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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

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Wednesday 8 May 2013

Mercredi 8 mai 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Wednesday 8 May 2013

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mercredi 8 mai 2013

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NON-PROFIT HOUSING
CO-OPERATIVES STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LES COOPÉRATIVES DE LOGEMENT
SANS BUT LUCRATIF

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 1, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 14, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés coopératives et la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne les coopératives de logement sans but lucratif et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

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

Mr. Michael Harris: Good morning. I'm happy to speak to Bill 14, An Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

I think all of us in this House can agree that the cost of living has risen much too quickly for Ontario families over the last 10 years. In fact, I've heard from my constituents in the riding of Kitchener–Conestoga who tell me that life under the Liberal government has become completely unaffordable. We know that far too many tenant households in Ontario are stretched to the limit trying to pay their bills, including their rent.

Despite this worsening situation, the Premier and her Liberal cabinet and caucus continue to allow skyrocketing hydro rates that eat away at what little disposable income these households, in fact, have left at the end of the month. Ironically, the Liberal government continues to pride itself on standing up for tenants, yet its own failed policies, like the feed-in tariff program, continue to increase the cost of living for those who can least afford it.

Now, more Ontarians are turning to affordable housing as their only option to make ends meet. Affordable community housing gives individuals and their families with low- to moderate-income households an opportunity to rent a housing unit at a lower cost. In fact, the region of Waterloo owns and operates more than 2,700 affordable rental units in Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo, Woolwich, Wellesley and Wilmot townships.

According to the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, there were more than 152,000 households on municipal waiting lists for assisted housing as early as 2011. That number was up by nearly 10,500 households from 2010, an increase of 7.4% in one year.

Closer to my home in Waterloo region there are 3,000 individuals and families currently waiting to move into an affordable home. And the wait, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, is long. According to Waterloo Region Housing, seniors can wait up to two years to move into an affordable home, while families typically wait six months to four years, and individuals wait four to six years. This reality puts a real strain on families already going through tough times.

With tough economic times, co-op housing helps Ontarians to find a suitable home to raise a family and build a safe community with other tenants. Co-op housing is different from a typical landlord-tenant relationship. They have rules and policies that are uniquely set out in their bylaws. For example, co-op members determine how funds are spent, determine the cost of rent for tenants and write the rules of conduct for the co-op.

When disputes arise between tenants and their board members with regard to missed rent payments, late rent payments or behavioural problems affecting other tenants, this has great ramifications. For example, in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, a housing co-op called Sand Hills is going through an expensive court dispute between its tenants and its board members. Tenants are being told that they have outstanding rent payments, but their board members cannot provide documentation to prove it. On top of that, residents feel that their homes are not being repaired as they should and feel unsafe in their own homes because of it. Since the region of Waterloo oversees the co-op's management, they ruled to eject the board immediately until the matter is settled in court.

You can only imagine how stressful this must be on families, but the problems continue. Without the co-op's approval, board members used up to \$15,000 of the co-op's fund to pay for a lawyer to represent them in court with the dispute with the region. This is greatly affecting

families in the co-op, using money that could have been spent on house repairs and other necessities.

Speaker, this bill, when it was Bill 65, could have resolved this issue much more quickly at a lower cost, with fewer negative consequences. Unfortunately, though, it died on the order paper when the Liberals decided to cynically prorogue this House and spend their efforts and their time electing a new Premier. Sand Hills is just one example of a co-op dispute that could have been avoided, but I'm sure that there are hundreds more across the entire province, costing people—families—their hard-earned dollars. If this bill was passed last fall, then the disputes resolution process could have been streamlined, and hearings like this one would have gone before the Landlord and Tenant Board rather than being placed in a long queue of court cases.

Yesterday, the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty, was back at Queen's Park to appear as a witness in the justice committee for the cancellation of the gas plants. I wonder if he felt that legislation was moving forward in the House any better than before he left, and if prorogation was in fact actually necessary. I know my colleague from Nipissing questioned him on that several times—some-what got an evasive answer, but anyways. I bet, though, if he looked at the order paper today and read all the bills that were being debated for the second time, he would see how drastic his decision was to lock the doors of this House and prevent us from debating important legislation like this, especially when this bill had support from all three parties.

Clearly with the cancellation of the two power plants—costing about a half a billion dollars of taxpayers' money and growing each and every day—the lavish spending over at eHealth and the scandals at Ornge, this government has more problems than it in fact can handle.

You know, you would think that in the consultation process to develop this bill, the Liberals would have met with residents in co-op homes. These families know what it takes to push a dollar as far as it can go in order to pay for the cost of living. Clearly the Liberals didn't learn this lesson in their consultations with these families because they continue to spend, spend, spend without any knowledge of the actual cost of their government.

But this morning I'm here to help speak to this legislation, this important legislation, that will actually reduce the cost of living on hard-working Ontarians. Bill 14 will reduce the backlog of court disputes by amending the Residential Tenancies Act and the Co-operative Corporations Act to move most co-op tenant dispute cases from the courts to the Landlord and Tenant Board. It also strives to streamline the internal dispute resolution process in non-profit co-ops so the Landlord and Tenant Board will deal with rent disputes and behavioural problems. This amendment will allow for disputes to be settled a lot quicker and at a cheaper cost to residents so that they can focus on getting back on their feet and providing for their families.

In my community, the region of Waterloo, there are many co-ops, and I've had an opportunity to meet with

many of them that have come in and talked about how this bill, although we would have preferred it to have been passed last legislative sitting, will actually help families that live in co-ops move forward.

0910

With what little time I have left, I want to talk briefly about some of the changes that were made. Obviously, this new bill contains an amendment to allow the Landlord and Tenant Board to waive that \$45 filing fee. There were a few additional things incorporated from the last bill, or changes that were made. You know what? We'll look forward to continuing the discussion about this important matter.

I was slated to speak to this bill last fall but I didn't get that opportunity. Today, I obviously will have had that opportunity. I wanted to speak to some of the situations that have arisen in my community, such as the Sand Hills dispute. But I know this bill will eventually move forward and we'll get it into committee and make some of those other changes we have spoken about over the course of this debate. I'll leave it at that and look forward to engaging in further discussion on this one.

You know what? I would have liked to have had the opportunity yesterday to speak to Premier Dalton McGuinty, to actually ask his opinion.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Harris: I've got one more minute left. I'm going to have an opportunity to talk further about this bill—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order, the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Mr. Michael Harris: —but I would have liked to ask Dalton McGuinty yesterday what he thought about the fact that these bills are now back. It's like Groundhog Day—all over again. I would have liked to have asked him what he felt about that. I know he said his mother was watching. I would have liked to have asked her what she feels about the impact that his cynical decision to prorogue the Legislature last fall is having on communities across Ontario, including those who live in co-op housing.

I'll leave it at that. I look forward to members' comments on this bill and will wrap up in the last two minutes I have. Thanks so much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to welcome again the co-ops this morning. Welcome, Harvey Cooper and his teammates for enduring this process and putting up with the continued debate on this matter.

I'd just like to say I was at one of my co-ops this weekend, Stoneworth. What a great co-op; they're doing amazing things. I know they're looking forward to this bill being passed. Hopefully, we can get that done shortly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: This bill has been debated now for 15 hours. Everybody agrees. Stop your filibustering.

Let's get on with second reading and let's send it to committee. Stop filibustering.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak for two minutes on this. I look forward to my time here.

I too want to welcome our guests back. I know you're here to continue to hear the good things we have to say about this bill. Our party will continue to say good things about this bill. It's the opportunity to chat.

Hon. Liz Sandals: That is, you'll continue to filibuster.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: As I said the last time I spoke on this—if I can have the floor, thank you—I spoke about the time that my wife, Patty, and I—I'm sorry. I'd like the floor for just one moment, if you don't mind.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I didn't even open my mouth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would like the member to sit down. You already said it once to the minister. I think she got the message. You didn't have to repeat it. You may now continue.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I would like the time to be able to talk about the visit that my wife, Patty, and I shared at the housing co-op in North Bay during the last election.

I still can't hear myself think, Speaker. I apologize, but it's very difficult when you can't—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You might want to sit down for a second. If you have trouble hearing with that amount of noise, can you imagine what I go through every day? I'm sorry, but it's not that loud that it requires any effort here.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I do find it annoying.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Just deal with the issue. I'm sorry you feel it's annoying. Deal with the issue.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My issue is that my wife, Patty, and I did enjoy our tour of the co-op. I would highly encourage all members from all parties to visit their co-op housing projects and communities. These are absolutely wonderful communities within each and every municipality that has them. It's a real opportunity to understand, to fully understand, the important role that co-op housing plays in your local community. So I would highly encourage every MPP to get out of this Legislature and get down into the communities and visit one of these valuable housing co-operatives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Welcome back, to those who represent co-ops. I am a mother and Mother's Day is coming up. There are many mothers in this chamber and there are many mothers who live in co-ops. On behalf of all mothers, I appeal to my friends in the Progressive Conservative Party to maybe keep the debate short. Let's get this to committee. Let's get it passed so that these mothers can stay in their homes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I would just like you to know that the people of Guelph support this bill—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm sorry, Minister. That was the fourth—the table just alerted me.

The member from Kitchener–Conestoga has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Michael Harris: I too would like to welcome our guests today from the co-op rental housing group to continue to hear the debate that is happening. Do you know what? The member just mentioned Mother's Day coming up. I had an opportunity to actually give my mother a call this morning and speak to her. She is in fact from Guelph and lives in Guelph. I'll be looking forward to of course giving her another call on Sunday.

I want to just follow up on some of the comments made by the Attorney General. You know what? I hope he was as discouraged and as vocal in cabinet last year, when the Premier cynically prorogued the House, as he is today with members who didn't get an opportunity to actually speak to this bill last year. I hope that he pounded the table and screamed and yelled, as he is today, when the Premier made that cynical decision to prorogue the Legislature and kill important legislation that we're now re-debating this session. I hope he was as discouraged as he is this morning with his former Premier on that cynical attempt to prorogue the Legislature, to simply kill any further discussion on power plants and you name it that we're now hearing about today.

I just want to talk quickly, in the last 30 seconds, about the one item that in fact was changed. That's the one-sided amendment to the LTB that would consider, without widespread consultation—landlords were upset, justifiably fearing that the door will be open to disgruntled tenants to take over every minor dispute. You know what? We need to stress that these nuisance hearings that they've now incorporated will only cause further delays in the already backlogged LTB system. This is bad news for landlords and it's bad news for tenants who actually have legitimate cases before the board that they need resolved in a timely manner.

Speaker, with that, I appreciate the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I too am very pleased to join this debate today for Bill 14, An Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. I'm really pleased to see this bill come back here to the House. I actually was very disappointed when we prorogued and this bill fell off the table last fall, because quite frankly I'm always pleased to have an opportunity to speak about co-operatives.

Prior to October 6, 2011, I was actually general manager of the Ontario Dairy Goat Co-operative. I appreciate and thank the leadership from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada for being here throughout all this

debate. It's a special mindset that embraces co-operative-ness. I have to tell you, the village that I'm from, Teeswater, Ontario—we actually exist because of four co-operatives. We have the Huron Bay Co-operative, the Gay Lea Foods Co-operative, the Ontario Dairy Goat Co-operative, and we have our own grocery store because people pulled together, after two years without a local grocery store, to chip in some dollars, so we are very proud to have our own grocery store on our main street. Otherwise, it would be gone. So I really, truly appreciate the whole essence behind co-operativeness and that's why I really look forward to the opportunity to speak to this bill.

Specifically, Bill 14 is intended to help people who are having a tough time. That's one thing about the Ontario Dairy Goat Co-operative: It didn't matter whether you were milking 1,000 goats or 200 goats; you all pooled your milk together to make a difference and to make life a little bit easier. That's what we want to provide and see through Bill 14 as well. We want to provide people who are having a tough time with non-profit co-operative housing, and we want to look after them in a fair and responsible way. That's the thing: Everyone is equal in this particular essence. I think it's an obligation as a society that we continue to support this type of initiative.

0920

The intention of this bill is to streamline the system of solving problems and disputes, and we support that. There has been significant cost in going to court, as opposed to going to the Landlord and Tenant Board to solve these problems. It would seem that going to the Landlord and Tenant Board to solve these problems is a logical thing to do. It gives the opportunity to take disputes between landlords and tenants to this board, as opposed to running them through the courts.

Anyone who has ever been in the court system knows it is not cheap and sometimes is very unproductive. It is estimated that the cost of—

Mr. Michael Harris: Like proroguing.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Like proroguing, absolutely.

Mr. Michael Harris: Very unproductive.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes, unproductive, just like proroguing, as my friend from Kitchener-Conestoga mentioned.

In terms of being costly, it's estimated that the cost of resolving these co-op disputes in courts runs between \$3,000 and \$5,000 each. We want to see these types of things get out of the courts so that other, more pressing issues can be there. There is our alternative: Get it to the Landlord and Tenant Board. That's the alternative we have to consider, but we have to do it with a balance. It needs to be a fair, balanced process for both sides—the landlords as well as the tenants. It needs to ensure that there's no frivolousness or nuisance stuff being able to actually backlog the issues.

Speaking about backlogging, we have so much to talk about with regard to this bill and other bills that we see coming through this House. Because of prorogation, so much fell off the table. We have a huge backlog. But we

in the PC caucus take our job very seriously, and we want to represent our constituents and the issues, and that's why we're taking time to speak to each and every bill.

Back to Bill 14: There's never an opportunity to do better—outside of Bill 14. To do better is to make life easier, to make life a little bit more streamlined so that the people in co-operative housing can find a better way. We have a problem right now that costs co-op members millions of dollars in unnecessary legal costs every year. That isn't the better way; it's not a fairer way. It costs millions of dollars, and we also, as I said, clog up the court system, which costs all Ontarians time and money. Yet it goes on and on, millions add up, and the court dockets just get more backlogged.

These disputes includes rent arrears, late payment of rent, wilful damage, illegal activity by tenants, interfering with other tenants' enjoyment of their property. These cases don't belong in court. They belong in front of the Landlord and Tenant Board. Let's streamline this and make life easier.

Roughly 125,000 people live in more than 550 not-for-profit housing co-operatives across Ontario. There are co-ops in 95 of the province's 107 ridings. With co-operatives in so many ridings, Speaker, clearly this is not just a specific urban issue. It impacts constituencies and ridings right across this wonderful province.

When I think about affordable housing and the people who are struggling to find it, because it's not easy, I have to think about how much we could do in terms of being better and how much more we could put into affordable housing if we didn't have all the scandals. Unfortunately, today I read a headline that really is disturbing. According to the headlines today, for the Liberal government, scandal is the new normal. Well, let me tell you, that is not acceptable in the Ontario that I am proud—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: My point of order is that the member should be speaking about the bill, as she well knows the rules of the House, and I would ask you to instruct her to do so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for your point of order. I was getting close. She was wandering a bit. I gave her a little latitude, but if she wanders any further she will be getting a warning. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Duly noted, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we could do so much more with dollars that, unfortunately, are being thrown out the window with scandal after scandal after scandal—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All right. You had your latitude. Now you stick to the issue. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: As I said, Speaker, if we had the dollars to afford co-operative housing in the manner it should be treated, we would have so many more opportunities to have affordable housing units, to have more long-term-care beds, more home care, more special

education teachers. I could go on for days and days, but I don't want to digress, because speaking about affordable housing is so, so important. That's why we have to address this through our debate on Bill 14. We don't want to see this file mismanaged like so many other files that have been by this Liberal government.

Specifically, in my riding of Huron–Bruce, in my Blyth and Kincardine constituency offices, I hear from people who are struggling to pay their own housing, their own utilities, and it's becoming harder and harder under this government. My office hears from people struggling to pay for their basic needs—home heating, auto insurance, healthy food, just as a few examples. These are expenses that families cannot avoid. They're basic necessities which need to be paid, and we can no longer see a government squander our hard-earned dollars away through issue after issue after issue. You know what I mean, Speaker.

We know that's the problem faced by those folks who actually need a place to call home, a safe place such as that that over 140,000 Ontarians are waiting to call home. We have a waiting list with over 140,000 Ontarians waiting for co-operative housing. Again, we have to stop the squandering, we have to stop the waste and we need to be able to support co-operative housing in the manner which it deserves.

Thirty-two per cent of tenants have accommodations that fail to meet standards of adequacy, suitability and affordability. This is all wrong. And the loss of the industrial sector, with over 600,000 Ontario men and women out of work, might cause that waiting list to grow.

Speaker, Ontario's in dire straits and we need a party that will address the tough issues and address what's right for Ontarians, as opposed to squandering our hard-earned tax dollars away.

We know that too many Ontarians—1.31 million tenant households—are stretched to the limit trying to pay their household bills, including their rent. We know that some 20% of these households spend more than 50% of their income on rent, while 32% are in core need, meaning their current accommodation fails to meet standards. And you know what? Under this current government, I worry about the standards that we have come to value in Ontario. Our standards across the board, be it the manner in which government conducts itself, be it the manner in which people should assume they can have a roof over their head, are spiralling downwards. We need to put a stop to it. The only stop really and truly is to bring around a change that Ontarians are asking for.

Mr. Michael Harris: Change the team.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: And we all know what that change is: It's a change of team, absolutely.

But back to affordable housing: There are massive wait-lists, as I said, and there's nothing for these people except to wait and to get into some sort of housing.

In my riding, with the way this Liberal government is headed, affordable housing is going to be a huge issue. The government closed the Walkerton jail—hundreds of jobs lost. The government closed Bluewater Youth

Centre—over 200 jobs lost. E.D. Smith in Seaforth is relocating in June to the US—again, more jobs lost.

We have to take a look at Bill 14, make the amendments and make sure affordable housing is a reality for everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'll briefly join the debate, welcome guests here to the gallery and just tell you what's happening here. So there's a little bill—it's not a big bill; it's a small bill—that would help co-ops, a really important kind of affordable housing in Ontario, something we desperately need to invest in and build. So many people can't afford rent. We have a government that's done far too little to protect tenants, to build affordable housing, and we have an opposition party that's now stalling so we can't do anything else. I'm not going to stall anymore; I just wanted to get you up to speed. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments. Which one? There are two people standing. The Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you, and thank you to Harvey and his cohorts up there, who are being very patient waiting for us to finish the debate.

My constituents in Guelph support this bill. Let's stop the filibuster; let's get this bill passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to follow the address by my colleague from Huron–Bruce, Ms. Thompson—a wonderful address. I'm always interested in hearing about how the co-operatives work. And the goat-milking industry; that's quite interesting. I had a chance to join Lisa in her riding back before she was elected, and a very interesting day we had.

Anyway, my constituents talk to me about what's bothering them, too. And this bill is going to get through because we support this bill, but we also support the right of every member to speak to a bill, Speaker. That is part of the process here in this Legislature. But I'll tell you what my constituents are telling me—and a shout-out to Harvey Cooper and his folks; they are wonderful, dedicated, committed folks that keep coming here whenever this bill is debated.

0930

You know what my constituents were telling me when I was home on the weekend? “What is wrong with this government?” Scandal after scandal after scandal, and now we know, at a very minimum, I say to the Attorney General, \$585 million. That's not the top. We think it's going to go higher, but at a very minimum—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: She's talking about what her constituents are telling her. We're talking about—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is the Attorney General done now?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. You got that off your chest; I'm happy. There are a few ministers that are getting very lively.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, continue. You do have a way of bringing it out. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Perhaps the Attorney General simply wants to stand in his place and rise and apologize for this scandal on behalf of his corrupt government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kenora–Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: You know what? It is time for us to move this bill on to committee. There are so many important things that we need to deal with in Ontario, and I believe that the Conservatives, on some level, know this, because they have officially run out of things to say. When they're talking about, "We need to build more affordable housing units," I think they might need a history lesson. Do they remember what they did when they were in government in the 1990s?

So you know what? You've run out of things to say. Let's move it on to committee. We'll make amendments. It's not perfect, but we can get there. So, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): And I thought it was going to be boring today.

The member from Huron–Bruce has two minutes.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to extend my appreciation to the members from Davenport, Guelph, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Kenora–Rainy River. But with all due respect, especially around the whole essence of co-operativeness, I never run out of things to say, because as I said, my village exists because of co-operatives.

To the leadership of the housing federation of Canada: I sincerely thank you. It's a different mindset that embraces the whole concept of co-operativeness. This is where we, as a House, need to be open and willing to hear what people have to say.

Ladies and gentlemen, while we squander and see this government waste dollars down the drain over and over and over again, we can't lose sight of the fact that people across this province, in 95 out of 107 ridings, live in co-operative housing—95 ridings have this issue in their home. People are on a waiting list; over 140,000 people are waiting to get into affordable housing.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have to keep talking about this, because it's an absolute shame. With 600,000 people out of work, and more manufacturing jobs being lost every week, we are going to be in dire straits.

Scandal being the new norm in Ontario is not acceptable. The only way to change this is to change course with a new team.

Let us tell you this: The PC caucus feels Bill 14 is very, very important. We need some amendments; we need some tweaks; we need to get it into committee. But we need a chance to talk about this.

I'd like to use the last seconds of my time here today to revisit the fact that we need fairness and balance. Co-operatives across this province strive hard to serve their

members well. I would dare say this Ontario government could learn a thing or two about co-operatives and from co-operatives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 14, the Non-profit Housing Co-operatives Statute Law Amendment Act, 2013. I'm sure the Attorney General is excited to hear the debate.

Anyway, housing co-operatives are an integral part of many communities across the province. As the member from Huron–Bruce has just stated, there are many different co-operatives that she has in her communities.

In this case, with non-profit housing—since not everyone can afford to buy a house or a condo—co-op housing can provide the affordable housing for people with moderate incomes, a valuable part of our communities, especially mine, that struggle for affordable housing. Since the floods have certainly hit parts of my riding, we're going to have an even greater need for affordable housing for those poor people who have been affected, both in the Minden Hills township and in Kawartha Lakes.

But it's the co-operative members themselves who make the big decisions about how the buildings will be maintained and how the business of the co-op will be managed. Because the members who live in housing co-operatives are the ones responsible for running it, they develop a pride of ownership and a sense of responsibility, and that's what we'd like to help build into people's lives—that sense of pride and ownership in where they live.

Housing co-ops come from all walks of life. The diverse backgrounds of the inhabitants often turn these residences into vibrant, thriving communities, as has been mentioned again by the member from Huron–Bruce this morning. There are around 550 non-profit housing co-ops in Ontario. These co-ops provide affordable housing for 44,000 households which represent about 125,000 Ontarians, including many of our citizens who, as I mentioned before, are least able to afford high-quality housing. So there certainly is a need.

Like all forms of housing, co-ops are not immune to the inevitable disputes that occasionally arise over rent arrears, late payments, wilful property damage and illegal activities—and those are just a few of the examples that exist out there. But the bulk of this bill aims to improve how those disputes are dealt with. So in making some important and overdue changes, I do agree, to the laws governing housing co-ops, this bill has been a long time coming. It's been clear for many years that much of what is proposed in Bill 14 has enjoyed the support of many members of the Legislature, from all parties, but I know my colleague the member from Leeds–Grenville is an expert on this issue. He's our critic for municipal affairs and housing. He said that these changes are mostly good public policy and that the people living in co-op housing have been asking for them for years.

It's clear that the current process for ending occupancy agreements in co-ops is time-consuming, expensive and

complicated for these non-profit housing providers and their members. The bill will amend the Residential Tenancies Act and the Co-operative Corporations Act to move most co-op tenure disputes from the courts to the Landlord and Tenant Board. This board was established under the Residential Tenancies Act to resolve rental housing disputes. So under the proposed legislation, co-ops would apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to resolve tenure disputes when they are based on grounds currently provided for under the Residential Tenancies Act. Essentially, we would be moving co-op housing disputes into the forum where all other housing disputes are settled. As my colleagues have mentioned, the Co-operative Housing Federation has asked for this change to ensure that decisions related to evictions are fair to co-ops and their members.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's an important change.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It is an important change. Several of my colleagues have also mentioned that the Landlord and Tenant Board is not a perfect institution. However, it can fulfill its goal of providing timely access to specialized, expert and effective dispute resolution. It is clearly a better forum than the courts in which to resolve matters between co-op housing organizations and members.

