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Thursday 9 May 2013

Jeudi 9 mai 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 9 May 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 9 mai 2013

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 2, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 / Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les aliments locaux.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 36 today. I guess this is the first bill introduced in the House by our new agriculture minister, and it's pretty clear she's new to the job, because if Bill 36 is supposed to do anything to improve or facilitate greater local food production and distribution, it fails miserably in its attempt.

I think what I'd like to do, for the Premier's and the minister's education, is read a little bit from a *Globe and Mail* story that was published in January of this year. I'll just read portions of it, because I think it really indicates what is the problem with improving or increasing local food production and distribution.

It starts this way: "Two chicken inspectors showed up at a farm in southern Ontario not long ago. They flashed badges and inspected the premises and, sure enough, they found what they were looking for: chickens. About 100 of them, wandering across open pastures...."

"The inspectors quickly put a stop to ... that. They told the farmer to get rid of his chickens or face the consequences," which are \$10,000 a day.

Then they went around to all the other neighbouring farms with the same badges and the same threats. They were not the police or the RCMP or public health officials. They were employees of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, the body that represents Ontario's 1,000 quota-holding chicken farmers, and they have the legal right to inspect the books, records and documents, lands, and premises of anybody who has chickens in our province. You see, quota is a legal requirement for having turkeys, chickens, eggs or cows in Canada and in Ontario, and if

you're not a member of that cartel, then you are often acting illegally and in contravention of the law.

Just to give some context here, in Ontario, you are allowed to own upward of 300 chickens without purchasing quota, if you are registered with the Chicken Farmers of Ontario. But if you should want to have more than 300 chickens in Ontario, you have to buy quota, and to get into the business, the minimum allotment for chickens is about 90,000 units or \$1.5 million at current rates. So you cannot be a small producer of chickens or turkeys or anything with feathers in this province unless you pay the \$1.5-million entry fee into the cartel.

The same thing applies with eggs. If you want to be a small egg producer, you are allowed to have up to 100 laying hens, as long as they're registered with the Egg Farmers of Ontario. Heaven forbid if somebody in the province should have an unregistered laying hen. They too are subject to those drastic and onerous fines if the chicken is not registered. The entry level to buy quota for eggs in this province is about 5,000 units or about \$500,000 in costs to the cartel. I could go on; the same thing applies with dairy.

So as the Premier and the new Minister of Agriculture talks about her desire to increase distribution and production of local food in this province, even going so far as creating and proclaiming a new local food awareness week in October of each year, these tremendous, costly impediments and obstacles are there in front of everybody who should choose to want to be a producer of local food.

Speaker, I think it's just hypocrisy to suggest that local food production, distribution and consumption is being facilitated by Bill 36 when these onerous obstacles are still present and not being touched. Once again, \$500,000 to get into the egg business, unless you just want to have 100 hens: I would dare anybody in this Legislature and anybody in this province to make a profitable living with 100 chickens laying eggs. They might make \$15 or \$20 a day with the amount of eggs that 100 chickens can lay, certainly not enough to even pay the property tax on their barns, let alone earn a living for themselves and their family.

It is just ridiculous that this government continues to leave these problems and barriers in place. But it goes beyond and past the cartels and the quotas as well. If anybody cares to look at the regulations that surround moving your local produce—your local food—onto the tables of consumers, you will find an incredible maze of ridiculous, costly barriers called regulations.

Here's one that I think people might be interested to know. The Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Act lists what are appropriate foods that are to be sold at farmers' markets. Of course, fresh meats are not allowed to be sold at farmers' markets, and ungraded eggs are not allowed to be sold at farmers' markets. But the health units do produce an appropriate list of what can be sold at farmers' markets, and they include things such as canned pop, bags of potato chips, Popsicles and chewing gum. That is what this province has listed as appropriate products to be sold at a farmers' market.

