.

Then they wonder why our leader, Tim Hudak, said, and rightfully so, “We will not be supporting this throne speech.” You know, you can’t—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We didn’t have to read it; we had it read to us by the—again, I feel sorry for the poor Lieutenant Governor, who had to deliver this document. But you cannot expect that our party, that is committed to changing the direction, the downward spiral that you have put this province on—we are going to turn it back up and give people hope—that we are going to succumb to this crap of a document—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Clearly, the member’s comment has caused some distress in the House. I would ask him to withdraw his unparliamentary—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw, Speaker. If you’re only worrying about when I cause distress in this House, I’m probably never going to be able to speak again, because I cause these people endless distress.

You know why I cause endless distress to these people over there? I tell it like it is. I tell the truth. You know, where I come from, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, that’s what they want to hear.

This document—they figure we’re going to support it because they throw a few baubles. A few baubles and trinkets, and they figure that Tim Hudak and the PC Party are just all of a sudden going to say, “Oh, yeah, we’ll support the throne speech.” You know what? It would be wrong for us to support this throne speech because it would be an abdication of our responsibility to the people of Ontario to sell out for a few trinkets and baubles. This province has to be corrected. The train wreck that you have put us on has to be stopped. There’s only one way to do that, and that is to change the government.

I want to touch on a couple of things that my colleague from Durham was talking about as well. After 127 days of prorogation, you’d think that they would have come to the conclusion that the only acceptable outcome for the people of Ontario with respect to the Mississauga and Oakville gas plant closure, cancellation and relocation scandal is to come clean. So the new government and the new Premier—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: She tried to. Well, she tried to fool us. You see, she goes public and she says, “I’ll be

appointing a select committee to study this issue,” and the minute that two honourable members of this Legislature—Rob Leone from Cambridge and Todd Smith from Prince Edward–Hastings—decided that their rights as members could not be the subject of an extortion on the part of the government—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’m going to rule that comment out of order as well. I would ask him to withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The government demanded that we back off, that we withdraw those motions in order for them to go to a select committee. So it’s like, “We want to get to the bottom of it, but we’ve got all kinds of strings we’re going to attach to it because we really want to control the agenda. We don’t want these motions of contempt or privilege to proceed.”

Well, we’re not available for sale, folks. The morals over here are not available for sale; the ethics are not available for sale. And the people of Ontario’s right to know what happened with respect to those gas plants? That’s not for sale either. You’re going to have to fess up. Whether or not the auditor’s report is going to help, we’re not sure; we’ll have to see. We’ll have to see because, you see, that’s the other thing, Speaker: People out there don’t really necessarily understand that before we ever see the auditor’s report, they’re going to have seen it for a long time. They’re going to have chances to study it, peruse it; they’re actually going to have a chance to respond to it. By the time we see the report, it’s already going to have their report on it. It’s going to have their spin. They’re going to already be spinning their story. As the Premier said last week in question period, “That’s my story,” and I guess they’re going to stick to it.

But eventually the truth is going to come out, whether it’s during a campaign—maybe we’ll be able to get it out then; I don’t know. Maybe we won’t even have the report yet. But if not, if we are honoured and privileged to be elected, whenever that next election comes, we’ve committed to one thing: If these people won’t tell the truth, we’ll appoint a judicial inquiry to get to the bottom of it with regard to those gas plants.

I want to talk a little bit about another issue, and I don’t have much time, but I was in my riding on Friday. I met with a number of people about the absolute catastrophe that is going to be foisted on the people of Ontario if they continue with their craziness with respect to how they implement the Endangered Species Act. There has to be massive changes or the economy is going to be harmed even more than these people have already. I know that’s hard to believe, Speaker. It’s hard to believe that you could do more harm to this economy and to this province than those folks already have done, but if there aren’t significant changes made to the process with regard to the Endangered Species Act, it’s going to get even worse.

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I’m going to speak about that a little more at another time when I have more opportunity, but I only have 10

seconds left. The bottom line is, Speaker, we cannot support this empty, vacuous, ridiculous document that does nothing to turn the course of a province that you've put on a downward—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: The members of the opposition certainly described in detail what they thought of the throne speech, but I also would remind them that the white paper can also be on a roll in a certain room in the House as well.

The item here that I want to discuss is that the whole situation that we're in now—we had Ornge; we had eHealth; we had the LHIN problem; we had the gas plant problem. Let's face it: They thought, by proroguing the House, that that would all go away. It hasn't gone away.

I'd like to remind them—I congratulate Kathleen Wynne on her win; no pun intended there. The bottom line is that Kathleen Wynne was elected by the Liberal Party. She wasn't elected by the people of Ontario.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: There's no mandate.

Mr. Paul Miller: There's no mandate there, so I'm telling you that that's going to change. It could be a short career.

I really get irritated when I see the House leader stand up and try to blame the opposition parties, because saying that the gas plant fiasco, "they voted not to build"—you're right. We voted not to build it in the first place. They built it and then, with two weeks to open up, they shut it down to save seats. That was a political move. That was a disgrace. It cost this province hundreds of millions of dollars, and I'll go through the list again if you'd like. They have blown more money, which I could have sunk into health care, social programs. I could have maybe even helped the racing industry that they want to close, which is another profitable organization. Who knows what they're going to close next? It's really scary.

They have no direction. The new Premier—it was a document full of promises again, and to date, since McGuinty took over, they've broken over 135 promises. Nothing has changed. We're going to get more of the same.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to be given an opportunity to speak, following my colleagues from Durham, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

I can't believe this. We're here to debate the throne speech, and the opposition is not focusing on the topic of the day. Let me remind the opposition members what your government, the Harris government, did to the city of Toronto with regard to the Eglinton line. Let's remember that, okay?

Let's also remember how much we have invested: the largest investment in the city of Toronto when it comes to public transit. So don't give us the line about not supporting public transit and transportation. It is unacceptable that my colleagues opposite have not read the

throne speech, and to criticize—and it's right there in the throne speech, talking about the transportation network.

Let's remind each other, please, that before you speak and open your mouth—I remember very clearly, as a young girl, my mother said, "Before you open your mouth, read the contents." I don't believe they did, Mr. Speaker.

In my short time, I want to focus on fiscal responsibility and accountability. That's what the throne speech talks about, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): On a point of order, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, that member is impugning another member. Speaker, if I didn't read the throne speech, it would have been very hard to underline the 16 points where it was said that this was the "new government." For goodness' sake—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's not a point of order. That is not a point of order. But I would perhaps be wise to remind the House at this time that questions and comments are supposed to relate back to a member's speech.

I return to the member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to conclude by remarking in my short time to focus on fiscal responsibility and accountability.

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

Point of order, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Point of order: I'd just like to remind the member that she made kind of a whole statement covering everyone in the opposition. We do read the budget—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's not a point of order either.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I said it's not a point of order.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It's not a point of order. A point of disagreement is not a point of order.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke made a wonderful speech in the House, pointing out exactly what bothers the people of Ontario. Of course, the fine people of Renfrew and Pembroke are known for their straight talk and their straight listening. That's why this member ends up with such a huge majority in his riding, because he does nothing but give his constituents the straight talk they deserve.

I was interested in the member's closing comments. He talked about the bill, the endangered species bill, which is a typical piece of legislation, the type of legislation this government brings in: no research, no

consultation, no regard for the consequences of what they're doing, no cost-benefit analysis.

It's exactly what they did to the horse racing business. They didn't talk to anybody. They knew best, and after they got involved in it, they found out they were making a huge muck-up of what was a very dynamic and successful industry in Ontario. And that's what you're doing with the Endangered Species Act. You can't expect the landowners, primarily farmers—farmers were never mentioned once in the speech from the throne. The Premier is also the Minister of Agriculture and also the Minister of Agriculture and Food. She didn't mention farmers once, and farmers will bear the brunt of that piece of legislation for endangered species.

You can't ask a farmer to set aside five acres here, two acres there, to harvest his wheat late, to harvest his hay late. The protein level of hay is never higher than when it first comes into bud. If you wait two or three weeks to harvest hay, you're losing the protein value of that hay crop. You can't ask individuals to suck up the cost of your mismanagement as far as new legislation is concerned, and nothing personifies that better than the Endangered Species Act.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as I always do, to the member from Durham and to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke because it is important for me to try to understand the Conservative psyche, to understand what makes them think, what makes them tick.

Now, a throne speech is a difficult thing. If ever there is an ethereal document on the face of this planet, that is it. It is how many pages? Seventeen, 18 pages of a whole bunch of very vague promises, promises which you have to read over and over and over again to even try to even get a kernel of truth out of it, to try to find even the slightest direction about where this government's trying to go.

I am still puzzled after listening to the members in this House. I am still puzzled after listening to the Premier, the cabinet ministers and everyone else as to what is exactly in this document. It is a whole lot of mostly nothing. Let us all be very honest about this. It is a very broad direction with no specifics, and people ought not to get too, too excited about it.

So when I listened to the Conservatives, the very first thing they said is that they're going to vote against it. Well, that's fine. Tell me what in this thing you're going to vote against. You're going to trigger an election on this document that the public doesn't understand, that the politicians don't understand and that doesn't say a whole lot of anything. I listened to them and they said they're not going to support the throne speech. That's fine. But I've also heard them say they're not going to support the budget, and that's a budget that hasn't even been written or tabled yet, and I have some real difficulties with that. Probably they'll have good cause not to do it, but I think they owe it to their constituents and everyone else to at least look at it first and then make that decision.

I listened to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and he said that they're not for sale. Well, I'll tell you, they may think they're not for sale, but they're willing to sell the LCBO, the 407, the OLG, and everything else seems to be for sale. Maybe they might want to talk about that, too.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes the time for questions and comments, and I return to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from the members of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Scarborough–Agincourt, Halton and Beaches–East York.

When I say we're not for sale, our ethics and our morals are not for sale, and they never will be. But I will agree with a couple of the comments from the member from Beaches–East York, when he agrees with us and says there was nothing in this throne speech.

But on the principle of voting for or against the throne speech, Speaker, you have to ask yourself: If you vote for this throne speech, then you are approving, in principle, the path that this government is taking this province. If you have a shred of—

Interjection: Here it comes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, I've got to rephrase this. If you have a shred of integrity, and you look at this document and you ask where Ontario has been for the past nine years and where this government intends to take it, and if you believe that you have a commitment to the people of this province of Ontario, you have to ask yourself: Do I make a statement that I have confidence in this government and vote for their throne speech? Or do I stand on principle and let the chips fall where they may, and let the people of Ontario know that, "No, I do not have confidence in this government. I do not have confidence that the document that was read to us in this House last week will take Ontario in the right direction"? Then, I am morally bound to vote against it.

On the other hand, the NDP play games with throne speeches and budgets. They may show up for the budget to vote. They may be there to vote when the budget comes. We're not sure. They may not show up for the throne speech debate.

But I can tell you that on this side of the House, on this part of this side of the House, in the Progressive Conservative caucus, when we take a stand on something, it will be based on solid principles, and we will not waver.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm also pleased to be back in the House after a long break away from this House, a place where I was elected to come and represent my residents. I'm very happy to be back. I'm also pleased to have the opportunity to be able to speak to this throne speech.

But first, I would like to mention how I appreciated the Lieutenant Governor's reflection on one of his

predecessors, the Honourable Lincoln Alexander, who passed away last October. Lincoln Alexander was a wonderful servant to the people of Hamilton. He blazed a trail not just in Hamilton but all across this country, acting as a spectacular role model for young people of every race. As we know, Lincoln Alexander was the first black politician elected to our federal Parliament. He was the first black cabinet minister. He was the first black Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. February, of course, is Black History Month, and it is fitting that we take this opportunity to honour his achievements and reflect on the positive impacts that he had on so many lives.

I listened with interest and anticipation to the throne speech. It was, after all, the first that we have heard in this Legislature since way back on October 15 of last year. Despite the unprecedented turmoil—the Ornge fiasco, the blocking of the opposition’s attempts to get to the bottom of exactly what happened in the cancellation of the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville, the government’s creation of a crisis in our education system—despite all of that, this place was silenced—silenced so that the Liberals could avoid the accountability that we in opposition are elected to do on behalf of our constituents—I wanted to repeat it just to make sure that you got it—on behalf of the people of this province; silenced so that the Liberals could regroup and try to get their own house in order.

We had heard in the weeks leading up to the throne speech, during the Liberal leadership campaign and particularly following that from the new Premier that she wanted to do things differently, that she wanted to turn the page, that she wanted to work with us on this side of the House to make this minority Parliament work for the people of Ontario. So, as I said, I listened with anticipation to what that actually means in the throne speech, and what I heard did seem to reflect some of that philosophy. I heard that the government “does not believe that we are irreparably divided.” I heard that the government “will create a better process to ensure that all its partners, including those within the public sector, are treated with respect.”

One of the first paragraphs in the speech read, in part, as follows: “Your government intends to work with opposition parties, in a spirit of renewed co-operation, to get the people’s business done.” It was certainly good to hear those sentiments reflected in the earlier part of the throne speech, and I looked forward to hearing exactly just what that means as the speech progressed. Unfortunately, that never came.

What we were treated to was a wide-ranging address that was generally positive but at the end of the day was really very vague. It lacked details and was devoid of any concrete plans for the upcoming session, and that is what we are going to need to see when this throne speech is reflected in the upcoming budget.

It may have escaped the notice of the government, but Ontario families are feeling squeezed. They are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet. They are finding it harder and harder to find jobs, harder and harder to

access services that they need, and they want action on the part of this government that’s not just vague declarations.

We in the NDP have put forward some concrete ideas, ideas like our First Start program, a realistic program that would help create jobs for youth. Our province badly needs something to address the growing problems of our unemployed youth. Figures from last year indicate that the unemployment rate for those between the ages of 16 and 24 is 15.7%, nearly double that of the population in general.

Yes, the government has indicated that they’re willing to help young people get on-the-job training, but yet again we don’t know what that means, and we’re still waiting for those details. Meanwhile, the NDP’s First Start program outlines some real results for our youth: 25,000 jobs over two years, each lasting a minimum of four to six months. Participants will be developing new skills while training on the job, and they will earn at least \$12 per hour for at least 30 hours per week. A government wage subsidy of up to \$7,800 would be provided. This program would emphasize moving these newly trained and motivated young workers into long-term employment positions. Smart private sector employers will use this opportunity to train young workers, with government support, to build their workforce of the future. That’s the sort of real action that we need to see in the budget: meaningful programs that will have real results for Ontarians.

I was very disappointed to note that the government did not commit to immediately giving Ontario drivers a break on their auto insurance. We do need to tackle fraud, but that won’t happen overnight, and Ontario drivers deserve better now. In 2011, insurance companies were able to save \$2 billion thanks to the changes in government policies, but despite hearing for two years that we will see lower rates, none of those savings have been passed on to drivers. In fact, the premiums have gone up 5%.

I was contacted by a young constituent who was giving serious thought to his future, and he was trying to make some sensible choices. This young man knows how important it is to have his education. He wants to continue to further that so that he can build a life for himself. But he also knows that there are costs to doing something about it. To help pay for his way through school, this young man sees an opportunity in landscaping. Makes sense: summer months; generally downtime for school and also a prime time to take care of our properties. So he developed a detailed plan to establish a landscaping enterprise in Hamilton. He has it all laid out. He has the materials, the equipment he needs, the hours he will work, all associated costs and of course his income.

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The problem is that he can’t efficiently walk from client to client pushing a lawnmower or carrying a weed whacker, a spade, a rake and the extra gas that he needs for his equipment. No, if you’re going to do it right and

you're going to have a business plan and be successful, you need a truck and probably a trailer to get you from job to job. And that's where the big obstacle lies—not in the cost of the truck or the trailer and not particularly in the cost of the fuel, which is also very high, but in the insurance that he would have to pay for his truck. He had quotes as high as \$8,000. We all know that young males tend to pay higher rates until they have established a driving history for several years, but that seems to be a huge amount to have to pay. It is making it impossible for my young constituent to fulfil his goals—goals which I think we would all agree are admirable and deserving of our support.