Unfortunately, the government has decided to tinker with this version of the bill in a way that could well make timely, expert and effective dispute resolution less rather than more likely. The bill before us today is in every respect identical to its predecessor Bill 65, with one exception. We now find a section of the bill proposing to authorize the Landlord and Tenant Board to waive the \$45 filing fee for low-income tenants.

There are two potential problems with this. Firstly, we want to be sure that this change won't encourage disgruntled tenants to take every minor dispute to the Landlord and Tenant Board. If this were to happen, we could see even more congestion in a system that, by many accounts, already suffers from the large backlogs and delays. The second potential issue is that this fee collectively represents an important source of revenue from which the board can recover some of its costs. We worry that Ontario taxpayers will be on the hook to cover any revenue shortfalls that result from waiving this fee. As this legislation transfers disputes to the Landlord and Tenant Board, it seems likely that the board's operating costs will see a corresponding increase. So this amendment therefore has the potential to be self-defeating. What is the point of rerouting disputes from the court system if we are going to send them to a similarly backlogged board?

Fundamentally, we don't know the effects and unintended consequences of this new addition to an old bill. It's disappointing that the government has chosen to tamper with the widespread cooperation that we achieved over the bill in the last session by throwing in this amendment.

0940

Let me return to the important point that the PC caucus supported the bill's predecessor, Bill 65. When it was introduced in the last legislative session here in this

chamber, we debated its merits and eventually decided that it was a piece of legislation that largely made sense. Unfortunately, when the former Premier decided to prorogue the Legislature in order to give the Liberal Party time to reinvent itself, this bill, along with 100 other pieces of legislation, died on the order paper.

Going back even further, several members have mentioned the private member's Bill 198 brought forward by the member from Etobicoke Centre, which suffered the same fate as Bill 65 by dying on the order paper.

Those in the co-op industry must have an incredible amount of patience, and we're testing it. This Legislature has been talking about this change for half a decade. To me, that says it's about time, particularly when measures have enjoyed support from all three parties. We do want to debate this bill, for everyone to have an opportunity to debate it, but it strikes me as somewhat hypocritical that the Liberal government should stand up and sing the praises of the bill when they've repeatedly shown the people of Ontario that they care more about avoiding a contempt motion and picking a new leader than crafting sound public policy.

Our party indicated over a year ago that we were prepared to support the changes by this bill's predecessor. The important and consequential provisions in the bill, those that we on this side of the House support, should already be law and making life easier for housing co-operatives. However, the former Premier and his team had other priorities.

Returning to the aspects of this bill that caused all three parties to support its various incarnations over the years, our court system is busy enough without having to deal with disputes involving the residents of co-operative housing. Courts are simply not the appropriate place to be dealing with issues arising between co-ops and their members. The Landlord and Tenant Board, on the other hand, is set up to deal with just these sorts of issues. Perhaps sometimes stakeholders become frustrated with the board, but its design is a far better fit than the court system. Bill 198, Bill 65 and now Bill 14 were on the right track in seeking to shift disputes between co-ops and their members to the Landlord and Tenant Board. The numbers that I have seen suggested that court disputes cost co-ops about \$1 million a year.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Shameful.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It is too much.

The ministry has estimated that the cost of resolving co-op disputes in the courts can range from \$3,000 to \$5,000 each, which is just too large for people. Of course dollar amounts don't consider the huge amounts of time, effort and voluminous paperwork that parties are required to invest in when they are involved in a dispute that is going through the court system. I hear that every day in the riding. That is money and effort that could be invested into our co-ops rather than wasted on resolving disputes.

It's important to ensure that co-op housing in this province can function as effectively as possible. The co-op model has great potential as a means of creating hous-

ing, and I think everybody in this House has talked about the need for affordable housing in their riding. In this debate, we've heard from members from across our province about examples of successful co-ops whose members have created an environment in which to live. However, we've also heard that an effective eviction dispute resolution process is simply not in place. It is therefore only logical to allow non-profit housing cooperatives to follow the same well-established process that exists for ordinary landlords and tenants.

Mr. Speaker, I see my allotted time is just about to run out. We look forward to further debate and to seeing this bill move toward committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for her comments. I would say, though, that it's a bit odd for us on this side of the House to listen to the Conservative members speak about a lack of investment in affordable housing. I suppose it's possible that some of the newer members may not be aware of the record of the Conservatives from 1995 to 2003. I would add to that as well the lack of investment that continues to flow from their federal cousins. This is obviously having a big impact.

This is a relatively small but significant reform to this piece of legislation. The co-op sector is here again representing their people in the Legislature. They're looking forward to seeing this move forward as quickly as possible, and we'd look for some co-operation from that side of the House to make that happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to comment on the address by my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. Clearly, she has spent a great deal of time looking at this issue and has understood the ramifications and the effect that this bill will have on the co-op housing industry, and she stated in a very passionate way that it's a change that is required and should be implemented as soon as possible.

The number that she cited as \$1 million being spent in the courts on disputes—sadly, that is money badly spent. These changes that we support in the legislation, in moving those disputes to the Landlord and Tenant Board, are supported by all parties.

I want to thank the member for her comments on the bill; also, for taking her right to speak to the bill seriously, as all members of our party have. Members of other parties have decided that they do not wish to speak to this legislation. Here in the PC Party, we've made it clear that we want to speak to bills, after having our rights as parliamentarians taken away from us back in October when former Premier McGuinty, without any warning, just like a tsunami, shut down this House, shut down the Legislature. We have made it clear that members take their rights seriously, and we were not pleased with the way the Liberal government, in order to hide from controversy and scandal, decided to shut down this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, we hope that they will take their responsibility seriously, look up at that wall and look up at that owl and govern themselves accordingly, and ensure that the rights of members of this Legislature are not trampled on in that fashion again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I would just respond to my friend from the Progressive Conservative Party that two wrongs do not make a right. We didn't agree with prorogation either, but that doesn't mean that in this instance we're going to take that cost out on our co-op housing providers. Right now, we have an opportunity to get this dealt with at committee, and any concerns they have can be done there, so let's get on with it. Let's pass the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Just for the record, I didn't agree with prorogation either, as is well reported in the Kingston Whig-Standard of those days.

I was elected in 1995, and two things happened. Number one, you cut the social service budgets for the people of Ontario by 22%, something that's totally unforgivable. The other thing you did—and some of the members who were elected at the same time know this quite well: There were all sorts of non-profit housing projects slated to be built, ready to go—some were already halfway on the ground—and you cancelled each and every project.

Finally, I was Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for four years. I do not recall one question being asked, during those four years, by the official opposition about social housing. You have absolutely no interest in it. Do not make the people of Ontario believe that all of a sudden you believe in social housing, because you don't.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, come on. Go back. Ask Joyce Savoline.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Nepean–Carleton.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): —Nepean–Carleton is quite robust today. So we'll cut it back a little, won't we?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My Sens won last night.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We will cut it back a little, won't we? Thank you.

The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Mr. Speaker, if I could just pick up a little bit on the comments by the Attorney General. How outrageous that he thinks that the PC Party and the members over here don't care about affordable housing. It's selective memory. You've actually gone through all the Hansards for the last years and have the nerve to tell us that we don't care about affordable social housing—is not accurate; I'm trying to pick the right legislative word. But for him—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks.

0950

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Back to the bill, after I've already commented on the Attorney General's misinformation and his remarks to us. Look, this bill is being debated—Bill 14. I think we're bringing some logical amendments that need to be brought forward. They were the government in power for over nine years that didn't deal with this. Now, of a sudden, they want to deal with it, even though they prorogued and didn't do—I think I've mentioned three forms of this bill that we have seen.

Maybe we should ask the government—if we can get it to committee and there are actually amendments made. Your track record of bringing bills back and actually completing bills to help the people of the province of Ontario is really not stellar.

I care about affordable housing for the people in my riding, even though the minister disagrees with that. I've mentioned some very vulnerable people who are in my riding, who are recovering from floods, who may not be able to go back to their houses—most of them probably won't.

We have some reservations about this bill. We are happy when it does go to committee, and we would be even more pleased if the government would listen to the amendments brought forward from the people of Ontario, not just us, and make appropriate changes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order from the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the comments being made by the Attorney General contravene standing order 23(h). He is making allegations against members of this House that are unfounded—figments of his own imagination. Unlike the gas plant scandals, which we have facts on, this man is now trying to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All right. Can I speak? Thank you. I think that's not a point of order, and you know that. Any differences that members have in the House, they can certainly discuss it, or if there's a problem, usually in question period you can ask for a late show. But I think you can deal with that other than in this place, so I think we'll continue on.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you for at least recognizing me, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Have we all figured this out now?

The member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Welcome back.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's great to be back here; thank you, Mr. Attorney General.

As I sit here this morning, listening to the bantering go back and forth between the government heckling the opposition who are actually trying to do their democratic

rights in representing our constituents, it's quite disturbing.

Obviously, co-operative housing is an important issue. We've made it very clear in the PC caucus that co-operative housing and this piece of legislation, Bill 14, does need to go forward. It's something that when we look at the bill itself, it is quite heavy. It addresses a good number of issues that do need to be addressed. It's actually, in comparison to the Liberal budget, only seven pages short of the budget bill, Bill 65, brought forward by the Minister of Finance. So it is going to do some good—Bill 14, that is.

Bill 65, the government's proposed budget, does more damage to actually hinder, I would say, low-income housing for individuals who are struggling to make ends meet. Here we have a government that is spending over \$10 billion annually on interest alone because of the debt that they've generated in this province. Imagine what \$10 billion could do for health care, education, infrastructure and low-income housing for those who need it the most—\$10 billion.

If there was a ministry just to handle interest that we're paying on our provincial debt, it would be the third-largest ministry the government would be handling, next to health care and education, respectively. So I do have some grave concerns with the Liberal government bantering the opposition about us not actually caring for low-income housing.

I have, in my riding of Northumberland–Quinte West, quite a few individuals who use co-operative housing, and others who are struggling to make ends meet who are in low-income housing. It's a great thing—the member from Huron–Bruce pointed out—coming from the smaller areas of my riding and the rural areas, the co-operatives are imperative to the functioning and day-to-day activities that transpire there.

The reason that this government has been forthcoming with this bill, because of the prorogation—and I want to make a strong point here and impress upon the viewers at home: Prorogation actually took away the rights of their elected officials to address major bills, like Bill 14, that are going to actually have an impact on the day-to-day proceedings and the duties of those individuals back home who are struggling, again.

To the point we have here, there are some great things in Bill 14, and I think that it's moving in the right direction. It will be interesting, when it does go to committee. We can actually sit down and make some amendments, because, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, no piece of legislation is perfect. So when it gets to committee, that's where we can actually get some more input from stakeholders and make the tweaks, the final tweaks, to make it work.

I think the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock brought in a very good point, and that is the point that this government is notorious for putting forward bills that are actually substantive and are going to actually have a positive impact on the lives of the people of Ontario, but never bring it forward once it gets to committee. They keep their bills in committee.

Interjection: They hide.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: They hide, and this is unbecoming. This isn't what the process is supposed to be.

So, Mr. Speaker, we do have some serious concerns with the way this government has brought forward the bill. For them to sit here and say that we, on this side, have no authority when it comes to speaking to co-operative housing—I have great concerns with that. What they're doing, by allowing us to continue this debate—they're not debating. They're not standing up and letting us exercise our democratic rights. I think that's quite important. I think this is a tradition, obviously, historically, about the parliamentary process.

It's well documented that this Liberal government, obviously, does not care about democracy and the parliamentary process and how that works here in the province of Ontario. We here in the PC caucus appreciate the history and the tradition that those who came before us fought and died for, and actually took the time to exercise those rights.

We're excited about getting Bill 14 to committee. But again, this scandal-plagued government needs to be held to account. The Liberal government has had the opportunity to really work on this bill, thanks to all their self-imposed delays. However, maybe they would have been too busy working on scandal cover-ups instead, because this is, again, a fairly weak bill.

I do first remember when this bill was previously introduced by the current Premier. I think that on all sides of the chamber here, we can agree—which we have—that this is something that needs to be addressed, and we can do a better job.

1000

But until we get our province in a situation—and I think our leader, Tim Hudak, said it best. It's one thing to have a social conscience and help others who are struggling. That's what we all are: We're in this together, collaboratively, collectively, co-operatively, as a whole. But when you're mortgaging the future lives of our young children—a newborn child this moment in the province of Ontario is already strapped with \$20,000 of debt thanks to this Liberal government. Think about that for a moment. "It's only \$20,000," some people might be saying, but that is a significant amount of money. That is money that we cannot afford to have. That's money, as I pointed out earlier when I stood, that could go directly into helping low-income families, providing a roof over their heads.

I've seen from an education standpoint how important having housing is for the development of young children. When children are in a home where they feel safe and secure, they actually do much better in school. So it is important for all of us, as concerned citizens of this province and this great nation, to ensure that Bill 14 gets to committee and we work on that.

But this Liberal government has shown contempt for the scandals that they've brought forward. They're hiding behind the gas plant scandals, the millions of dollars that they've wasted. It's quite disturbing.

I think what we need to do is that when we get this to committee, I'm going to greatly anticipate—I won't hold my breath, but I can't wait to see if this government actually brings Bill 14 to the forefront once it gets to committee and the debates have been handled there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I just want to respond to one of the things that the member from Northumberland—Quinte West said. When he was talking about us wanting to move this on to committee, he likens that to us being anti-democratic. I want to take a minute, as my colleague from Davenport does, and explain the process to the people at home. The first step is that we debate this piece of legislation in this House. Then it moves on to committee, where we're able to discuss it line by line, clause by clause. So this is by no means the end of the democratic process for this bill. No one is suggesting that we turf this bill out the window; we're just suggesting—it sounds like the Conservatives may be in support of this. I've heard other members of the House who are in support of it. So let's move it on so we can discuss it clause by clause, we can improve it and we can get results, which is something, let's face it, we really need to do in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I think I represent more co-ops than anyone else in Canada. I keep on hearing from the official opposition that they care about people who live in co-ops. There are folks who are down here—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I actually don't usually interrupt the person from Nepean—Carleton when she's speaking, so I'd like the same courtesy.

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Did you want the floor or—because I can sit down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, you can sit down for a second right now. We won't have any cross-dialogue, we won't be talking to the people in the gallery, and the member from Nepean—Carleton will allow the member to speak. Thank you.

Continue.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a very large issue for people. This is something that's in the middle of their lives. It's in their homes; it's in their co-ops; it's their ability to resolve conflicts. It's a critical piece of legislation that has—this is the third attempt, I think, to get it forward. It would be good if we could actually get this to committee and get it back.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Some of the members opposite right now who are heckling me are a little concerned. Their federal counterparts over the next five years will take 24,000 people who are low-income families living in co-ops, cut off their subsidies and geared-to-rent and put them out in the street. This will be one of the largest losses of affordable housing in the history of the province.

So if the official opposition, the Conservative Party, actually really cares about people in co-ops, those 24,000

people who their federal cousins are dumping in the street, maybe they could get some hearing from them. And they could at least have the decency to move this bill forward in a reasonable way. There has not been one new idea. We've heard the same statements repeated over and over again. If they have something new to say, either say it or allow it to go to committee.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nepean–Carleton, point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Similar to the point of order raised earlier by my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke about the Attorney General making allegations, I think the people on this side of the House are a little tired of hearing from blowhards on the opposite side that we don't care about people. I think that's a bit unacceptable and I think it's beyond the pale of expectation in this chamber.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): As the member knows, she got her points in even though it's not a point of order. I can't distinguish whether the member is going by history or his own information; I can't distinguish that. That's not my position.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oxford isn't talking when I'm talking, is he?

I don't call that a point of order. Continue.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, this is an important bill and we do support it as the PC Party of Ontario. We would like to see it progress quickly, and this is work that needs to be done. It provides for much-needed reform to the dispute resolution process, which would save great dollars for the co-ops, which they need, because there are far too scarce dollars. It might need a little bit of fine-tuning, but that can be done in committee; we know that. We need to address the concerns and rights of landlords—they have expressed some issues to us—but we can do that in committee. All the little details that aren't in the bill that satisfy all of us can be fixed, and we know that.

The real sad thing here is that it could have been done a long time ago. This is 2013. It could have been done in 2012. The reason it wasn't done in 2012 is because this government prorogued. They did not prorogue because they were interested in co-op housing in Ontario. They did not prorogue because they were interested in improving the legislation that would help the people who live in co-op housing in Ontario. Three times this has come up; three times it has not happened. This last time, with prorogation, they suspended government because they had one scandal too many. There was eHealth, there was Ornge, there was Presto, and now gas plant scandals, and their feet were just getting a little too close to the fire. The way to get out of that kitchen was to prorogue.

There was no concern given to the people in the co-op housing organization, the good people who are here to see this passed today. They've defiled this place, the Ontario Legislative Assembly, the seat of government for

the province of Ontario, which is based on a British cultural Christian heritage going back to the Magna Carta of 1215. All of that history, all of those hard-won battles for freedom and rights of people, which is property rights and people's rights, which are the same thing, were defiled.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: The previous member is correct: The Liberals have held this bill up for this many years, and it's unforgivable. But for the Conservatives to continue filibustering when this could have been done in April 2013 or possibly March 2013, and now we're in May 2013, is just as guilty. Two wrongs don't make a right. Let's get it done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Northumberland–Quinte West has two minutes.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills said it quite eloquently in the fact that this is not just a bill that we're debating here. We're talking about the rights of Ontarians; we're talking about the rights of individuals who live in a free democracy. We're talking about the rights of the citizens here that this bill will actually affect.

The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation pointed out that this is the third attempt at bringing forward this bill. We agree. But my challenge to this government—and you can mark my words, those individuals who came here today, out of their busy schedule, to listen to us further debate on this: Once this gets to committee, this government will not bring this bill forward in committee.

My friends, I'm sad to say this, but this is how this government operates. They invite you, it looks good, they get a photo op; they get to put out a press release—that thing is great. But the fact of the matter is the underlying messaging that they're going to do is not going to be effective. That's the Liberal government of the province of Ontario for you. It's sad.

But yes, when we get it to committee, we are going to do our very best to try to bring this forward and make amendments that are actually going to be substantive and actually have a positive impact on the individuals who this bill is designed to help. This government will not. Mark my words: It's going to happen.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1011 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This, of course, is not an introduction of guests.

It's obviously an update for my favourite Montreal Canadiens fan, the Speaker.

Yesterday, my team, the Ottawa Senators, were down 2-0, until the third period, when we scored not one, but two goals to put it into overtime. I watched that overtime goal by Turriss. Now the Ottawa Senators are leading their Stanley Cup playoff series 3-1, Speaker. I couldn't have done it without you, and they couldn't have done it without the great support of allowing us to have these updates.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I thank the member for the update—maybe.

Introduction of guests.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I could spend some time defending the Montreal Canadiens this morning, but we'll wait till Thursday night.

More importantly, I'd like to introduce two people from my riding of Peterborough today: Bob Campbell, president of the board of the Peterborough Community Counselling and Resource Centre, and Ms. Casey Ready, executive director of the Peterborough Community Counselling and Resource Centre. We welcome them to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to extend a special invitation and welcome to Bryce Davison, a grade 7 student at Light of Christ Catholic Elementary School in Aurora. He's joined by his grandfather His Worship Gary Davison, mayor of the township of South Frontenac.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The Minister of Children and Youth Services. Oh, sorry. The member from Newmarket—Aurora.

Let's keep these as quick as possible, please.

Mr. Frank Klees: While I'm standing, I want to congratulate my colleague from Nepean—Carleton on her thrill of having the Sens win a game—probably their last one in this series, Speaker.

We're all looking forward to the Toronto Maple Leafs tonight—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. I think we've probably had the last of our updates. We have to keep going.

Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, Speaker. Today is family service day here at Queen's Park, and I'd like to speak a little bit about family service day and make a couple of introductions.

I know that the staff who work at Family Service centres make an extremely important contribution to our families and our communities. Today I'd like to introduce to the House some people from Family Service Thames Valley and Family Services Windsor-Essex. Sandra Savage and Robert Young are from Thames Valley. As well, from Family Services Windsor-Essex, I would like to introduce Joyce Zuk. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I welcome everyone to the reception in room 228 after question period.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise today to welcome our page from Thornhill, Shruti Sandhu, and her family, who

are here with us for question period. They are Davinder Chawla, Devender Sandhu, Aditi Sandhu, Surinder Sandhu Kaur, Vivek Gupta, Rhea Gupta, Manish Agarwal, Dhanu Agarwal, Priya Rastogi, Neha Rastogi and Anu Agarwal. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Paul Miller: In the west gallery, I'd like to introduce Mr. Cesar Kowalski and Cindy Preer, good friends of mine from Stoney Creek, and accompanying them is my lovely wife, Carole.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Obviously, it's a special day here: family service Ontario day. I'm pleased to introduce a couple of people who are here from the Thunder Bay Counselling Centre: Nancy Chamberlain, executive director, and Danielle Peuramaki, who's a board member with the Thunder Bay Counselling Centre. Welcome. Everybody come to the lunch in rooms 228 and 230.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to recognize that it is Harry S. Truman's 129th birthday. Receiving celebration at that was Marcel Beaubien, who was the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex in 1995 and 1999. Welcome to the Ontario Parliament, Marcel. Thanks for coming.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to acknowledge Kitchener-Waterloo Counselling Services Inc. for all of their tremendously important work in our community and welcome their executive director, Leslie Josling, who is here to represent them today. Welcome to Queen's Park, Leslie.

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to welcome two individuals visiting the House today. Their names are Sophia Karapita and Farina Ekra. They are from my ministry.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to welcome, from the Community Counselling Centre of Nipissing, Alan McQuarrie, Helen Antebi and Derek Thompson to the House.

Mr. Bill Mauro: In addition to Nancy Chamberlain and Danielle Peuramaki from the Thunder Bay Counselling Centre, we also have Rob Barrett, the executive director of the Catholic Family Development Centre from Thunder Bay, here as part of family service day in Ontario.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'd like all members in the House to recognize the York region board of family services that are also joining us today. Please help me welcome them here to Queen's Park.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to acknowledge Family and Children Services Niagara here today. Bonnie Filipchuk, service director, community and clinical services, Family Counselling Centre Niagara, is with us today.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's my pleasure to introduce Patricia Hollingsworth to the chamber this morning. She is the executive director of the Northumberland Community Counselling Centre. Welcome.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce the family of one of our hard-working pages, Victoria Farkas, from my riding of St. Paul's, and they are here in the gallery today to observe question period. They are Gabriella Evinich, Balazs Farkas and Abigail Farkas. In fact, it's Abigail's 11th birthday today. Please join me in welcoming them.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to introduce, from my riding of Guelph, Kate Power, who is the executive director of Family Counselling and Support Services for Guelph Wellington. They provide a number of wonderful counselling services in our community.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to introduce Mariana Benitez, Susan Warren and Elisha Laker of York Region family services. Please join me in welcoming them to Queen's Park.

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

There is a reason why I went over the clock in making sure that everyone had an opportunity to introduce their guests. I want to define this once more. I will have to be stricter, and I blame myself for that, and I apologize.

I would ask you to stand, introduce your guests and sit down. Please avoid the extra add-ons. That way, everyone gets a chance, within the five minutes allotted, to introduce their guests, because that's the purpose.

I'm going to ask, kindly, the member from Nepean-Carleton and the member from—should I say that, Newmarket-Aurora, even though you're defending me?—to give us updates at a later date, or somewhere else.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Whatever. So I would ask us to stay focused on introducing our guests here in the House. Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question to the Minister of Finance: Minister, at committee yesterday, we saw former Premier McGuinty display the same disrespect for taxpayers that we saw from Premier Wynne at committee the other day. It seems sad that the Liberals treat truth like an inconvenience, and accountability like a bother.

Given the serious nature of the matters, Minister, before the Ontario Legislature, don't you think it's time that we allow Ontarians to have their say? Do they believe that your move to spend their tax money to cancel gas plants—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry for the interruption. I believe the member was finished, the leader was just finished—or not?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. No, no. And I'll stop the clock for that.

I'm going to ask people to come to order on this. The shout-outs are not necessary, and I'll start to name your riding quickly.

Leader.

1040

Mr. Tim Hudak: Finance Minister, given the serious nature of the matters before the Legislature and commit-

tee surrounding the gas plant scandal, don't you think it's time that people had their say—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —a vote in the Legislature. Does this cross the line into corruption, or is it simply the cost of doing business?