0910

I have yet to come across a Popsicle tree, Speaker, and I bet you there's not many people who have come across a Popsicle tree in this province, but it is allowed and appropriate to sell those Popsicles off the Popsicle trees at our farmers' markets. It's the same with chewing gum. I know there are bushes of chewing gum plants all across the province producing multitudes of chewing gum, and they of course are allowed at the farmers' markets as well. But heaven forbid if somebody should want to sell an egg at a farmers' market, or a chicken breast. Then they're in trouble. Then they've got the heavy hand of the law to deal with, just like those farmers in southern Ontario who were doing that vile, atrocious, evil act of having 100 unregistered chickens on their land and facing \$10,000 in fines.

So I do think that if this government is indeed caring and compassionate for small producers, and interested and honestly, genuinely wanting to facilitate the increased production, distribution and consumption of local food, let's start dealing with the real problems, and put your proclamation of food awareness week on the back burner and start dealing with the real problems.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again it's an honour to be able to talk about food in this Legislature, and I have some specific comments to the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. He used the word "hypocrisy." Last week, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario were here, and I'm sure all three parties vowed to support supply management. Well, let's talk about hypocrisy. A member of the Tory caucus just stood here and said that the cartels are going to bring farmers down. Dairy farming in Ontario provides 75,000 jobs. Does the Tory caucus supply management or does it not, as the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington said? That's talking out of both sides of the caucus's mouth.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, this is a very serious issue. I'm here to stand up for the people in supply management, to stand up for the people who support this province, who create the jobs in this province. And the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington says it's a cartel. Let's come clear with the Tory party. Are you in favour? Is Tim Hudak in favour of supply management, or is he not? Because I have just heard, and I think our caucus has just heard, that this member is not

in favour of supply management because of his ideology. Well, what is the ideology of the Tory party? I think we have the right—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: The 75,000 people who work in the dairy industry have the right to know if the Tory party is in favour of supply management, or is it not.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I couldn't have said it better than the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. On so many issues does the Tory party wants to have it two ways. They say one thing in their ridings and they say something totally different here. Speaker, as my colleague from just north of my riding has stated, he claims there isn't much in the bill. We think there's lots in the bill. We've debated it here now for 20 hours, and it's time that we vote on the bill and send it to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased to respond as well. I want to address that directly. I can tell you that I have some of the most successful farm operations throughout my riding, including supply management, which I would support. I would say the question here is on Bill 36. I think it was just completely extemporaneous and quite angry comments from the member from Timiskaming. I know he himself is a proud farmer—a dairy farmer, I believe—and so I have every reason to embrace his passion for the topic. But I'll make it local food.

This is an article from the media last week, not precipitated by any action of mine, but a fellow I know quite well, Ted Eng. He's a farmer and owner of Zephyr Organics and employs a team composed of family, local and migrant workers. He's pictured here showing one of the migrant workers, Peter Bartley from Jamaica, weeding a greenhouse plant operation of leeks. This is a proud farm. This is a fellow, the Eng family, some of the most wonderful property in Uxbridge township. He served on council as a regional councillor. He served on the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee and the GTA agricultural advisory committee. He's active in the community. He's active in leadership in agriculture. These are the things that we should be celebrating.

The anger that the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is upset with is that this bill is much to do about nothing. Bill 36 does nothing. I can tell you, there's more success just from the farms themselves. This is the Evans family farm abuzz—

Hon. John Gerretsen: What about supply management? Are you in favour of that?

Mr. John O'Toole: I certainly am in favour of supply management. I've been quite clear on that.

I would say that I believe that agriculture is the largest real business in this province. Now, this government could do more to cut down some of the red tape. I fully endorse that. Unnecessary red tape and regulations are hurting farming in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: It's a pleasure to rise in the House this morning and speak again about food. I'm looking forward to this bill getting into committee. I hope at that point we can put some substance to this bill.

I do want to take a moment in this debate to make a point that I've made before, which is about access to any kind of food in this province. This week is one of these weeks that we talk about it. It's Hunger Awareness Week in Ontario. We have this week, and it hasn't stopped hunger. We have a bill before us that proposes Local Food Week, and I don't actually think that that is going to solve our local food issues in Ontario. But the issue of hunger is something that we should focus on.