This government can take some real action. As we have suggested, they should step in and ensure a 15% reduction in auto insurance rates. That move would save the average Ontarian \$226.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech also said that the government would ensure opportunity for all without letting anyone slip through the cracks. That's a bold statement and one that I'm very happy to hear, but I have to wonder if this government realizes just how many people are falling through the cracks. It's encouraging to have a government indicate that they will allow Ontario Works and ODSP recipients to receive all of the first \$200 they make. We need to see the details, but on the surface that move would appear to need some help.

That is just a tip of the iceberg. The cuts to the community start-up allowance and maintenance benefit are having a devastating effect on my riding of Hamilton Mountain and across the province. I know that myself and members across the House have had many meetings with organizations talking about the devastating effects that these cuts are having on the people in our ridings. And that's in every single one of our ridings. These cuts are going to create homelessness. They're creating more poverty. People count on those rates and those extra monies to be able to make up for the hydro that they're falling short on and they're having their lights shut off; when they're paying the last month's rent to help them get a fresh start in a new apartment; to help them make up for furniture when they've had bedbugs. Having these kinds of cuts just isn't working for families or single people. They're barely making enough as it is on OW or ODSP. They need those extra funds to be able to get through the hardships and times that they just can't make up for. So I really hope that you're looking at those cuts and will return those benefits back to the people.

People are falling through the cracks with programs and the services that our young adults and young people with developmental disabilities are facing. We continue to hear stories of families who simply aren't being able to get the support they need to care for their loved ones—heart-wrenching stories of loving parents whose lives are an exhausting, full-time commitment to caring for their severely disabled children. These families are in desperate need of help and support. The crack that exists when children with developmental disabilities transition to adulthood is very real, and many, many people are

getting caught in it. When it comes to autistic children in need of services, we're not talking so much about the crack rather than the huge hole that they're falling into. We know that the earlier we can provide therapy to autistic children, the more effective it will be, yet in Ontario we have 1,700 children on the wait list for IBI treatment, and that's currently more than who are receiving it—1,700 children who have been diagnosed have been referred to IBI treatment but are still on the wait list for up to four years.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech also indicates a willingness to get seniors the home care they need so badly—again, an encouraging sign and something that we in the NDP have promoted.

I constantly hear from constituents who are worried that they're not able to provide care for their aging spouse or their parents to continue to live at home. Oftentimes, they don't need much, just a small helping hand, perhaps when they first come home from their hospital stay, or maybe just some help doing regular household tasks without which they would lose their independence.

It makes no sense at all that we have an added expense of extra days in the hospital when, for a lot less, we could have those people back in their homes living productive, independent lives. It makes no sense to drive people toward long-term-care facilities, where the spaces are already scarce, when a cheaper option, an option that is better for the individual, exists.

That's why we've put forward very workable proposals, a proposal that will get people an assessment of the need for home care within five days. We know the fiscal challenges that are being faced by the province, and it makes no sense that we are not doing what we can to wisely spend what we have. Our proposal just makes sense, and I hope the government follows through with it.

Speaking of fiscal responsibility, it's beyond time that we moved to close corporate tax loopholes and, we need to see action on that when the budget is presented. We need the government to close the employer health tax loophole that allows larger business to take advantage of an exemption that was intended for small business. By all means, keep the exemption on the first \$400,000 in payroll for small businesses, but when the payroll goes over \$5 million, that exemption should be removed.

We also need to look at the HST input tax credits. Currently there are restrictions on those input tax credits put in place in 2009. Those restrictions are temporary and apply to large businesses and financial institutions for things like meals and entertainment. It's hard to believe that we could even contemplate allowing large corporations making huge profits to write off the HST when entertaining their clients. When we are making cuts to people who are in desperate need, how can we possibly justify that? But that's what's in the plan for a few years down the road. We can make those restrictions permanent rather than let them expire in 2015. In doing so, we would be saving \$1.3 billion each year.

Mr. Speaker, last year's Drummond report recommended limiting corporations' ability to move profits and

losses from province to province to decrease the amount of corporate taxes they pay. We can also move to limit corporations' ability to shift profits earned in Ontario to foreign subsidiaries, which they do for the same reasons. Although the government has indicated that they will move forward on some corporate tax compliance issues, they have not been clear on where they stand on these issues. They said in the throne speech that they would take a balanced approach to balancing the budget. Well, here is one opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to just that. I would suggest to them that if they are serious about not letting anyone slip through the cracks, then they need to take a serious look at some serious steps with respect to corporate taxes.

Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last year, the government has made a real mess of its relationship with the public sector workers, and in the throne speech we saw what might be an indication of a different approach. They say that they will "sit down with its partners across all sectors to build a sustainable model of wage negotiation ... respectful of both collective bargaining and a fair and transparent interest arbitration process."

There are some nice words: "respectful," "fair," "transparent." It's good to hear them because they certainly weren't evident in the actions of the government over the last year. But it also says "build a sustainable model," and I wonder what that means. Without details it's pretty hard to know.

What we do know is that Ontario has a long history of collective bargaining. We have a model that has proven its sustainability, a model that has served us well. It was stripped away, undermined, if you like, by Bill 115, leaving education workers feeling betrayed in a government-manufactured crisis, a crisis that saw our students paying the price.

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Improvements could be made, but I hope the government has learned from their mistakes of the past, and I look forward to the interpretation of "respectful and fair" as we move forward. Once again, the proof will be in the pudding.

Mr. Speaker, as we debate this throne speech, I'll wrap up by repeating that although the throne speech is vague and lacks detail, we can support it. There is a lot of positive language in there, but at this point it's just words. If we're going to be able to support the budget, there are going to have to be some real results for the people of this province, real action that will address the concerns and needs that I'm hearing from the people of Hamilton Mountain.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: At the outset, I would like to compliment and recognize my honourable colleague the member from Hamilton Mountain. I think, unlike others in this chamber, she did not only read but also dissected and brought forward a number of aspirations that I think we in the government share in this new spirit of entente and cordiality.

I would also like to say, Speaker, that one of my aspirations in this two minutes is not to be asked, unlike many Tory members, to withdraw any particular remark that was either egregious or outrageous.

I'm, of course, always pleased to follow the always level-headed remarks of the member from Beaches East-York.

I can tell you that I'm honoured to be the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government Services, the Honourable Harinder Takhar. I can share with you, for example, some of the initiatives in our own ministry that are directly, hopefully, attempting to implement some of the new aspirations for a fair society. Whether we're dealing, for example, with the Ontario photo cards—so 1.5 million drivers in Ontario—people who do not drive now have ID; the four-in-one birth registration in which you're able to maximize your legal status here in Ontario; the fact that we have nine different service guarantees now offered and a whole range of services; the fact that we've expanded, for example, health-card-issuing centres from 37 to 300 across the province, including northern and rural Ontario.

Again, Speaker, aspiring to move fully into the modern digitized world, we'll be moving on a number of fronts to offer government services available online.

That is, of course, a small snapshot of some of the issues that we're busy working with at the Ministry of Government Services.

I would again like to compliment the member from Hamilton Mountain, who, I think, is animated, certainly, by her concern for the constituents she serves, as she voiced, with fiscal responsibility, health care and education.

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Listening attentively to the comments made by the member from Etobicoke North and the comments made by the member from Hamilton Mountain, you'd almost think that there was a courting process, a wooing, if you will, going on here between the Liberals and the NDP. Of course, many of the younger people wouldn't know what courtship is, but it almost seems like this is what we're seeing.

It's quite indicative, however, Mr. Speaker, that if the Liberals are courting the NDP and going down the same path that we went down last year when the budget was presented, we see increases in spending. Of course, the new Premier has increased her cabinet by 25%. These are the kinds of indicators that would lead us to believe that this Liberal government is not serious about actually taking austerity measures to the next level, that are going to bring this province back in line and on the right path that we need to be on, to get more jobs created in the province and get our spending under serious guidance here. There's a lack of leadership over there, Mr. Speaker, and it's disconcerting.

I would like to say, though, that the member from Hamilton Mountain does eloquently present her case in the courtship between the Liberals and the NDP. But

again, it really is disconcerting to myself and our party. Mr. Hudak has obviously said it best: Things aren't working; it's time to change who is leading the team here.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to follow the debate and the remarks from my seatmate, the member from Hamilton Mountain.

I want to comment on something that my good friend the member from Northumberland–Quinte West is trying to formulate here: some sort of courtship. I'll remind him that prior to prorogation, the only dates that occurred between any parties in this House were in the imposition of Bill 115, where the Liberals and the Tories got together to give it to the teachers. What you've seen now is a reversal. Once that date was over with, we've seen the Liberals do a 180 on 115. Now there are roses and flowers going out of every door in this chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I can hear the same type of rhetoric that the Tories are anxious to go to an election. I can only surmise that they're anxious, that the internal brass—the party brass in the PCs—are anxious to get rid of their leader, because he's doing so terribly in the polls. I tell you that we do not. We want to keep him in his seat for as long as we can. He's one of the best things to ever happen to the Progressive Conservatives. So keep him around for our sake, please. We love it when he talks. We love it when he gets out there and presents his white papers, because they have absolutely no content whatsoever.

What we are doing here, I think, is the practical, prudent, responsible, respectable thing, the thing that Ontarians are demanding of us: that the people who are elected to represent them in this province actually take a look at the challenges that are faced by those people and offer some solutions, offer some remedy, but offer some energy. Get in here and do the work. Add your ideas, add your submissions, make suggestions and amend the laws so that we can find some compromise.

We are ready to do that. I think that's a really reasonable thing. That's why our leader, Andrea Horwath, has been so widely applauded for the way she has governed this party and ultimately will govern the province of Ontario; I'm certain of it.

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

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to begin by congratulating the member from Hamilton Mountain for a very eloquent speech. She spoke very passionately, and clearly she has actually read the throne speech—I have a feeling many of the members who have been speaking haven't read the throne speech—so thank you so much.

I also want to thank everybody else who spoke, including the members from Northumberland–Quinte West, Essex and, of course, my colleague here from Etobicoke North.

I'd like to also say that I want to thank my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for her support of the throne

speech. She was very supportive and very complimentary, so thank you so much. I look forward to working with you. I want to assure her that, as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services, making sure that Ontario's most vulnerable are looked after and don't fall through the cracks is indeed a priority for me.

I also wanted to say that it appears the member from Northumberland–Quinte West appeared to be a little envious of the courtship, as he characterizes it, that is going on between the Liberals and the NDP. I just want him to know that he is invited to the party. He is welcome. It's a shame that they don't want to work with us, that they don't want to come to the party, but the invitation is still open. You are welcome. I look forward to working with you instead of rattling for an election.

It does appear that the member from Northumberland–Quinte West seemed to suggest that he is ready for an election, which is very, very disappointing given that clearly the people of Ontario want us to work together to make this minority government work. That was the essence of the throne speech, and it is very disappointing that the member does not agree on that important point.

He also mentioned the need for a focus on the economy and balancing the books. If you read the throne speech, the first paragraph does deal precisely with balancing the books.

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

1520

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to thank the members from Etobicoke North, Northumberland–Quinte West, Essex and Mississauga East–Cooksville.

I'll tell you, we are here to work together. We are here to make a minority work. We are here not to prop up a Liberal government, but to get real results for Ontarians. I am sorry that some people in this House refuse to get to that work. It's unfortunate for the people of Ontario, for their constituents, that they find that spending money on an election before even looking at what's being brought forward is more important than putting that money into services that are going to actually help the people of this province.

I'm looking forward to seeing the budget speech. I agree: There was a lot in the throne speech that was very vague. We all know this, but there was nothing in there that I could disagree with. We need to be looking at these things and saying, "Yes, there are no meat and potatoes, but it's something to look at." It's something to at least wait for the budget and give it a chance. People elected us to sit here, to work together, not to run to the polls every time we see it politically fit. I would rather see that money go into services.

You're putting forward positions for people with developmental needs who need a transition period. If we're wasting money, how are we ever possibly going to find that transition-period money?

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

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'd like to mention that I will be splitting my time with my colleague the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville this afternoon.

What a privilege it is to get to stand before this House to speak to the government's speech from the throne, an event that we know marks the beginning of the second session of the 40th Parliament of the province of Ontario. I want to preface my speaking time by saying to each and every colleague of mine in this House that I sincerely hope we can all work together in this very important session of Parliament. It's going to take all of us rolling up our sleeves and getting to work on behalf of our constituents who sent us here, and I remain optimistic that we can do that.

When I meet with my constituents back in Windsor West, I'm constantly reminded of one thing: We truly have amazing communities. No matter which part of the province you're from—Windsor, Thunder Bay, Ottawa or Toronto—we all share the same values, hopes and dreams as Ontarians and as Canadians, and we all come together to work together, to make our communities strong and to make our province strong. Ontario truly is a great place to live and to raise a family.

I believe the same also to be true between the three parties within these chambers, and that is, as the throne speech states, there is more that unites us than divides us. As I walked through the main doors of this Legislature the day after the throne speech was read, not only as the MPP for Windsor West but also as the Minister of Children and Youth Services, I was and I'm still convinced that the priorities outlined in the throne speech last Tuesday reflect all our concerns.

Our Premier and our government have shown a path forward for this minority Parliament to work, and I'm looking forward to working together to make a difference. The vision and the direction laid out in the speech from the throne is one of strong economic stewardship, helping to create jobs and grow the economy.

I was born and raised in Windsor, a city that intimately knows the importance of economic stewardship. Jobs and the economy are our priorities. A stronger economy means more jobs and greater prospects for the people of Windsor and Ontario, which is why the elimination of the deficit by 2017-18 is a critical element to the future expansion of our economy.

I believe that our government has outlined a path that provides a prudent path to a strong and more efficient economy. Premier Wynne has met with opposition party leaders to explore common ground and establish priorities moving forward, and I hope that they can come to some of those priorities and common ground together.

One of these priorities is on youth and ensuring they have the opportunities in life to be successful. Youth in this province hold the key to our future success, and it's imperative that we give them the tools they need early on. We must teach them to work together and to believe in themselves. We must help them feel safe, and take their ideas and their input seriously.

Every young person, every child, has the potential to contribute to our communities. We must ensure that all our children have the supports and opportunities to reach their full potential. That's why, as mentioned in the speech from the throne, our government will create a permanent Premier's Youth Advisory Council, a council that I believe will pay huge dividends to both our youth and our economy.

We know, and we've heard, that one of the biggest problems facing our young people is unemployment. Too many youth are still living at home, unable to tap into the labour market. To address this serious issue, Premier Wynne has a plan. Our government will be joining forces with high school educators, colleges, universities, training partners and employers to establish opportunities for young people to enhance their skills. Success demands collaboration. We cannot do it alone. Our government will get more youth into the job market through internships and co-op programs so they can gain valuable real-world experience.

As the former executive director of employment and social services for the city of Windsor prior to being elected to office, I couldn't agree more with the approach of working with our partners in these areas to find a path forward for our youth, to build on their education, their skills, their abilities and their strengths—our greatest resource in this province.

I'm also proud of the government's Poverty Reduction Strategy. This strategy has made progress over the last four years in helping children and families emerge from poverty and raise their quality of life. Yet we know there is still more to do. I know this is an area of concern for all three parties, and I know it's something we will work collaboratively on to continue to champion.

Through careful, thoughtful reform, we will ensure that the challenging path individuals must navigate through social assistance is not made unduly hard. Proper reforms will enable individuals and families to keep more of what they earn through their hard work and reduce barriers to leaving social assistance—reforms that I know will make a true difference to families across the province—another common priority of all parties, Speaker.