Hon. Charles Sousa: So, Mr. Speaker, what I know is this: This side of the House has been asked to report to the committee. This side of the House has taken leadership by being more open and transparent and by initiating initiatives to disclose as much as possible. This side of the House has reported and delivered and appeared before this committee to disclose all that they know. Yet, Mr. Speaker, that side of the House doesn't show up. The Leader of the Opposition has been called and he hasn't appeared. For that matter, neither have any of the other candidates who fought and said that they too would not put the power plant in that spot—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The same goes for this side.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We all in this House agreed that the siting of those power plants was inappropriate. They all said they would cancel it and/or move it, as did we, and that's exactly what we've done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It is disappointing to see the same smug disregard for taxpayers from the finance minister that we saw in evidence from Premier McGuinty and Premier Wynne; similarly, the same degree of evasiveness, to put it kindly.

Let me ask—and hopefully I'll get a more serious answer from the finance minister. So Colin Andersen appeared at the committee. He refuted the testimony of both Premiers Wynne and McGuinty, and he said that everybody knew the cost was more than \$40 million. Premier Wynne and Premier McGuinty said they were not aware of that.

So, Finance Minister, clearly somebody is not being honest with the people of Ontario, and it should be up to them to decide. So if Colin Andersen was not being honest with the people, shouldn't he be fired, or if Premier Wynne was not being honest, isn't it time for her to go?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The only one being smug is the Leader of the Opposition, who does not appear. We've asked for him to appear. We've said to him and to all others that we're willing to work together for the very purpose of getting to the truth and understanding what has taken place, understanding that they themselves also said that they would not build the power plant.

They themselves took the steps, by way of an election no less, to say that they would cancel it, and they appeared before the communities with a bus and did a press conference. They even had a pink elephant right on the site, saying, "Vote for me because I will be the one who will cancel the power plant." And he sent out robo-calls, and he was on the telephone and doing town halls, standing up for the fact that we should not put a power

plant in that place, and that's what we've done. We've delivered on the very promise that he said he would do.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, that's the kind of clownish answer from a finance minister that shows us why we have lost confidence in the ability of this government to get us out of the hole that we're in.

Let me ask you a question, Finance Minister, that you dodged the first time, and hopefully you'll be more honest and direct this time. We're tired of the Liberals blocking a confidence vote here in the Legislature. We're tired of the Liberals blocking the ability of members to stand up—or sit down—when it comes to deciding, does this gas plant scandal cross the line into corruption, or is any price worthy of being paid simply to save Liberal seats. Don't you think we owe it to Ontarians to actually stand in our place and say this was right or this was wrong? Don't we owe it to Ontarians to actually stand in our place and say this goes across the line, or is it simply the way this government is going to operate? Minister, will you call that confidence motion to the floor of the Legislature today?

Interjections.

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

Finance minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the only circus that has been happening here has been the actions of the opposition. We have taken the steps necessary. The Premier wrote to the AG in regard to Oakville. We all agreed that was a good thing. We immediately called the House back, and we struck some committees. We expanded the scope of the committees. We offered documents from across the government. The Premier appeared before the committee, and the committee, since February, has heard from over 26 witnesses.

Furthermore, we have listened to the local communities. We recognize that we need to take proper steps going forward so that this doesn't happen anywhere else ever again. We need to make sure that we have the proper setbacks and the proper siting.

Mr. Speaker, we will stay focused, and what we need to be focused on, when it comes to a confidence motion, is the budget. The budget is what matters to the people of Ontario. They're asking for us to continue moving forward, continue stimulating economic growth and continue to create jobs and the well-being of everyday people in their everyday lives.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, it's time your Liberal government stops evading accountability. The ultimate accountability measure is a confidence vote right here in the Legislative Assembly, right on the floor.

It seems to me, if I was the finance minister, the first meeting I would have called, had I been you, would be to

ask Colin Andersen of the Ontario Power Authority to give me a full costing of the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga plants. As the incoming finance minister, when did you ask for a briefing from Colin Andersen of the OPA to get a full cost on the cancellations of Oakville and Mississauga?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We immediately wrote to the Auditor General to examine the cost of the Oakville relocation. We immediately took the steps to identify all the costs that had taken place. The complexity and the changing of OPA estimates is understood now by all, so we have to make certain that we get it to the right numbers. I have taken the precautions necessary in putting something in our budget that accommodates the costs that we do know and, going forward, will ensure that the contingencies and so forth are taken into consideration.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition wants to continue to deliberate over an issue that we are already resolving. What the people of Ontario want to know is, what are you going to do to help their lot in life on their everyday issues? What are you going to do to support this budget that speaks to the needs of the people of Ontario right now? We need to continue to create jobs—

Interjections.

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

While we're at it—stop the clock—I've been hearing people use people's names again. This time, I will go to that individual if I continue to hear first names, second names, other than—you must address people by their riding or by their title. If it continues, I'll single that person out.

Start the clock.

Finish—10-second wrap-up.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I do appreciate the opportunity to reaffirm what's really important here, and that's to stimulate economic growth, ensure that we're creating the jobs necessary for the people of Ontario and move forward.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: Well, with all due respect, Ontarians want to know when you asked for a full briefing from Colin Andersen of the OPA in your capacity as finance minister on one of the biggest, most expensive scandals in the province's history.

Sir, you asked for the job, you campaigned for the job; Ontarians spent billions of dollars for you to keep your job. Sandra Pupatello turned down the job so you could get it. Now you need to do your job.

Will you tell us when you asked for a full briefing from Colin Andersen of the OPA? Why aren't you doing your job?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I believe that—

Interjections.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: I believe that Hazel McCallion, the much-revered mayor of Mississauga, had it spot-on when she came before the committee and she said, let the committee do its work. Get on to something else. Get on to the issues that the people of Ontario really and truly care about.

We have been as open and transparent as you possibly could be. The Premier appeared before the committee, which has never, to the best of my knowledge, happened before. The former Premier appeared before the committee. All of these people are trying to be open and transparent, to tell you exactly what they knew and when they knew it. Let the committee do its work; let the Auditor General do his work—

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I can't believe what I just heard.

Back to the Minister of Finance: Minister, the hard-working people of Ontario want the accountability resorted to in this Legislature. Your Liberal government's unwillingness to call our want-of-confidence motion for debate shows the arrogance with which you have treated this entire scandal and your refusal to deal with the consequences.

1050

Today I tabled a motion that will be debated this week and will automatically cause a vote on the call to motion for the want of confidence. The NDP need to decide whether they're going to prop up this government, a government they continue to criticize. We look forward to them voting in favour of the want of confidence motion. We believe Ontarians deserve a vote in this Legislature to see if the Liberals have the confidence of the people. It is imperative that all members get that opportunity to vote on the want of confidence motion. Will you call that motion?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Stand up and do the right thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You know we've talked about timing before. You have got to be better at it because when everything gets quiet, you are heard. Thank you.

Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: The Premier appeared before the committee, which is unprecedented in the history of this Legislature. The former Premier appeared. When is the Leader of the Opposition going to appear? When is he going to appear? When is he going to come up with his costing as to what it would take? The costing will be—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Actually, this is a comment to both sides: Someone is answering, let them answer. Someone is asking, let them ask. And the shouting back and forth will be stopped quite quickly.

Finish, please.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Very simply, when is the Leader of the Opposition going to appear in front of the committee and tell them what he would have paid to cancel those plants, because if he had formed government, heaven forbid—he didn't—he would have cancelled the plants as well.

Let the Auditor General continue with the work on the Mississauga plant—

Interjections.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: That's decent. Now you don't even want to listen to the answer.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Oxford, come to order. The member from Thornhill, come to order. The member from York, come to order. The member from Nepean–Carleton, come to order. Second time, the member from Leeds–Grenville, come to order.

I've got a system, and it will work.

Finish.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, it's very unfortunate that the members ask the question and they don't even want to listen to the answer. They want to shout down the government in giving them an answer to the question they've asked.

My question is, when is the Leader of the Opposition going to come up with his estimate of what it would cost to—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Over the last few days, we have heard from thousands of Ontarians who say they want to see positive change in the budget but they also need to know that the government is going to be investing their money transparently and accountably. We think that's a concern that we should all take seriously in this House. Does the Minister of Finance agree?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Of course we agree. It's why we've put in our budget a number of accountability measures. On pages 217 to 220, we talk about a number of initiatives that we've put in place to support accountability; we also put it on pages 143 to 145.

More importantly, Mr. Speaker, it was this government that also introduced legislation around the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, 2010, as well as the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004. We as a government took the steps necessary, because of what has happened in the past, to ensure that even pre-election reporting be reviewed by the Attorney General. We are always open to more transparency and fiscal oversight in the things that we do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my initial thoughts are two words: gas plants. That's how well their accountability works.

People are being told that they have to make sacrifices in tough times, that there's not enough money to go around while we try to balance the books. They see hundreds of millions of dollars going to waste at Ornge, at eHealth and at the gas plants, while their government claims they have to make cuts at hospitals in order to invest in home care. Is the minister ready to admit this is a problem and take concrete steps to address it?

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's why we've taken a number of measures already. We're strengthening the post-secondary education accountability measures in our budget. We're taking steps to ensure even more accountability around home care and community care. We've taken steps around the child welfare initiatives in our budget. There's a whole slew of opportunities that we recognize are important to take better measures, including transfer payment accountability, tax report accountability and agency accountability—all issues that we recognize are important, that we know require greater oversight, and we will continue to work towards doing just that.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday the Premier claimed she had "done everything in her power" to be accountable. With respect, I don't think that's a good enough answer. Ontarians are frustrated with the government's failure to be accountable, and families deserve to have a government that's accountable to them.

Today I put forward a simple idea: a financial accountability office modeled on Ottawa's parliamentary budget office. Is the government ready to start rebuilding trust with Ontarians?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, as mentioned, we've taken a number of initiatives, a number of steps to improve accountability. I believe that to be a very interesting idea. I do look forward to having this discussion and I look forward to having a very productive conversation around the issue.

I think what's necessary here, as well, is to get this budget passed because there are a number of things at stake, a number of things that the opposition members recognize all too well need to be addressed and need to be passed in order to proceed. I would like to cite those measures in the budget and recognize that what's important here is the well-being of the people of Ontario. I look forward to continuing to work with the opposition members to do just that.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Minister of Finance. Ontarians want to see real, positive change that improves their lives, but too often they've seen governments act in the interests of their own political party instead of the interests of the public. And instead

of giving people the facts, their government gives them empty spin and misleading information. A financial accountability office would take a small step to providing some real accountability. Does the minister agree that more accountability is needed here?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I responded to that. We have already cited the fact that we're taking a number of measures in our budget to address greater accountability. We've taken the steps necessary to improve what we need to do going forward. We recognize that the idea put forward is a good idea. It's interesting; it's something that we see has happened with the federal government.

What's at stake right now, though, Mr. Speaker, is increasing the Ontario child benefits. What's at stake is the Ontario Trillium Benefit that the member from Beaches—East York has been advocating for. What's at stake is auto insurance that the member from Brampton has also been advocating for. What's at stake is permanent gas tax funding for our municipalities. What's at stake is more roads and bridges funding for our rural communities. What's at stake is an infrastructure modernization plan that will continue to support the people of Ontario and greater competitiveness going forward.

Mr. Speaker, what's at stake is for us to ensure that we're on plan to reduce our deficit to zero, and we need to do that for the benefit of creating more jobs and helping people in their everyday lives.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: With all due respect, what's at stake is the trust of the people in their government. That's what's at stake.

Yesterday, the former Premier admitted that he didn't know and didn't much care what the cost would be of cancelling the private power deals in Mississauga and Oakville. And in her testimony, the current Premier made it clear that she didn't much care either. Ontarians deserve a lot better than that. That's why New Democrats put guarantees in our suggestions for the budget and it's why we clearly identified savings so that we could invest in prosperity that everyone can share in without making harmful cuts. And it's why we're calling for a financial accountability office that would let the public know how the government intends on spending their money. Surely the minister doesn't have a problem with accountability.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We're taking steps necessary to improve and enhance our accountability, so that's not the issue. The notion of being a caring and more compassionate party—we actually have a whole section in our budget around a fairer society. We know we need to support those most vulnerable so they get a better start and ability in life. The member opposite should be looking towards them and finding ways to support this budget on that score.

But as I said, it's an interesting idea. I welcome the opportunity to have that conversation. This is not about being partisan. This is about the people of Ontario. Let's look after them.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I fear that what I heard is that the minister seems to think the status quo is good enough, but he seems to be the only one who thinks that, because people are telling me that they want to see a budget that is fair, transparent and accountable to them. That's not what they see right now.

Will the minister tell Ontarians whether the status quo is good enough or whether he agrees that Ontarians deserve something better?

1100

Hon. Charles Sousa: We've consulted with over 600,000 people in the preparation of this budget. For the member now to suggest that we're going to consult after the budget has been prepared, after all the work that's been done, after the contributions and recommendations that have been made by all members of the House—we've taken those initiatives, we've taken those steps and we do agree: We want to be more accountable, we want to be more transparent and we want to take those measures. We're implementing those in this budget.

It's interesting that the member now is trying to somehow express that they're the ones bringing this idea forward. Fine; take credit all you want. What really matters is the people of Ontario. We will work for them. We'll work with you and we'll work with the official opposition to that end, because what we want is to stimulate economic growth. We have a very sensitive recovery, all the more reason that we need stability—

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

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, we've always known that the Liberals will do and say anything to put their party's interests first. We saw more proof of that yesterday as the former Premier tried to explain away your gas plant scandal. First you needed the power, then you said you didn't need the power. The current Premier finally admitted it was a political decision, but the former Premier says he cancelled the gas plants for the kids—too bad no one over there cared about those kids a few years earlier; we could have saved at least \$585 million—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The members will come to order. Thank you.

Please carry on.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'll ask the minister: Tell us how much money you've set aside in your budget for your seat-saver program.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I don't know where that member was five or six years ago. I know where I was, and I know what I was doing to support and protect communities. These power plants weren't even in my riding, but I was concerned about the well-being of the people of the communities that surround it.

That is why I sat on the Clarkson Airshed Advisory Committee. That's why I stood with 12 to 15 different

town halls to support the community. That is why I advocated to move those power plants from the very beginning. I stood by, and I asked for the support of the members opposite—I stood by the energy critic, no less. When he went to those communities, he said “No, it's a done deal”—only after I came forward and fought for it. As I sat in the rump, I sought people's support.

To the member opposite: We were there; I was there all along, fighting for the community and making certain that this sort of thing never happens again anywhere in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I never heard a budget figure, so—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —it's obvious the minister has taken tap dancing lessons from the House leader.

There's more proof of how desperate your Liberals are to save their own hides and cling to power. They continue to ignore a centuries-old parliamentary tradition in bringing our non-confidence motion to the floor of this House. They continue to hope their orange life preservers to my left will sell themselves out and rescue them from the orange sea of scandal.

We tabled a motion today calling on this House to bring our original non-confidence motion to a vote. Minister, will you do the honourable thing, put democracy and the people ahead of the Liberal Party, and bring forward our non-confidence motion?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: To the Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: The member is a former mayor, and he knows very well that the real confidence motion and vote is on the budget. That's what we're talking about here. This is a fair budget that's being presented to the people of Ontario. That will be the confidence vote, and we'll see how you and the members of the NDP vote on it.

But in the meantime, I still come back to the point I made a little bit earlier. Why is the Leader of the Opposition not appearing before the committee with his numbers as to what it would cost to move those plants? We've got the Auditor General, who did a report on the Oakville plant situation. We've got him doing one now on the Mississauga plant situation. The Auditor General is highly regarded. Why don't we let him do his work and why don't we get on with the rest of the work for the people of Ontario?

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Acting Premier. Minister, when the Premier was selected by the Liberal Party, she didn't even bother to ask the outgoing Premier how much it would cost to cancel the plants in Mississauga and Oakville in the scandal that eventually

cost the member for Ottawa South his Premiership. Being a leader means asking tough questions and it means giving tough answers, but neither the former Premier nor the current Premier did that.

Doesn't the Acting Premier think that showing real government accountability to the people means that the Premier should have at least asked her predecessor about the cost of the cancelling of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Premier has gone well beyond. She has taken full responsibility and she wants to increase her accountability and transparency on this measure. That's why she sought support from the other members of the House to do a committee that would allow for all of this to come out even more quickly. She has asked the right questions. She has now written to the AG in terms of getting all the costs that were involved with Oakville, and they agreed; we anticipate them shortly. She has asked for an immediate call back to the House so that we can strike these committees.

We've expanded the scope of the committees. We've offered documents from across the government. The Premier has appeared before the committee; the past Premier has done the same. We've had our Ministers of Energy appearing before the committee. We have taken over 26 witnesses to this committee. We are doing our utmost to try to get to the issues and to resolve them, more importantly, so they never occur again in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yesterday I asked the former Premier whether the current Premier ever asked how much the promise to cancel the Mississauga gas plant would cost when she was the campaign vice-chair on the very campaign that made that promise. He said no, she never asked. I asked, when the member for Don Valley West was a cabinet minister signing cabinet documents on Oakville, did she ask the Premier about costs then? He said no, she never asked.

Ignoring these problems doesn't make them go away and it doesn't show respect for the Ontarians who are paying the bills. Does the Acting Premier think that the way to show respect for families means denying the people real accountability for wasting their dollars?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Unlike the official Leader of the Opposition, the Premier did appear before the committee. The Premier did respond to these questions. We are doing what the committee wants us to do. More importantly, though, the members should be asking, what are we going to do going forward? What are we going to do now to ensure that these sorts of things never happen again?

What steps have we taken to do that? We're providing for siting restrictions. We're ensuring that community engagement is there. We want to make certain that greater accountability exists.

More importantly, in this budget we talk about some of these initiatives, and this is what the member opposite should be working towards: supporting this budget so that we can get on with the business of helping the people of Ontario.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The budget speaks to creating a prosperous and a fair Ontario. It's something I know everybody across this province wants to see. We've heard a lot about the government's plan to increase jobs, tackle gridlock, reduce the price of auto insurance and improve access to home care, but homelessness is still a problem that affects far too many people in Ontario and across Canada.

All members of this House know that when people are given the opportunity to live in safe and affordable housing, our communities thrive. People are healthier, mentally and physically, and their children do much better in school.

The question this morning to the minister is: Can you tell us what our government is doing to tackle the pressing issue of homelessness across communities in Ontario?

1110

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member for the question. There's nothing more distressing to me or our government than the knowledge that, somewhere in Ontario, there's a child or a family or a senior wondering where they're going to sleep tonight.

That's why our government remains committed to a long-term affordable housing strategy, the first of its kind, actually, in Ontario. Our investment in affordable housing is a partnership with the federal government. It's a \$480-million investment to repair 7,000 affordable housing units in Ontario. The program allows service managers to increase flexibility to let them develop local solutions to reduce wait times in communities across the province for people who need affordable housing.

In the first year of the program, we helped 600 households which are no longer in need of a roof over their head. It is our government's goal to ensure that those who need assistance when they're at their most vulnerable get the help that they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's good to hear the government takes homelessness seriously, as we all know the impacts of not doing that would be damaging.

But this conversation is about investing in affordable housing; it's very similar to the debate we're having about transit in the GTHA. They both require infrastructure investments, they take a long time to construct, and they're very expensive to build. We know the politics of these types of investments aren't easy; otherwise, other governments of other stripes would have come up with a long-term affordable housing strategy long ago. At the end of the day, all levels of government have a stake in seeing a plan materialize.

In the minister's answer, Speaker, she spoke about our partnership with the federal government. What I want to know is, what is this government going to do to continue dealing with homelessness after the current \$480-million commitment from the federal government runs out?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Again, I thank the member for the question. We recognize the importance of affordable housing and continue to make this case to the federal government. While our government welcomes the federal commitment to affordable housing as they recently announced in their budget, the fact remains that the federal government is reducing its contribution to social housing over the next 20 years to zero. That's why, along with other provinces and territories, we are going to be meeting our federal counterparts this June. I hope that we can work together to encourage our federal counterparts to live up to their shared obligation, in fact, their moral imperative on affordable housing.

I want to urge every member in the House, in this chamber, to join with our government to get them back at the table because this need for social housing is not a municipal issue, and it's not a provincial issue; it's a societal issue.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, I deeply regret that I must, once again, ask the same question of you that we've been asking in committee and in this chamber on behalf of the people of Ontario. Both your current and former Premier have stuck to their talking points about regretting the decision to cancel the Mississauga and Oakville power plants at the cost of at least \$585 million.

At the recent retirement of Ontario's Auditor General, Jim McCarter said that governments work best when they're watched. Minister, you're being watched. Please use the opportunity to explain to the Ontario taxpayers how it is that a decision that had such serious financial implications would not be fully costed out before any cabinet decision was made.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: You know, the opposition can't have it both ways, Speaker. They wanted the power plants cancelled. All of your candidates said that. Your own leader said that. The third party wanted to get the power plants cancelled. We did exactly what every party and everybody wanted done. The people of Oakville and the people of Mississauga did not want those plants there. It's as simple as that.

Why don't we just let the Auditor General do his work? He is an independent officer of this Legislature. He did a report on the Oakville situation, and he'll do a report on the Mississauga situation. People of Ontario will make up their own minds about that. That's what this is really all about. Let's leave it to the committee. Let's leave it to the Auditor General. Let's talk about the real issues that are facing the people of Ontario today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: You signed this contract. You ripped up this contract. You need to take responsibility for this mess. At what point in this embarrassing charade do you actually acknowledge your mistake and admit that you were wrong to cancel the gas plant before you knew

how much it was going to cost the people of Ontario? As the finance minister, surely you understand how that makes the Liberals look so willing to waste millions of dollars while other people pay.

You could turn the page on this mess right now; you could do the right thing today and allow this assembly to debate the member from Simcoe-Grey's non-confidence motion. Will you do it?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, Speaker, you know what this is all about as far as the opposition is concerned. It's all about political posturing. That's all you're doing, is political posturing.

Let the Auditor General do his work with respect to Oakville. Let him do his work with respect to Mississauga. We have been as open and transparent as we possibly could be. The Premier has appeared before the committee. The former Premier has appeared before the committee. And no matter what's done, no matter what further we'll do in this regard, you will not be supportive. You know it. You wanted the plants cancelled. They were cancelled. It's better for the people of Mississauga, it's better for the people of Oakville, and it's better for the people of Ontario.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Acting Premier. Today the CEO of Windsor Regional Hospital is raising concerns about the financial donations that were revealed in the newly released contract between Medbuy and Marchese for chemotherapy drugs. He asked some pretty straightforward questions. Why is a \$20,000 contribution part of the bidding process? Can the Acting Premier answer this question?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I can say this, Mr. Speaker: The issue of the chemo drug dilution, everything that has occurred, is distressing for all of us. We all have members of our family or friends who have been affected. This has been drastic.

We've taken immediate steps to try to bring resolution to it. We need to do what's best for the safety and the security of the very individuals and the patients who are affected. It affects all of us, and I have been greatly disturbed by what has taken place. But I can say that we've taken steps; we've taken action. We've posted new regulations with all the hospitals to ensure that purchased drugs are only from accredited and licensed suppliers.

Health Canada, of course, has a role here, a very big role, in terms of oversight and to post and to make amendments. The College of Pharmacists has posted their regulation and bylaw amendments. We're working with organizations who have a shared responsibility on

this issue. And more importantly, we've asked Jake Thiessen to take over—

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: The first thing that comes to my mind is, what is the province's role? With the release of these documents, hospital CEOs and patients are left with difficult questions about the bidding process. To many, it looks like nothing but a kickback. Throughout this fiasco, we have seen a government that has checked out of their oversight role, and the consequences have been immense for the people in this province. Will the Acting Premier clarify the purpose of this contribution and whether what many see as a kickback has any place in the transparent procurement process?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we're the government that took steps to try to support the industry. That's why we've been dealing with generic drugs, for example, finding ways to afford and provide better value for our taxpayers. But this is more important than that; this is more important. This is about the safety and security of our people, the patients who are affected, to ensure that this doesn't ever happen again. It is why we have appointed a third party reviewer, Dr. Jake Thiessen, to provide recommendations on how we can prevent this from ever happening again.