We have a budget that was introduced last week. The Attorney General yesterday, in our housing debate, was talking about the Tories' record when it came to cutting social assistance benefits to people. You know, I read in the weekend newspaper about a former minister here who made those cuts, and he kind of expressed that he didn't actually know what he was doing when he did that. He had no understanding of the impacts of that. I thought that was telling. It was clear to people who understood that a 22% cut to somebody making \$550 just won't allow people to eat. But to the Attorney General, where I do disagree is that in fact rates in Ontario are now worse than they were when you came into office, sir. In fact, people are worse off if they don't have work in Ontario than they were when the Liberals came to power. That is something that has not been addressed. In this budget we've seen further cuts. You know, at the end of this year, community start-up benefits will expire. That means that people will not have access to emergency supports when they are in need. So while we're talking about a Local Food Week in Ontario, we're failing to do the very basics to make sure that 600,000-plus people who don't have work actually have support when they need it. I think that is something that we do need to focus on.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I guess I hit something raw with the member from Timiskaming. Maybe we'll have to pasteurize him a little bit here and calm him down. The thrust of my comments is thus: There are real, tangible, significant barriers for local producers to get their product to consumers. If we don't deal with them, all the proclamations and all the awareness weeks in the world will do nothing for those people, both the consumers and the producers. I talk about hypocrisy. This is hypocrisy, that when a bill—

Hon. John Gerretsen: You can't say that in here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to withdraw. It's unparliamentary.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

0920

Mr. Randy Hillier: But certainly we can see the contradictions between putting forth a bill that says, "The

Liberals have a big, big heart for local food, they are compassionate about the local producer, they want to facilitate and help and make everything possible," but then they run and hide from the real barriers, the real problems.

Nowhere did I hear from anybody—from the Attorney General or the member from Timiskaming—about the Popsicle trees that grow here in Ontario but that are facilitated and allowed by our regulations. Let's deal with the real problems and the cost. The cost of entry into local food is prohibitive. When you have to spend \$500,000 to get into selling eggs—that's the entry fee—that is an impediment.

Let's wake up and really, surely show that you do have a heart and that you do have some care and compassion for consumers and local producers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It's my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 36, the Local Food Act, and to celebrate local food and its roots in my riding.

Burlington is a wonderful place to live and is home to great natural beauty: a limestone escarpment threading through woodlands of oak, pine, ash and maple, and a waterfront lapped by the waters of Lake Ontario. Although it is thought of as suburban these days, it was at one time called the garden of Canada, in recognition of its land, thought to be some of the richest, best settled and most highly cultivated in Upper Canada.

Like many settlements at that time, agriculture was a big part of life in early Burlington. While Halton's agriculture is mostly found north of Dundas Street these days, at one point it was far more commonplace and widespread. You'll find a hint of this on Burlington's crest, which features a bright, red apple. The apple is symbolic of the area's fruit-growing industry, which dates back to the days of the United Empire Loyalists.

History records that more than 200 years ago, members of the Ghent and Davis families, early settlers of Burlington, paddled across Burlington Bay in canoes carrying apple saplings brought up from the Carolinas as seeds and raised to whips in the Stoney Creek area. My constituency office is located on a street named for the Ghent family, and orchards once fanned out across fields just a couple of blocks south of my constituency office.

Off to the east, the plots along Maple Avenue were once home to vegetable crops. Market gardens also flourished between downtown Burlington and the village of Aldershot, even further east. If you look closely, you can still see some of the signs of those market gardens in neighbourhoods along Plains Road.

By the late 19th century, local growers were developing a reputation as pioneers of a different sort, dabbling in technology and using cold storage to export perishable fruits, not just across the province, but also overseas. Local growers dedicated themselves to science and knowledge of the land, determining which varieties of fruit were best adapted to the area's soil and climate. Through these efforts, the area's productive fruit acreage

doubled, and they didn't just stop with fruit. The same appetite for discovery and improvement spun off over 250 varieties of hardy and delicious crops being produced.

Between 1892 and 1902, the Burlington Horticultural Society captured first prize at Toronto's Industrial Exhibition for the best collection of fruits. This standing was mirrored far abroad at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, the Paris and Glasgow exhibitions in 1900, and Buffalo's Pan-American Exposition in 1901.