We will also continue to build the strongest and most innovative health care system in the world. It's about being innovative. It's about doing what's right for Ontarians as we move through the 21st century. It's about promoting partnership between health care providers, from hospitals and long-term-care homes to our community support services and front-line medical providers through community health links—all, of course, so that the care of our loved ones and our most vulnerable citizens is constant and cohesive.

I also think it's very important to note our government's commitment to ensuring a respectful partnership with our labour leaders. I believe all my colleagues in this House, as well as thousands of students across the province, were pleased to see, this past Friday, our leadership partners at OSSTF agree to putting extra-curriculars back in our secondary schools. I know I spoke

to many students over the weekend—having teenagers—and they were quite pleased to see that they would be again playing volleyball, baseball and all their sports this spring.

I would like to congratulate our Premier and new education minister, as well as the leadership from OSSTF, on working together the past few weeks to make this happen.

1530

Speaker, I'm encouraged by the feedback I've been receiving back home from our partners in labour, in business, within the not-for-profits, and within our communities following the throne speech. I hear time and time again from everyone I speak to that they want to see this House working together. They want to see us collaborating and making a difference for our families and our communities. They do not want to go to an election. They, along with Ontarians, want us to work together, to continue to weather the terrible economic storm that was delivered to the world, and to continue to come out ahead like Ontario always has, all while at the same time not forgetting that The Way Forward has three components, as we outlined in the throne speech: the requirement for a strong economy, a fair society, and an effective Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga East–Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, I rise today to speak to the throne speech. Before I continue, I want to say that it continues to be a privilege and an honour, as well as a pleasure, to represent the good people of Mississauga East–Cooksville.

I believe that the throne speech is essentially an expression of a government's value system, its governing priorities. It's an expression of the kind of Ontario we want to live in, an Ontario that is at once fair and economically vibrant.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that a fair society is only possible when you have a strong economy. That is why it astonishes me as to how often people think that a strong economy, a free, vibrant market economy, is somehow mutually exclusive with a fair society. That is where I believe the opposition gets it wrong, because they do believe, or seem to believe, that they are mutually exclusive. But the fact is that they actually work hand in hand. The reality is that a fair society is only possible when Ontario is economically strong, and that is why this Liberal government has boldly staked its ground. We will balance the books, restrain government spending so that our economy continues to strengthen, and we will do this without compromising on social justice. That is the Liberal way; that is what this throne speech is about. This is what Ontarians deserve: nothing more, nothing less. This is what they elected us to do.

That is why the throne speech sets out as its priority a continued commitment to balancing the books by 2017-18, a jobs strategy with a focus on youth, and an infrastructure strategy that recognizes that if Ontario is to continue to be an economic power horse, we need to

make sure our infrastructure keeps up with the 21st century. More importantly, we have to make sure and have the courage to make the difficult decisions that we will need to ensure that we have the infrastructure we need.

That is why the throne speech also commits itself to grassroots democracy, giving communities more input on what economic investments they want. The reality is, there is no perfect investment. They always come with some pros and some cons. It is important to give communities a choice in the pros they can live with and the cons that they cannot live with. However, what is often missing when communities make these decisions is the unbiased facts that would allow them to make an informed decision. This throne speech recommits itself to not only giving communities more of a say in what kind of investments they get, but also the information they need to make judicious decisions.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech also makes a commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Frances Lankin-Munir Sheikh report on social assistance reform. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services, I have a particular interest in this. Especially, I would like to dwell for a minute or two on how this report is an example of how what is good for the economy is also good for social justice.

Take the idea of allowing people on social assistance to keep more of what they earn. This is the perfect marriage of helping the vulnerable and, at the same time, helping the economy by taking away the perverse disincentive that exists today that stops people from looking for work. That is the essence of what we mean when this government says that good economic policy and good social policy can and do work hand in hand. This idea that good economic policy and good social policy should work to amplify each other is the leitmotif of this throne speech and this government.

The government services that Ontarians rely on are the bedrock and the foundation of the fair society that we so cherish as an ideal. That is why this throne speech rededicates itself to building and strengthening our relationship with all of the stakeholders that make it possible for Ontario to deliver the services Ontarians rely on, from education and health care to social services. So indeed it was very good news when we heard that in high schools, teachers can now go back to providing extra-curricular activities.

In fact, there's a student in my riding who is running for student rep for the Peel region, and his election platform was going to be bringing back extracurriculars. So when he heard this news he said—I won't use his exact expression, but essentially he said, "Oh my God, I've got to now change my platform, but good news all around."

Finally, this throne speech recognizes that the good people of Ontario expect all three parties to work together to make a minority government work. This is what Ontarians said on October 6, 2011, and this throne

speech makes it abundantly clear that this Liberal government is open for business when it comes to working with the opposition parties. So it is indeed disappointing that the official opposition has decided to vote against a budget that is yet to be written—yes, it's yet to be written. That, to me, is an abdication of the official opposition's responsibility, as well as a disservice to the Ontarians who voted them in as the official opposition.

It is also disappointing that the official opposition has chosen to vote against this throne speech. I want to know just which part of the throne speech are they against? Is it the part that commits the government to balancing the books and focusing on job creation? Is it the part that commits the government to a fair Ontario? Or is it the part that the government commits itself to an effective and functional Legislature? Or is it just crass politics and a total disregard for the people all 107 of us were elected to serve? These are very important questions, and I look forward to hearing answers to these from the official opposition when it is their turn to respond to my comments. I would like to applaud the third party for the support they have shown to the throne speech and the open mind they have to the budget.

Once again, I would like to reiterate what this throne speech is about. It is about a way forward that creates a strong economy, a fair society and an effective Legislature. This is what the good people of Mississauga want. They want jobs. They want good schools. They want a reliable health care system. They want dependable infrastructure. They want the government to give a hand up for those who are down on their luck, and to be able to hold up our head with pride and say we are from Ontario. That is what Ontarians want from us.

What they do not want is an uncalled-for election. It really is surprising to me that the loyal opposition on the one hand says they want to balance the books; on the other hand, they're perfectly willing to spend \$300 million on a self-serving election that would probably not serve them as well as they think. It's just not clear to me as to how all of this fits in with being a responsible government.

Finally, all I want to say is that what the throne speech promises is a government that works, and I'm going to ask all 107 of us in this room to work together to implement that vision.

1540

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. It's good to be back after 127 days back in the constituency listening to my residents and their concerns, and I'll tell you what they are concerned about. In no small way, they are concerned about a fair society.

I'd ask you to imagine for one minute what a fair society would mean if we actually didn't have to pay to service a debt and a deficit that's three to four times the size of the rest of the country put together. Imagine if that money could go towards those who are less fortunate. Imagine if it went to front-line education, where we

could actually have EAs making what they deserve to make. Imagine if we could actually train them properly so they could deal with children with special needs in their classrooms properly without using blocker pads, padded rooms and padded cells. Imagine if we actually put our resources into things that actually matter to Ontarians and not into paying our debt and deficit, which is the mess that you guys got us into for the past 10 years and refuse to take responsibility for. You refuse to take responsibility for everything and try to put it all over onto the opposition.

You know what? You need to stand up and take responsibility just one time for the mess that you've put us into in this province. To actually stand up and say that we're not respectful and we don't care, we don't have any social conscience—well, I have news for you. The Progressive Conservative Party was founded on social conscience, on family strength and on actually taking care of people. You know what? You can't afford to pay your bills until you pay off your debt. At least that's the way I run my household.

Until you learn that, until you learn that you've had 10 years to fix the problems of this province and you've done nothing but put it into the hole even worse, we're never going to solve this problem. It's time for fundamental change. No more tinkering around on the fringes; get down to business, get to the crux of it, do your job, govern Ontario properly, or step aside and let us do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Oak Ridges—Markham—sorry; York South—Weston. I apologize.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to say, first of all, that I'm very glad to join this debate on the throne speech. I want to say that this is, traditionally, a document that is called a high-level document, a document that gives vision, that gives direction.

I want to say that, personally, I feel optimistic and inspired by what the throne speech contains. I am not usually a very critical person who may see the negative in everything. What can it accomplish for the people of this province? Well, first of all, yes, we are committed to balancing our books, and we are committed to be responsible and transparent but, at the same time, we also have to think of the future. Building a strong economy, finding those good jobs, helping the people who are most vulnerable, giving them a hand up, having sound infrastructure for our province: This is all very important. It's all important to the people of Ontario. To those families that work every day and come home, they want to know that we're trying to work together effectively here in this House. That's what we've been elected to do.

Yes, at times we can get partisan. We all come here with different opinions. That's okay. We have to find a way, a consensus, though, to move forward. That's our responsibility as elected officials. So let's find a way to work together.

I want to say to the member from Barrie—"You got us into this mess." The world has been in a global recession. Everybody should take responsibility, yes, but so should

the opposition; not only the government. We did have three balanced budgets before entering the deficit when the recession began.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a pleasure to get up, after 127 days of not sitting in this Legislature, to respond to Mississauga East–Cooksville's talk about the throne speech.

It's unfortunate, when we look through this—and, really, there's nothing in this throne speech, nothing that dealt with jobs or dealing with the fiscal reality.

Maclean's magazine from just last week talked about the state of the provincial debt. To quote it, “. . . the Macdonald-Laurier Institute found that Ontario's debt was worse than that of California,” a state that was issuing IOUs because it couldn't afford to issue tax refunds, and “the Fraser Institute is even less kind,” saying that a new study shows that the debt “is exactly where Greece was in the 1980s....” It just talks about the seriousness of the problem we're in.

I think it's time that this government owns up to it and brings Ontario back. Yes, there are some tough decisions, but I think we need to look at making some decisions now that will allow us to ensure our future is not just mortgaged on our children—it's easy to spend money, and it's easy to print money. It was also interesting that they suggest that Ontario is the most likely province to default in the next 30 years.

These are serious issues. This is Maclean's magazine, unquestionably not a conservative paper, but these are issues they're trying to bring up with people, trying to wake them up to the cold reality this government is bringing us to. Maybe we could buy a subscription for all the members on the other side, and maybe they could look at some of these warnings that are coming from the financial world. If we don't act soon, we'll lose our ability to act and we'll leave it to our debtors to make decisions.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have to say that when I heard the throne speech last week, it seemed to have everything for everyone. I thought to myself, “Can a government deliver so much to so many people when they have nothing in the cupboard?” How can you deliver anything to anyone when your deficit is 12 billion bucks? Yet you've got a direction and a vision and an inspirational throne speech that attempts to give everything to everyone. In the end, I say, is there actually anything in that throne speech? If I were they, I would have been a little more focused about what I think we could achieve. To give everything to Liberal supporters, to a great extent, and to Conservative and NDP supporters—I don't know. To me, in terms of believing all that, it fell a bit short, I would say.

I was concerned and worried for the new Premier in terms of where she is going. I don't find it visionary, I must admit. I must admit it wasn't inspiring. But it did

make me feel good, because it gives you the sense that maybe she will look after us. And for some people, feeling good about something is an important part of politics.

I've got to tell you, from a New Democratic perspective, that we're going to wait for the budget, because that's when we are going to see concretely what the government intends to do and what, practically, they're going to put in the budget to make something happen in the short term, over which she has some control, and in the longer term, over which there may not be any control, because we could be into an election in the next year or year and a half.

I'm looking forward to the budget, Speaker. That's where we're going to meet with the Liberals on that one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That, I believe, concludes the time for questions and comments; there have been four.

I return to the Minister of Children and Youth Services for her two-minute reply.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank—I hope I get these right—the members from Barrie, York South–Weston, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and Trinity–Spadina for their responses to our collected words on the throne speech here this afternoon.

There are questions that I'm hearing in terms of what was in this throne speech. As I read it, the throne speech is our vision; it's our direction; it's how we're going to move forward.

As I indicated, there are three essential components to this throne speech. It's about having a strong economy. How do we speak to the strong economy? By continuing to balance the budget; by transforming services throughout government, using creativity and innovation, to ensure that we are receiving value for every dollar we spend in our communities.

Second, it's about our fair society. It's about working with our communities, strengthening our relationship with our communities, with our partners, to ensure that all our families are able to reach their full potential.

1550

It's about an effective Legislature, and that, Speaker, is the key. I think it's the key that every one of us needs to recall. Why are we here? We're here to work for our constituents. What do our constituents want? And nobody can tell me that they haven't heard this from their constituents: They want us to work together. They want us to act like adults, to say, “Yes, we have differing opinions, but we all have the same values. We all want the same thing for our communities. We want jobs. We want our education system. We want a strong health care system.” We all have the same values, Speaker, and we all need to work together on it. Yes, there will be differing opinions, but you know what? As adults, we sit down, we talk about those differing opinions and we come to a consensus. We come to some kind of a collaboration. We have some level of accountability in working together, Speaker.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to rise today to respond to the recent speech from the throne.

Before I get going, Speaker, let me say that I'm going to be sharing my time this afternoon with the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

I have to say that I was optimistic and excited to return to Queen's Park. I was hopeful for the upcoming session, hopeful that after four months Premier Wynne would finally break the McGuinty padlock and open democracy's door, returning the House and getting MPPs back to work on behalf of the ridings and the people that elected us. I had hoped that this House would see real change and that Ontario would finally be able to move forward.

Sadly, after a week of being back here at Queen's Park, it was very evident that absolutely nothing has changed. The government party is sitting in different chairs. They have different titles and new business cards. But just as a zebra can't change its stripes, neither can the failed McGuinty-Wynne government.

Speaker, in a moment of total *déjà vu*, we learned late last week of more secret documents relating to the canceled gas plants. Project Vapour, Project Apple, Project Fruit Salad and Project Banana are all code names that this government used to hide and conceal its operations and activities. After months of promises from the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals that there were no more, we find that there are more hidden documents, more secrets, more code words and more cover-ups, Speaker. The language of the recycled Liberal caucus—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes, in the past, that particular word has been ruled out of order, and I would ask the member to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I withdraw.

Speaker, as I was saying, we found that there are more hidden documents. I think the bombshell from the Ministry of Energy floored every member in this House in the opposition benches. We're not sure if the government knew that those documents were coming or not, but obviously, by the reaction from us, we were totally, totally surprised.

The language of the recycled Liberal caucus, as I was saying, remains the same. The excuses are the same, and still nobody is willing to pay the price. Instead, while the scandals pile up, the taxpayers are being left with the bill. It seems that the culture of this government is scandal, waste and mismanagement. It's their legacy to the people in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, Ontario families know that they cannot trust this Liberal government to get to the bottom of this scandal, and with such an overwhelming amount of political interference by the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals, it has become increasingly clear that the only way to get to the bottom of the Mississauga and Oakville gas plant scandals is to have a judicial inquiry.

In most jobs, there is a three-strike rule. If you mess up more than three times, you're let go. eHealth, Ornge

and gas plants: that is three strikes, and I'm not even going back more than the last couple of years. There are many, many more tales of scandal and waste, but if I were to go into detail about the failures of this government, we would be here all day.

Further to my point regarding the recent throne speech, Premier Wynne's speech has outlined her unwillingness to make the necessary and urgent decisions needed to fix the Liberals' made-in-Ontario jobs-and-debt crisis. When the new Premier says she wants to build on Mr. McGuinty's legacy, I question how she could fail to recognize the amount of scandal that the McGuinty legacy is built upon. Indeed, the McGuinty-Wynne legacy is a tale of injustice and mismanagement that has cost Ontario taxpayers billions and billions of dollars.

Premier Wynne's first act was to increase cabinet by 22%, Speaker, adding \$3 million more to our debt, just by her very first decision as Premier. That follows deliberate choices to hand the chequebook over to union bosses at the expense of students and parents, continue the expensive Feed-In Tariff program, and park the Drummond commission's 362 recommendations permanently on the shelf.