We've asked all Ontario hospitals to ensure the appropriate quality assurance measures are put in place. We'll follow up with those hospitals and with the industry. And we'll continue to work with the federal government to ensure that they take the actions necessary to stop this from happening. We believe what's necessary is to protect the people and the patients of Ontario.

1120

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Kim Craitor: Mr. Speaker, my question, though you, is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Our government recently tabled a great 2013 budget. This budget is about creating jobs and helping people in their everyday lives. Our government has presented a strong plan to help people across this province: creating jobs, connecting communities and giving everyone a chance to succeed.

A question that I am asked constantly by constituents in my riding of Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie is, what is the government planning to do to improve and modernize our infrastructure? Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure: Can the minister please inform this House about the investments our government is proposing in the budget to help communities across Ontario address their vital infrastructure needs?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member from Niagara Falls for his question and for his advocacy on this issue.

The finance minister has built on what has been an unprecedented commitment to infrastructure in Ontario. In years past, typically we would spend \$3 billion or \$4 billion on infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, we spent about \$13 billion this past year and have committed to \$35 billion over the next three years. This is about a 400% increase after 40 years of neglect.

We're also continuing not just to fund infrastructure but to focus on rural and northern communities. Particularly, we fund the strategic asset management plans so every community in Ontario has a good sense of the condition of its infrastructure, can help set priorities and can help work with the government to fund not just projects, but coherent plans.

We have a strong focus in the north on highways, in rural communities on bridge—and smaller communities, Mr. Speaker.

I have a feeling the Minister of Rural Affairs may like to weigh in on this as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kim Craitor: My follow-up question is back to the minister. I'm glad to hear the Ontario 2013 budget includes a focus on investing in growing infrastructure needs across the province.

In order to keep our economy moving forward and on the right track, we need to ensure we make the right investments to build infrastructure today. This includes the rural and the northern communities.

Like my riding of Niagara Falls, and Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie, many communities across Ontario face unique challenges when it comes to infrastructure.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Could the minister please provide an update to the House and to the people of Ontario on what our budget is proposing, particularly for rural Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm proud to say that this budget delivers for rural Ontario. We know that our rural communities face unique challenges and have important infrastructure needs. That's why the Ontario 2013 budget proposes a new \$100-million infrastructure fund for 2013-14. This fund will help small rural and northern municipalities build roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind you that in 1997-98, 43% of all the roads and bridges were downloaded in eastern Ontario. We're catching up on that inventory.

I have a great quote from Bill Vrebosch, the mayor of the municipality of East Ferris in the riding of Nipissing: "The \$100 million being dedicated to rural and northern is exactly what we've been looking for for years," in the province of Ontario.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Acting Premier.

Minister, you, the Premier and your cabinet colleagues have been governing this province with the help of

smoke and mirrors to try to deflect the truth and responsibility for the ongoing gas plant scandal. We have examined countless documents and heard hours of testimony that clearly demonstrate the web of denials and half-truths which have been spun by this government.

The total disregard for the taxpayers of Ontario and the continuing attempt to conceal the entire truth is a vivid reminder to all Ontarians that your government—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm a little concerned about the weaving in and out of very close to being unparliamentary language, and I'm going to warn the member not to go down that road. Thank you. Carry on.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Their actions are a reminder to all Ontarians that the Liberal government has lost the moral right to govern. So will the government do the honourable thing and allow the non-confidence motion tabled by the member from Simcoe–Grey to come to the floor for a vote?

Hon. Charles Sousa: To the Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, let me just say what the esteemed leader of the third party said about your non-confidence motion in a recent interview on Citytv. Andrea Horwath said, “I think it's more about grabbing headlines and getting attention than it is a serious motion. From my perspective, let's deal with the real issues.” And she is totally correct.

Let's see what the member from Timmins–James Bay, Mr. Bisson, said. He said, “Absolutely”—again about the Tory non-confidence motion—“not, because ... it's a game that they're playing. This is an attempt on the part of the Tories to do what they normally do, which is to find a weird way to try to get a headline that doesn't get you anything in the end.” And he is totally right too.

Let's talk about the real issues that face the people of Ontario, and let the Auditor General do—

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Barrie will come to order.

Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: This is a real issue. This is the biggest scandal in the province of Ontario, and the taxpayers want an answer. Almost \$1 billion of their money—you have lost the moral authority to govern, so I ask the Premier—

Interjections.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Minister, the Premier has repeatedly said that the budget will be the confidence motion. Since the NDP have demonstrated once again that their support is always for sale and that integrity is no longer a matter of principle, I ask again if the government will agree to a real vote of confidence and allow our non-confidence motion to come to the House for a vote today.

Interjections.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: A great bit of acting there; I'll tell you that much.

Speaker, do you want to hear about a real scandal that happened just before the 1999 election? Do you want to hear about a real scandal? It's when your government at the time—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Will he tell us about the building scandal from the 1800s, Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member's timing is pretty good again, so I'm going to ask the member from Renfrew to come to order. That will be the last time I do it.

Hon. John Gerretsen: The people of Ontario are still suffering the results of the Harris years. Do you want to hear about a real scandal? It's when your government in 1999 sold the 407 for \$3 billion—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Barrie, come to order. The Minister of Rural Affairs, come to order. The member from Simcoe–Grey will withdraw.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the member from Huron–Bruce: If it continues, you'll be warned. Attorney General?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let the Auditor General do his work—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex will go to his seat to withdraw.

Hon. James J. Bradley: He's the new hotshot over there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment will come to order—last time.

Mr. Peter Shurman: He's the old one.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Thornhill will come to order. The member will withdraw.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'll withdraw “cover-up,” Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have a tremendous number of armchair quarterbacks who seem to want to do this. Just let me know.

The member will withdraw, with no comment.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'll withdraw.

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

1130

ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Acting Premier: On April 24, the Premier and the Ministers of the Environment, Natural Resources and Intergovernmental Affairs announced with much bravado that they had stepped

forward to allegedly save the renowned Experimental Lakes research station in northwestern Ontario. Why, two weeks later, are scientists still barred from accessing the research station, putting the survival of important environmental research projects at risk?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: As the member said, yes, we were very proud to have our Premier stand to acknowledge the importance of scientific research that takes place at the Experimental Lakes. Since that time, Ontario has been working collaboratively with the federal government, the province of Manitoba, the International Institute for Sustainable Development and other partners to keep the ELA operational in the 2013 year and to ensure sustained longer-term operations.

I can tell you that the federal government currently controls the site and access to it. Ontario is working to provide operating support. We're working towards an agreement with the International Institute for Sustainable Development, and we want to assure all members of this House, all researchers and others across Ontario that we understand the urgency of this, and this is a very active and ongoing file.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: The government website still claims that the Ontario government will "keep the Experimental Lakes Area operational in 2013," and that it will ensure "important science conducted in the ELA can continue," but today we read in the *Globe and Mail* that nothing has been solved. Scientists are being prevented from accessing the research station. Long-standing projects are being jeopardized. Instead of holding premature press conferences, when will this government actually do something to ensure that the Experimental Lakes research area remains open?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I can tell the member that what the Premier said was to indicate that Ontario is prepared to step up to ensure that the Experimental Lakes continue. As I said in the previous answer, and I suspect that if she reads the transcripts she will see that, we are working with the federal government, who control access to the site at this point in time. We're working with the province of Manitoba and we are working with IISD to ensure both a short-term and a long-term plan for the Experimental Lakes.

We understand fully—and we have been working to ensure that all parties, including the federal government, understand—the scientists' concerns and our government's desire for the research to continue as planned, this year and into the future. We're actively engaged on this file, and I think all Ontarians should be proud of the fact that our government has stepped up to protect the Experimental Lakes.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Mike Colle: To the Minister of Labour, through you, Mr. Speaker: On a too-frequent basis, I've got workers coming up to me in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence.

These are people that make \$10 or \$11 an hour. They work as cleaners; they work at night. They love being here in Canada, they love the job, but they constantly complain about being pushed too hard by their employers. They always get intimidated, threatened with losing their job if they don't work hard, and they're asking me, "What can you do as the MPP? Can you ask our Ministry of Labour if they could do more to stop this very silent war that goes on in some parts of Ontario and Toronto where?"—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Join a union. All they've got to do is join a union. I'll give you a phone number.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay, come to order.

Mr. Mike Colle:—and here's the member of the NDP not allowing me to ask a question about these workers. These workers are union workers; some are non-union workers. These workers are saying the government should be doing more. I'm asking the minister—

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to assure the member from Eglinton–Lawrence that his constituents can rest assured that the Ministry of Labour is out there in workplaces across the province ensuring that workers know their rights and that employers are living up to their responsibilities. In fact, we have modernized our system to conduct more proactive work to better serve those that need our help.

In the 2013 budget, if that is passed, starting in 2013–14, the government will invest an additional \$3 million per year to hire more officers to provide proactive inspections at workplaces. This will bring the government's total investment to \$7.5 million since 2009 in proactive employment inspections. Our proposed funding will increase enforcement which in turn will help to ensure workers in all sectors are protected and treated fairly in all workplaces.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Mike Colle: You know, I told your staff just the other day, Minister, that I've got these night caretakers and cleaners; they work downtown in all the high-rise towers where all these guys and some women are making big bucks. Yet the cleaners, they're getting pushed around, asked to clean 40 washrooms in a couple of hours and then the manager comes along—and this is a union shop—and says, "Oh, well you're not cleaning fast enough. If you don't clean fast enough you're gone," and the poor guy is only making \$10.25 an hour to start.

Will these officers we're employing go into the downtown high-rise towers and talk to some of these people who own these buildings and these fancy companies and say, "You've got to treat your workers fairly. You just can't make money. Treat your workers fairly."

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: A very important question. The Ministry of Labour is committed to increasing compliance with the Employment Standards Act through education, outreach and proactive inspections.

The ministry now has a total of 30 officers, an increase of 50% from the previous year. If the budget is

passed, we will add 20 more officers to a dedicated enforcement team. These officers will conduct an additional 1,400 proactive inspections each year across the province; this is more than three times the number of inspections conducted annually since 2010. Proactive inspections help educate and encourage compliance so that workers in all sectors are protected and treated fairly in workplaces. This is a powerful and often-called-for change to how we will work with businesses, especially small businesses, and their workers. I hope all members will support the budget to make it happen.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the Minister of Finance this morning, which only seems fair given we now know that the price to keep him in that seat is \$300 million. It's fair that he would stand up and answer some questions here today.

This government, Minister, is plagued by negligence in a way that is simply unacceptable. According to the OPA, everybody over there around the cabinet table knew that it was going to cost more to cancel those power plants than what the government originally said.

A week after the current Premier's shameful display of selective memory in front of the justice committee, yesterday the former Premier went before the justice committee and again embarrassed that office that he sat in for nine years.

The people of Ontario and this House have no confidence in this Premier, the old one, or this current cabinet or this current government. Why won't you call our confidence motion for debate? Put an end to this scam that's perpetrating hundreds of millions of dollars against the taxpayers of Ontario.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: I guess the rebut is this, Mr. Speaker: Why won't your leader appear before the committee? Why won't you appear before them and answer questions as well?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: We paid \$300 million for that seat. I can tell you right now, we overpaid for that seat. The people of Ontario paid \$300 million for you to stand there like a fool and not answer questions, and kick the question—

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

Mr. Todd Smith: Which one, sir? I'll withdraw, I'll withdraw.

It's sickening for the people of Ontario to watch you laugh off \$600 million. You're laughing off \$600 million wasted. You don't have the confidence of this House. You don't have the confidence of Ontarians. We have absolutely no confidence in you to do that job, especially at the price that we paid for it. Call the want of confidence vote motion to the floor—

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

1140

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

Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we have a very serious matter before us indeed, and that's this budget. This is the confidence motion that the people of Ontario are expecting us to talk about. Deal with that.

TORONTO WATERFRONT

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. According to Waterfront Toronto, the province's half-billion-dollar investment in the waterfront has paid off. Since 2001, Waterfront Toronto has generated \$240 million in revenue for the province and attracted development projects worth \$2.6 billion. This success is threatened by plans to expand Billy Bishop Airport to allow jet planes, which Waterfront Toronto's CEO warned could bring traffic congestion, noise, impacts to public space and disruption to boating and maritime activity. Why is the minister shrugging off airport expansion as a federal matter rather than defending the province's interests along Toronto's waterfront?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We're not shrugging anything off. I think, on a number of issues, those of us on this side of the House may differ with the members opposite. We actually respect the Constitution of Canada. Airports are not regulated by the province of Ontario or any provincial government.

The zoning matters relating to the airport and the permissions and agreements are signed between the city of Toronto, the port authority, the airport and the federal government. We are the only government that isn't a signatory to it, nor do we have a say in it.

The party opposite often raises issues about when governments interfere in other jurisdictions. They and their cousins, where they're in government, are very defensive about protecting that.

As there are many members of his party on the Toronto city council, I have a lot of confidence in my city councillors to manage this issue well and to respect the jurisdictional authority of the federal government in this matter, who do regulate this and who are responsible for it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The public wants a sustainable and vibrant waterfront, and the public has been clear that this does not include mega malls and Ferris wheels and mega casinos, and it does not include a mega airport either. I recognize that there are many who enjoy the convenience of a small-scale airline, but opening up the airport to jets and long-haul flights threatens the livability and vibrancy of Toronto's waterfront. Each time the waterfront has been threatened, the public has stood up to defend the public interest.

Will the minister stand with the public and defend the public's interest on the waterfront?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I will meet with Waterfront Toronto; I do on a regular basis. I will review the matters and recommendations of Waterfront Toronto. I also listen to my constituents who live in the downtown area, being the member for that area.

We understand the role of the federal government and the city of Toronto. Right now, the city council is actually considering this file. Maybe the member opposite does not have confidence in the city council of Toronto. We work very well with them and we have respect for them. I have confidence in Councillor Wong-Tam and Councillor McConnell—who's a member of this party—who are managing this issue well. Not one city councillor has called me and said, "Would the provincial government weigh in?"—not a single request, and I meet with my city councillors on a regular basis.

Given that his party is the official opposition, maybe they will have better success with this issue than they had with the environmental lakes when we did have to step in when the federal—

Mr. Rob Leone: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: During questioning by our member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities suggested that she should ask a nursing question because she's a nurse. I hope he would apologize for that comment, because nurses can hold this government—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Let me rule on this one. That's not a point of order. Any member has an opportunity to correct their own record, as I have asked before—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Even while I'm in the middle of a sentence, the member continues.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Point of order.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think the member ought to get his hearing checked, because I said no such thing.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sit down. That's not a point of order.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1500.

WEARING OF BOW TIE STICKERS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I suspect I have a point of order from the Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I have a very important point of order this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear bow tie stickers this afternoon, in honour of the late Bruce Crozier, who was a friend to all when he served so elegantly and distinguishedly in this Ontario Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs is seeking unanimous consent, and I'm looking to make sure that everyone has access to the bow ties. Do we agree? Agreed. Thank you.

It is now time for introduction of guests. The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank my colleagues for the unanimous consent to allow us to wear these stickers. As we can see, we have quite an esteemed number of guests up here, and I recognize you may introduce them, but if I may as well, I'd like to welcome a number of people who are here for the tribute for our friend Bruce Crozier.

We have Joan Crozier. We have David and Jolean Crozier. We have Ben, Cowan and Cate Crozier. If they stand up, they have little bow ties on. I think they look just adorable. Look at that. There's Nancy Crozier, and Emma and Adam Stoyles.

Of course, we have our former members Dwight Duncan and Mike Brown up there, as well, and I'm sure—sorry—you will introduce them as well.

I just turned around and I saw Dave Gene and Jamie Rilett, who aren't on my list, but I do see them up there.

Welcome, everyone.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I'd like—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not a report.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, Speaker, you're a Habs fan. I'm really sorry about those reports.

I just wanted to reintroduce somebody I ran into on the street yesterday. He's not wearing his bright yellow, banana-coloured hoodie that he was wearing last night, but it's nice to see Dwight Duncan nonetheless.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This is going to be stepping on my toes again, because I normally introduce those former members as well.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You go ahead—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I absolutely will—without the shot at the Habs.

Further introductions? Last call for introductions.

As is the custom of this particular Speaker and Speakers before me, I would like to introduce, in the Speaker's gallery, Mr. Dwight Duncan from Windsor–Walkerville, 36th sitting; Windsor–St. Clair, 37th and 38th sittings; and Windsor–Tecumseh, from the 39th sitting. Thank you for joining us.

And of course—kindred spirits, for sure—Mr. Mike Brown from Algoma–Manitoulin, from the 34th to the 39th, and Speaker of the House.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Didn't Mr. Duncan serve in the 40th too?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Speaker stands corrected: and the 40th. From the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Final call for introductions?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I understand that although we've had a good introduction of the list up there, we forgot Deb Roberts and Paul Yeung, who are also here today for the tribute, so we want to welcome them.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I stand today to bring a very important matter before the House, and that is the World Trade Organization's appeal of a ruling that Ontario's feed-in tariff program is illegal. Speaker, this ruling was upheld.

Since the Green Energy Act was introduced and hastily implemented in 2009, the FIT program has done nothing but send electricity rates through the roof. It created a frenzy of wind turbines being built in communities that are not willing hosts, and it has taken away all powers from municipalities. Unacceptable.

What is it going to take for this Liberal government to admit to their mistakes, to admit that the FIT program is a failed program, to admit that they rushed into the green energy scheme too fast and too hard?

Since the decision from the WTO is now final, Canada, and subsequently Ontario, could have to pay damages to the affected parties. What we don't know yet, and what I ask the Minister of Energy, is how much more will Ontario taxpayers have to pay for yet another energy debacle? I can tell you that Ontario taxpayers are tired of paying for one mistake after another on this energy file. Between the cancelled gas plants, unwanted industrial wind turbines and an illegal FIT program, Ontarians have had enough.

I am proud that Tim Hudak and our PC Party have committed to doing the right thing, cancelling the FIT program, which we were against from the start. We have to make Ontario a stronger place to attract jobs and grow the economy.

LOCAL ECONOMY

Ms. Catherine Fife: This past week, I had the distinct pleasure of leading a Jane's Walk in my riding of Kitchener–Waterloo in honour of Jane Jacobs, a groundbreaking advocate and progressive planner who said, "In order to find out what works for cities, you've got to get out and walk."

The focus of my event was the local food economy, which provided an opportunity to acknowledge some of our local sustainability leaders:

Little City Farm, an urban homestead that sets a positive example for sustainability;

Smart Growth Waterloo, who have emerged as a result of the local OMB decision. They have brought together ideas from environmental and community groups to speak in one voice about the future of Waterloo region;

The Bailey-Dick family, who raise urban chickens and work to educate people on the benefits of doing so; and finally

Seven Shores Urban Market and Café. Their contribution to the health of the Waterloo region starts with their commitment to sourcing local food and supporting local farmers. They pay their staff a living wage, and they purchase all of their products, whether local or international, on a fair trade basis. Seven Shores is committed to the protection of local employment and farmland, stimulating the local economy and building towards an overall improvement of quality of life in Waterloo region.

All of these amazing leaders are making a difference in our region, building a strong community and a thriving local economy, and I would like to congratulate them on their successful ventures and thank them for their invaluable contributions.

FAMILY SERVICES

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I rise today to mark the fifth annual family service day here at Queen's Park. This is an opportunity for members of the Legislature to thank and show appreciation to all of the caring and committed persons in our ridings who work tirelessly each and every day helping others. For decades, family service agencies have helped thousands of Ontarians who face stressful and difficult situations.

Every day in my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River, I hear of the good work being done to improve the lives of people of all ages, from youth services to seniors' programs. For example, the Chinese Family Services of Ontario serves many of my constituents. This community organization offers linguistically and culturally sensitive services to enhance and enrich the quality of life of many newcomers living in Scarborough–Rouge River.

Our government shares a commitment with groups like this to provide services in the community for all kinds of people facing emotional, psychological and social problems.

Last year, over half a million Ontarians were served by community mental health and addiction programs. In this government's budget, we've committed to expanding funding for our comprehensive mental health and addiction strategy to \$93 million annually. This is an investment that is extremely valuable to ensure the well-being of many Ontarians. We will continue to work with dedicated people in our communities to care for others.

I'd like to once again thank our family services agencies for being there when our people need them. Thank you.

1510

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Robert Bailey: On May 5, I joined with Sarnia's Royal Canadian Naval Association to commemorate the

70th anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic, the longest battle in Canadian military history. Stretching for close to six years, members of the Royal Canadian Navy fought to keep open a critical supply line for Britain, defending merchant vessels from the onslaught of enemy submarines and aircraft.

Between 1939 and 1945, the Royal Canadian Navy in Halifax protected the critical raw materials, munitions and manpower supply line that fed the British and Allied war effort. Facing both the constant threat of attack from the sea and air, and the treacherous waters of the frigid north Atlantic, more than 25,000 merchant vessels crossed the Atlantic with the protection of the Royal Canadian Navy warships and minesweepers.

Numbering only six warships at the outset of the war, by Victory in Europe Day, Canada could boast of the third-largest navy in the world, with 270 ocean warships and 95,000 personnel, including 6,000 members of the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service, otherwise known as the Wrens.

For its part, the Royal Canadian Navy lost 2,000 sailors in combat, 14 warships to U-boat attacks and another eight ships due to collisions and other accidents. However, this indomitable force could account for the sinking of 31 enemy submarines in defence of the main supply route for Europe.

The victory in the Battle of the Atlantic is a triumphant moment in the Royal Canadian Navy's history, and I am proud to stand with my colleagues and honour them here today.

DRIVER LICENCES

Ms. Cindy Forster: I've been getting a number of calls from constituents genuinely confused as to this new code W on Ontario driver's licences that prohibits commercial drivers from crossing into the United States. While the American government has a rule that doesn't allow particular people to drive commercial vehicles in the event they have certain medical conditions, this is not the case in Ontario. However, since September 2003, this agreement has placed inactive W codes on internal records of commercial drivers who have one of four medical conditions restricted in the US. Ontario commercial drivers with any of these conditions, or drivers who have not filed a cyclical medical report, are prohibited from operating a commercial vehicle in the US.

The problem is that 47,000 people have been notified by the MTO that effective this month—with very little notice—they will be unable to cross into the US. It's coming as a huge surprise. It's leaving drivers at risk of losing their jobs. Their jobs are at stake. The only way they can combat this classification is to pay 120 bucks for a medical exam, if they can get an appointment. If the MTO has been working on this initiative since 2003, couldn't they have given more notice?

Can the government explain why they're using outdated data to restrict Ontario drivers? I've had complaints from Mr. Klimek in my office that he hasn't driven for

nine years, yet he got a notice to actually go and update his medical. So clearly the government needs to do something about this, or we're going to have a lot of Ontarians out of work.

CORRIERE CANADESE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I was saddened to learn, just a few days ago, that Corriere Canadese, the Italian-language daily newspaper, suspended publications after almost 59 years—a great loss for the Italian-Canadian community, who will miss the insightful perspective of the Corriere's newsroom on current events.

The publication was founded by Dan Iannuzzi on June 2, 1954. The date carries significance because on June 2, Italians celebrate the country's long road to democracy and its establishment as a republic.

Corriere Canadese was Toronto's oldest newspaper after the Toronto Star. The paper gained popularity within the community through the 1950s and the 1960s, when as many as 60,000 Italian immigrants a year flowed to Canada in search of a better future for themselves and their families.

Still relevant today, Corriere continued to connect Italian Canadians with news of interest to the community here in Canada and information on the major events from Italy. "Fiercely Canadian and Proudly Italian" was the headline printed on the front page of each edition of the Corriere, and so many people recognize themselves in that motto.

I want to take a moment to thank all the journalists who throughout six decades have served the community with the utmost professionalism and dedication, with the hope the management will be able to solve the present financial difficulties, avoiding a definitive closure. I also hope this is not a farewell—an addio, as we would say in Italian—but just an arrivederci to future editions.

GRAEME MURRAY

Mr. Norm Miller: At a time when the NHL playoffs are in full swing and hockey rivalries are even making their way into the Legislature, I rise in this House today to recognize a world-class hockey player from my riding. I would like to congratulate Graeme Murray on scoring the gold-medal-winning goal for Team Canada at the recent world sledge hockey championships, which were held in Goyang, South Korea.