Agricultural production in Burlington peaked between the great wars, but the land still bears the names of those who made a living as farmers. We remember some in our streets or parks, others in our institutions. You'll find a high school named after M.M. Robinson, the founder of what we now know as the Commonwealth Games. Robinson also founded the Ontario Food Council and served as vice-chairman of the Ontario Food Terminal.

As important as that heritage is, it's equally vital that we not lose sight of the fantastic legacy that is all around us even today, Speaker. I think on some level that's what Bill 36 sets out to do. In a broad-brush sense, it underlines the importance of local food and seeks to foster a greater awareness and appreciation of the importance of sourcing where food comes from, how it is grown and sometimes even who is responsible for growing it.

Having spoken about the distant past, I think all of us here feel an enormous sense of gratitude for the convenience granted to us by modern times and technologies. Anyone who grew up during the 1960s and 1970s can probably still remember when shoppers didn't have nearly as many options as are available—and widely available—to the consumers of today. Even then, things were more seasonal.

The act of eating, mechanically speaking, hasn't changed much since the dawn of time. Chewing, swallowing, digesting—you can't really do a lot to change up the routine, Speaker. But as far as what you put on your plate, how you prepare it and how you source the ingredients, all of those factors are now far more variable than they used to be. That's true even if you decide to leave the cooking to someone else. Our chefs and restaurants now work from a palette of options that would have been unimaginable outside the finest kitchens until the last 20 years, Speaker.

That variety is made possible by thoughtful and dedicated farmers, as well as a robust distribution network, but it is sustained by consumers' choice and conscious effort. Today, victory gardens and community agriculture are taking root in my riding thanks to the efforts of BurlingtonGreen, which is helping to improve awareness of people sourcing their food from local suppliers and farmers, and creating and managing a community garden in partnership with the city of Burlington. Consumers' tastes have helped to shape the evolution of farming practices as well, of course, making things like heritage livestock and organic vegetables, biodynamic wines and cheeses much more readily available, if not quite the stuff of corner stores.

Even though it continues to evolve and face new and imposing challenges, the agriculture sector remains a major economic engine in this province. It's impossible to imagine a future without food and farming, and yet in my view we continue to be overly confident when it comes to the critical matter of food security. This is just one reason why legislation to strengthen this sector is so important, Speaker. It gives the government an opportunity to support a critical sector and help to develop local food systems in communities across this province. It is essential that the government seize this opportunity to do real and substantial good. Our food system and agriculture sector face a number of serious challenges, from red tape to hydro bill shocks to crushing eco fees on agricultural tires, so it's curious and more than a little disappointing that the government has failed to address those concerns in this bill, Speaker.

As some have suggested, a critical step to realizing the goals of a stronger food system in this province is improving food literacy, and that's a steeper hill than many realize. Mark Wales, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, has warned about the high cost of school programming that doesn't make time for home economics instruction. We're raising a generation that, for the most part, can't cook a meal from scratch. To local producers and growers in Ontario, that's not a healthy sign, Speaker. Prepared and prepackaged foods certainly have a key role, and I'm proud to salute outstanding and long-standing local businesses like Ippolito Group, Fearmans Pork, Tender Choice and Voortman Cookies, but they're not a substitute for practical knowledge. They're not the whole picture.

Neither is Bill 36 the complete picture, Speaker. Many of those who have spoken before me have detailed the blind spots and shortcomings of the proposed legislation or its missteps such as bigfooting Ontario Agriculture Week with the newly minted Local Food Week. This sector is big and diverse enough to accommodate both, but there's no credible reason they should fall on the same week.

0930

We also know that agriculture and local food organizations have submitted a considerable number of ideas and proposals for this bill, which were ignored by the government. My colleague from Oxford has done exceptional work in a white paper that outlines a number of concrete ways we could strengthen our food system, boost access to local food and help our agriculture sector. But, for some reason, the government has chosen to ignore stakeholders' input and opposition proposals, and simply reintroduced what is essentially the same thin bill that we saw in the House last fall. We've seen this kind of unconscious behaviour from the government before, but, to be frank, we expect better from the Premier.