In the throne speech, we saw no new initiatives to reduce the size and cost of government. Instead of restraint, we continue to have a government spending more and more money, doubling our debt, of course, over the past nine years while taxpayers are getting less. Over the past decade, Ontario has lost 300,000 good jobs in the manufacturing sector, but at the same time we saw 300,000 more jobs and more people added to an already-bloated government payroll. Last month alone, in January 2013, we lost 48,000 private sector jobs right here in the province of Ontario. That's the greatest number of job losses since the recession. Again, in January we added an additional 9,000 positions in the public sector.

The size and cost of government under the Liberals continue to expand. Fewer people are working outside the government, paying for more people working inside the government, with higher wages, benefits and pensions than those who are paying the taxes. We have all seen reports from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business indicating public sector workers earn 27% more in wages, pensions and benefits than their counterparts in the private sector.

Speaker, ignoring the issues Ontario is facing is not a solution. We are facing the biggest jobs-and-debt crisis in our lifetime. Anyone who has ever been faced with a crisis or emergency will tell you that being cautious, being incremental will not save you. The only way forward is to move confidently and boldly in the direction that you know is right.

Premier Wynne indicated that she expanded her cabinet so that she would have the "tools needed to deal with the problems Ontario is facing." Based on the 22% growth overnight, I would anticipate that she is expecting Ontario's problems to only get worse. She has more than enough people in her cabinet to address the issues

Ontario is facing. I guess she's expecting a disaster. But I have news—and our caucus has been talking with conviction about this: The disaster can be avoided.

Ontario needs a new approach, one that will create jobs and stop reckless overspending. It's clear that the current government is not up to the challenge of doing this. Speaker, we are one week into this government and we have seen nothing but the same old results. You would swear that Premier McGuinty and his political handlers had never left the building. To change the direction of our province, we need to change the team leading it. The Ontario PC Party and opposition leader Tim Hudak are the only party with a comprehensive plan to end overspending and grow our economy.

This week was a moment of truth for this province. Four months after the Liberal government shut down the Legislature and walked off the job, this Premier had an opportunity to change course and move Ontario onto the right path, but, regrettably for this province and for its people, Premier Kathleen Wynne and her government chose to further entrench the Dalton McGuinty legacy. If the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals won't make the necessary decisions to get Ontario back on its feet, there's another party and another leader who will.

I am proud to say that your Ontario PC team and I, and our leader, have put forward a plan to rein in overspending, get our economic fundamentals right and grow the economy through our 11 Paths to Prosperity white papers: bold ideas to create a leaner public service that delivers more value for less money; to lower taxes on businesses so they can invest and create jobs right here in Ontario; to reduce the heavy hand of the 300,000 regulations that stand between businesses and success; to fix the outdated labour laws that have made us uncompetitive and are costing us jobs; and to create more affordable energy for Ontario families by treating energy as an economic fundamental rather than as a social experiment.

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Speaker, we can no longer be content by being first in debt and last in job creation. Ontario will rise again and reach its true potential, but only if we change the team that's leading Ontario. Our party is committed to working hard for Ontario families, and that is why we are offering real solutions to the disaster that this Liberal Party got us into.

There has been no change and no renewal. While the politically easy thing to do may have been to let the throne speech pass, as those in the third party have chosen to do, we have a responsibility to demand a plan that brings about a major change in the direction Ontario is headed. We need a new approach, and it starts with having only as much government as we can afford. For this reason, I will be opposing the throne speech and I encourage my colleagues to join me in doing this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener-Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker. Last week, the Premier was presented with an opportunity to change

course, an opportunity to unveil a credible plan in the throne speech that would reduce the size and cost of government and finally get Ontario's economy back on track. But we all know what happened: The Premier refused to embrace this opportunity. Instead, she chose to entrench the failed agenda of Dalton McGuinty by keeping Ontario on its collision course with a \$30-billion deficit.

Over the last week in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, I've had many constituents ask me why the Liberals won't take Ontario's fiscal problems seriously. They just can't believe how the government can justify doing nothing at a time when the province is spending more than \$10 billion a year on interest payments for Ontario's \$275-billion debt.

I know many of my constituents would like to see some of that money go toward correcting the health care funding inequity in my riding. For years, Waterloo region has received considerably less provincial funding for local hospital services when compared with other jurisdictions. In fact, the region receives \$255 less per resident in provincial funding than the rest of Ontario. So how can the Liberals defend sitting on their hands while spending \$10 billion a year on interest when these types of gross inequities exist? Do you know what \$10 billion could be used for? How about 5,000 MRI machines or hiring 50,000 doctors. With funding shortfalls like the one I've mentioned, I think it's clear that the government can no longer continue business as usual.

We need to chart a new course, one that takes us away from more debt, more spending and more taxes. To do this, we must focus on the province's resources, on real priorities like jobs, the economy, education and world-class health care. But to move forward, we must first get our fiscal house in order. If we don't, and interest rates rise, we could face hundreds of millions of dollars in new interest payment expenses.

Even a former parliamentarian admitted the interest on the province's debt is "a ticking time bomb." Speaker, do you want to know who said that? The former finance minister. I wish he was here today. And I think it's fair to say he knows that situation is much more serious than the governing Liberals will admit to. I wish he was here to hear that, in fact. I'm happy he's moving on. God bless him and good luck to him in that venture. But everyone I talk to understands that Ontario must deal with its debt spending problem.

Unfortunately, we know this issue is not on the Premier's priority list, however. Wynne telegraphed that on her very first day; she increased spending by adding five more ministers to her cabinet. Perhaps the Premier should have also appointed a minister of debt to oversee Ontario's interest payments. After all, they would have had the third-largest portfolio in the Wynne government. The Liberals' dramatically bigger cabinet demonstrates that the Premier remains committed to continuing in the same failed direction of her predecessor, who for a decade did nothing but grow the size of government through excessive public sector hiring and pay increases. As a result,

the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has found that public sector workers earn 27% more in wages, pension and benefits than their counterparts in the private sector for the very same job. That's certainly not affordable, but it's also not fair. Unfortunately, this is a story for too many Ontarians.

Over the past decade, the province has lost 300,000 good-paying jobs in the manufacturing sector that helped to strengthen middle-class communities in places like Hamilton, Windsor, London, and in my home of the Waterloo region.

In order to improve the conditions for economic growth, leaders in the private sector have repeatedly told the government for years to lower business taxes, make energy more affordable and invest in infrastructure. What did the Liberals do? They did the opposite. They reneged on their promised tax cuts; they caused the price of hydro to skyrocket with their failed green energy social experiment. They failed to adequately invest in our roads, bridges and public facilities, leaving municipalities with a \$60-billion infrastructure deficit.

We've seen this story too many times before. The Liberals remain incapable of confronting the challenges we face with real leadership. On virtually every issue, their only solution is more spending, more red tape and more bureaucracy.

Take public sector hiring: When the private sector lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs, the Liberals' only solution was to add 300,000 public sector jobs to an already bloated and unaffordable government payroll. We have nearly 600,000 men and women in this province who wake up each and every morning without a job to go to. Last month alone, we lost 48,000 private sector jobs. That represents the greatest number of job losses since the recession.

You would think that with an unsustainable deficit and steadily increasing debt, the Liberal government would refrain from more public sector hiring in January, but you'd be wrong. The Liberals continued to add more to the government payroll by creating 9,000 more jobs in the public sector. This disturbing trend means that we have fewer people working in the private sector to pay for more and more folks working in the government. This is totally unsustainable.

Ontarians know that we can do better, but they also understand that we need bold leadership to get our province out of this mess. Anyone who has ever faced a crisis or an emergency knows that slowly taking small steps isn't going to save you. You have to do the opposite. You have to move quickly in the direction you know is right. That starts with developing a comprehensive plan, which I'm proud to say the PC Party has put forward.

We have presented a positive vision to make Ontario a leader in Canada again. That starts with getting government out of areas it has no business being in so that we can focus on things that really matter, like job creation. Part of that includes acknowledging that Ontario must invest in education to develop a knowledge economy while maintaining our manufacturing base.

To carry out this plan, Ontarians need a government they can trust, a government that's accountable and transparent. Unfortunately, the Liberal government broke that trust with its politically motivated decision to cancel the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants just to save a few Liberal seats in the last election.

This is political opportunism at its absolute worst. The Liberals continually obstruct this House from obtaining information detailing the true costs of the Liberals' gas plant scandal. It wasn't until the government faced contempt charges that we finally received the first batch of incomplete, redacted and whited-out documents. Even though there were no documents from the Premier or energy minister's office, the member for Kitchener Centre claimed the government had released all requested information. Then, just a month later, he was forced to retract those statements when the Liberals released a second batch of documents—again, incomplete, redacted and whited out. Now, just last week, we received a third batch, and the government has been forced to admit yet again that it has not been forthright with Ontarians.

Ontarians expect much more from the government. They expect a government that makes decisions, that is open and transparent. That's why we would appoint a judicial inquiry to investigate this matter. We need to determine who was involved in this politically motivated decision, how much money was wasted and how we can ensure that this type of blatant misuse of taxpayers' money, and the public's trust, never happens again.

This secrecy surrounding the issue really fits into a larger government strategy to keep Ontarians in the dark. Take cap-and-trade, for instance. Every time I have raised this issue in the House or in committee, the Liberals simply pretended it doesn't exist. Instead of being upfront with Ontarians about an excessive new cost associated with such a plan, they posted a vague discussion paper on the environmental registry which calls for a system with hard caps, while continuing to deny they're moving forward. And though cap-and-trade is a major part of the Liberals' policy agenda, it appeared nowhere in the throne speech.

For the record, Ontarians are aware that the Liberal government is forging ahead with an onerous new cap-and-trade scheme, one that provides no flexibility for Ontario businesses already struggling to remain competitive in the global marketplace. Forcing Ontario companies to make unrealistic cuts in greenhouse gases will only send emissions overseas to countries with less stringent environmental standards, all while crippling the industries that thousands of Ontarians who rely on those good-paying jobs. There's no shortage of solutions to combat climate change, such as conserving energy, investing in public transit and preserving green space in both urban and rural areas.

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Unfortunately, the Liberals have taken a page from their tax-and-spend playbook and are moving ahead with a restrictive new cap-and-trade scheme at a time when our economy can least afford it. We all know that carbon

taxation has been a pet project of the Liberals for years, yet they continue to hide this policy from Ontarians. When a government only uses its throne speech for a PR stunt, and not to indicate the major policies it intends to implement, it's no wonder Ontarians have lost faith in this Liberal government.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join in on this session of debate on the throne speech. There's reference to the 362 recommendations made by Don Drummond. One of those, I think I remember correctly—the leader of the Conservative Party had indicated to the government that they had to implement each and every one of them or none of them would work. All 362 had to be implemented. One of those implementations—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I do. Your leader was standing outside of my office; we're on the same floor, the third floor. I actually watched the media scrum. He was pressed on it because one of those recommendations is the elimination of the Slots At Racetracks Program. You can't be selective. You're either saying remove them—use the 362 recommendations or don't. So you guys have to be clear on which recommendations—either you want all of them or you don't want any of them. Stop referencing them.

But you can hear the tone from the Tories that there is a concerted push toward an election, and I would say that it isn't necessarily the members who are doing it; it's the Tory party bosses, the brass, who are pushing toward an election. Because you see the polls, you see that there's been stagnation for your party, particularly your leader—and there's some good talent there. I hear it. There's some good talent. People could easily move up to the front, and I think that's what's happening, but it isn't in the best interests of the province and the people of the province. It might be in the best interests of your political futures, given the prospects of a new leader some time in the future, but it certainly isn't what people expect us to do. They expect us to push forward good ideas so that we can work toward the issues, not simply play partisan politics for the sake of political posturing and our own personal advancement or of the party. I would trust and hope that that is the intent of all the members in here, to put their best ideas forward and work towards them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to respond to the debate on the throne speech motion.

I want to tell you that last Friday, when Premier Wynne came to Ottawa—the first week of the new session and three days after the throne speech—part of that day was taken up with a great round table on youth job creation and job creation in general. We were hosted by Mayor Watson and his team, Mr. Lazenby and Mr. Westeinde, directing the jobs agenda. We heard from Premier Wynne, but the major part of the presentations were from small, medium and large employers.

Within the week, Premier Wynne was doing the listening part in preparation for the job strategy for youth and jobs in particular. This was the second meeting on jobs; there was one held earlier in Toronto. So that is moving forward very quickly. That was in the speech from the throne and that is one of the large priorities for this government. We will continue to move with the good plans set forth through the speech from the throne.

I heard the third party sounding very open and very positive about some of the initiatives, but the opposition sounded like the old style of really letting the nurses go, closing the hospitals, letting the teachers go, decreasing the size of the people that provide the services in Ontario. That to me is not a good direction.

And you know the OSSTF have already encouraged their teachers to bring back the extracurricular work they have done so well. So congratulations to the Premier and the Minister of Education for acting on these two main items in the throne speech, and thank you to the teachers.

The speech from the throne has set a tough challenge for our government and this Legislature. I'm pleased, as the new PA to Minister Bradley, to see that the Great Lakes legislation is coming forward.

I believe that Premier Wynne has challenged the province through the throne speech and the throne speech's ideas will be further developed in the upcoming budget.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to commend my colleagues from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex as well as Kitchener–Conestoga on their remarks on the failed throne speech that was delivered here last week.

All of the media, pretty well, has made it very clear that the only thing remaining is a call on the McGuinty government, now the Kathleen Wynne government, to be open and transparent, specifically on the gas plant issue, in terms of who knew what when. The suggestion today was clear, and I think my colleagues have said that: that the people of Ontario have lost trust with the Kathleen Wynne government, after less than a week, basically. It'll be a week tomorrow since her first remarks in the House, where they've already lost trust with the people.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, has been calling for many of the things that are required. The tough decisions that he's been laying on the table have, for the most part, been ignored.

I can only say this: If you look at the remarks in the throne speech, it was more of the same. If you look at question period, it's pretty much a pickup from what happened with the un-openness and fairness around the gas plant. Even last week, Thursday, the bombshell dropped of more redacted papers that were hidden under the code name Vapour.

What more is to come? All of the mistakes—we haven't heard the end of Ornge. They haven't got a solution for the slots at racetracks. They haven't got any solution to the gas plants—how much it is actually going to cost. All of the information we requested is being

somehow withheld—I don't know how; the contempt order is still on the paper.

I commend the members from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Kitchener–Conestoga for holding Kathleen Wynne's feet to the fire.

Try to be open and honest with the people of Ontario. That's all we're asking for.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to address the matter. I want to thank the members from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Kitchener–Conestoga for adding to the debate this afternoon.

I take a different tack. I want to say to the Liberal government that it's a very nice thing to have a speech from the throne, to talk about what needs to be done in Ontario. Some of the language that was used was of interest to us, although, as you're well aware, Speaker, our leader, Andrea Horwath, has said, "There were some nice words there. What we need to see is some very concrete action."

If, in fact, many of the concerns of the people of Ontario are going to be addressed; if, in fact, we are going to ensure that our schools function well and that our society is productive, then we need to ensure that we have public funding to actually carry out the work that's necessary. One of the things that we in the NDP have called for is to ensure that the HST phase-in does not go another step and give a \$1-billion-plus windfall to the corporate sector.

I had the opportunity previously, Speaker, to sit on the finance committee here in the Legislature. I saw many presentations in the lead-up to the 2011 budget—very clear that corporate tax cuts over the last decade in fact had undermined the ability of government to do what it had to do and, at the same time, didn't produce jobs. The more taxes were cut, the fewer jobs there were.