Graeme hails from Gravenhurst, in the beautiful riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, and has been a staple of the Team Canada blue line for over a decade. He made his debut at the Salt Lake City Paralympic Games back in 2002, when he was just 15 years old.

Known throughout his career as a tough defender, Graeme's offensive talents were on display in the recent gold medal game. His blast from the point early in the second period held up as the lone marker in what proved to be a hard-fought win over the United States.

I was proud to see Team Canada take home the gold, and I would like to wish Graeme the best of luck as he

prepares for the 2014 Paralympic Games in Sochi, Russia. Congratulations to Graeme and the entire Canadian sledge hockey team on your gold-medal performance.

OUT OF THE DARKNESS WALK

Mr. Bill Mauro: This Sunday past, at 6 o'clock Sunday evening at Confederation College in Thunder Bay, I had occasion to attend the third annual Out of the Darkness memorial walk. I want to stand today and just thank, congratulate and recognize the strength of the organizing committee, but especially one lady in particular, Margaret Hajdinjak.

Margaret began this walk some years ago; as I said, this was the third annual, but Margaret lost her son to suicide six or seven years ago and began this particular walk three years ago. This was the third annual. I want to recognize her for her incredible strength, courage and conviction in bringing this forward.

I don't know, and I don't know many people who are able to understand, what it is that's happening to our young people. All we know is that the rates of suicide are just so out of control that it has so many people scrambling for answers. What I do know is that Margaret, the organizing committee and everybody who is supporting her in her walk are truly engaged in something that we all know will be impactful in the lives of many people.

As I said there Sunday evening, the world is becoming a better place. We saw for the first time where a pro athlete, a member of one of the four major team sports, came out as a gay man playing in the NBA, Jason Collins.

There are many reasons for suicide; we don't know what they all are. But the world is becoming a better place, thanks to the efforts of people like Margaret and her organizing committee. They are impacting the lives of people. I want to just thank her for her strength, her conviction and her courage.

AMATEUR BASEBALL

Mrs. Jane McKenna: The Major League Baseball season has been going steady for the past few weeks, but it's not the only game in town. In fact, for communities across Ontario, local and regional baseball can be just as top-of-mind.

Since 1919, the homegrown Intercounty Baseball League has won a reputation as one of Ontario's best amateur leagues and remains the province's premier senior baseball league. Many outstanding former pros play in the league, along with some of the best graduating juniors from across Ontario.

The league's teams can be found in communities from Ottawa to London. It's the London Majors, in fact, that the Burlington Bandits will be taking on in their home opener at 2 p.m. this Saturday at Nelson Arena. Known as the Twins in their first two years of IBL play before being bought and renamed by owner Scott Robinson during the recent off-season, the Bandits opened their season against the Guelph Royals this past weekend.

I'd invite everyone to visit Burlington this summer, take in a game and support the Bandits, as well as their season partner, the United Way of Burlington and Greater Hamilton, who will be at every home game conducting 50/50 draws, giveaways and other contests. See you in the bleachers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements—especially the last one, since Brantford has won five championships in a row, but I won't say anything.

BRUCE CROZIER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to have tributes to our former colleague Mr. Bruce Crozier, who was an MPP here from 1993 to 2011, with a representative from each party speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to give tribute to Mr. Bruce Crozier. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the member from Wellington-Halton Hills.

1520

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

He was, said his family, "a real gentleman; a true friend." What a beautiful and eloquent way to remind us of the remarkable life of service of the member for Essex, Bruce Crozier, who departed this place and then, so shortly and sadly thereafter, departed this world.

It's a real honour for me to speak in tribute to Bruce with his family here because I considered him a friend across the aisle, as we all did. On behalf of the entire Ontario PC caucus, I extend our condolences to Joan and the rest of the Crozier family.

Bruce was one of the best-liked members and one of the most effective ones during his long tenure, speaking on behalf of and representing the people of Essex county for some 18 years, an amazing record of service, far longer than the average tenure of MPPs these days.

As he once said, he was a constituency person first and foremost, which meant he instinctively and consciously put his constituents first. It meant he put his constituents ahead of his own personal ambition. It meant that, yes, he was partisan, he was loyal to his party, but he spoke up for his people. It meant that no one else wrote his script, and it meant that he didn't waste a lot of time chasing the Queen's Park press gallery after question period. He was a workhorse, not a show horse. He was the kind of member that this place relies upon and could not function without.

Bruce's life was one of service. Active for years in Kin Canada, he rose to become the national director. He was involved in many other community organizations at home in Leamington, too many to list here. He served on council and as mayor.

Professionally, he had a distinguished private sector career as an accountant and as an insurance broker. He

worked for years for Bennie Lumber and Building Materials and later for the H.J. Heinz Company, before joining us here in a by-election in December 1993.

When he arrived here, serving in opposition to the NDP government of the day, he soon was on his feet, not with an over-the-top partisan rant, for that wasn't Bruce Crozier, but instead his own thoughtful observations based on his life and his professional experience and what he was hearing in his riding. It was an auspicious start. For as long as his name was on the ballot in Essex South, and later, Essex, the other parties, including our own, didn't have a chance. Even when his party was dragging him down, as it did occasionally, he still had strong pluralities, underlining the respect that people had for him in his home community, the people who knew him best.

Before long he was a critic of several important ministries and he introduced a number of important private member's bills. I remember one in particular, which was an amendment to the Safe Streets Act. His bill sought to allow our volunteer firefighters to have occasional fundraising tolls on the main streets of our small towns. I voted for his bill at second reading and it ended up as a tie vote, which meant that the Acting Speaker had to vote as well, as tradition dictates, voting in favour of the bill to allow further discussion. It passed second reading. For those who say that one vote doesn't matter, it was one of those days when every single vote did indeed count.

Later on he had success again with a private member's bill that meant so much to him, and he talked about it in his farewell speech two years ago this very month: the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Awareness Month Act. Because of the respect and trust we all had in Bruce, we allowed that bill to receive unanimous consent to be called for third reading and passed into law, forgoing the normal procedure. I know that he was very proud of this accomplishment, and rightly so. His bill will raise awareness and save lives, helping families forevermore.

In 2003, when the Liberals formed the government, Bruce was nominated, and then, by the passage of a motion of this House, he was reappointed Deputy Speaker. And then he had to go back to school, attending what I would call "the university of the table." There, tutored by our patient and knowledgeable Clerk and table staff, he became an expert on parliamentary procedure and tradition, which he came to love and cherish, as we all do. Over time, he became the longest-serving Deputy Speaker in the history of the Ontario Legislature, outlasting three Speakers, and in this capacity he was known for his sense of fairness, his sense of humour, and his integrity.

He had a deal with Bert Johnson, who was another of our favourite members, who was also a presiding officer at the time. Bruce would do Bert's duty when Bert went on his annual fishing trip. In return, Bert would cover for Bruce during the week of the Indianapolis 500, which I think was not permitted to start until Bruce arrived in Indianapolis for this annual auto racing ritual. Indeed, the weekly morning meeting of the presiding officers and table staff could not begin until Bruce informed us of the

details of the previous weekend's NASCAR or IndyCar road race. He had a passion for auto racing like nobody I've ever met.

Then the subject at those presiding officers' meetings would turn to Emma, his granddaughter, and we'd hear the latest Emma story, every one of them beautiful.

Bruce enjoyed being a member here, loved making a difference and carried his responsibilities very well, but he missed his family terribly when the House was in session. He once told me how he hated "that apartment" when he was down here alone.

Conversely, you could see the joy in his eyes when he'd tell you that he was busy because Joanie was in town—Joanie, his bride of almost 50 years, the love of his life. We all know how much he adored you, Joan, and your family, and he was looking forward so much to spending his retirement years with you. But we never know—none of us ever know—other than the fact that God has a plan for all of us, and we are granted comfort in His love if we seek it.

Our Clerk, Debbie Deller, told me that when Bruce was first elected way back in 1993, he asked her to bring him into our legislative chamber here when the place was quiet and nobody else was around, just so he could, as he said, "soak up the privilege of what it is to serve here." At the end of his time, he asked her to do the same thing, so that he could spend a few quiet moments alone reflecting on all that he'd worked so hard to achieve for his constituents, for the people of Ontario, and what a privilege it was to serve here.

I'll always remember Bruce either sitting over there, the best-dressed man in the House, often wearing Prime Minister Mike Pearson's bow tie, I understand, or sitting down there in the Speaker's chair looking at his beautiful pocket watch and declaring it "6 of the clock," adjourning the House—even if his pocket watch was off by half an hour or even more—or standing down there, when I spoke to him for the very last time, wishing him well in retirement and promising to keep in touch.

A real gentleman, a true friend, and we can add to that an outstanding member who we'll always miss.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour to stand here today on behalf of our party and our leader to pay tribute to my predecessor, the former MPP for Essex, the late Bruce Crozier, who served as MPP for the riding of Essex South—which was later renamed Essex—from 1993 to 2011. That's 18 years of dedicated service to our region and our province. So it would come as no surprise to the members of this House that Bruce was a political powerhouse. Mr. Speaker, I would challenge you to check his stats. He won by wide margins in each and every election.

You simply can't achieve that level of electoral success without doing the right things and having the right stuff, and Bruce had it, beginning with assembling a committed and hard-working team of constituency and legislative assistants. I want to acknowledge them today.

They are Carrie, Patti, Dan, Tracy, Darcie, Danielle, Robyn, Jamie, Paul, Susan, Kevin and Kandice. It sounds like your typical Essex county family, because indeed they were a family. There wasn't really that much turn-over over the 18 years that Bruce served, and I want to thank them sincerely on behalf of our team and our party for the work that they did on behalf of Bruce.

Bruce was known as the consummate gentleman, and of course he was easily recognizable by his bow tie. He was kind-hearted and empathetic, but we know that nice guys only get so far. Bruce was most importantly effective. He delivered results for Essex county, most notably as the champion of our primary agriculture producers. He was a passionate ambassador for our region's farmers and agricultural industry. Whether promoting our region's amazing wine growing or working with our greenhouse and horticultural industry to expand and define itself as our nation's premier region for sustainable food production, Bruce's voice was heard loud and clear.

I know he was also instrumental in filling the gap for our grain and oilseeds and beef and pork producers in initiating the provincial business risk management program for those industries, an important program that ensures that our region's farmers can leverage the risks of their operations knowing that the government is there and will be there to support them in difficult times.

Bruce was recently recognized posthumously for his contribution to agriculture by his induction into the Essex County Agricultural Hall of Fame, and that is certainly a fitting tribute to his work.

1530

Bruce also recognized the vital need for good infrastructure to allow our region's agriculture and manufacturing industries' products to reach their markets. He was the lead advocate for expanding the Highway 3 corridor from Oldcastle to Highway 77 from two lanes to four lanes. As a testament to his work, that stretch of highway is now and will be forever aptly known as Bruce Crozier's Way.

And Bruce had a way about him, a way that he spoke to people, a way that he addressed their concerns and a way that, as an aspiring politician, I personally admired. I never got to tell him this, but I studied his performance during the 2007 election. He was remarkable—of course, seasoned, but impressive nonetheless.

As any good politician should, I learned a few things from him. I learned that people can pick up on insincerity quickly when you're in the public eye, so it's better to be forthright and steadfast than to try to wiggle out of a tough question. I also learned that our region, Essex county, as geographically large as it is, is actually a small place—we're all in the same phone book—and that county class transcends party politics.

As an example of the quality and caliber of Bruce's character, I can tell you that it was no more evident than when he paid a personal visit to my mentor and Bruce's predecessor, former MPP for Essex Pat Hayes, in December of 2010. Pat was in ill health and passed in

May of 2011, but Pat and his family told me how much that meant to him, that Bruce took the time to pay Pat a visit in his home to talk. That's class. What I would not give to have those two in a room together right now.

It's that wonderful personality, dedication to his community and resolve to represent our region that endeared him to so many for so long. But I know Bruce's proudest achievements are not his political endeavours but the strength and love of his family. His marriage to his wife, Joan, whom he referred to as his bride during their entire 49 years of marriage, was his crowning achievement. As many of us in political life know, the stresses and demands of this job are immense. A partner who is there for you through thick and thin is a gift to be cherished. I know he felt that way.

His son, David, and daughter, Nancy, and grandchildren Ben, Cowan, Cate, Emma and Adam are the legacy that Bruce surely was most proud of—a family that embodies the sincerity and love that Bruce felt for our region every day.

I want to thank Bruce's family for sharing him with us for so long. The sacrifices that you made as a family in order for Bruce to serve his constituents for so long are ones that only the members of this House and their families understand.

It is with great gratitude that I say thank you. Our province is indeed a better place for having had Bruce Crozier as our voice. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, Speaker. Again, I'd like to welcome the family and friends of Bruce Crozier to the Legislature today as we all pay tribute to our friend and colleague Bruce Crozier. I'd like to thank my colleagues across the way, from Wellington-Halton Hills and Essex, for your words as well today.

Please know that everyone in the Liberal caucus has only the fondest memories of Bruce. Everyone that I talk to here, I'm sure everyone could give five to 10 minutes of their memories of Bruce. Please know that as well.

I, of course, did not have the opportunity to work with Bruce here, but being from Windsor, everyone in Windsor-Essex knew Bruce and what he was doing. He certainly was a very vivid part of our community and our region.

When I hear the name Bruce Crozier, many things come to mind: his love for his family; his love for the riding of Essex; his dedication to the people of Essex county. Among all the descriptors and words used to describe Bruce, one always stands out: genuine. With Bruce, what you saw was what you got. If he agreed with you, he was your greatest ally. If he disagreed with you, well, he'd let you know, as I'm sure members of both sides of this House who did work with him can attest to. I know everyone who knew him has their stories. Bruce was a true friend. Whether you were a family member or a constituent, you always knew that Bruce would be on your side, helping you, cheering you on and providing you with sound advice.

Speaker, I had the opportunity, back in 2011, to attend the renaming of that stretch of Highway 3 that is now known as Bruce Crozier's Way, a reminder of the special way that Bruce Crozier conducted himself as a member, as a citizen of Windsor-Essex, as a father and as a grandfather—truly, a testament to his dedication to the residents of Essex, a testament to his years of advocacy for the widening and extension of that highway for the safety of its residents. Every time I drive by that sign, I get a smile on my face because I remember Bruce, his easy smile, his dedication, and yes, even his bow tie.

As an MPP, Bruce worked tirelessly for the riding of Essex. Around the caucus table and in this chamber, you saw and heard Bruce proudly inform the people of Ontario of the needs and joys of Essex county.

Bruce's public life, as we know, dates back to 1985 as a councillor in Leamington, then mayor, then his election to provincial politics in 1993. His service and his commitment over that number of years are to be admired.

Today, we remember those contributions, remember that gentleman from Essex, our friend the late Bruce Crozier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their very—

Mr. Mike Colle: Scotch for everybody, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You guys have a way of stepping on all my lines.

I thank all members for their very kind and heartfelt comments to the family, and about Bruce.

If you'll indulge me—a personal observation. The last time I saw Bruce was days before the tragic event. He looked me in the eye and said, "Men should never be afraid to say 'I love you,'" and he said to me, "I love you," and I had the opportunity to say, "I love you, too."

I thank the family for the wonderful gift of Bruce Crozier. I wear this watch in honour of him, and I will never take it off.

The comments will be copied from Hansard, and we'll have a DVD sent to the family.

We thank you for the gift. Thank you.

As my wife says, gather yourself up.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FIGHTING HUNGER WITH LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À COMBATTRE LA FAIM À L'AIDE D'ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Mr. Bailey moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 68, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to provide for a tax credit to farmers for donating to Ontario food banks certain agricultural products that they have produced / Projet de loi 68, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour prévoir un crédit d'impôt pour les

agriculteurs qui font don de certains produits agricoles qu'ils ont produits à des banques alimentaires de l'Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

1540

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Mr. Speaker, over 400,000 Ontarians have been forced to turn to food banks every month in 2012—an all-time high. This is a 10% increase since the 2008 recession.

Over 25 million pounds of fresh food is disposed of or plowed back into farmers' fields in Ontario each year due to cosmetic reasons, and today farmers cannot afford the cost incurred to deliver that unsold produce to local food banks.

The Fighting Hunger with Local Food Act amends the Taxation Act, 2007, to provide a non-refundable tax credit to eligible Ontario farmers who donate food to Ontario food banks—certain agricultural products that they have produced. The tax credit is 25% of the wholesale value of the donated agricultural products. Unused tax credits may be carried forward and deducted in the following five years. If the tax credit is claimed for a year, no charitable donation may be claimed in respect of that donated agricultural product.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

SÉCURITÉ CIVILE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Community and Social Services and Corrections.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci, monsieur le Président. I'm pleased to stand in the House to mark Emergency Preparedness Week in the province of Ontario.

Ontario has faced a number of emergencies in the past: ice storms, floods, industrial accidents and forest fires. No doubt we will face these and other emergencies in the future. The impact of emergencies can be significant and far-reaching. Superstorm Sandy was a recent reminder of the devastation that natural hazards can unleash on the whole region and its people. This is why it is vital that we all take action to be prepared.

Emergency Preparedness Week reminds us of the importance of being prepared and the value of each household having an emergency plan and an emergency survival kit. This year, Ontario is marking Emergency Preparedness Week by highlighting the importance of seniors being prepared for emergencies. While everyone in Ontario is encouraged to take action to prepare themselves and their families, seniors can be especially vulnerable during an emergency.

Les situations d'urgence passées ont démontré que les personnes âgées arrivaient très bien à s'entraider et à participer aux efforts communautaires d'intervention et de rétablissement après une catastrophe. Leur coopération à la sécurité civile est très importante.

Emergency Management Ontario, in collaboration with the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat, has developed a new emergency preparedness guide for seniors. This guide shows how easy it is to be prepared for different emergencies, and outlines the circumstances and needs that seniors should consider when they plan for emergencies.

The first step for each of us is having an emergency plan that contains key information, such as where you would go in an evacuation and who you would contact if you needed help. It should also include your important medical information, the name and contact information of your doctor, and others who would assist you in an emergency.

The next step is building an emergency survival kit. This kit should contain non-perishable food, water and other provisions, such as a flashlight and batteries, to last three days. It should also have supplies tailored to the unique needs of each person, such as extra medication, medical equipment, or food and water for your pet.

It is only fitting that I mention the importance of remembering our pets when planning for emergencies, as this week is also Be Kind to Animals Week.

Finally, everyone should have other items such as clothes, blankets and personal items ready in case you have to evacuate your home.

Par ailleurs, la population de l'Ontario doit demeurer informée; c'est-à-dire qu'elle doit se tenir au courant des dangers locaux et de la façon de s'y préparer. Tout le monde peut s'abonner aux avis d'urgence de l'Ontario pour obtenir des renseignements importants sur les dangers qui menacent sa région.

By encouraging and helping more Ontario seniors to be prepared, we aim to help increase their safety and resilience in the face of disaster, and free up first responders to take care of those who are hit hardest by an emergency.

Personal preparedness contributes to building stronger communities. As the people of Ontario become better prepared, our towns and cities become more resilient and better able to deal with emergency situations.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage seniors in Ontario and their families to visit Ontario.ca/beprepared. Indeed, I encourage everyone to visit Ontario.ca/beprepared. There they will find resources to help them to become prepared and information on how to subscribe for emergency alerts.

Monsieur le Président, je prie instamment tous les députés de faire le nécessaire pour se préparer aux situations d'urgence. Je les encourage aussi à participer aux activités de la Semaine de la sécurité civile organisées dans leur collectivité et de transmettre les informations à leurs électeurs, en particulier les aînés, pour les inciter à préparer leur propre plan d'urgence et trousse de survie.

Your support will help build safer communities for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the minister for incorrectly identifying her ministry. I said "community services," not "community safety." I apologize.

It's time for responses.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to respond on behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus for the 18th annual Emergency Preparedness Week.

I agree with the statement by the minister. We're supportive of continuing to have an Emergency Preparedness Week, because it speaks to a very important issue, and that is to remind people that, should an emergency occur, there is a certain amount of responsibility on our part, as the government, and public agencies, but one of the most important things is for people to bear in mind that if this should happen to them, there is a plan that they should have in place themselves as well.

This year, the focus is on seniors. We have to be reminded, Mr. Speaker, that aged seniors could be much more vulnerable should an emergency beset them, either by weather or accident or whatever. So we also remind the families of seniors, if your mother or father or relative is not living in the same dwelling as you, to be prepared, should there be an emergency, to offer assistance to those seniors in your family as well.

My wife insists, during the winter months, that I have in my van all kinds of emergency supplies. I have a pair of snow pants; I have a pair of insulated boots; I have mitts; I have a toque; I have an air pump; I have flares. If she had her way, she would probably have more stuff in there. I said, "I've never broken down." She said, "Well, if you do, you'll be glad you have that stuff." So I thank my wife for continuing—though I've taken it out now, because I need the room. But during the winter months, I always keep that stuff in the van, and also a set of booster cables. I carry those all the time, and it's not only for my own use, but if I come across somebody that could use some help, that averts problems for someone else as well.

1550

The most significant emergency that I recall was the ice storm of 1998. That was not just an emergency, but a disaster, and that took place not everywhere across the country. Down in this part of Ontario, it was nonexistent, but as you moved to eastern Ontario and then into Quebec, there was a huge, massive—probably the greatest single disaster in Canadian history in terms of money that had to be spent to bring things back up to standards after the disaster.

A lot of people were caught off guard. When I was a kid, and certainly before my time, it was common in rural Ontario to have the power go out for significant periods of time. As time went on and our system became stronger and better, it was more and more rare that you would actually lose power, but in rural Ontario it was quite common. People were prepared all the time for a power outage, because they knew that they would happen on a regular basis. We don't expect them too often anymore, but we should always be prepared for those emergencies.

The minister was in my riding earlier this year, in townships in my riding. Brudenell, Lyndoch, the township of South Algonquin, the town of Huntsville, Bancroft, Minden Hills, Kawartha Lakes—they all declared emergencies this year because of flooding within their regions. It's an opportunity to remind every one of us again that we need to have those 72 hours of provisions of everything we need, whether it's medicines, medical supplies, food, water—all of the kinds of things that will allow us to survive for that period of time. If there's no intervention, if there are no first responders that can get there because they're dealing with a massive problem on a bigger scale, we have to be able to ensure that we can take care of ourselves for that period of time.

So we in the PC caucus applaud and support the establishment of Emergency Preparedness Week and the continuance of marking it on our calendars as a very, very clear annual checkup: "Okay, what do we have in the house? Are we prepared should an emergency take place? Are we ready? Are we in a position to survive clearly and comfortably for that 72-hour period?"

If it's beyond that, obviously, then it is something that is beyond an emergency, it's a disaster, but 72 hours I think is the right number. We should all do whatever we can to ensure that whatever emergency might beset us, we are able to survive for those 72 hours. I congratulate the minister for, again, announcing Emergency Preparedness Week, and we continue to support it on the PC side.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I, too, on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party and our leader, Andrea Horwath, want to commend the minister and her initiatives through the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, who indeed are informing, in a broad sense, Ontarians about this week.

It's similar to the week in which we all check our smoke detectors; it should be an annual reminder, as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke just stated. It certainly should be something that we all take stock of: What would we have in case of a catastrophic emergency? It's not something that people think about every day. It's almost not something that people think about at all throughout the year nor, really, can you blame them. We don't go about expecting natural disasters to happen each and every day. But as we try to adapt to the changing nature of climate and the effects of climate change, we know that, more often than not, these emergent situations come through acts of nature, whether they be floods, tornadoes, slides or anything associated with climate change.

That's why, obviously, it's so important for us to have a plan and for us to coordinate that plan with various levels of government and various first responders: to ensure that, in conjunction with our first responders and emergency responders, we are acting proactively to make sure that our communities are safe.

It's also important to ensure that they have the right resources. We in this chamber are identifying what those resources are and actually acting upon them, whether

they be upgraded search-and-rescue tools for our first responders to be able to do those jobs, or, in fact, communication tools.

I think the most effective method of addressing any type of critical situation is to get the word out: "Here's where to go, here's what to do, and here's how you can remain safe." Obviously, in this day and age, we have various ways of connecting with our communities, and I applaud, certainly, the government's initiative on expanding that scope of information.