I know that we can do better than Bill 36 as it stands. While I'm prepared to help this bill get to committee, I hope that the government will take that opportunity to make this bill everything it can be and everything it should be for the good of our farmers and, indeed, for all Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It is with great joy that I stand this week to talk about the Local Food Act, because last week I left off talking about the Local Food Act with a big concern for people on Manitoulin Island, that there are so many farmers, so many farmers' markets and so many people that count on attracting and welcoming people to Manitoulin Island that that was in danger of happening.

I'm a man of my word. I give credit where credit is due, and I must say I'm very pleased to see my friend across the way, the Minister for Northern Development and Mines, who is here. We worked very hard in order to get this done, and I have to say I'm very happy that he stepped up to the plate and heard the call of the people of Manitoulin Island and has released the funding that is needed in order to get the Chi-Cheemaun running again so that people can welcome them—from the Island—so they can start selling their product.

However, we've hit another barrier. Now it's in order to get the federal government to respond and actually authorize this to happen, because it is a federal jurisdiction. So we need to continue putting pressure on our cousins at the federal level in order to get this done. It would be nice to see some movement on there.

Now back to this bill. What I would like to see, and what a lot of individuals across Algoma-Manitoulin would like to see, is a process where there's going to be a sincere demonstration that their input will actually be considered in this bill. I don't see any steps, or I don't see any concrete formats, in regard to how they're going to have that opportunity. In what arena, in what realm, will they be able to offer their points of view? I'm hoping that once we get this to the committee stage, that we can actually get those nailed down so that they feel—although they're in northern Ontario, and they're smaller than the big players—that they will have a sincere way of bringing their contributions—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to thank the member from Burlington for her 10 minutes, as well as the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his comments.

Speaker, we've had 20-plus hours debate on this issue. The member from Burlington indicates that we can do better with this bill. Perhaps that could be the case. I would ask them to help us put this bill into committee so that we can actually do some work on it instead of standing here and sitting here, and listening to the opposition hear themselves talk. I would recommend that everybody end the debate; send it to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I do appreciate, and I was quite moved by, the comments from the member from Burlington, because she described the pastoral scene of where she's proud to be the member with a sense of passion and knowledge—technically, the way she described the very

foundations of the community that she represents. So I commend you for that, and I feel very strongly myself.

This morning there's been some discussion about supply management here, and clearly on our side. It's the foundational part of agriculture is ensuring we have supply of safe, quality food for Ontario's citizens. Now, this is a family, the Evans family, and the article says the farm is abuzz. Now, let's put this in context. The Evans family—the principal fellows involved here are Grant Evans and his brother, Eldon Evans. They have a sprawling Highview Holsteins Ltd. farm near Epsom, Ontario. I'd encourage people—there's another pastoral scene that you could visit this summer.

Durham region is home to 1,454 farms, and these farmers farm 297,702 acres. Some 42,600 acres are pasture; 32,138 are Christmas trees—horticulture, I guess; and the other 209,000 are acreage crop, what you call cash cropping. Now, the Evans operation alone is just one small business unit in my riding, and this is the story across Ontario. For instance, the York region has 828 farms, with 153,000 acres in use; Halton region has 469 farms, with 79,000 acres in use; and Peel has 440 farms, and they farm 93,000 acres.

Now, the Holsteins at the Evans farm: The farm works 1,800 acres and has 460 cows—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments? The member for Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. Once again it's an honour to be able to talk about local food and food in general in Ontario, and to comment on the member from Burlington. As opposed to the last speech from the Conservative side, I agree with almost everything she said. It is obviously a split party, because there are some reasonable and some totally unreasonable. You know, I would like a confirmation from the leader of the Tories regarding supply management, because obviously what we heard this morning was completely, completely anti-supply management.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, he should make it again, because his caucus, some of them, are making statements that are way out there.