If this government actually wants to deliver on promises and have a budget that's successful, they have to ensure that the funds are coming in. They have to give up on this loophole for the HST for the corporate sector.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to thank the members for contributing to this debate: those from Essex, Ottawa–Orléans, my colleague from Durham and, finally, the member for Toronto–Danforth.

I spoke to a lot of constituents back in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga—I had really hoped and looked for the new Premier—and I was just reading a column on their characterization of the throne speech: "Wynne's Speech a Load of Bull." That was them, not me. It talked about this new government. I was looking for this supposed new government to really take a 180-degree turn from where we were over the last eight, nine years, with this failed McGuinty approach and putting Ontario, in the place of Canada, where we are at now. I mean, we have got a \$12-billion deficit; \$10 billion annually to service the debt, which is now \$275 billion. We talk

about the priorities outlined in the throne speech, but we are simply not going to have the resources and the funds to be able to properly fund those social programs like health care, education etc.

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We talk about this new government and an accountable, transparent—making sure that everything is open for Ontarians. But yet we saw the latest attempt just mere days after we got back into the House after prorogation. The government pulls the same old tricks that they've done in the first session: dumping new documents, saying, "Listen, we have got everything here. They're all here. Oops, no, we found some more documents." Ontarians will not trust their government if it continues to treat its citizens the way it has.

I appreciate the opportunity to address the throne speech on behalf of my constituents and thank you for your time.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: First, I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the newly appointed Premier of the Liberal government.

The Premier delivered her throne speech on February 19, and there were a litany of promises to Ontarians. Unfortunately, those promises lacked detail on how this government would deliver real results for Ontario families.

Speaker, Ontario families in every city in Ontario are feeling the pinch of these economic times that we are facing in the province. In big cities, small towns and in rural Ontario, families are telling us that they are experiencing tough times. Families expected that this government would be proactive in bringing in legislation that would create jobs, improve the quality of life through better-managed health care and help families make life more affordable. The government has been promising much and delivering very little. Unless this government starts to show real action in the upcoming budget on job creation, on health care and on managing the books in this province, New Democrats will not be supporting this government's budget.

This government's throne speech lacked detail, was vague and had no real plans for job creation for our youth, to stop corporate tax loopholes and to deal with rising auto insurance premiums. We saw this government make promises to co-operate on some proposals New Democrats put forward, but on other issues, we saw this government remain silent or reject proposals outright.

Ontario needs real leadership, and Ontarians need action in areas like improving health care, job creation, balancing the budget and making life more affordable for families in big cities, small cities and rural Ontario. In this session, New Democrats will focus on moving forward with positive change for Ontarians, and we will expect results from this minority Parliament. Our leader, Andrea Horwath, has set out good ideas to accomplish getting results for Ontarians.

New Democrats have proposed to the government to close corporate tax loopholes. We want this government

to move forward on some corporate tax compliance recommendations that were in the Drummond report that we would expect this government to implement. We would expect this government to make changes to the employer health tax exemption threshold and close this tax loophole so that large, multi-billion dollar corporations do not qualify for exemptions that were designed for small businesses. But this Liberal government has refused to say whether they will continue to allow large corporations to use these exemptions, and this government is still allowing corporations to write off \$1.3 billion in entertainment and meals.

Our leader, Andrea Horwath, has been very clear on proposals for closing the corporate tax loopholes and asked this new Premier to work with the NDP. Speaker, this proposal is a reasonable approach. In 2009, the Ontario government announced that companies would receive input tax credits for sales on their purchases, but they also announced temporary restrictions on some input tax credits that would apply to large businesses and financial institutions for items like meals, entertainment, telecommunications and company vehicles. Speaker, these restrictions are set to end in 2015. What we think is reasonable is to keep the restrictions permanent on large corporations and banks so they will not be able to claim sales rebates for corporate meals and entertainment expenses. It doesn't make sense that we're talking about cuts to health care but allowing companies to write off Leafs tickets in this economy.

Speaker, we also suggest that small businesses would continue to receive the input tax credits for all purchases, including fuel and energy, because we know that small businesses create jobs in our communities and that having healthy small businesses means a healthy community. Local residents support their neighbourhood small businesses, and so should this government. If this government listens to New Democrats, this decision would save the treasury—get ready—\$1.3 billion annually in Ontario.

I remind this government that they commissioned the Drummond report, and although we did not agree with a great deal of the report, there were other recommendations we believe are reasonable; that was the recommendation to reduce the ability of corporations to eliminate or decrease payment of provincial corporate income tax by shifting profits and losses across Canada, along with other illegitimate practices that could be diminished, including aggressive international tax planning strategies used to shift profits earned in Ontario to foreign-based subsidiaries to avoid Ontario corporate income tax. The report estimates this would bring in \$50 million in one year and \$200 million by 2017-18.

There are other ways to help small business. What New Democrats propose to assist small business is to continue the practice of not collecting the employer health tax on the first \$400,000 of payroll, but with some changes. Today, this exemption currently applies to all businesses, but if Ontario put this in place only for small business owners and removed the exemption for

companies with payrolls over \$5 million, which is about 100 employees, that would be an estimated \$90 million for the treasury.

Ontarians understand fairness and expect us all to pay our fair share. In a time of record profits for some of our largest corporations, this is a responsible thing to do.

Speaker, Ontarians have been waiting for MPPs to get back to work in the Legislature and get back to business.

It's no surprise to many that London's unemployment rate is one of the highest in Ontario and people are having a hard time finding a job.

In 2012, there were 182,000 unemployed Ontarians between the ages of 16 and 24. That works out to a 15.7% unemployment rate—nearly double that of an average worker in this province. This is a lot of young people. To make things worse, almost 25% of all youth with a university degree were unable to find work in their field. That is not the way parents want to see their children start their future: graduating university and carrying a substantial debt load, yet unable to find work in their field of study. Our youth need to have the prospect of a bright future, and that means getting a job so they can purchase their first car, buy a home and start a family, and not in that order—feel free as to how you want to do that order.

We have said that New Democrats believe that rewarding companies when they create a job is the way to stimulate our economy. That's why we put forward a jobs creation plan called First Start. This plan looks to help to provide young people aged 16 to 26 years an entry point into long-term employment. This will have participants learn life and work skills while earning income.

So if this government is committed to creating jobs, we ask them to help to put young people back to work instead of handing tax breaks to companies that want to shift taxes out of the province or write off sales tax for dinners and Leafs tickets. This is an achievable plan that would help Ontario youth and reward businesses for creating jobs.

Another way to help Ontarians is opening the doors for employment. People on social assistance face many barriers to obtaining a job, and currently social assistance rules punish the initiative by those going out to look for work by taking away 50% of people's earnings, starting from the first dollar of wages. What we need to do, Speaker, is encourage people on OW and ODSP to seek out opportunities to look for work and become independent, and not penalize them for finding a job and wanting to make a better life for themselves.

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That is why New Democrats have a plan to open the doors to employment, and would allow social assistance recipients to receive 100% of the first \$200 they earn each month. This proposal comes out of the Lankin-Sheikh social assistance review report. A change to this rule would make a difference to approximately 50,000 Ontarians.

Ontarians want to see their public tax dollars put toward investment that actually creates jobs and grows

the economy. They don't want to see corporations write off sports and entertainment expenses. That's why it makes more sense to help youth and those on social assistance find and keep good jobs.

Ontario families are trying to make ends meet, and they're struggling to pay everyday bills. Having the HST on home heating doesn't help make life more affordable for families. Ontarians are asking us to help them make their lives more affordable and give them a break.

We know that Ontarians are among the safest drivers in Canada, but they're paying the highest auto insurance premiums in the country. That's why we, the New Democrats, are calling for solutions; we're calling for more affordable auto insurance. The government should direct auto insurance rates for safe drivers to drop by 15% at the end of 2013 so that they are paying a fair insurance premium. A 15% premium reduction for safe drivers would save the average Ontario safe driver \$226 per year. In 2011, the Auditor General noted in his report, "Although Ontario has one of the lowest per capita rates of automobile-accident deaths and injuries in the country, it also has the highest ... premium[s] in Canada..."

As accident rates have decreased, average payouts have also decreased, yet insurance premiums in Ontario have increased consistently. Ontarians should be benefitting from safer driving, but instead we're all paying more. The Financial Services Commission of Ontario can instruct insurers to lower their premiums. By asking FSCO to decrease premiums by 15% at the end of 2013, we can ensure that life is more affordable for safe drivers in Ontario.

Some of those things, as I mentioned, are balanced approaches, helping Ontario find and create jobs and also make life more affordable.

Health care is always on the mind of every Ontarian, I think, and it's one of the pillars of public service. All Canadians hold it in high regard, and the people of Ontario want to have their health care there when they need to use it. Health care is something we all will use at some point in our lives.

By the year 2017, for the first time, Ontario will be home to more people over 65 than children under 15. The senior population is living longer, and seniors are telling us they want to live in the comfort of their home as long as possible. Study after study has shown that staying in your home longer isn't only good for seniors and quality of life, but also helps stretch our precious health care dollars further. It's a win-win proposition, Senior—Speaker. I don't know if you're a senior yet, Speaker.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Not quite.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: If we help seniors live longer in their homes, we know that will mean seniors need to depend on home care services. So it's important to have these services delivered to seniors, to avoid unnecessary visits back to the hospital. We don't want that revolving door, Senior—Speaker—for seniors. I'm going to call you "Senior."

In the throne speech, it's good to hear this government's willingness to get seniors the care they need, but

as I mentioned before, we need to put meat on those bones; in other words, details on this government's home care plan.

There are 6,100 Ontario seniors waiting for home care, and some are waiting for as long as eight months, Speaker—eight months. This makes life unpredictable for seniors and their families, because we know that families also look after their elderly parents. Families more often than not are the primary caregivers of their elderly relatives, and they need help to deliver those services. Families and seniors need to have predictability when their loved ones are released from the hospital, and the home care should be reliable and consistent. Speaker, that's why New Democrats again have proposed a practical solution: a five-day home care guarantee that would ensure that Ontarians receive care five days after being released from the hospital and approved for the care.

The cost of a five-day home care guarantee would be \$30 million. We have a way to pay for that, because this is a type of investment that's positive and that we can afford through identifying savings. According to the government's own report, we can save \$27 million by standardizing health care procurement and streamlining CCACs and the LHINs. If the NDP's plan to cap hospital CEO salaries is included and is part of the solution, we can find additional savings that take that number north of \$30 million.

You see, Speaker, that's a balanced approach and that's what people want to see. They want to see their seniors stay at home and they want to see how we're going to pay for that. We're offering those balanced approaches and reasonable solutions. New Democrats are, as I mentioned, taking a balanced approach to balancing the books.

In addition to our solutions, we are calling for a spending review to search for savings that don't impact services that families rely on. We understand that all of us need to do our part in these tough times, so imagine our surprise when senior government managers received bonuses worth \$21 million just prior to the holidays.

Additionally, balancing the books should not mean that we sell off essential revenue generators like the LCBO or ServiceOntario. These plans are the same as the 407 debacle that cost the province billions of much-needed revenue, money that not only helps to fund important services but ensures that citizens get some tax relief. Selling off the LCBO and ServiceOntario is not how we're going to help pay for health care, our infrastructure and our education system.

This government needs to be accountable and transparent. They have spent Ontario's hard-earned tax dollars on fiascos and scandals and have wasted public tax dollars, like on Ornge, eHealth and gas plants. The people of this province deserve answers from the Premier and her caucus.

The people of Ontario elected a minority government and have waited long enough for MPPs to return back to work and to this Legislature. New Democrats are going to work hard to get results, create jobs, improve health

care and make life more affordable while taking a balanced approach to balancing the books. Speaker, I for one am glad we're back in this Legislature, because it's long overdue. Ontario has been sitting, waiting for this Liberal government to pick their leader so we could come back to work and actually get results for Ontarians. I urge this government to please listen to some of our proposals so when your budget comes forward, we can actually see results and help the people of Ontario accomplish what they're looking for.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a pleasure to rise in this House and to speak to the speech from the throne motion. The speech from the throne is a high-level document, and as we all know, it's delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. It contains, basically, our party's values, the Liberal values. As my colleagues from all three parties have noticed, the speech from the throne refers to the Liberal values, meaning being socially fair and economically being responsible.

The speech from the throne discussed—just one line; not very much conversation on that has been done in this House, but it's a very important point which is in the speech from the throne. It's about expansion of our business and our trade with emerging small economies around the world. As we all know, in the past 10 or 15 years, we have been trying to expand our business with major emerging economies such as China, India and Brazil. But not much attention has been paid to expanding our trade and business with smaller emerging countries, such as Malaysia and Indonesia in Asia, for instance; or central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan; or Middle Eastern countries such as Arabian countries, Gulf countries and Turkey; and then South American countries—for example, Argentina or Colombia; and eastern European countries. We need to expand our business, our trade, with all these emerging countries in order to expand our trade with various countries around the world. We are heavily dependent upon our business with our neighbour to the south and, to a certain extent, with those three major, emerging economies.

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This is one of the major points which we can see in the speech from the throne. We hope that in the future our trade relationship will be expanded with every country, all countries around the world, in particular those small, emerging countries in the world.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further comment? The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. Yes, I do have some comments to direct to the presentation from the member from London–Fanshawe. Mention was made of permitting those on social assistance to keep more of the money that they earn—those who are able to work. That's an excellent idea. As the member may know, we introduced that idea in legislation, I think it could be close to three years ago, through a private member's bill,

and it did receive support from all three parties, was referred to the finance committee, and there it sat. This government would not call it forward for hearings.

Subsequent to that we went through an election; we included that idea in our election platform. I can't remember whether the Liberals or the NDP did include that idea in their election platforms, but I am quite heartened to hear both parties muse about this idea now, albeit three years later. It is unfortunate that, as a result of this inaction, so many people have spent the last three years on social assistance, on welfare, on the Ontario disability program—those who were working—and were not permitted by this Legislature to retain some of those earnings.

So I would sincerely hope this government will bring forward legislation to that effect. They can lift it right out of that legislation of three years ago, proposed by the opposition. I'd also like this government to bring forward legislation that consolidates Ontario Works and disability into one program at the local level.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just want to congratulate the member from London–Fanshawe in presenting a very reasonable speech. I'm looking forward to the Liberal members commenting on the proposals that we are making, because this is going to be a showdown, as you might imagine, for the budget, so we'd like some of you to speak to it.

I find the suggestions that have been made by the member, and are being made by us as a party, reasonable, practical and doable, except none of the Liberal members that I'm hearing are speaking to any of the suggestions that have been made.

One of the suggestions is that we need to reduce auto insurance rates for people who, in our view, are over-paying. When insurance companies make \$2-billion profits in cutting the benefits of all Ontarians, you would think that it would be reasonable for the insurance companies to give some of that money back to people. I think that in the time of an economy where people are suffering, they could use a little break. So New Democrats are saying, as the member of London–Fanshawe has said, that that would be something practical and something doable, and we think many Liberals, MPPs and supporters would support that initiative.

Closing some of the tax loopholes: People get the impression, for some reason, by suggesting that what we are saying is anti-business—no. Businesses are on the whole doing well, particularly the large ones, particularly the shareholders, and all we're saying to them is, "Pay some of that money back." We're urging the Liberals to close some of the loopholes so that those who don't have the loopholes could benefit a little.

This is a practical proposal made by our member. We're hoping some of the Liberals will respond to it.

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

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: It's a pleasure to rise in the Legislature today and speak in response to the highlights

that the member from London–Fanshawe has given in response to the speech from the throne, which was called *The Way Forward*, delivered by the Honourable David Onley on February 19, 2013.

Speaker, highlights for me in the speech from the throne are that we would continue, as a government, to be strong economic stewards, to help create jobs and grow the economy, to be fiscally responsible, to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18 and continue to build the best education and health care systems in the world, as we have done since 2003. I can tell you that these are the initiatives that my constituents in Etobicoke–Lakeshore, constituents I've been privileged to represent since 2003, want us to focus our attention on.