I also think that focusing on the most vulnerable population that we have, when it would come to a scenario where an emergency happened—our seniors, who indeed would be at a tremendous disadvantage if they had to rely solely on themselves to escape an emergency situation.

We need to make sure that the proper tools are available. We need to make sure that the proper plan is available, and that community assets are deployed to respond to those people and identify who those people are and how we can ensure their safety, and I think that this week allows us the opportunity to do that. It allows us the opportunity to thank our first responders for keeping our safety in mind, first and foremost. They put themselves out there. We call them the "front line," and that's a term that's typically used in a military context, because they're the ones who are first to see action. They're the ones we send into battle. They're the ones we rely on if these scenarios, unfortunately, come to play. They're the ones that we need to make sure have the resources, and we certainly can identify where those resources can be applied.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I commend the minister. I hope she knows she has my full support—and our party, in any way that we can facilitate getting the word out, ensuring that Ontarians know that there are plans available.

As the minister mentioned, I encourage folks to visit the Ontario.ca/beprepared website. I'm certain there's a whole host of information that's available there for individuals and community partners to get the word out and for us to all remain safe and sound in this wonderful province of Ontario.

Merci, madame la Ministre, pour votre intervention aujourd'hui et pour toute l'information et l'éducation que vous donnez aux Ontariens.

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a distinct pleasure today to participate here at Queen's Park.

This petition is from my riding of Durham, and it reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

“That the Minister of Health amend Ontario regulation 319/08 to give the testing track record of a small drinking water system greater weight in the risk assessment process. Furthermore we, the undersigned, ask that bed and breakfasts operated within a private home with a drinking water supply meeting all the requirements of a private home not be subject to regulation 319/08. Furthermore we ask the minister to work with the bed and breakfast industry to find simplified, safe solutions for smaller operations (three or four guests).”

I'm pleased to sign it and support it and present it to Megan, one of the pages.

PROROGATION

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition contains over 100 signatures in support of my private member's bill that was passed after second reading: Bill 24, the Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, to ensure that prorogation is debated and supported by the majority of MPPs.

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“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas MPPs are elected to represent their constituents in the Ontario Legislature;

“Whereas prorogation has an important role in Westminster parliamentary systems democracies that should not be abused by the government of the day;

“Whereas the use of prorogation to avoid accountability in sitting Legislatures has become a worrying trend;

“Whereas Ontarians deserve to know when their representatives will be back at Queen's Park when the Legislature is prorogued;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should take action to ensure that the Premier cannot prorogue without first seeking a resolution from the Legislative Assembly.”

I will affix my signature and hand it over to page Kelly.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families have for ... years (beginning in 2010) faced a decline in provincial funding for programs that support people with disabilities like cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and autism; and

“Whereas this level of provincial funding is far less than the rate of inflation and operational costs, and does not account for providing services to a growing and aging number of individuals with complex needs with a developmental service agencies are being forced into deficit; and

“Whereas today over 30% of developmental service agencies are in deficit; and

“Whereas lowered provincial funding has resulted in agencies forced to cut programs and services that enable people with a developmental disability to participate in their community and enjoy the best quality of life possible; and

“Whereas in some cases client services once focused on community inclusion and quality of life for individuals have been reduced to a ‘custodial’ care arrangement; and

“Whereas lower provincial funding means a poorer quality of life for people with a developmental disability and their families and increasingly difficult working conditions for the direct care staff who support them; and

“Whereas there are thousands of people waiting for residential care and day program supports province-wide;

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

“(1) To eliminate the deficits of developmental service agencies and provide adequate new funding to restore services and programs that have been cut;

“(2) To protect existing services and supports by providing an overall increase in funding for agencies that is at least equal to inflationary costs that include among other operational costs, utilities, food and compensation increases to ensure staff retention;

“(3) To fund pay equity obligations for a predominantly female workforce.”

I agree with this petition and will give it to Brendan.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas servers and bartenders in Ontario earn \$8.90 an hour, far less than the minimum wage; and

“Whereas tips are given to servers and bartenders for good service and to supplement the lower wages they receive; and

“Whereas Ontario law allows for owners and managers to pocket a portion of servers' and bartenders' earned tips or total sales; and

“Whereas thousands of servers across the province have asked for this practice to stop;

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

“Support the swift passage of Bill 49, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act with respect to tips and other gratuities and thereby end the practice of ‘tip-outs’ to management and owners.”

I am in agreement, sign my signature, and send it with page Megan.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government has announced that the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. will end its Hiawatha racetrack slots operations in Sarnia on March 31, 2013, even though the current agreement does not expire until 2018; and

“Whereas the end of this program will cost the city of Sarnia 140 jobs immediately and \$1.5 million a year in gaming revenues, not to mention potentially 60,000 jobs across the province if the program is scrapped entirely; and

“Whereas there has been absolutely no consultation with the community, employees, or owner/operator of the local facility; and

“Whereas the” McGuinty-Wynne “government continues to put more and more Ontarians out of work due to its ill-conceived, ad hoc decisions, including, in Sarnia, the loss of 80 jobs at the ... jail, 100 jobs at Lambton generating station, and numerous others due to high energy costs on businesses;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the McGuinty government stop risking thousands of jobs in Ontario and \$1.5 billion in potential revenue by mismanaging the racetrack slots program and focus on finding solutions to the real problems that Ontario is facing.”

I agree with this, affix my name and send it down with Fiona.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, beginning January 1, 2013, the WSIB was expanded to include groups of employers and principals who had previously been exempt from the WSIB and had private insurance; and

“Whereas this new financial burden does nothing to improve worker safety and only drives up the cost of doing business in Ontario;

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

“To repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with page Eve.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I continue to get these petitions into our office—and I have them here—to stop the tire fee increases.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship’s eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

“Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

“Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

“Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

“Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

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

“Please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship’s fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs.”

I affix my signature.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I’m pleased to share a petition that I continue to receive in my office, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn’s, Alzheimer’s, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic

and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

I've met with these people. I agree with their petition and I'll send it to the desk with Shruti.

SHINGLES VACCINE

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas one in three Ontarians will experience shingles in their lifetime; and

“Whereas shingles is a painful and stressful condition; and

“Whereas a vaccine is available for preventing shingles and is recommended for all seniors; and

“Whereas the shingles vaccine is currently not covered by OHIP;

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

“To ensure the shingles vaccine is covered under OHIP for all Ontarians.”

I agree with the petition. I will be signing it and handing it off to page Brendan.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Ms. Laurie Scott: “Stop the tire fee increases.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

“Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

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“Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

“Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

“Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

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

“Please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs.”

It's signed by many people in my riding, and I'll hand it to page Megan.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the government of Ontario's newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year; and

“Whereas the Ontario College of Trades has no clear benefit and no accountability as tradespeople already pay for licences and countless other fees to government; and

“Whereas Ontario has struggled for years to attract people to skilled trades and the planned tax grab will kill jobs, and drive people out of trades;

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

“To stop the job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with Fiona.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I have a petition here from the community of Walkerton that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario has closed historic jails in Walkerton and other rural Ontario municipalities resulting in loss of employment and heritage buildings to be vacated; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario is committed to job creation and economic development in rural Ontario communities and the preservation of heritage resources; and

“Whereas the provincial Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services has indicated a desire to establish a provincial correctional museum and memorial to showcase the history, heritage and legacy of our correctional institutions;

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

“That the Liberal government support the establishment of the Province of Ontario Correctional Museum in the historic 1866 Bruce County jail in Walkerton and instruct the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, to begin discussions with the municipality of Brockton.”

I do agree with this petition. I affix my signature and send it to the table with Gabriel.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have here a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and the quality of life for all future generations;

“Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which will have significant human and financial costs for;

“Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents' physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

“Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

“Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;...

“Whereas the county of Oxford has passed a resolution requesting a moratorium on landfill construction or approval;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To implement a moratorium in Oxford county on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

“That this review of alternatives would give special emphasis on (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can efficiently and practically be recycled or reused so as not to require disposal in landfills.”

I affix my signature to the petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROSPEROUS AND FAIR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 POUR UN ONTARIO PROSPÈRE ET ÉQUITABLE (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 7, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / *Projet de loi 65, Loi visant à mettre en œuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John O’Toole: Before I start my remarks in a different tone this afternoon, I want to extend my appreciation to the remarks by all members for the member from Essex, Bruce Crozier, and his wife. I specifically want to thank the member from Wellington–Halton Hills. I was moved to tears, actually, because I did know Bruce and Joan, and Ted summarized a fine reputation of 18 years here at Queen’s Park.

From that tone, I’ll move on to the next tone. It’s out of respect.

I’m following up on the comments made by the member from Thornhill. I did sit with him and watch his comments yesterday in his leadoff remarks, and he was kind enough to offer me the opportunity to speak about the situation Ontario finds itself in on Bill 65.

I think context is always important, to let the people of Ontario know precisely where we are. The context is—we often say it, but we don’t frame it up properly. We

just go into a bit of a rant on some of the scandals that are ongoing.

I think it’s important to recognize that in the 10 years under Premier McGuinty’s and Premier’s Wynne’s time here, we’ve moved the actual accumulated debt—this is important for the young people here, because this is future taxes. The debt in these 10 years has moved from \$139 billion—that’s like a mortgage on your house—to \$273 billion. They’ve doubled the accumulated debt, so actually they’re living on the credit card. When you can’t afford the quality of life you have today—which we all want—but you want to fake it, you put it on the credit card. So that’s what the accumulated debt is.

But if you look at provincial spending on a broader scale, what is that spending for? Is it any better in our local hospitals? No, it isn’t. In fact, there are layoffs I will go through here. Is it any better on our highways? We’ve got congestion coming out our ears. Where is it any better? The children’s aid societies are all in deficit. Name for me—the Toronto schools are accused of spending \$100 million in sort of scandalous spending. Name one thing that’s better. I can’t think of one, unfortunately.

Now, I’m not saying Ontarians are to blame. I’m putting the blame squarely on a government that has no plan, no ability to manage a large and important province, the largest province in the whole federation of Canada—and we’re behind almost all of the other provinces. That’s the context that you have to put these remarks in.

And don’t just listen to me. This is the summary of what I see. The spending level has doubled as well. The spending basically started off just this brief last couple of years, and it has gone to the point now where—it has basically doubled from 2003 up to now; it’s \$130 billion.

When I look at those things, I say, “How do we finance all this spending?” Well, it’s the debt I talked about, and they still—even this year, the deficit is a good place to talk about. Operationally, they had a deficit of \$14 billion in 2010. Then they had another deficit in 2011 of \$13 billion. Then they had another deficit in 2012—this year.

Now, it’s down this year to \$9.8 billion. We all thought it was going to be \$14 billion, and you sort of ask—you look back, and there’s a lot of one-time revenue generations that are savings. They’re really cutting off entitlements to public sector employees. They don’t know it yet; a lot of the younger ones don’t. These are pensions and other things that are being hollowed out. They’re stealing money—pardon me—taking money from every program they can find.

Now, if you look at next year, the deficit is up again. They’re back on the spending spree. I think we should be putting an end to it, is what we should be doing. We should be bringing forward the confidence motion by our leader, Tim Hudak; our House leader, Jim Wilson; and Steve Clark.

This is a serious, serious time for Ontario. If you want to know the outcomes in the future, look to the outcomes in the past. Past behaviour is a great predictor of future

behaviour, and I just outlined it for you. It's nothing but deficits and debt and spending.

Now, again, they're shaking their heads. I see their House leader over there, who is the worst House leader ever. I hear that every day—I didn't say it, but it's a term that I hear—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham, withdraw that statement.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, I don't have—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Never mind "well." Withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: I don't have evidence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now, I want to put a few things on the record here that still aren't clear in the minds of the people of Ontario.

I'm talking and having a conversation—that's another term I hear a lot. I'm having a conversation with the people of Ontario. Ask yourself, are you any better off? Ask yourself, where's the budget going, the \$126 billion—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: —yes, \$127 billion; that's what it is. Where is it going? Well, almost 60% of it is wages and benefits; that's where it's going.

Now, what's the first expenditure? To understand this—Mr. Speaker, I appreciate you cutting me off on that rant I was on there, but the first and most important one is health care. We'll get into a bit of what's happening there. That's the biggest expenditure. In fact, with an aging population, including myself, it is an important expenditure.

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The second one is education, and I suspect that we could do better there. I really do feel that we could do better; and I would say that we move into a knowledge-based economy. For the people of Ontario, what's the third-largest expenditure?

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Servicing the debt, paying off the credit card. They're not paying it off—no, no. The third-largest is paying off the credit card, the monthly payment thing. If there's not enough money to buy food, you have to pay off the debt of the food you've already eaten and spent. It's tragic.

I look at the budget in a different way, I think. I look at where some of the risks are in future program money. It's important to put into context here—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I have a little time left; I don't really want to be interrupted if I can help it.

They made a deal. There was a secret backroom deal made with the NDP, as far as I understand. This has been verified by the media; I have clippings on that. The deal was that there were three things they wanted. The three things they wanted were—now the leader of the NDP,

Ms. Horwath, is questioning whether or not they're going to deliver.

The Liberals have won every election by promising something: closing the coal plants in, I think it was, 2003? They haven't closed one. Ten years later, they haven't closed one. They've shut the economy down so you don't use them—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, they haven't.

Mr. Phil McNeely: No, I know they have.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, they're still up. They're all up there. Phil, you'll have two minutes when you get it.

The next promise they made is that they won't raise your taxes. Well, they're the highest ever in the history of this province.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Aren't they called revenue tools now?

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, that's the new transit thing. My member from Huron–Bruce, she's right. Those are promises yet to be made, but they're coming. You can count on it. These revenue tools that were spoken of are important.

But the third one was reducing auto insurance by 15%. There's absolutely no method of how they're going to do it, and if the NDP sign that cheque, they're being fooled.

Interjection: You didn't read it. Before you say—

Mr. John O'Toole: There's no method; I'm sorry. What they're going to do is cut the statutory accident benefits and move all the costs to the consumer when they go to court to get your money. That's how it's going to be paid for. It's going to be all moved to the courts through tort, and your entitlements under statutory accident benefits, or the number of entitlements you're entitled to—but the Liberals are used to saying, "I'm entitled to my entitlements."

But here's the other part: Ms. Horwath is now saying she needs proof that she can get these deliverables. We'll see about the proof; I can't for one moment trust a thing they say. The most important evidence there for me—why I get so disheartened—is that I listen to the arguments every day on the Ornge helicopter scandal, just a tragic waste of health care dollars. Imagine what we could have done with those millions and millions—hundreds of millions—of dollars.

That's just one example. Don't even talk about the gas plants, because that's not \$500 million, it's not \$800 million—it's a billion dollars. It's a billion dollars, and where is it going to show up? In your electricity bill. Look on there; there's a little number on there. That number is going to get bigger. It's going to be the highest energy costs in North America.

They just lost a ruling with the World Trade Organization on Bill 150. They couldn't manage their way in a two-car funeral. I just can't believe this government gets away with it. Honest to God, I'm shocked and saddened by the performance of the current government. They obfuscate and avoid telling the truth about anything.

It's so evident, when the gas plants—our member Vic Fedeli, the energy critic, has done a marvelous job, as has

John Yakabuski, our former critic on that file. It's true, if I even look at the clippings; what I'm going to do is go straight to—these aren't prepared notes, because I don't have any prepared notes, but I do read the paper. We get the paper every day. All members get them; they're called the clippings. I'm just going to flip through the clippings. What have they been saying about the party? These aren't written by our leader, Tim Hudak.

The very first one—this is the first one; I think the member from Ottawa—Orléans should look up here. This is from the Toronto Star, which we would refer to as their briefing notes. Here's the headline—I'm not making this up, Mr. Speaker; I'll submit this to Hansard—"Hospitals Face More Spending Cuts." Now, here's what it says: Last year, Ontario's—were frozen at \$17 billion. This year, they're moving the money—it says, "Community, Home Care Get Boost, But Patients Still Lose Out, Critics Say." This is by the critics.

Now, pay attention. They have no plan. They're just moving the money from the hospitals to the community. They say, "Well, it's going to be called aging at home." No, no, no, it's aging alone. That's what it is: aging alone.

You can't get home care now. In fact, the most number of hours you can get, I think, right now is 12, and I think they're moving it to 14 hours. That's a convenient number. That's two hours a day: one hour to get up, and one hour to put them to bed. That's home care in Ontario today. It's tragic.

The nurses—I'm meeting the nurses in three of the hospitals in my riding, with our critic, Christine Elliott. We're at Whitby in the morning, Whitby psychiatric hospital, or mental health hospital. Then we're at the Uxbridge hospital, Port Perry and the Bowmanville hospital. All of those hospitals have deficits. Check out with your riding. They all have operating deficits. You don't see it, because it's a line of credit, and they have to pay the interest on the line of credit. All of them are in deficit.

And why? I want to tell you why. The Auditor General—here's his report. Auditor General, what are they doing in hospitals? Hospitals? We're getting 7.1% a year from 2003—this is the auditors, not me—to 2011. What are they going to get in the future if they're going to 3.6%? That's half. Where does their budget go? For pills? No, salaries; it's nurses. They're laying them off. Then it will be the caretakers. With all the hospitals, they have C. difficile.

Education is being moved from 4.8% over the last five years, 10 years, to 3%. Post-secondary training—they're cutting to support the debt they're creating in the province of Ontario.

Our member, our critic from Thornhill has done a marvellous job. He has outlined the scandalous relationship with the NDP—\$1.5 billion, I think, was the payoff. That's the payoff for the NDP: \$1.5 billion. I have the greatest respect for Michael Prue. I've been on committees with him for years. I hope he turns it down. Do the right thing. Go to the people of Ontario and ask, "Do

you think they're doing the right thing?" Read the paper. Look at what's happening.

This is about the jobs that are being shed in Ontario. Everybody can't work for the government. Do you understand? I think the Liberals think that's the case. They just hire more public servants and everything will be fine.

But I'm saddened and disappointed by this budget. I can't ever see myself or our leader, Tim Hudak, supporting it, because they've proven to me over 10 years that they haven't got a plan. They're skating around the issues, and not just on the gas plants; they still haven't got a plan for most of the major challenges.

I'm going to say a last thing, that transit is the next debate. Metrolinx wants an additional \$50 billion of new money, new tax money, and they're going to get their revenue from these things they call revenue tools. Now, what are revenue tools? Revenue tools are new taxes: development charges, lot levies, tolls on highways, on gas, on parking—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: —and just plain more taxes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Durham says that he has been doing some reading, which is great, because you should have read the budget before you said, "No, no, no."

You say that you care about those priorities that you've put forward, like jobs, like health care, like education. But you didn't try to make it work. You didn't try to make it better.

So now, afterwards, you've negotiated your way not only away from the table, but you're out of the room. You might as well not be in the building, because you're not doing your job. You abdicated your responsibility as opposition members to make a minority government work. That's what the people of this province want. The people want politicians to work harder. They want them to work harder, not less. They don't want them to throw their hands—they don't want to see lazy politicians saying, "You know what? We just can't do it anymore." So you missed your opportunity.

We, of course, have a different approach. We came to the table. We had five asks. Home care: You say that you care about home care. We put a five-day home care guarantee in for consideration in the budget. It's there. We put something on auto insurance, on affordability. Parts of it are there; not all of it is there. So we're going to continue to work.

1630

Today, we introduced a new office called the financial accountability office to make sure that Ornge doesn't happen again, which makes sure eHealth doesn't happen again, which makes sure gas plants don't happen again.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You say you care about it, but you're not doing anything about it. We on this side of the House are going to try, because when we go back to the

people, we can prove to them that we are standing up for them, that we understand what they need. This side of the House is truly the only party who understands the people of this province and who are trying to make it work at Queen's Park.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, it is always fun to follow the member from Durham. Any relationship between fact and the member from Durham's speeches should be taken as being entirely coincidental. He asked something about secret backrooms where, allegedly, there was a deal between Liberals and the NDP, but my colleague from Beaches—East York—I went over and I asked rhetorically, "Did I miss something here?" He said, "That secret backroom: That was the meeting rooms here in the Legislature where the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs meets." That's where the NDP decided, "We'd actually like to work in this Parliament and see whether or not we can come up with a budget for all Ontarians." They actually put an agenda on the table. We said, "Okay; we understand who sent us here, and we understand why we were sent here. Let's see if we can work together."

Let's see. What did the Conservatives put on the table? Um, nothing. They decided to vote against the budget before they read it—before they read it. They're irrelevant; simply irrelevant.

Let's look at what this budget does do in my community in western Mississauga. It is the end of GTA pooling: \$36 million a year that we had six years ago—gone. Mississauga and Brampton don't pay that. Property tax bills covering land ambulance, court security, Ontario Drug Benefit and Ontario Disability Support are now completely phased out, gone. Mississauga and Brampton: Your property taxes now go a lot further, courtesy of what this budget and this government and everybody that has chosen to work with this government has done for you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank my colleague from Durham for his insightful comments on the budget. Speaker, he gets it. He gets it that when you're talking about an \$11.7-billion deficits and you're talking about \$273-billion net debts, the formula cannot work. It cannot continue.

What we've been advocating in the PC Party is a change in direction on the way that this province is going. You just can't continue to spend yourself out—you can't spend yourself out of a hole, Speaker. You've got to manage yourself out of a hole; you can't spend yourself out of a hole. That's what this government seems to continue wanting to do.

I say to the comments of the member from Kitchener—Waterloo, chastising the member for Durham: How could we, in good conscience, support a budget that does nothing to address the jobs crisis in this province? It's only about kicking tough decisions down the road for

another day and for another generation to have to face them. That is wrong thinking, Speaker.

If you want to change the fortunes of Ontario long-term, you've got to actually start to do something. You can't hope and pray and try to buy your way into the homes of people across the province by currying favour here or currying favour there; a special program here, a special program there. The next thing you know, we will never be able to get out of this mess.

That's how it started in the European countries that have gone to the dogs. They just felt they could continue to spend and that they would somehow miraculously get out of the hole. That's not the way it worked there. Now they've got disaster zones. It's not the way it's going to work in Ontario.

If you don't have the strength, the moral fortitude, to stand up and take the heat and make the right decisions today, then everybody down the road will pay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Prue: I will have my own one-hour in a few minutes, but I did want to comment on yesterday's speech by my colleague the member from Thornhill. He is my colleague and, I trust, my friend. We sit on different sides of many, many issues. He did speak for some 45 minutes yesterday, talking about the Conservative position around the budget.

I listened intently to what he had to say because I wanted to hear whether he had direct criticisms of various portions of the budget that he either liked or didn't like. He described it all succinctly, in a couple of sentences. It didn't matter to him, he said, what was contained within the budget because they were going to vote against it anyway.

The budget itself is not the relevant issue for him and, I think, for his party. The relevant issue for them is the gas plants. Let's be very real: The relevant issue for them is that they think the Liberal government is not up to snuff, ought to be defeated, and they are using the budget as that opportunity, should their motion not be successful, in order to defeat the government.

I don't blame them for it. I understand that point of view very well. I've heard that point of view from many of my own constituents. But the reality is that if we are going to talk about what is contained within the budget, if we are to separate them at all—and I think we have an obligation to do so on behalf of our constituents—then a rational and reasoned argument needs to be made over what portions of this budget the Conservatives are opposed to.

In speaking to my own constituents, I have not yet really heard too much opposition about the budget itself. I've heard many, many comments about the wastage of money. I've heard many comments about the incompetence of government around eHealth, gas plants, Ornge and everything else.

I'm still waiting to hear Conservatives speak about what it is they do not like in the budget. I know what they don't like about government. Let's hear the other side.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham has two minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: I just want to acknowledge the emergency responders who were here listening today. I think of those who put their lives down and the government that's basically not there for them, even though the minister spoke rather eloquently today.

I recognize the member from Kitchener–Waterloo—she's new here. She means well, but she has drunk the Kool-Aid. Unfortunately, she thinks by hiring another bureaucrat, you can actually solve the auto insurance policy—I don't think so.

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville is on the record as saying that they had no idea how much they were going to spend because it's sort of like a space shot. He's on the record there, so you can dismiss that.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke summarized it very well. We've got to change directions. Our leader isn't so much voting against Charles Sousa—a nice fellow—or the Minister of Finance, I should say. He would have done anything to get that job. In fact, he threw Sandra Pupatello under the bus.

Here's the real issue. We're voting against the Liberal strategy. We're voting against the Liberal plan. We've got to change directions.