As for the Local Food Act, the problems with the Local Food Act—good, nice statements, but they reflect a lot of the problems in the Liberal government, because it sets lofty goals, with no framework how to achieve those goals. Actually, it doesn't even say what the goals are. In the budget, it allocates \$30 million—I believe it's \$30 million—over three years, but if you look at the Local Food Act, it says, "We're only going to tell you how we're going to spend the money three years from now." Obviously, that's a problem, and it's obvious why we have to, in this Legislature, implement measures that hold the government accountable while it's spending money. It's great to look at the scandals after they're done, but then the money's already gone. The Local Food Act is a small example, but it is an example of, "We're going to take \$30 million and talk about what we did with it three years from now," and that's wrong.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): My apologies. The member for Burlington, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. I always like to hear you speak. You're a very good speaker and very articulate and passionate, but your Uncle Ernie, the member from Oxford, said that our leader, Tim Hudak, has said it numerous times. So I'm just going to clear that up before I start.

As I said earlier, this legislation, as it stands, is abundantly flawed. There is, and it has been said repeatedly, no need to pit Ontario Agriculture Week against Local Food Week. But as it turns out, that misstep actually spotlights a bigger problem with this legislation, which is that it tends to miss the obvious. In doing so, it misses out on doing the most good for a sector facing many challenges.

Again, stakeholders across the agriculture and food sectors have a lot of good ideas about how this legislation could be made better. This party, and in particular its agriculture critic, have put forward a host of proposals for strengthening our food system, increasing access to local food and helping our agriculture sector. Our food system and agriculture sector face a number of serious challenges, from red tape to hydro bills and shocking to crushing eco fees on agricultural tires, so it's curious and more than a little disappointing that this government has failed to address these concerns in this bill.

0940

At the end of the day, the government has essentially chosen to ignore stakeholders' input and opposition proposals and to introduce a piece of legislation that is essentially identical to what we saw here in the House last fall. This government owes it to the people of this province to take the opportunity presented by committee and make the most of it. Let's roll up your sleeves, get under the hood and fix this legislation, or it will stall out before it can do the job you intended it to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to stand up today and give my two cents' worth on Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act.

I'd like to start out saying that we should all thank a farmer for what they do for our province and what they do for our economy. Especially the government of today should be thanking a farmer because if it wasn't for the success of the farmer in our society, the only industry that's really churning along, this province would be down the sewer without them. So we've got to thank the farmer for keeping our economy going.

Mr. Speaker, just to expand upon the economic strength of the economy due to agriculture, let's look at what they've done to the manufacturing sectors. St. Thomas, in my riding, has a population of 37,000 people.

Since 2006, our city has lost 6,000 manufacturing jobs. Take a look; that's almost 20% of the population, if you think about that. It's ranging from small to larger-size jobs. Schulman lost 134 jobs; Accuwright millwork lost seven; Alcoa, 152; Arvin Meritor, 30; Conmet, 10; Contrend, 157; Emerson Network Power, 195; Flexalloy, 10; Ford Motor Co., 2,387; Lear St. Thomas, 303; L.A. Walker Transport, 256; Mutt and Co., two; Parker Hannifin, three; Potters Canada Partnership, 20; Rite-Form Tool and Die, 11; Sterling Truck, 2,200; Thermodisk, 373; Woolsoly, 31; and ZF Linkstan, 94. And to top it off, at the end of this month, Timken, which has been part of our city since the 1940s, will be shutting down, and another 300 jobs lost.

The only thing that's really keeping our economy going in our area is the fact that we have good land and we have smart, educated farmers who are producing product in order to spend in our economy.

I think this government brought out this bill—what they should be doing is helping the economic situation of the farmer. We put through plenty of ideas in Paths to Prosperity. I would have hoped that this bill would have encompassed some of them. Trying to reduce some red tape and regulation for these farmers: The easiest way to do that is to follow Ernie Hardeman's idea, the member from Oxford. Have one window of access for these poor farmers who want to do something with their land or build a new barn or do something interesting with their business. Let them go to just one part of the government instead of having to go through many different ministries. Let's work with them. That alone would really, really ease their pain in dealing with government.

We need to get a hold of our hydro rates, the amount of hydro that our farmers are using on the dairy farms, the pig farms, the chicken farms. Let's try to work with those costs so that they aren't struggling, so that when they want to pass the farm onto their children, the high expense and the cost of the land to buy the farm, the kids will want to come back and take over the farm. Instead, they're now having trouble, with the high energy costs, to actually pass on the farm because of the high costs associated with it.