I was reminded of the wonderful community that I represent just this past weekend. I can tell you that we had, with my colleague from Etobicoke Centre, our eighth annual government and community services fair gathering at Cloverdale Mall, where we have hundreds of organizations and thousands of people come forward and we have an opportunity to reconnect with our communities. We have our government ministries here at the provincial level, we have municipal service providers such as those from the city of Toronto—parks and rec, public libraries—and then we have local organizations that make our communities amazing places to raise our families and to grow old in and be young in and to continue to represent. Some of those organizations are the Franklin Horner Community Centre, the LAMP community centre, Trillium Health Partners, Windfall, Furniture Bank, Dorothy Ley Hospice, our historic societies, our Etobicoke Humane Society and the Etobicoke Rotary. I wish I could name them all.

I will take the remaining seconds to say that it is a privilege to represent this community, and to thank those organizations for everything they do for our community.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We return to the member for London–Fanshawe for her response.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's interesting—you know, we've come back to the House. I got elected back in October 2011, and when we were here, we started learning how things work and how you're supposed to co-operate with each other, and we had an effort in that session that we were trying to make this minority government work. But I think this government across the way keeps forgetting it is a minority government. The focus in their questions and comments was about the Liberal government. If they want the opposition to work with them, they've got to, as one of my colleagues said, reach out to us. We're reaching out to you, and we're giving you suggestions, and we're asking you to listen. When you hear those responses about what they've done in their riding and how rosy and sunshine and apple pie it is out there, that's great—but when we're talking about the solutions so that we can find ways to help Ontarians with job creation and health care and affordability, that completely was right over their head.

So I'd like to say that I'm a little disappointed that this government wouldn't actually have some feedback on the comments that we're giving and suggestions that we're giving that are going to get results for Ontarians. That's what this session is about. Let's get results. Let's get people back to work. Let's find health care. Let's find solutions to help people get good health care and make life more affordable. That's what Ontarians are asking us for, and that's what I'm here to do. I'm not here to gloss over the questions and comments from someone else. I think that direct questions and comments is a good interchange between members, and that's how we're going to find solutions to get to where we need to go.

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

Hon. John Milloy: It's a pleasure for me to address this debate. As people may know, as government House leader I have an opportunity to speak in this Legislature quite regularly, but it's often on technical matters; it's often in a question period venue. I welcomed the opportunity, when it was offered to me, to speak about the speech from the throne and the new government, not only because I'm excited about the speech from the throne—I'm excited about the vision that has been put forward for the new government—but it also allows me to give a bit of an update to this Legislature about the great things that are going on in my riding of Kitchener Centre.

I want to begin, as others on all sides of the Legislature have, by congratulating our new Premier, Premier Wynne, someone whom I've had the privilege of working closely with over the past number of years. I also want to say how honoured I am that she has asked me to remain in her cabinet as the government House leader, a job that comes with certain challenges in a minority situation but one that I have enjoyed over the last year and will certainly enjoy as we move forward.

1650

The speech from the throne, Mr. Speaker: It's a vision for Ontario and how we want to see it progress over the next several months. As I said at the beginning, I want to reflect a bit on what it means for my community and some of the great things that are going on in my community—how we from Kitchener Centre want to see the province move forward. As other members have commented, I've certainly had a great opportunity to spend time in the community, meeting with constituents, meeting with individuals and talking about what their priorities are.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a busy, busy time back in Kitchener Centre. Several weeks ago, just to put one plug on the record, I had the great privilege of announcing \$3.5 million in government support for an organization that I think you may be aware of and other members may be: KW Habilitation, which works with individuals with developmental disabilities. They have a facility there which has been serving the community of Waterloo region for many, many years. They do an outstanding job.

I've got to give a shout-out to Ann Bilodeau, their outstanding executive director, and her team. But quite

frankly, Mr. Speaker, they needed a new facility. They needed it for a variety of reasons to be able to offer the support and services that are needed. About two weeks ago on a Friday, I was able to go on behalf of the government at a wonderful, wonderful ceremony—hundreds of people were out for it—and announce that we would be moving forward with this support for this new facility.

I think it speaks about the type of agenda that this government has had over the past number of years, one that has made social justice and issues around, in this case, individuals with disabilities, a real priority, not only in supporting them but making sure that they can provide the type of input, the type of contribution to the community that is always welcome.

The speech from the throne, of course, was last week, and in between I had a very, very busy time. I can report in the House what people in my community are saying. Again, over the past number of days, the Friday leading into the weekend, there was a very, very exciting event—again, symbolic of the trajectory of this government—and that was the opening of the brand new courthouse in Waterloo region. It was my privilege in 2005 as a new MPP to announce the fact that this government was moving ahead with the courthouse. It is a beautiful facility—over 400,000 square feet, 30 courtrooms and, perhaps most importantly, on time and on budget.

On Saturday, I went and was able to make a Trillium announcement for a local organization: the Waterloo Regional Matmen Wrestling Club, which works with young people. They had individuals from across the province, young wrestlers and their parents and coaches. We were able to talk about some support through Trillium—I believe about \$43,000 that went through.

Later in the day, as we were approaching the end of the month, I did my last Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal to a very deserving citizen of our community by the name of Chandrika Anjaria. She works with the university, has been involved in the United Way and in a number of local Indian organizations, and really has made a tremendous, tremendous contribution to our community.

I want to talk a little bit about that ceremony. That ceremony actually sprung out of a situation that had arisen in the riding of Kitchener–Waterloo, my neighbouring riding, when my colleague the then MPP Elizabeth Witmer had put forward her list of names—and members will be aware of the list of names that each of us were asked to put forward for potential recipients of this medal. Elizabeth Witmer had put forward her list and then decided to retire from politics, and we faced the conundrum of who would give out the medals, how we would organize it. It reverted, technically, to the then Premier of the day, Premier McGuinty, and I was asked to coordinate it. Once the dust of the by-election had settled and we had gotten through it, I approached Mrs. Witmer, now working at workers' compensation, the WSIB, and I also approached the new MPP, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, Ms. Fife, an NDP member, as we all know, and I said, “Why don't the three of us get

together and present these medals at one ceremony?” The one on Saturday was sort of a follow-up because Chandrika could not be there. But we had this wonderful evening where the three of us, each representing three different political parties, came together—there were several hundred people there—and presented medals to the original list that Mrs. Witmer had put forward. I want to dwell on that for a second or stress that because I want to come back to it a few seconds.

As I say, we had the Queen Elizabeth II medal presentation. Later in the evening, I went to a Chinese New Year celebration at the Central Ontario Chinese Cultural Centre—always a wonderful event, again with several hundred people there. By coincidence, their president, Mr. Shu Hing Man, is someone whom I presented a Queen Elizabeth medal to—an outstanding community member. On Sunday, Mr. Speaker, instead of a New Year's levee, I had a skating party, where, again, people from throughout the community came and skated for free at the memorial auditorium, home of the Kitchener Rangers, the greatest hockey team in the province.

What's interesting is that in all these travels, when I talked to people about what they are concerned about, they brought forward the obvious things about health care and education and the economy, but they also mentioned the courthouse. I must say, there has been a lot of buzz at home about it. But most of them, Mr. Speaker—it was quite interesting—made reference to what was going on in the Legislature and to their desire to see the parties work together.

I often wonder, when I pick up the paper in the morning—who reads the editorials? I read the editorials. Here, we all probably read the editorials. But there was an editorial in the Kitchener Record on Friday which was cited to me over and over again as I went about my duties throughout the weekend, and I'd like to share just parts of it with the Legislature. It's from Friday, February 22—and this is just to show you that people do read their editorials, and I'll just quote part of it. It says:

“The leader of Ontario's Progressive Conservatives probably felt tough when he announced Thursday that his party would vote against the upcoming provincial budget—even though it hasn't even been written yet. Maybe he imagined himself sitting in the Premier's seat when he declared he would fight for a provincial election to be held as soon as possible.

“Yet despite all the sound and fury, [the Leader of the Opposition] succeeded only in revealing his party's weakness in the minority Legislature—as well as his complete failure to comprehend how such a Legislature should work for the good of the province....

“A far better plan—for Ontario as well as [the Leader of the Opposition] and the Conservatives—would have been for him to join the budget-making process. He should have tried to influence a Liberal government that, in its throne speech this week, declared its priorities were ‘fiscal responsibility, economic growth and increased employment.’ Aren't those [the Leader of the Opposition's] goals, too?

“By withdrawing from the budget process before it has been completed, by declaring that no budget will be good enough to win Conservative approval, [the Leader of the Opposition] has elbowed his party to the sidelines, rendering it both impotent and irrelevant at a crucial time.”

Mr. Speaker, I am not making it up. I heard from people who said to me, “Did you see that editorial in the paper? Why can the parties in the Legislature not work together? Why can they not sit down and make this work? We don’t want an election.” What was interesting—and again, Mr. Speaker, I’m not exaggerating. A number of people said to me, “Do you know what was great? You and Elizabeth Witmer and Catherine Fife actually got together and were able to give out Queen Elizabeth II medals. It was great to see parties working together.”

When I think about the speech from the throne, when I think about particularly the latter section of it, the theme that comes forward there is about co-operation. It’s about a Premier who wants to set a tone that is conciliatory, that has set a tone that—and certainly people are referencing the fact that I’m House leader. I will tell you, privately and publicly, when I spoke to the Premier to get my marching orders, what she said is, “Let’s have a spirit of co-operation. Let’s be reasonable. Let’s sit down and make sure that this Legislature can work. Let’s look at what good ideas are being offered by all sides of the House and have them reflected in the speech from the throne”—which I believe it was, and certainly is the goal as we move forward with the budget.

That is one of the overall themes of the speech from the throne that I was most proud of. But I want to pick a number of them—and again, reflecting some of the concerns in the community.

As someone who—what, 10 days ago?—up to 10 days ago, was Ontario’s Minister of Community and Social Services, I had a first-hand opportunity to work with and meet with many in our community—the community of Kitchener Centre, the community of Waterloo region—who are concerned about issues of poverty.

1700

There was great excitement with the work that was undertaken by Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh in the social assistance review. I had the privilege, as the minister of the day, of receiving the report, of being briefed by both individuals, of meeting with them and learning of the type of detailed recommendations that they were going to bring forward and that were put forward in the report.

I just want to remind members of the Legislature to take a step back to when that report came out. Those of you who have had a chance to read the report—and I recommend it to everyone—will realize that within it were three types of recommendations.

The first were a series of very, very good, solid recommendations. I was excited to see some of them referenced in the speech from the throne, and the member from Haldimand–Norfolk spoke about the issue of people on social assistance keeping more of their earnings.

The second category of recommendations was those where the authors of the report said, “Look, we don’t know. We don’t have a 100% idea of how you should move forward in a certain area. It needs more study. It needs more discussion. It needs more debate.” I think that’s certainly legitimate. We gave them a huge, huge undertaking in looking at a very complicated system, the social assistance system in this province.

The third type of category involved those areas where they came forward with recommendations where, quite frankly, there isn’t a consensus; where there is debate and discussion that needs to be held; where there needs to be more consultation. It was interesting. Prior to the release of the report I had a chance to meet with many people in our community who are concerned about this issue. Following the release of the report I met with many people who are excited about the thrust, who are excited about the vision, but who want a chance to have that kind of discussion about how we move forward.

It was interesting. When the report came out and I spoke to many journalists, I outlined those three categories of reports, and I also said that we have to take a look at the fiscal realities of this province. What I think frustrated me the most is, the reporting that came forward said that the minister of the day—myself—we wouldn’t implement the report because we didn’t have the money. I never said that. What I said is that we need to study the report, we need to understand its complexities and we need to have that path forward. I was absolutely delighted when the new Premier came in and one of the first areas that she identified as a priority for her as Premier, and a priority for this government, involved this report and involved the steps that they talk about.

I’ve referenced the one that was highlighted in the speech from the throne concerning keeping more of your wages. As members are aware, those on social assistance, when they work, their social assistance rate is reduced by 50% to correspond with the wages they have, both as an incentive to have them go back into the workplace but also to level the playing field with those who are working and not on social assistance. What we’re talking about is let’s get the incentives a little bit better and have that threshold where individuals can earn up to a certain amount. That’s something that is outlined in the report and, as I say, I’m delighted that, as a government, we’ve looked at.

Another piece of the report which the speech from the throne spoke about—at the beginning part of the speech, and separate from this—was the whole issue of persons with disabilities and making sure that they are welcomed into the labour force. I began my speech today referencing KW Habilitation and the outstanding work that they do with individuals with disabilities. I can think of countless organizations across this province that I’ve met as a minister, that I’ve met as an MPP—certainly, there are a number of others that operate locally—and all of them, over and over again, spoke about the desire of so many individuals with disabilities to enter the workforce.

The fact that we have people in the province of Ontario who have the skills, who have the talent, who

want to enter the workforce but are finding barriers, are finding that there's a lack of support there for them—this was an issue which I felt very strongly about as minister and I still feel very, very strongly about as an MPP, and continue to push on it. I've had the opportunity to meet and work with our Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable David C. Onley, and in fact went with him and a number of Ontario businesses to Connecticut to visit Walgreens. Walgreens is a world leader in terms of hiring persons with disabilities as part of their operation. The plant, I believe, has—around 40% of the employment force are persons with disabilities. They don't get any special pay or some sort of special programming. They are brought in as part of the workforce. What's amazing is that we talked to the senior executives with Walgreens and they said, "You know what's our most productive plant in the country? That particular one."

Mr. Speaker, you find when you speak to employers—and I think of the great work that's being done by Rotary right now, with the fact that polio, as a cause, thankfully, is diminishing. They are able to put more of their attention in other areas. One of them is this whole area of promoting the hiring of persons with disabilities.

When you talk to the business community, they say, "We're not doing this because it's good. Yes, we all recognize the fact we want to reach out, but we're doing it because it's great for the bottom line." Here is a group of individuals who represent a labour force that has not been tapped into, many of whom have the training and the skills, but you also find studies that have been done: lower absentee rates, higher productivity, individuals who want to work.

So our challenge as a government—and this is not a fiscal challenge. I mean, there is programming, there are dollars available, but our challenge as a government—and this reflects the report that I referenced, the Munir Sheikh-Frances Lankin report; it reflects the speech from the throne—is, how can we bring employers and persons with disabilities together?

I was excited. I was delighted to see that was a significant part of, as I say, the first part of the speech from the throne. Because what the speech from the throne does is it makes all the connections. Those connections are that, yes, we have a fiscal imperative and we've got to get our house in order, but we have pressures in health care. We have pressures on so many fronts, and everything is connected from one to the other. When we look at issues like social assistance—to marginalize people on social assistance, to not give them the support they need, is merely going to put pressure on other parts of the economy. It's going to put pressure on health care. It's going to put pressure on other services that people, as they are increasingly marginalized, need to go to.

I think the vision of the Premier is one that we should all applaud, and that's a vision that says we've got to realize everything is connected. Although we do have an economic imperative, at the same time we've got to look out for everyone, including the least fortunate, in order to make our society work and in order to make our economy work.