There are two ministers here. There are no backbenchers except Phil.

All I'm saying is, they've got to change directions. Ontario is hemorrhaging money. We're spending about a million dollars each and every hour more than we take in. Isn't it a symptom of reckless, careless, thoughtless spending? I've got the plan for you right here. This is the commission on reform by Don Drummond. In this book, do you know what he said? You have a structural deficit. Put on the brakes and turn around before you go over the cliff. We're in serious trouble in Ontario.

I think of my constituents in the riding of Durham, which is Uxbridge, Scugog and Clarington—these are the people who are going to have to pay the money out of their pockets for the problems they have created. It's sad.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a delight to stand up here today and to speak.

To my Conservative colleagues who were cheering me on yesterday, I hope you're cheering me on by the time I finish the one hour.

This is my opportunity to talk about what I think the economic circumstances are in this province, to give the government some guidance, to talk about the budget bill and to talk about some of the other political events of this time.

I'd like to start off with the economic conditions because I think we need to look at where Ontario is today. I look through this, A Prosperous and Fair Ontario, these 314 pages, and I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, it is important that every member of this Legislature attempts to read all or most of it.

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The day the prosperous and fair Ontario budget was brought down, there were many in the press who came running up to me immediately and said: "Are you voting for this budget or against it?" The answer was a very simple one, that we needed some time to read it. I think that anybody who is doing their job in this place and is trying to understand how \$120 billion is spent needs to take the few hours that it takes to read that entire document; needs to absorb what is contained therein; needs to look at Bill 65, which is the compendium to the budget request; needs to look at all of the bills and all of the acts that are going to have to be changed; how it's going to be implemented; what is amendable, what is not; and then a decision has to be made.

We in the New Democratic Party went a step further, and I think it's an important step to take. Not only do we have to read this, but we also have to talk to people and see what they think. When this Legislature was shut down for four months, many people, I am sure, went home, went on holidays, went fishing, did whatever they wanted to do. I know even myself, I took a day off and I painted part of the house. It was good to have a day off. But I want to tell you what I also did and what members of the New Democratic Party did. We went into our ridings and we went to other ridings all across this province, and we asked people: "What do you want to see in the upcoming budget? This Legislature is going to go back. We're going to have to do some work. What is it you want to see? What hopes and dreams do you have? What are the things that are important to you?"

People told us over those four months hundreds of things that they wanted done. It was impossible to contain all the hundreds of asks in a single request to the government at the time that the budget was brought down, but it was possible for us to come up with six or seven really good ideas that we thought would improve the lives of everyday Ontarians, ideas that they thought were important to them and ideas that they wanted us to bring forward. We have done that.

Before I get into those ideas, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the economic circumstances in which we find ourselves. Because as I read A Prosperous and Fair Ontario, as I listened to the Premier, as I listened to the Minister of Finance, it seems to me that these members of this Legislature look at the world through pretty rose-coloured or Liberal-red glasses, because what they want to see is an ever-improving economy here in Ontario, things getting so much better—our trade deficits being wiped out, trade with the United States going up, jobs galore everywhere there is. That's what they have contained here within the body of the budget.

But you have to dig down to look at what the reality is, what we can probably expect and what the budget has to mirror. First of all, real GDP growth in Ontario is going to be stuck at 1.5%—that's the forecast for this year and maybe slightly more for next year; 1.5% GDP growth is basically treading water. It does not really produce the kinds of things and the kinds of oomph that

people are looking for in terms of expansion, in terms of our budgets, in terms of job creation, in terms of extra money for families. It does not contain it. Anyone, including my colleagues across the aisle in the Liberal Party, who says that things are getting better—the forecast is for 1.5% GDP growth, which is one of the lowest growth rates that Ontario has experienced since the Second World War. This is not a time when we are into expansion, and the government needs to tell people that we are not into expansion. They need to tell people that what they are going to do is going to help and not hinder their efforts to find affordability and jobs and security.

The second thing it says—and this is very interesting as well—is that private sector growth is going to be 1.6%. What that means is that public sector growth is going to be under that, and it also means that there will probably not be much of an expansion in public sector expenditures. As you look through the budget, you'll see that that is in fact the case. But having private sector growth at 1.6% says and should say a lot to the members opposite in the Liberal Party. It should tell them that when you have an anemic private sector growth of 1.6%, even though all kinds of efforts have been made over the last 10 years with the Liberals in office, all kinds of efforts to pump more and more money into the private sector, to take away all the tax expenditures they used to have to make to government, to make them fabulously rich—it is not having any real growth within the private sector.

In fact, private sector growth is lagging behind even those countries in Europe which faced catastrophic conditions this past year, and well behind the United States. Giving more money in tax breaks is not working. The government needs to start thinking about this when you look at that kind of anemic growth. We in Ontario who are trying to help people find jobs need to find other alternatives than what the government has set out in A Prosperous and Fair Ontario.

They have a dream. The dream is that 2014 is going to see this rebound. I heard this last year; last year, they said 2013. And 2012 was going to be a rebound, and 2011 was going to be a rebound. This year the rebound is not too high. It's up to 2.3%, which is still, even if that happens, even if some miracle happens and their rose-coloured glasses suddenly catch fire, well below the average growth rates of Ontario for the last 50 years.

So they talk about how this is going to be fueled on the stronger exports to the United States of America. I want to say that this too is a dream that is contained within their budget; this dream that they have is not likely to happen. Exports have declined to the United States—a combination of factors. The high cost of energy makes our products much more expensive. The Canadian dollar at or near par has made it much more expensive. The household net worth in the United States has not yet come back to where it was in 2007. So even though there has been some growth in that country, they are still worse off today than they were in 2007, and they are definitely not looking to us to provide exports to them in anything except energy.

Interjection: Made-in-the-USA policy.

Mr. Michael Prue: They have made-in-the-United-States policies, as my colleague behind me just said. It's absolutely true that they buy American first, that the States are all into a whole thing about protecting their own jobs. In fact, their job growth rate is eclipsing ours as a result. We're not doing the same thing; we're trying to be good neighbours. We're trying not to get involved in that kind of stuff, and we've argued this in the Legislature before. But please, please—you know, the Liberals are saying that this is going to solve our dilemma; it's not there at all.

In four years, the government says they've created 400,000 net new jobs. The government of Ontario says that unemployment is going to go down to 6.6% by next year. I think that there is a dream here, a dream that is not likely to be realized. The unemployment rate in Ontario has been stuck in the 7% and 8% area for a long time. It does not appear, given that companies in Ontario are holding on to their money and not creating jobs, that the government is going to have any success at all in realizing this dream of a 6.6% unemployment rate for 2014. There is an anemic 0.8% 2012 forecast that's going up to 1.5% or maybe to 2% by 2014-16 in terms of growth.

Household debt in this country is rising. People have less money to spend. Household debt: According to A Prosperous and Fair Ontario, it's the first time in postwar history that it is actually past the United States of America. Ontarians owe more household debt than the average American does—first time it's ever happened in our entire history. It is at 150% today of disposable income. Who is going to buy the goods and services you say are going to be created by your policies?

When I talk to ordinary people, when I'm out there in the finance committee, in my own constituency, around the province, people say they don't have the money. That's why they complain about the sky-high electricity rates. That's why they complain about all of the government programs that cost them too much money. They complain about the cost of gasoline. They complain about the cost of taxes. They complain about everything because their disposable income is no longer there. They're in debt. They're maxed out. The credit cards can't take any more.

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If you also look at A Prosperous and Fair Ontario—and then I'm going to get on to the actual budget containment. Personal income tax: If you look at what the government is saying is going to happen between the year 2012-13, which is this year, personal income tax is going to net the government \$26.1 billion, but by 2015-16, there's going to be a huge increase, according to them, in personal income tax—up to \$30.6 billion. Somehow, magically, they expect that the ordinary people who can't find jobs, who are struggling—the manufacturing sector is anemic. It's suddenly going to increase by \$4.5 billion in the next couple of years. Maybe if everybody had jobs, maybe if everything went really well, maybe

that would happen, but look what happens in the same book—the same couple of pages.

Corporate taxation in Ontario, which is today at \$12 billion and has declined from some \$18 billion in the last few years, is going to be reduced to \$11.3 billion by 2015-16 as the government continues to write down money to corporations, as the government recognizes the \$1.3 billion that is a giveaway for fancy meals, Blue Jays games and corporate boxes and stadiums. All of that is already written off, so the government has already recognized where their money is going to come from. It's going to come from ordinary people. The corporations who have not delivered hardly any jobs in this economy at all are going to get even more money to sock away or to send to the Cayman Islands, which is where much of it is today going.

This is the reality, and I ask the members: If you want to know what a budget is all about, take the time to read it. For the press, if anybody's listening to it, it takes a few days to read the 314 pages, all the compendium and everything else, to understand what it's really about.

It says here that there is a common goal, and I think we all have a common goal and I agree with that: that we have to build prosperity. We have a common goal that we need to build prosperity for everyone. For the members of this Legislature, for the people outside this Legislature, for students who are going to school and facing tough times, we need to have a common prosperity and to build that prosperity for every Ontarian, and we need to do so in every single region. It is not good enough when someone can say that Toronto or the Toronto area has some form of prosperity and then neglect the people of northern Ontario, neglect the people of Welland or neglect the people of Windsor, where the unemployment rate is at 12%—stubbornly at 12%. We need to have a common goal that is reflected across this entire province where every single person can have an opportunity for prosperity.

That's something we have to look at in terms of the budget. It's something that I would set out as the critic for the NDP and it's something that the NDP has set out in discussions with everyday Ontarians.

We have to approach this with ambition and optimism but, most importantly, with reality. The reality is that when you've seen 10 years of experimental stuff that isn't producing results, you have to change course a little bit.

I do not buy into the Conservatives. They want to switch the course the other way. They want to go back to the time of Reaganomics, with the trickle-down theory: Give more and more money to the rich and see if it trickles down. They have great faith in that. I don't know where it has ever worked, but they still continue to have faith in a Milton Friedman policy, which has been totally discredited everywhere in the world it has ever been tried.

We in the New Democratic Party tried to outline and did outline our challenges. We don't believe, as I said, in the Reagan-Thatcher dreams of trickle-down. We don't

believe in Milton Friedman. We have seen in countries where they have tried that, especially today in Great Britain, that there are actually riots in the street when people are unable to get jobs. We actually see there that there is a complete class distinction that has redeveloped from a country that had gone through some middle-class periods. But you see today the haves and the have-nots. We have seen it here in our own province when we had the 1% versus the 99% camp-outs, when we had people starting to talk about all the things that are happening here.

We can see in our own statistics, and I'm sure the government has them, and the Conservatives have them, too, where the rich keep getting richer and the poor—not so much the poor are getting poorer, but the middle class getting squeezed right out. That is, in fact, what has happened. We see here many advocate a race to the bottom.

I think that President Obama said it best in the United States: It's your right to work for less. When you talk about some of the solutions that my colleagues in the Conservative Party put forward day after day—like the right-to-work states or the right-to-work Ontario—it is the right to work for less money. It is the right to work in more unsafe circumstances. It is the right not to enjoy the fruits of your labour.

There is a growing gap, and a continuing gap, squeezing out the middle class. It is squeezing out, at the same time, the momentum that we should have in terms of an economy that needs to work for everyone. Surely, in my lifetime, I have seen bad economies; I have seen good economies. The good economies work amazingly well for people. It gives people an opportunity to lift themselves from poverty. It gives opportunities for new Canadians and for students to get that first job. It gives amazing opportunities for people to work and to save, to build for themselves and for their families and to buy houses and consumer goods. That is what we really need to do if we are going to have momentum and bring momentum back into the economy.

It also, I think—if we continue to do what we've done—squeezes the confidence out of equality. That is most troubling of all to me, because if we become a society in which you have haves and have-nots, if we become a society that has no middle class, then the social cohesion that has made Ontario a wonderful place to grow up and to live will be gone.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk, too, about the focus on the economy. We need good jobs. If the economy is going to work, the only thing that is going to make it work isn't to line the pockets of those who have a lot of money so that they can have more. It isn't right to have that money taken and put away in a sock or transferred to the Cayman Islands or to some other offshore place. The important thing is that the jobs have to be created, and real investment has to put money back into the economy; it cannot be hoarded.

On this one thing, I find myself in agreement with the finance minister of Canada. The Honourable Jim Flaherty

spent a long time here. He was the finance critic for the Conservatives for much of the time that I was the finance critic for the NDP. After he was the finance critic for the Conservatives and he left, the Leader of the Opposition—who is now the Leader of the Opposition—for a time became the finance critic for the Conservatives.

I've had a long time to discuss financial issues with them. I cannot always agree with them, but I do agree with Jim Flaherty today. I do agree that there is a lot of hoarding of money taking place in Canada. It's dead money. It is money that is not being used for a purpose that it should be used for. Jim Flaherty will be amongst the first to admit that his whole policy—the whole *raison d'être* of the Conservative Party in Canada is to give money, or to allow corporations to take money, on the mistaken belief that jobs will be created. If anyone is as disappointed as he is—obviously, I am. I'm disappointed.

Ms. Catherine Fife: He's disappointed.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, he is disappointed as well in what he thought was going to be a policy that would create jobs, and, in fact, it has not created any.

We also have here in this province the high cost of electricity, which has driven jobs out. We know that in certain sectors of the economy—manufacturing, northern Ontario resource development—one of the key conditions that is driving factories and good-paying jobs out of Ontario is the high cost of electricity.

1700

We also know that productivity and growth have slowed in Ontario and that investment as a share of GDP has declined steadily over the last decade.

There's all the things. Now, what do we do? This is where the NDP got involved in all of this. This is where we sat down and thought, "This is the scenario. This is what is happening here in Ontario." It's not all doom and gloom. You have to look at some of the positive aspects. We have some of the brightest people in the world. We have an educated workforce. We have people who want to work. We have people who want to contribute. We have vibrant cities, although they're a little bit clogged with traffic. We have people with great intellectual potential. We have financial markets in part. We have great resources. What can we do as a people, given the circumstances that we have inherited from the Liberals? New Democrats went out and talked and thought we could do six or seven really important things to get the economy moving. That's what we were hoping to see and what, in part, to be fair, we did see within the body of this budget.

The first thing we asked for was some youth employment. We asked that money be spent. We only asked that—\$30 million or \$40 million, I believe, was our ask.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No, not for youth.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no, \$185 million. We asked for \$185 million to create some 60,000 jobs for youth unemployment in Ontario, because youth unemployment is stubbornly high. It's well above 12%, 14%. It's been there for a long time.

Young people coming out of university or college looking for that first job are stymied. They cannot find

the kind of work they need. They cannot find the kind of work that all of us in this chamber probably took for granted when we finished high school and university and went out to find that first job. Although it was difficult—I graduated during a bit of a recession myself in the early 1970s. There was a recession. It was not hopeless like today, where people are sending out hundreds and hundreds of resumé's with no result.

I got a letter yesterday which I want to read in part into the record, with your permission, Mr. Speaker. I don't know whether the man is my constituent or not. It came by email, and all I have is a name, but it was heartfelt. Although it will take me a minute or two to read most of it, I want to do that, because this is the story of one young person, 28 years of age, with a degree from the London School of Economics and a whole range of experience both in this country and in Great Britain, who is here and cannot find a job. He's asking for us to do simple things. He wrote to me and he says the following:

"Dear Michael Prue, MPP Beaches–East York,

"As a member of your constituency, a recent graduate student and an unemployed youth, I would like to raise several issues with you. First off, I'd like to thank you for your service to the community. Second I'd like to tell you a story about myself that might make it clear to you the situation youth are in today." And I'm going to skip a little bit because it's a long letter.

He goes on: "After applying and graduating from university with a degree in sociology I applied to the London School of Economics to study with the top mind in my field. The program, M.Sc. biomedicine, bioscience and society, only took four social scientists that year, and I was one of them. Through a strange course of events I was able to find the funding necessary, and I worked hard to complete my degree.

"When I moved back to Canada, after a year in London spent watching the youth of a nation lash out in anger, saddled with a 45% youth unemployment rate, I thought things might be different at home. I thought that with my degree and an impeccable work ethic I might be able to obtain a decent-paying position outside of the restaurant industry, an industry that almost crushed my will six years prior. I was wrong.

"After six months with very little work and nearly no work pertaining to my area of expertise, I find myself now broke and on the verge of being homeless. I'm depressed, frustrated and dismayed at the hundreds of resumé's I've sent out. I have yet to have one interview—not a single one. I am now forced to go back to school for a PhD in hopes of a chance to get a job when I come back again from London, UK, in three years. I'm smart enough and I show enough promise to get into a PhD program at King's College London, but apparently I can't get a job here, not even a summer job.

"The economy as I understand it is not doing too bad. Ontario is doing quite well and in fact there are plenty of jobs out there. The issue is, not a single company will train an individual or give them a chance without having some experience. How does one get experience? In the

health, research and policy industry you cannot get experience unless you already have experience. Why? Because no one is willing to hire someone out of school. I can list off a number of jobs I've been completely qualified for but had no response to due to lack of experience.

"Contrary to government belief this is not due to a lack of funding for on-the-job training or some nonsense like that. The more money you give to businesses or banks to train people, the more they will expect that money and come to rely on it. And so you have a situation like I'm in now; a talented, driven individual on the verge of homelessness.

"I'm fed up and tired of being told by the media and governments alike that so long as I play by the rules and follow the dotted lines I'll be okay and end up with a job. This is pitiful. I played by those rules; I followed the guidance put before me by governments and policy analysts. The fact is that I've been fed nonsense by individuals who are struggling to understand anything, let alone what the youth of today wants, needs or is feeling. We/I need help.

"You could start by taking large companies, organizations, not-for-profits and other entities and forcing them to hire at least a quarter new individuals without prior experience. If they want funding you could give them funding on a needs-first basis. If this seems unreasonable, you could remind them of the glut of individuals with post-secondary education coming onto the job market.

"You might also provide bridging grants to get students from idea to funding stages for small business ventures or social entrepreneurship opportunities. These could be set up in a fashion that would allow for the individual to pay these bridging funds back with grants attained in the future. I have an incredible idea for a social enterprise to help the homeless and mentally ill. Of course, by the time I finish all the plans (three quarters done now), I'll be homeless.

"If I can help you bring this message to your fellow members of Parliament please let me know. I of course have nothing to do right now except continue my endless submission of resumés and cover letters." And it's signed.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I read this letter out is because there is a frustration out there. There is a frustration of young people. There is a frustration of what is called the Y generation, or now the millennium generation, which are seeing the opportunities that they had grown up and expected their whole lives, the opportunities that their parents had spoken about, not coming to any kind of fruition.

I watch in dismay as the government of this country, with some help from Ontario, hires foreign workers. I'm not opposed to foreign workers—I don't think any of us are opposed to foreign workers—but when there are 100,000 brought into Ontario to take jobs and you have people here who are willing and able to work, one has to question the rationality behind all of this, and I think the only rationality that we could know of is the fact that they can be and are paid 15% less for taking the job.

We need to start looking at how we hire the people who live here. How do we give them work? How do we encourage them? How do we encourage this young man to stay in Ontario and give of his expertise to us? He was one of only four people in this new course, biomedical science, chosen at the London School of Economics, and he excelled at it. And yet there's nothing for him to do here.

We in the NDP came up with a program, \$195 million. We came up with the program—and we're happy that part of that program made it into the budget—to give people an opportunity by having businesses paid to hire or given money to hire people on a six-month basis, with the expectation that a full-time, permanent job would be there at the end. We agreed with what was contained in the budget. It was our idea. You know, it's one of the things that need to go forward.

Unemployment among young people is stubborn. Unemployment among all Ontarians is stubborn, and I have had letters as well from people in their 50s who lose their jobs when their factory shuts down and quite literally have no real chance of gaining meaningful employment again.

1710

We went on to talk about barriers to employment, and it was another one of the things we asked for. We agree with the government that allowing people who are on ODSP to keep the first \$200 of the monies that they earn ought to be allowed. This was a recommendation of the Frances Lankin-Munir Sheikh report, and it is a good recommendation. One of the things we asked for was \$200—and I'm not convinced that that's the right amount, but I'm willing to start with that, but \$200 goes a long way to encouraging people to go out and get that job.

I have often spoken in this place about the money that we claw back from individuals on ODSP, and one of the most egregious things I have ever encountered in my life is the fact that this government, for the last 10 years, has clawed back money from people who are on ODSP because they were born with developmental difficulties. We know that there are people who work in this province, who give their utmost, who are proud of what they do and what they accomplish, who have abilities to do some forms of work. We have all seen wonderful enterprises like Common Ground's Lemon and Allspice, through which people with developmental disabilities serve coffee and baked goods. They have baked goods that they make and sell in many of the downtown office buildings. They make a small living, they're on ODSP, and yet we have clawed back their money.

We know of people born with Down syndrome who go out and work, who sweep floors in restaurants, who stock shelves in some of the bigger grocery stores and who work in enlightened establishments—I see them occasionally in places like Tim Hortons and Starbucks coffee—and we claw back their money. I find this atrocious. I find it appalling that we take money off people with Down syndrome who go out and get a job. I

find this shameful beyond belief, and I am happy that, for the first time, we're going to allow them to keep the first \$200.

It's only a start. It's not enough, but it is something that an enlightened society needs to do because we need to encourage everyone—everyone—to go out and get a job, to do whatever they can do, to make whatever contributions they can make to this society. We need to encourage them to do it and to have something at the end of the day.

With \$200 a month and the maximum amount that an individual is allowed on ODSP, which is about \$1,100 a month, that will take them up to \$1,300 a month or about \$16,000 a year, and they'll be \$4,000 under the poverty level, even when we allow them to keep this. Think about that. We are condemning them to an entire life of living in poverty, and I would hope that even though this \$200 is a small amount, it is the start of something much more. We need to make sure that people have an opportunity to escape from poverty. Being born with a disability, or developing a disability through accident or disease, should not, in and of itself, be an automatic condemnation to a lifetime of poverty.

At the same time, and I commend the government for this—the NDP did not ask for it, but we could have and we should have: to allow high school students to keep the money that they earn without having it included in their family's ODSP or Ontario Works monies. It's only fair that they go out and make their own money. They need the money if they're going to put themselves through school and for all the other things, and it's about time. I commend as well Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh for including that in their report and for it being in this budget.

I'd like to talk next about corporate tax loopholes, one of the favourites of NDPers all the time. We are taking so much less money from corporate taxation than we did 10 years ago, and I've seen members of the Liberal government and some members of the Conservatives talk about what a good thing this is. If those corporate taxes had not been cut back 10 years ago and were allowed to be even at the same rate as at the time Mike Harris cut them back, we would have about another \$8 billion or \$10 billion in the coffers. We would have no deficit—no deficit at all.

So when that money is taken away, when that money goes to a place where the government doesn't know where it is and when that money goes to a place where the federal government doesn't know where it is, when it languishes in some account in the Cayman Islands or some other place—Solomon Islands is another good place; I don't want to pick on the Cayman Islands alone; there are many of these corporate tax havens around the world—when it sits there and when it just increases corporate profit, it's not helping the people of Ontario, any good at all. Had we continued to tax them at the same rate as Mike Harris lowered it to in 1995, we would have \$8 billion or \$10 billion more a year, we would have no deficit, and we would have a whole lot healthier economy.

We in the NDP want to talk about corporate tax rates. The government said they were going to do something about it, but what did they do? They eliminated the employer health tax exemption of \$400,000 on companies earning \$5 million, which the NDP asked for. First of all, you would say that's a pretty good thing for all those companies that don't need it; the big banks, the large corporations—they don't need that \$400,000 exemption. However, they increased the exemption for small business. I don't really have that much of a problem leaving it at \$400,000, but they increased it to \$450,000 on \$5 million, which meant there was no new money for the treasury. It meant it was revenue-neutral. I don't have problems keeping things revenue-neutral if there's a good reason for it, but I have yet to hear the government explain what that good reason was. There could have been hundreds of millions of dollars within the treasury to be used for purposes that we need, and it's not there.

The government also said that they're talking to the federal government about the whole problem that we are experiencing here in Ontario and in Canada of corporate profits being shifted around the country and outside of the country. One of the favourite things that corporations do, of course, is that they're headquartered here in Ontario—their largest facilities, whether they be manufacturing, business or anything else are located in Ontario—but when you see the federal tax being paid at the end, almost all of them claim that their profits come from Alberta. The reason they claim their profits come from Alberta, even though the money's all made here, is because they pay less taxes there.