I was delighted to see that as another cornerstone: co-operation with the opposition, seeing the interconnectedness that exists between the various programs in our government and in our society, and at the same time, within the framework of fiscal responsibility. All of us on this side of the House were pleased with the former Minister of Finance's announcement that the deficit has come in below the target—that maximum that we had. We are making progress. But what we have to do is we have to get it right. We have to make sure, as we move forward, that we make the investments that are true investments, that are going to pay off; that we make the tough decisions and are going to get our fiscal house in order; and that we continue to build an Ontario for the future.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted with the new Premier. I'm delighted with her personal vision for the province. I'm delighted with the vision of the government that's put forward in the speech from the throne. It's one that reflects a great deal of co-operation and dialogue with the opposition. I am absolutely flabbergasted that we're not seeing that dialogue and discussion continue with the Conservative Party. But I think if we forge ahead with our agenda, my hope is that we're going to see that type of dialogue and co-operation so that we can see an Ontario that is in the best interests of everyone and reflects the needs of everyone, particularly those in the great community of Kitchener Centre. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes, thank you very much. Questions and comments? The member for—

Mr. Toby Barrett: Haldimand–Norfolk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thanks, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the comments from the government House leader. As we have heard, much of his comment related to his previous portfolio as Minister of Community and Social Services, making reference to the importance of better enabling people on social assistance to not only get a job, but to keep more of the money they make if they are working. We need these people; our economy needs these people. Certainly our party has a very concrete plan to create the kinds of jobs that will be available for people on social assistance, very specific recommendations with respect to tax policy, with respect to labour policy, with respect to energy policy, with respect to eliminating so much of the unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape that we have been exposed to under the present government.

1710

This is so important. We've got something like 500,000 people unemployed, we have 450,000 people on welfare, and a very significant number of people on the disability program—a program that is growing. We brought forward legislation three years ago to enable people on these programs to keep more of the money they make. It was not brought forward by this government to the finance committee. I don't think they put it in their party platform during the last election.

There has been a change, even though we do see a continuation of the McGuinty-Wynne legacy. There are some good ideas in the Lankin report and Drummond's recommendations. We have waited far too long to see this government take some action on some of these steps here.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I used my first two rounds to, I think, attack my Tory colleagues a little bit too much. I'm not going to do that anymore; don't worry. I'm going to point the sights at the government.

I'll tell you, I listened intently to the throne speech. I heard the word "agriculture" once—somebody can correct me; I think it was mentioned one time—not really in any specific terms: not in terms of acknowledging the important role that those in rural Ontario play in our overall economy, not acknowledging that this province could certainly use a provincial agriculture strategy or procurement policy when it comes to the use and procurement of Ontario-raised and Ontario-grown food within our various ministries and operations.

In terms of the throne speech, it certainly shied away when it came to the issues of what the government did with the Slots at Racetracks Program in absolutely dismantling and destroying that industry with one fell swoop, in pulling the rug out from underneath those who work in that important industry without any consultation, without any negotiation and really without any concerns as to the detriment it was going to play in rural Ontario. They give us a really clear example of how the government can act to destroy an industry. It is the way you would do it if you were looking to absolutely eliminate the competition, and that's what they're doing.

They are talking about modernizing Ontario Lottery and Gaming. What they're talking about, essentially, is privatizing the entire scope of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., and that makes up a large part of the policy of the PCs' platform—I told you I wasn't going to attack you, but I had to. They are symbiotic in policies there. They want to privatize, let Donald Trump come in and run every casino in the province of Ontario. That certainly is not a road to economic fortune; it is a gamble that I think Ontarians aren't ready to take, and I hope they change direction on it.

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

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to join in this debate and make a few comments on the speech by my colleague the government House leader and the great member for Kitchener–Centre. It's really interesting. He committed a lot of his speaking to the passion that he shows about the work he's doing in his riding and also some of the work that he's done at the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

I just want to add to it for some of the work that has gone on in my riding that is covered in the throne speech. Our government has been in office for the last nine years, and I've been a lucky person to represent my area for the

last seven. I have to say to you, when I got elected back in 2005, I represented a riding that was really challenged when it came to youth problems, employment problems, because the young people in my area were losing hope.

At the time, I had a very frank discussion with Premier Dalton McGuinty, and he sort of covered the pillars that this government intended to pursue over the years, which were health care, education, jobs and what we would call social justice.

In my riding at the time—a large population with very few services in the area—the first opportunity by the government was to create the Taibu Community Health Centre to deal with some of the health problems of our seniors and the young people in our area. That was a \$4-million commitment by this government. I'm proud to say that that centre has been built. It's open, and the community is using it every day.

At the time I got elected, the dropout rate in the high school in my area was pretty significant. It was one of the neighbourhoods designated by the city of Toronto and the United Way. I have to say that the Learning to Age 18 Act cleared up some of the problems for me.

We're in the right direction. The people are asking us to carry on.

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

Mr. Rob Leone: I listened intently to the government House leader, who is from a neighbouring riding. I'm pretty happy to report that he reads the news, so I'm going to actually read something that Rex Murphy wrote in his article this weekend, called "Ontario has a Dead Government Walking." It says the Premier "cannot win. The Ontario Premier's coming electoral-loss-to-be was written long before she became Liberal leader earlier this month.

"The now infamous story of the cancellation of two Ontario gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga—the latter during the last election—continues oh-so-justly to hound the Ontario Liberals. It has utterly blasted Liberal credibility in Ontario."

It goes on to suggest that "the gas plant shutdowns will cost Ontarians anywhere from a quarter of a billion to a billion dollars. And this is only one of a set of megamismanagements by the McGuinty crowd: the green energy 'take the windmills and shut-up' policy, which so angered rural residents and local authorities; the scandals of the Ornge helicopter service; the eHealth mess; the massive deficits. All of this is what Premier Dad left in the curdled cup handed to" the now Premier.

"The scale of the waste matched the depth of the political cynicism involved," it continues. "Everything since—the prorogation of the Ontario legislature, the decamping of Premier McGuinty into private life, the hurried leadership convention—all has been for the tactical convenience of the minority Liberal government. All flowed from that decision on the campaign trail. The Liberals squeezed by with a minority win last time, but they will not be shielded much longer."

I'll end how the article ends by saying, "Nor should they be."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll return to the government House leader, who has two minutes to respond.

Hon. John Milloy: I appreciated the comments from my colleagues from Haldimand–Norfolk, Essex and Scarborough–Rouge River, and the uplifting comments from the member from Cambridge at the end.

The fact of the matter is, all parties in the House opposed the gas plant. That's a fact; that's part of the record.

I guess the question that I posed in my speech rhetorically—the question that was posed in the speech from the throne—is, we are a province that's facing some challenges; we've got a heck of a lot of work to do. What I'm hearing from folks in Kitchener Centre is, "Look, we have issues around health care, particularly with seniors and mental health." I think we can find consensus on it here in the Legislature. We have issues around transportation. We all recognize the needs of the 21st century in terms of infrastructure and transportation. We can find a consensus here in the Legislature.

Obviously, unemployment in general is a concern, but the issue of youth unemployment in particular is something that is concerning all of us and, I think, crosses all partisan lines. What people are saying to me, and what was outlined in the speech from the throne, is, "Why can we not, as a Legislature, sit down and find a way forward?"

That was the tone of the speech from the throne. That is the tone as we move forward with the budget discussions that we will have with the people of Ontario and with the folks across the way.

Mr. Speaker, it was a pleasure to speak today on the speech from the throne. I have to make one addition, though. I spoke about my weekend, and I forgot that on Friday I attended the House of Friendship's annual potato lunch. I want to give special congratulations to John Neufeld and all the people at the House of Friendship, who do such an outstanding great job caring for the less fortunate in our community and, at the same time, the literally dozens and dozens of volunteers who helped them out.

1720

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to be back in the Legislature and debating bills after our long leave of absence from the place. I just want to say from the outset that I want to share my time with the member from Halton, for our 20-minute cycle.

I know she's not here at the moment—I know we're not supposed to say that—but I want to congratulate the new Premier on her election as leader of the Liberal Party and thus the Premier of the province of Ontario.

As I said earlier, when we were on our prolonged break, prorogation, while the Liberals were reinventing themselves, our constituency offices did get a lot of

telephone calls and emails and letters demanding that we come back, because they actually recognize there's a jobs-and-debt crisis in the province of Ontario. I said I was more than willing to come back, but the Liberal Party needed time to reinvent itself, and so the business of Ontario was put on hold.

We were looking forward to the speech from the throne to see some new ideas, some new direction that we hope and we desperately need in the province of Ontario to go—but I think it was very sad to say that it was a missed opportunity. The speech from the throne was very nice, full of very eloquent ideas, a little bit Kumbaya-ish—but really, lots of conversations. The rubber does have to hit the road at some time. We need action. We saw a commitment to the Dalton McGuinty continuous legacy of stale ideas—no new opportunities that we desperately need in Ontario.

Just for recap of the state of the province that we are in, in 2002-03 we actually had a debt of \$132.6 billion; then we have seen that balloon almost 78% to \$235 billion. When the minister over there says we've all got to get together and we've got to fix the problems, well—

Mr. Michael Harris: Sing Kumbaya.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes, we've all got to sing Kumbaya.

We have to do a total change in direction or our financial house is going to fall and we will pay for nothing.

This government has an incredible spending problem. The increase from 2003 to now is 77.8%—

Mr. Michael Harris: Addiction.

Ms. Laurie Scott: My colleague says it's a spending addiction; it is.

Last month alone, we lost 48,000 private sector jobs—the greatest single-month job loss in several years. Of course, we all know—I'll just remind people at home—we are a have-not province. We have the highest debt and the highest unemployment, so we are kind of high in some respects. At the same time that we lost those private sector jobs last month, we also saw an addition of 9,000 public sector jobs created. This cannot continue; it does not work out.

We need specific action. We saw in the speech from the throne not a lot of details. As my leader indicated in his response, "The only way forward is to move swiftly and decisively in the direction you know in your gut is right, and right for this province."

We saw the Premier's group hug last week. There are still 600,000 Ontarians who don't have a job. In fact, while the entire province suffers from a lack of good jobs, the situation in my own riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock is worse. We have a higher-than-average unemployment rate. We lack a lot of opportunities. As I say, every day my constituency office hears from people struggling to pay their hydro bills—especially in wintertime, their heating bills—or put food on their table. They can't even get to the point of "What are my children going to work at?" They are just so

consumed with getting through their daily life, and it is quite sad.

Most people aren't looking for a handout in my riding; they're looking for a job. They want to help themselves. They have pride.

Mr. Michael Harris: A hand up.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes, they want a hand up. The best thing we can do is give them a job. They do want to work. That is what the PC Party has been trying to achieve. We have put lots of ideas out there. We have 11 white papers out there. So when you say we're not working together—we're giving you our ideas. We've consulted with Ontarians constantly since we were elected. We want to steer Ontario in the right direction. I want to have hope and opportunity for the people of my riding and the people of the province of Ontario.

You cannot continue to put your head in the sand and ignore the crisis that exists in the province of Ontario. When business entrepreneurs say to me every day, "Why would I open up a business in the province of Ontario? Can I go through the burden of regulations and red tape?" The WSIB that came in in January—my goodness—the construction industry especially; how are they going to even look at employing young people in the summertime, which they usually do to see if they like the industry, to get their foot in the door? You are killing businesses.

Can I bring up the Endangered Species Act? Because you know I could talk at great length about that, how that is crippling our economy on several fronts. They speak of ROMA, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, in town today. Go and talk to those people about the Endangered Species Act, about the burdens that this government has placed upon them.

When I say young people—and I know the minister brought up young people—why do they not change the apprenticeship system? How many years do I have to speak in the Legislature about changing the apprenticeship system? We need skilled tradespeople in Ontario, at least we know we need that. The government forecasts huge numbers, and yet we have an outdated system that prevents young people from entering that business. Instead, they set up the college of trades, which is just going to tax the current industry and does nothing for them. Let me tell you, the industries are mad, and so are a lot of the unions, about this college of trades. It's not helping young people get into the trades, nor is it helping the people that are in the trades.

When I speak about the size of the debt and deficit, it's the third-largest budget item. There's health care, there's education and there's servicing the deficit. How does that help us with programs to help the people that are disabled, to help in our health care sector, to make real changes in our education sector? If you don't have the money in the government, if you don't have people working, you cannot invest in these programs that we all hold near and dear, because of this government's out-of-control spending. We've seen that they've increased the size of government, which is going to cost us \$3 billion more by adding—up to 27 cabinet ministers we have

now, from 22. That doesn't make sense and it doesn't show a path that they're going to control their spending.

We asked about a public sector wage freeze. Nowhere was it mentioned. We've asked questions continuously. When such a large part of your budget is in wages, you have to have public sector control and wage freezes happening. You cannot ignore it and you cannot progress without dealing with it. We have tried many, many times.

I only have a few minutes left, but you see in education where they spent \$8.5 billion more than in 2003, and yet we have 250,000 fewer students. Let me tell you, anybody that's been out in their ridings knows that the parents and the students aren't too happy with what's going on in the education system right now.

We talk about health care. I know in rural Ontario we certainly suffer from not having enough doctors in the system, but now with the changes that have occurred in the present government, I can't get people to get their lab tests done in these small communities. They're now having to travel out of their communities, and yet they've wasted so much money in Ornge. Or can we just talk about the boondoggle of eHealth? That money could have been spent on front-line services.

The list goes on for long-term care. The wait for beds is two years in most cases in our ridings. We've discussed people with mental health services—it's totally unacceptable, the mental health services we have in the province of Ontario, and some of them who are suicidal have to wait two years for assistance. So, yes, can money be better spent? Absolutely, money can be better spent in this province. People don't want to see the waste that continues on now.

We have the gas plants. I know there's a lot of chat about the gas plants. It's up to \$1 billion of a promise and a plan that should never have existed. That's over \$1 billion they could have spent, again, into our province, into health care, into education, into social services, but they wasted that, and then they expect us to ignore that, to ignore the fact that they've covered up documents, to ignore that they prorogued—basically, because of that, the Premier stepped down. So we want to—

Mr. Michael Harris: The heat got too hot.

Ms. Laurie Scott: The heat is hot.

So we're hoping we can get sufficient committees to investigate this further, because yes, the people do want us to investigate where their money went to, because it's their money and it's not well spent.

The many issues of the killing of the horse racing industry, particularly in my riding with Kawartha Downs, and the many businesses that survived off that industry being cut out from underneath them with no consultation, that occurs again. Rural Ontario is getting hammered by a government that does not understand them and does not want to understand them.

1730

Mr. Speaker, if I could just say my last point, on the industrial wind turbines: The Premier made mention in her speech from the throne that she would have willing communities, willing hosts. The wind turbines that are

proposed in my riding have not got final approval, so I ask that she look at those wind turbines anyway. For four years, we've fought against those wind turbines in my riding, and she should listen. There's no way that this is a willing community to have wind turbines.

I want to share my time now with the member from Halton.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to let you know that I have great faith in the people of Ontario. I think Ontario is a great province, and Ontario will rise to lead again. It's the government over there that I don't have too much faith in. Ontario is a great province and it will be number one again; this government over here, not so much.

You know, our new Premier was sworn in on February 19. In her first initiative, she swore in a very large cabinet. She knew that would be controversial; why would she do that? Well, during her run for the leadership, which she won on January 26—and congratulations to her—there were many people in her caucus who helped her, and, of course that creates a debt. She needs to pay those people back, and she did so. She paid five or six of them back by creating a very large cabinet. That cabinet cost Ontario taxpayers a lot of extra money.

Why should we be concerned about a larger cabinet? Because it costs taxpayers a lot of extra money. Each cabinet minister probably has six or seven staff; they have a travel budget; they have chauffeurs; they have offices that they have to pay for. It probably costs close to \$1 million each. So that larger cabinet probably cost the taxpayers of this province \$5 million or \$6 million.

So here the Premier's first act that she did, the first thing she did on becoming Premier, was to pay back promises, pay back her debts, her leadership debts, to people in her caucus, and she did so at the expense of the Ontario taxpayer—spending Ontario taxpayers' money to pay her own debts. I'm sorry she did that, because it created an impression. In effect, this Premier paid \$5 million or \$6 million back to the people that she owed for her leadership, and that's too bad; that was taxpayers' money. This was done as the first item of business in her mandate. I wish her first action hadn't used taxpayers' money in this way.

But perhaps we shouldn't be surprised. The cancellation of the gas-fired power plants, they being in Mississauga and Oakville, was funded also by taxpayers' dollars. They cancelled the Mississauga plant during the election, and they did that in order to save five seats in Mississauga and Oakville and Etobicoke. So taxpayers funded a seat-saver program for the Liberal Party of Ontario. Who cancelled the plants? Well, the Minister of Energy, Chris Bentley at the time, said he did not do it. He said, in a committee hearing last summer, that the Liberal campaign team cancelled those plants. At that time, the Premier, Kathleen Wynne, was co-chair of the Liberal campaign team. So she was in charge, or pur-

portedly in charge, as co-chair, of running the campaign for the Liberals' re-election.

She claims she has no knowledge of the cancellation. That gives me great concern, that the Premier has taken that position. She was co-chair, and she's asking us to believe that the most important decision that the campaign team made during the election—she is suggesting that she had no knowledge, no input into that decision. At the very least, as a senior cabinet minister and as co-chair of the Liberal campaign team, she failed in her fiduciary responsibilities to the taxpayers of Ontario. I'd like to believe the Premier, but the facts make it very difficult to do so.

Then, on February 14—Valentine's Day; there was a lot of love in the air—the Premier wrote a letter to the leader of the PC Party and to the leader of the NDP, promising that a select committee would be struck to find out the conditions under which the gas plants were cancelled and who was responsible.

There were no conditions in that letter. It was a promise—a written promise. It seemed that she had a genuine desire to get the facts out. It seemed like a new beginning. However, then three days later, the government House leader, whom we just heard from, backtracked and added conditions—strings—to the promise, suggesting that the contempt charges had to be withdrawn before a select committee could be struck. Why was this condition all of a sudden put in? What happened after the February 14 promise? One might think that new information was given to the Premier, new information that made it necessary to backtrack on a written promise. She knew there would be backlash but she backtracked on it anyway.

Then, last Thursday, on February 21, more documents came from the OPA, the Ontario Power Authority, regarding the cancellation of the power plants, papers that incidentally had been held since last November and were not forthcoming until the contempt charges were reintroduced on February 20. So you have to ask the question, how much does the Premier know about that situation? In fact, how much have they told the Premier about this situation and who is it that is withholding this information from the Premier, if, in fact, we believe what she says? For one, I would like to believe her; she is the Premier of this province, and I would like to believe what she says. It means a lot to the integrity of our entire system.

If we look at the sequence of events that have happened here: First, the taxpayers' dollars were spent in order to enlarge the cabinet so the Premier could pay off her political debts; second, she denied involvement, she denied any knowledge of the power plants, even though she was co-chair and a senior cabinet minister at the time; and third, she reneged on the written promise to strike a select committee under very confusing situations—the introduction of contempt charges, the introduction of more papers and more documents from the Ontario Power Authority. Well, it hasn't been an auspicious start for this Premier.

If I were to give the Premier some advice, given the situation that Ontario is in today, I would suggest that she should clear the slate. I would suggest she should get the information out through any and all means possible. I would suggest that the select committee should be struck, where sworn witnesses can get to the bottom of this sordid affair. Do it this spring. Get it behind us. Get this whole situation behind us so that we can move forward with the things that Ontario needs desperately at this time. We can move forward with jobs; we can move forward with the reduction of red tape; we can move forward with all of the things that Ontario and the people of Ontario desperately need.

We currently have a debt of about \$250 billion that needs dramatic attention from this government and from this House, and it needs attention as soon as possible. We have a huge deficit. The government suggests it's going to be \$12 billion; I suspect it'll be a little larger than that, but it is certainly one of the largest we have had in history. This government has been saddled with debts and deficits since its beginning. We're currently spending, as a previous speaker said, \$11 billion in interest. Imagine what you could do with \$11 billion a year if we could only start reducing our debt. We could build 11 huge hospitals per year.

1740

We have to get on with the business of Ontario. We have to get on with the creation of jobs. We have to get on from being held up from that over this mess that's here. Finish with the mess. Have a select committee. Get it behind us.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I'm going to take this opportunity, following the speech from Mr. Chudleigh, to go back to a point that I think all parties in this House should agree on and one that I believe needs to be recognized in the budget coming forward, and that is the recommendation coming from our party, from our leader, Andrea Horwath, that there be a five-day home care guarantee. I am quite sure that there is a shared experience of every person in this chamber of dealing with constituents who find themselves in a desperate situation, either personally or for an older member of their family, or a member of their family who is facing serious illness, where they have to wait for home care and find themselves in an impossible situation.

According to Ontario's Auditor General, in some communities Ontarians are waiting as long as six months to receive home care services. Speaker, you're very well aware that when people need nursing care at home, six months is not an acceptable wait time. Five days is still going to be something of a burden on some households, but frankly, five days as opposed to six months is something we could justify to the people of Ontario, something the people of Ontario would want.

You can't delay medical care, you can't delay home care for extended periods of time without having serious impact on people's lives. There's an opportunity for this

government to garner support from our party, to garner support from the majority of people living in this province by moving forward on this pledge.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to speak and comment on the remarks made by my colleague opposite from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

I want to remind the House that the government's commitment through the throne speech focussed on fiscal responsibility, economic growth and increasing employment. I also want to remind the House that we have had an increase in employment to the tune of 388,200 net new jobs since June 2009. Furthermore, Ontario has recovered 143% of jobs lost since the recession. So I want to remind my colleagues opposite.

The other piece is that the throne speech clearly talks about job creation, and that our government, listening to the opposition members, will be creating the jobs strategy, which is being considered and supported by both opposition parties. Furthermore, our government is supportive of the business community. I don't know why my colleague opposite talks about killing businesses and what have you; yet in the throne speech, we talked about an increase in the exemption threshold for the employer health tax. Again, that's supportive of employers.

Furthermore, we are committed to reviewing corporate tax compliance. Furthermore, our government is committed to \$50 million to \$300 million of federal-provincial venture capital funds to support, again, businesses. Again, Mr. Speaker, we're also committed to increasing access to capital for small and medium-sized businesses, because we recognize as a government that the backbone of our communities is small businesses.

For the opposition members to say that we're not supporting businesses is absolutely not true. I welcome everyone to continue the dialogue, and listen to the opposition parties as well as our partners.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I listened very carefully to the comments that were made by my colleagues, the members from Halton and Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, excellent comments, in my view, on this throne speech that's been put forward by this government. I think, particularly financially, we have to recognize that we're in a very, very deep hole here in Ontario, much worse than I think most people realize. The member from Halton made mention of the fact that we're currently spending almost \$11 billion on interest for money that we've borrowed here in the province of Ontario over the last nine years. We're in a very deep hole, and if interest rates rise even by one percentage point, that means we're going to pay another \$500 million per year, just on interest—not on improving health care, not on improving our education system, just on servicing debt.

How we've gotten ourselves into this situation is because of uncontrolled spending on the other side; they don't know how to rein in spending. That's what causes

us a lot of concern and what's, frankly, putting us in the position of not being able to support this throne speech, because they've talked about vague generalities about how they're going to bring spending under control, but they're going to care a lot more than everybody else and they're going to continue that kind of spending. What we need to do is have a very strict approach to the way that we go on in Ontario. We need to make sure that we get our spending under control so that we can afford all these services.

We also need to have a very focused approach in kick-starting jobs and the economy here in Ontario. The youth unemployment rate currently stands at about 15%. It's something that I hear about a lot in my riding, where young people are forced to still live with their parents, not because they want to but because they don't have a job. They're coming out of universities with multiple degrees and there are still no jobs for them to go to. That's what we were hoping to hear from this throne speech. We didn't hear that. Regrettably, we're not going to be able to support it.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to comment on the remarks made by the member from Halton. I think what he's attempting to do as a senior member in this House and someone who, I think, takes a pragmatic approach to policy development—and principle, actually—is to offer you some space, as the government, to do the right thing, to I guess press rewind on some of the failed exercises that you've embarked on, to give yourselves the room and the mea culpa on the gas plant fiasco and move it outside of this Legislature to where full public scrutiny and full debate can be had and impartiality can reign supreme, rather than the constant legislative roadblocks and strategic roadblocks that we saw in the previous session, whether it was the striking of committees or the construct of committees or all of the other games that I think members are familiar with in this House. We need to see a real, tangible effort made on the part of the government to own up to the mistakes and to set the tone for future progress and future policy development.

Anything other than that, really, only adds to the cynicism that we on this side of the House feel in your approach to the work that this body needs to do. It also, of course, adds to the cynicism and the palpable disdain that I think the public in general have for the way in which this government has approached each and every aspect of its policy development.

Honestly, Mr. Speaker, it is not looking good out there for the good Liberal government. I think they know that. That's obviously why they prorogued. That's obviously why so many of their main ministers jumped ship. We're also giving them an opportunity now to keep that boat afloat a little bit, but do it for the right reasons, for the people of the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. One of the opposition members has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I thank the members for Toronto–Danforth and Scarborough East. The member for Scarborough East's comments were interesting.

The member for Eglinton stood up and talked about the demise of his favourite restaurant earlier this afternoon. That is happening all across Ontario. It's not just restaurants; it's all kinds of small businesses. Those businesses are disappearing, and that's what's causing the demise of Ontario. That's what's causing your lack of income and tax revenues. The member doesn't see that.

The trouble with backbencher members is, they're listening to the government. They're drinking the Kool-Aid. It's not what's happening in Ontario. Get out there and understand what's happening to the businesses in Ontario: They're failing. It's just not good out there, and it's very, very difficult.

1750

The lack of co-operation that we get from the government—the day that the Premier appointed this same House leader—the same House leader who argued for months about the construction of the committees of the House, who argued for months and then cancelled the committees, wouldn't reappoint the committees in September, wouldn't give us information about what is going to be debated next week or what is going to be debated in the House until the last minute, had absolutely no co-operation with the other parties whatsoever, and as soon as he was reappointed as House leader, the co-operation in this House—the die was cast. The co-operation in this House would not be good because of his past performance in this House and the way he has represented—

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: He's having a great time making fun of me over here, but the truth is, when he was appointed House leader, this Premier did not want the co-operation of this place.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I appreciate the support from the government House leader in this matter.

There are a number of critical points that I want to touch on before I go into some detail about the speech from the throne, and the first is, it's very clear to everyone in this chamber and everyone in this province that families are being squeezed hard by tough times. We hear about it in our constituency offices. We hear about it when we go to community events. We see it when we go down streets where businesses are closed.

We know that, right now, Ontario is facing some very tough times. People want government action to restore the economy, to bring back jobs, to deal with health care, to make life more affordable and to take a balanced approach to balancing Ontario's books. That's the context, that's the frame, within which people see our action or inaction here in this Legislature.

The speech from the throne was presented very recently. It had a lot of promising talk; had some interesting language. But, unless the promising talk is converted into real action in the coming budget, then we won't be able

to support it. This government will have to look elsewhere for support. We'll have to figure out how exactly it's going to get something passed if it doesn't have a number of solid steps taken to address the concerns of the people of Ontario, a number of which we talk about in our response to that speech.

The government's throne speech was vague, lacked details or concrete plans to create jobs for youth, to crack down on corporate tax loopholes, to make auto insurance more affordable and to deal with the very pressing needs in community care and health care. We saw promises on some of the proposals that New Democrats have put forward, but there was silence or simple rejection on the part of others.

In this session, we're going to look for the government to take action, to show leadership, on job creation, health care, making life more affordable, and dealing with those tough times that all of us see manifesting themselves across this province.

It's our intention as New Democrats to get results for people in this minority Parliament. It's the reason we're here: to get those results. If we're not getting those results, you have to ask yourself, Speaker, why do we stay in this chamber?

In concrete terms, what are the things that we want to see? Not just well-worded, interestingly worded speeches from the throne; what do we need to see in the budget to actually make a difference for people in Ontario? One of those is ending corporate tax loopholes. This new Premier has got to pay attention to, and act on, closing those corporate tax loopholes so that we actually have the money that we need, to do what people in this province expect from us.

The government indicated they'd move forward on some corporate tax compliance recommendations in the Drummond report and they'd explore an increase in the employer health tax. They announced a commission on the reform of Ontario's public services.

The Drummond report recommended reducing the ability of corporations to eliminate or decrease payment of provincial corporate income tax by shifting profit and losses across Canada. Speaker, why wouldn't we do that? Why would we in Ontario effectively just pass money on to corporations in other provinces, when we are so well aware of what's needed right here in this province? We know that there are practices that need to be eliminated, that need to be changed, that have to be addressed.

With regard to the employer health tax exemption, to help small businesses—and this is a worthy goal—the province doesn't collect employer health tax on the first \$400,000 of payroll. It makes sense to do that, but it doesn't make sense to apply that to all businesses in Ontario. Ontario should retain the employer health tax rules for small businesses. At the same time, they should eliminate the exemption on the first \$400,000 of payroll for all companies with payrolls over \$5 million, or roughly 100 employees. That would mean approximately \$90 million a year for the treasury. With \$90 million here

and \$90 million there, soon you're talking about the money needed to balance the budget and provide people in this province with the services that they need.

Speaker, as you're well aware, young people in this province have tremendous difficulty getting a toehold in the job market, getting that experience that they need to be able to speak about when they apply for jobs. They need support getting into companies. We're encouraged that the government has indicated that they have a willingness to help young people get on-the-job training. We, however, are going to need to see the details about how this program will actually be implemented.

In 2012, there were 182,000 unemployed Ontarians between the ages of 16 and 24. Speaker, like you, and I'm sure this is the case, I have talked to many young people who come into my office—and the parents of those young people—who cannot get a job in the field where they've had training, cannot get a job that pays more than minimum wage, and in many cases can't get a job at all. People expect us to act on those needs, to address those concerns.

We've proposed a First Start program to get young people into jobs. We want to provide young people aged 16 to 26 years an entry point to long-term employment opportunities, opportunities that will allow people to get on their feet and establish a track record so they'll be able to go on to other employment in the future. We've calculated that with an investment from this government, we could create over 25,000 jobs within two years, with participants learning new on-the-job skills and earning their own income.

Speaker, if this government is serious in its statements in the speech from the throne that it wants to deal with youth unemployment, then it makes complete sense for this government to take these suggestions, carry them forward as they're writing their budget, as they're looking at what is it that will actually pass in this Legislature in the months to come.

As I mentioned earlier, we need a guarantee that people will get home care, community care, when they need it. We need a timeline to implement a home care guarantee. It was nice to hear that the government has a willingness to get seniors the home care they need, but we need those details. We have to have a substantive commitment that we can see delivering real home care to people in a very short time.

As I've said earlier, Ontario's Auditor General has said that in some communities, Ontarians are waiting as long as six months to receive home care services. Currently, there are 6,100 Ontarians on the home care wait list—far too many.

Speaker, you seem to be indicating something.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes. I would draw the member's attention to the fact that it is 6 of the clock. As such, we will adjourn the House until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
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 Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales 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 du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
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, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
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 Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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 Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
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 Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
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	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
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	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre 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, Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
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 Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement 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 Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	London West / London-Ouest	
Vacant	Windsor–Tecumseh	

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Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Bill Mauro
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Bas Balkissoon, Rick Bartolucci
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Mike Colle, Rosario Marchese
Laurie Scott, Todd Smith
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day (pro tem.)

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Phil McNeely, Paul Miller
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

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Steven Del Duca, Bob Delaney
Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

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Steve Clark, Mike Colle
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Bill Mauro
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Vacant
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France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qaadri
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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

Chair / Président: Vacant
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Joe Dickson, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Margaret R. Best
Ted Chudleigh, Cheri DiNovo
Ernie Hardeman, Helena Jaczek
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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