This is something we need to work on. This is something we have asked the government of Ontario to work on, and we did get a promise in this budget. We got a promise that they're going to study it. I've been here 12 years—two years of Conservatives, 10 years of Liberals—and all I ever hear is that they're going to study it. This problem has been studied to death.

What it needs is some real action. It needs the government of Ontario and the governments of the other provinces to sit down and to force, to acquiesce or to do whatever they have to do with the federal government that says a dollar made in Canada is a dollar made in Canada, and that it should be taxed in the place where it's earned or, at least, the average tax of the places across Canada in which the corporations are located. In Ontario, even though we have the lowest taxes on corporations, we don't have the lowest taxes overall; therefore, we are bleeding a lot of money to provinces that have different tax structures—and, by the way, governments that probably don't need the corporate taxation quite as much as we do because they're sitting on trillions of dollars of oil revenue.

We've got the whole problem of the underground economy. God knows we need to do something about that, but the Liberal government, several years ago, got rid of our tax department here in Ontario, so now we have to run off to the federal government and ask the federal tax officials to look at the underground economy

and where all of the money we thought we were going to have has been disappearing to—that black hole, that place where people go around the tax system.

Going around the tax system is very harmful—maybe not so much for the person who's doing it, lest he or she gets caught, but if they don't get caught, who it's harmful to is to the province and to all of the things we need to do here: the schools that need to be built, the hospitals that need to be staffed, and everything else. Allowing an underground economy allows for unsafe workplaces, but it also is unfair to all of those citizens who are expected, year in and year out, to pay their taxes. We need more than just a promise from this government; we need something to be done. I don't know how the government intends to do that, having sent our tax auditors and our tax collectors away to the federal government, but certainly something needs to be done.

1720

We've asked for a simple way to keep \$1.3 billion in the province. That is, at the end of next year, when the corporate HST exemption is finally lifted and all those people can go down to Maple Leaf Gardens or to the Blue Jays game or the Rogers Centre or to fancy hotels or restaurants, and all those things that can all be written off, 13%—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: The new casino maybe, somebody is just saying to me, if there is one—I hope you're not right. I'm from Toronto. We don't want to see that here.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Put it in East York—

Mr. Michael Prue: No; we'll put it in Scarborough if you insist, but it's not going to East York. The honourable minister just said to put it in my riding in East York. I think that the honourable member would know that that is the one place in Toronto—that is the highest no vote for a casino in all of Toronto. I'm proud to say it's in my riding.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The highest vote against the megacity as well.

Mr. Michael Prue: The highest vote against the megacity as well. We are independent people.

Okay, but what the minister did, one day before budget day: The Minister of Finance sent out a letter to the federal government asking them to review this largesse. This is a 13% loss on every corporate meal, hockey game, baseball game, theatre, anything that—any place where they could entertain or eat or drink or make merry. I don't think the province can afford it, and I don't think that people, ordinary people, can afford it either. Certainly everyone in this room, everyone on the street, everyone else who's not associated with a business who wants to go out to a restaurant meal has to pay the 13%. Everybody who goes to the baseball game has to pay the 13%. Everybody who does ordinary things with their money has to pay the 13%. Why do we give some a privilege of not doing it?

I honestly believe that sending a letter is not sufficient. I know it's not sufficient because, the very next day, a

question was asked in the House of Commons by the NDP finance critic, Peggy Nash. She stood up, and she asked a question of Jim Flaherty, whether he had received the letter from the Honourable Charles Sousa. Jim Flaherty answered, and you can look it up in Hansard, that yes, he had. The supplementary was, are you going to do anything about it? His answer was, no, he wasn't. So if that's the government action, to write a letter that is hopeless, I think that a whole lot more needs to—some tough negotiations need to take place, and \$1.3 billion is simply too much to lose.

Other issues we talked about: We talked about home care, and the government has come forward with \$200 million on this front. We didn't ask for that much money, but we did ask that the money come from savings, and we pointed out some places where the savings could be made. By capping exorbitant CEO salaries, by finding efficiencies within the administrative units of the LHINs and CHCs, we could actually find the amount of money that we thought would do it, which I think was \$30 million—\$30 million, and give a five-day guarantee. The government has thrown in \$200 million, but leaves the corporate salaries, leaves the LHINs' and CHCs' administrative efficiencies which we think could be made—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Cuts hospital budgets.

Mr. Michael Prue: —and cuts hospital budgets and closes beds.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Fires nurses.

Mr. Michael Prue: My colleagues say, fires nurses, and all the other things that go.

We want a five-day home care guarantee, but there are other ways to do it other than are set out in this budget, and we're asking you to take a good hard look. Is it better to take money so that people who are hospital administrators don't earn twice as much as the Premier of this province? We've asked that it be capped at twice the Premier's salary. This is a Premier, whether you like her or not—and she has been my friend for many years—who earns about \$210,000 on a \$120-billion budget and tens of thousands of employees. I don't know how a hospital administrator in a small hospital would deserve more than twice that, quite frankly. We think money can be saved there, but we don't see it.

I'm mindful of my time here, Mr. Speaker.

Auto insurance: We think that drivers need a break. Auto insurance rates in Ontario are, by the government's own admission and by what is contained within the body of the 314 pages of the budget, the highest in all of Canada. They are outrageously high, and the closer you live to the city of Toronto or the GTHA, the higher you're going to pay. You pay not because you're a bad driver; you pay not because of any fault that you may have against your insurance; you pay because of where you live. It's auto insurance by postal code. It's auto insurance by age. It's auto insurance by sex. It's auto insurance in a whole bunch of guises—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's illegal in California.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes. In many places in the world, that's illegal.

What we have said to the government is that, "You made a whole lot of things good for the auto insurance industry about two years ago."

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: That's why they gave \$25,000 to each leadership candidate.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes. My colleague here—and I should throw this in. Auto insurance, she says, donated \$25,000 to each of the five Liberal candidates running for the leadership and Premier of Ontario. I don't know whether that's true, but she tells me that and I'm going to take it at face value for the moment.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's true.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay. She says it's true. Okay.

But the reality is that, after the government changed all the laws to cut catastrophic insurance, after the government changed all the laws to make it much more difficult to commit fraud, after the government changed all the laws to make it much easier for them to earn money, they earned an additional \$2 billion in profit. All the NDP is saying is that this is a commodity on which you have no choice. If you are to drive in Ontario, then you must have insurance. If you must have insurance, it needs to be regulated. If the government is going to change the laws to, in effect, increase profits by \$2 billion, some or all of that has to be passed down to the consumer. We see something in the budget, but what we don't see is what we were asking for.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): If the two members from Ottawa would like to have a reunion, maybe they'd like to go outside. It's getting a little loud over there, and I can't hear the member way, way down at the end.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Too many Leafs fans out there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't care about the Leafs fans or the Ottawa Senators right now. You're going to have to keep it down. Thank you. This is not a hockey arena. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank you, Mr. Speaker, but you are a very fair referee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks.

Mr. Michael Prue: Even if it isn't a hockey arena—both on and off the ice.

What I was saying is: We think that some of this money needs to be passed down to people who are suffering.

In terms of suffering, if you go to the west end of the city or out into Mississauga or Brampton, you will find that that is where the rates have gone up the most exponentially. If you talk to taxi drivers—and I had an opportunity for a rather lengthy taxi ride in the Windsor area a few weeks ago. I was going to an event from—I got off the train. I like to take the train to Windsor. Everybody should do that. It's a great way to travel. I got off the train, got into a taxi, and the taxi driver told me as he was driving along that he was very interested in what the NDP was doing in terms of rates.

He told me that the rates on his cab in the last two years had gone from \$7,000 a year to \$15,000 plus, and

then they wouldn't insure him anymore, even though he had never had an accident. He knew a broker. They had to go through several insurance companies in order to get one at about \$12,000 a year in order for him to continue to do his job, drive his cab and make a living for himself and his family.

I listened to that with some degree of horror because these are the same companies that are making \$2 billion in profit, and that poor man was talking about how he was going to have to get out of a business where he owned his own cab, where he drove people in and around the Windsor-Detroit area, and where he was going to have a hard time making a living. He was talking about going into other fields, because he didn't know at this point what else to do. I told him I would raise his case here in the Legislature, and I've just done it. But also, I told him that we would do everything within our power to make sure that the insurance rates were kept affordable.

1730

I am mindful that the insurance companies still think that there's fraud out there, and perhaps there is. I am still mindful of the fact that they think that catastrophic injury needs to be better defined, and they're waiting for some court cases to come along which will give better definition to that impairment. But at the same time, ordinary people need to make sure that their costs are going down and not up.

As I said at the beginning, all of the stuff that's happening to ordinary people is pretty bad. They're suffering, and they're looking at almost anything in order to save money, in order to make sure that they can accomplish what they need to in their individual lives.

We've looked at the budget and what it had to say about transit, and—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Not much.

Mr. Michael Prue: Not too much about transit. They're going to change HOV lanes to HOT lanes. For anybody watching, wondering what the difference is between an HOV lane and an HOT lane, it's pretty simple. An HOV lane means that if you have two or three or four passengers, you can go into one lane, and it's usually not as crowded during the rush hour. It really, really encourages people to carpool and get people out of their own cars and get two or three drivers into one car, as opposed to driving two or three cars along the other lanes. It's a really good environmental decision. It helps to ease congestion. We all understand what HOV lanes are. HOT lanes are very different.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Lexus lanes.

Mr. Michael Prue: In the NDP, we like to call them Lexus lanes, because it doesn't matter how many people are in the car: If you pay a fee, you can go in the fast lane. I don't know how this is going to be administered—whether or not they're going to have their special transponders, or whether they're going to have a big sticker on the back saying, "I'm a Lexus driver. Get used to it." I don't know how this is going to be enforced.

But we have to wonder whether or not this is going to help ordinary people. It means that they're going to be

forced to drive in the slow lanes, and their quality of life is not going to go up with HOT lanes.

I'm looking for the government to answer. Are you taking lanes out of the 400-series highways? Are you taking a lane out? Because most of them don't have HOV lanes in them at present. I know the QEW does, and some of the others in the Toronto area.

But if you start adding them to the 401, which is eight lanes in both directions through Toronto—if one of those suddenly becomes a HOT lane, it means that all the cars that used to use that will be squeezed into the other seven, which will cause even more congestion, so you can make some money. We need to know about this. The government has not come clean on what they're going to do on HOT lanes. Before you get too far down the transit road, please explain that one.

And while you're at it, we're all waiting for Metro-linx. Even the city of Toronto is looking for Metrolinx. Yesterday, they came to their wisdom by one vote, and they've decided to put in a submission. Metrolinx will be giving—and, we understand, has already given—the government the heads-up on what they're going to be recommending. We've asked questions in the Legislature. The Premier has denied seeing it, but we know it's there. It has already been reported as having been given over to government authorities, the first draft of where they're going.

We need to know what that is. We need to know what it is, because the budget says that this is going to be included later. This may be a lot of money for the people of Ontario, and we need to know how much, if anything, is going to be charged to them.

Social assistance—I've got four minutes left. Social assistance: It's been a shame in Ontario, what has happened to people on social assistance. It was reduced by some 32% by Mike Harris in 1995. As bad as that was—as bad as that was—those are looked upon as good days, because this government in the last 10 years has not increased social assistance to keep up with the rate of inflation. There's a chart here in this book, if somebody wants to look it up, a chart that shows down, down, down, down, down—the spending power of people on Ontario Works and ODSP since 1995. So as bad as the deepest, darkest days of Mike Harris were, the deepest, darkest days of Kathleen Wynne are worse for people on social assistance.

You know, you can give them 1%. You gave them 1% last year, you gave them 1% the year before, and zero the year before that. One year, I remember, you were really magnanimous and gave them 2%, but inflation topped every one of those every year, so every year it's gotten worse.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: The community start-up fund is gone. There's nothing in here about the special diet allowance—

Interjection: Discretionary funding.

Mr. Michael Prue: Discretionary funds. The government did agree to increase asset levels, which is a good

thing, in line with what Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh talked about, but there's so much more that can be done and should have been done, and it's not, and people are way behind.

The wait-list for social housing has gone right through the roof. It's gone up 24% under this government—the wait-list is up 24% in the last 10 years. No social housing has been built. The wait-list is enormous. In fact, if you are a person with four children who requires a three-bedroom unit, in Ontario today, the average waiting list is 24 years. Your kids will all be grown up, and if you're lucky, graduated and married and gone before your turn comes up. What kind of social housing policy is that?

I listened to the minister today answer the fluff question from the back bench, saying how wonderful they are and how they're going to work with the federal government. In 10 years, they haven't, and this budget doesn't say much about it at all.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Inclusionary zoning.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, a simple thing like inclusionary zoning, which has been requested by the NDP and by my colleague from Parkdale–High Park, would allow cities that opportunity.

In my last two minutes—there were other things, but I'm running out of time—I'd just like to talk about the announcement made by the NDP today about a financial accountability officer and a financial accountability office. It would be modelled after the budget officer of the federal government. They had such a person, a remarkable man, in the person of Kevin Page, and we think that we need to do the same thing. We know that this may cost a little bit of money, but we think it is important for all of the things that are contained in the budget, all of the things we want to see, all of the things we're hoping this government might do, to see that the money is actually expended wisely. We have watched, to our horror, over the last couple of years as scandal after scandal seems to fall wherever this government goes—around eHealth, around Ornge, and most recently about the gas plants. Money is being wasted that we cannot afford to waste. Money is being spent, you know, for these fly-by-night P3 schemes in energy, in health and everything else, where the only losers are the people of Ontario.

The friends of the Liberal government, the people they want to contract out to, all seem to do fine. The lawyers all seem to be doing fine. But we think if we have a financial accounting officer who has the same rights and authorities of the other legislative officers, like the environment, like the Auditor General and like others—the Ombudsman—that we can get a handle. We are asking—we are more than asking. We are demanding that a financial accountability officer be part of this budget process to ensure that the people's money is spent wisely, because if we have no guarantee that it's going to be spent wisely, then it is very difficult to trust what is contained within the body of the budget, those things we like, those things we don't. We want to make sure that the government is held to account for every single penny.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, this budget was prepared after consultation with more than 600 people across Ontario—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Six hundred thousand.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Sorry, 600,000. It's a good thing you were there to correct me—600,000 people across Ontario, and it reflects their needs and provides positive solutions to challenges they face.

I participated in one of these town hall consultations with the Minister of Finance and some of my colleagues in the Ottawa area, and it was a very informative and interesting consultation that we did. We had over 20,000 callers on the line, and they all came with very interesting questions and concerns. I can say to you that their questions and concerns were addressed in the budget.

1740

We've heard about people on social assistance who want to be supported when they want to go back to work and that they want to keep more money of their earnings to help them to go through these difficult times.

We've heard about young people who wanted to find a job, and they had difficulty. They graduated with a nice degree, and they had difficulty finding a job. I must add that Ontario is not unique; in some European countries, youth unemployment is very high.

I will continue to address the budget. I'm the next speaker, so stay tuned. I will speak on the budget later on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Let me read a little from my recent op-ed piece, paraphrasing the title of a popular movie. I call this "My Big Fat Greek Ontario."

"After listening to the Wynne Liberals' first budget, I doubt that anyone is cheering 'Opa!' Sadly, Ontario may well be on its way to a Greek-style meltdown.

"You don't need to be an economist to know that Ontario is where Greece was in the 1980s. From 1984 to 1994, Greece's net debt to GDP ratio went from 37% to 66%.

"Today, Ontario is at 37% and if we maintain our current spending rate, we too will reach 66% by 2019.

"Last year's credit rating downgrade was a siren call to Ontario: Fix this now or it will destroy you. Instead, last year we saw spending actually up \$3.6 billion, while revenue was up only \$2.6 billion.

"We ... don't have a revenue problem in Ontario. We have a spending problem.

"Our debt is" due to "the refusal of the government to control spending and their lack of political will to balance the budget.

"Low interest rates make carrying this large debt possible but even the slightest increase in rates will induce trauma upon Ontario's finances....

"Over the last nine years, our GDP was up 3.3% while our program spending went up 6.6%.

"Had we just matched our spending to the GDP rate, last year's budget would have been \$91 billion instead of \$115 billion—and yes, that would have meant a surplus as opposed to a deficit....

"Ontario is poised to become the next Greek tragedy."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to stand in this House and talk about Ontario's finances and particularly to comment on my colleague from Beaches–East York. Actually, he's done what a—a lot of things are missing in this House, because on one side it's all good, and on this side it's all doom. On the Conservative side, it's doom and gloom, and they want to cut. They want to balance the budget, but not once have they said where they're going to do it. What my colleague has said is—where credit is due he has given it, and where there are problems, he has also stated them.

It's not a surprise that one of the biggest problems with this budget and with past budgets from the Liberal government is that it has been very easy to promise. One of their great promises is \$100 million for infrastructure for rural and northern Ontario. Rural and northern Ontario is a big place, and that \$100 million might not go that far, especially when you're announcing it in every town across this great province.

The problem is, no one really knows if that money is going to be spent. That's the biggest problem with all of these, and that's why one of the biggest things we asked for in this budget is we wanted accountability. The Liberals didn't put any accountability in it, so that's why we propose today to put a financial accountability office into this Legislature, because the auditor looks at numbers after they're spent, when it's too late. It's a job that needs to be done. This officer would look at the numbers before and while they're being spent to be able to put their red flags up before billions are wasted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I always appreciate these long opportunities to hear the member from Beaches–East York. He made comments on many, many issues in the budget. So, in two minutes, you can't touch very much, but I would like to mention youth unemployment.

On page 40 of the budget, it shows that the employment rate of youth 15 to 24 years is about 50%. It's been going down ever since the recession. It follows a line similar to the OECD. The OECD is about 11% lower, but they're parallel. This is a tragedy for North America; it's a tragedy for Europe; it's a tragedy everywhere for youth.

Studies show that periods of youth unemployment can have long-term social and economic consequences. So that's why we're coming up with a major expenditure in many ways: Ontario Youth Employment Fund to expand employment opportunities for youth across Ontario, Ontario Youth Entrepreneurship Fund, Ontario Youth Innovation Fund, Business-Labour Connectivity and Training Fund.

I know that there were a lot of incentives—at least a lot of encouragement—from the NDP in order to concentrate on this issue. It's so important, and I hope that's one that we're able to get through this period and to start helping youth who need a lot of help.

The other thing I noticed is that the Poverty Reduction Strategy of child poverty—it's been going down. Not enough, but certainly the contribution we make that's going up \$100 a month is going to help a lot—that child credit. In any case, those dollars are for the kids—it's showing up in our child poverty, and it's an excellent way to go. So, thank you very much for all the good ideas that you expounded today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The honourable member from Beaches–East York has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to thank the people who commented: the Minister of Community Safety; the members from Nipissing, Timiskaming–Cochrane and Ottawa–Orléans.

Dealing first with the member from Ottawa–Orléans, you twigged something there, and I should have said something within my hour. Child poverty has, in fact, gone down—not as much as what we would have wanted, because they are one year behind; the government is one year behind on its commitments to get the money up to where it should be. People who were here during the budget debate came and spoke to me about how disappointed they are that the government is not going to meet its 25-in-5 target because that money has not been forthcoming. If the government could find any such money, it might be a good thing.

To the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane: You're absolutely right to talk about the north. I think the \$100 million is not going to go very far.

The Minister of Community Safety, I thank you for your comments.

I'd like to spend my last minute—the member from Nipissing, I didn't speak about Greece at all, and I'm not sure that you should have spoken about it either, unless you knew a little bit about that country. Greece is facing huge turmoil. Greece is in a very unique and unstable position because they have euros and not their own currency. They have been unable to balance it. They have been unable to get the kinds of loans and guarantees they needed, primarily from Germany and from France. The Greeks are in this circumstance because they went through multi years of government by a party known as New Democracy, which has nothing to do with my party, but is a right-wing government—exactly like the things that you are expounding. They're in exactly the circumstance they're in because they followed the dictates that you're trying to say are good for Ontario. The reason that they're in such turmoil today is because they voted too often for New Democracy in Greece, and that's the reality.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Speaker, I would just like to correct my record. It was the Ontario child benefit, of course, that I was talking to, not a tax credit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to speak today on the budget from the new Premier, Premier Wynne, and the finance minister, Minister Sousa. I will say to you that probably the most important thing that we see in this budget is the fact that we are going to balance the budget by 2017-18. It was said often that how the money that is being spent to pay the interest on the money that we borrowed to administer the province—if we were able to use it for public service, we would be able to offer more money to our colleges and universities, we would be able to support our students who go to college and university, and we would be able to bring back the grant for those francophones who live away in the province and want to study in a larger city and have extra expenses.

That \$9 billion that we spend every year could also be spent in hiring more health professionals to provide good service in the community for those people who want to stay at home longer—our seniors, for example, who don't want to go into long-term care but want to stay at home.

My mom is 89 years old. She's lucky because she still lives at home. She lives at home with the help of three wonderful people. They each take their turns to stay with her, so she has someone 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It's a good thing that she has put money aside so that she is able to pay for all these good services, because my mom will refuse to go to long-term care. She wants to stay at home, and she wants to have care at home. But for those who are not able to pay for these services, if we did not have to pay the interest on the debt, we would be able to offer these good services.

A feature of this budget, in co-operation with our colleagues in the third party, is that we have added more money into the budget for home services, for care that seniors want in their own home. It's wonderful. We could do more; Ontarians are aging, so we will need more service, not less service. Again, the seniors in my community don't want to go to the hospital if they don't need to go to the hospital. They want to be back in their homes with the support that they need.

What we have also added into the budget—and this is very dear to my heart, as a former Minister of Community and Social Services—is we have increased the assistance for those who are on social assistance and those who are on ODSP. What the previous government did in slashing 22% of the social assistance income when they were in power—we're trying this time around to try to compensate for this large difference between those who are on OW and those who are on ODSP.

Those who are on OW are not on OW because they want to be on OW, on welfare. It is because there is an unfortunate situation that occurred in their life, and they need to rely on this assistance. Those who don't have

children are receiving around \$600 per month. Just imagine, \$600 per month. The Attorney General repeats often and reminds us: What can you do with \$600 a month? This budget will help to—not compensate totally, but at least it's an increase in the right direction to help those who are on social assistance.

What I also like in the budget is an increase in the envelope for Ontarians who have developmental disabilities. They need a lot of help, especially after they graduate from high school. They don't have all the programs that we all wish were in existence to offer services to those with developmental disabilities. During the day, if their parents are working, their parents cannot take care of them, so at least they will have a place to send them to spend the day, to do all sorts of activities, and the parents can go about their daily work and not be concerned about where their son or daughter is, or receive a phone call at 10 o'clock in the morning that their daughter is lost somewhere in town and doesn't know where she is. I heard too many of these situations when I was the Minister of Community and Social Services.

I'm very pleased with the two commissioners I have appointed to review social assistance—Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh—and I want to thank them. What an ideal team: the Honourable Frances Lankin, who had experience as Minister of Health and as Minister of Economic Development under the New Democratic Party; and Munir Sheikh, who was the chief economist for Statistics Canada. Together, the two have reviewed welfare and social assistance and have made recommendations, so I want to publicly thank them for the

excellent work they have done. We have listened to them, and we're moving—not to put together all their recommendations at once, but it's a move in the right direction.

Social assistance, people with developmental disabilities—I've heard parents being so concerned. Under our watch, we have created the Passport program, which comes to the assistance of these individuals and of parents who want to have activities for their sons and daughters who are developmentally disabled. I've seen so much innovation on the part of the parents. In Nipissing, for instance, parents pooled their Passport money and hired a team to develop programs for their sons and daughters. Of course, there is a lot of volunteer work that is done by the parents, friends and families because they cannot pay the full price for every activity. There is a lot of volunteerism that is done to help.

My heart goes out to these parents because their concern is: "Now I'm alive, but when I'm not there, when I have to go to a seniors' home, what will happen to my son or daughter?" One thing that I used to tell them: When you are not able to take care of them and you have to go into long-term care, I promise you that the government will take over.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you, Minister.

It being 6 o'clock, this debate will continue from where it left off when it's called again.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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