One thing that they could do for agriculture is they could have stopped the destruction of the horse racing industry, the slots at racetracks. And I do have to say to my friends to the left here that the time to do it would be to not support this budget. This is the last chance for the horse racing industry, but if you want to sell your soul for a 15% cut in auto insurance over the horse racing industry, I think—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I will withdraw.

The other thing that they should be doing is have a dedicated fund for risk management. That's another one that's come out from our Paths to Prosperity. Instead of having a general fund that other government agencies can take from, let's have that fund set aside so that when the

farmers do need it, when we actually have a bad crop year, it's there for them to keep on going. The poor apple farmers last year: A lot of them have suffered and gone without due to the fact that a lot of that money isn't there for them.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to touch upon this food act. We're going to bring forth an amendment that the members from Nepean–Carleton and Oxford have put forth to add food literacy for our students in our schools. I think that it's very important to add it to our education. It has been identified that only 41% of people age 18 to 34 actually know where food comes from. I think that's startling because how can you expect to cook healthy food? How do you expect to support local food if you don't understand where it comes from and understand how it helps the economy and helps provide the services like health care and education that we have today? So we need to add that food literacy.

While we're adding that food literacy in our education program, I think we also need to look at adding some financial literacy for our students. There are too many kids today who are graduating already in debt and aren't able to manage that debt, let alone they get married and buy a house; they're in over their heads. If we can get some financial literacy into the school system, they'll be far better ahead at the end of the day, when they start out their life, when they start their new job, get their new family, and able to plan for proper retirement. Because I tell you, the way this government is headed, we're in trouble. We're in trouble, and we need people to be educated. We need them to understand what they need to do with their money. We also need them to understand where their food comes from. If we can help put that into our education system, make it a priority, I think we can make a better Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, this Saturday our local farmers' market opens up, the Horton market, and it's in St. Thomas. All the farmers—there will be a nice big breakfast today. We make it, in our family, kind of a tradition to go every Saturday morning to get our vegetables and fruits for the week. There's a bakery there; we get some bakery. There's a butcher; we get my daughter her meat for her sandwiches for school for the week there, usually on Saturday.

So it will be very nice to see all the vendors out there. I tell you, it draws from a wide range. We usually show up, and the president of OFA, Mark Wales, usually has a booth there with his garlic and his peppers that he grows. And then we'll go down to McSmith's Organic Farm. Excellent. We always get her cabbage that she's chopped up and, of course, her lettuce. It's really enjoyable to see them.

It becomes a family atmosphere, these farmers' markets. The kids can get their face painted, they can get a balloon, and then around the corner there will be the crafts.

The gentleman who paints my house, Chuck Magri—his wife grows herbs, and she sells her teas there. Then we'll go inside, and of course, the bakery will be there.

We'll buy the cookies. We'll buy a breakfast sandwich. I won't too often because I eat too much while I'm here, so I cut back and just have a coffee. At the end, of course, as I said, the butcher—and the turkey shop. There's a turkey farmer, Oegema farms. We always get the little bacon-wrapped turkey—I don't know what you call it, but I call it bacon-wrapped turkey—and the little turkey pepperettes.

All that is local. It's packed with people, and we support the local farmers who come and sell their wares. What we need to do is expand upon that. Let's try to encourage southwest Ontario to have more of producers in the area.

I think a great idea from the member from Oxford is maybe producing a second food terminal. I think a second food terminal would be in an excellent position to come to my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London. It's halfway between Windsor, Toronto and Buffalo. As I said earlier, we've been devastated by job loss. I think it would be an excellent idea if this government brought that idea forward. We're more than welcome to bring that food processing. If we can generate more food processing, our farmers can grow more food. Our farmers can sell more food. It can create jobs, and it will have a beneficial trickle-down effect throughout the economy.

So as I stated before, we thank the farmers. We thank them for what they do. We hope to teach our kids to understand where food comes from, and we hope this government acknowledges the fact that this is the only industry that is working in this province, that is bringing in—that is keeping this province afloat, and we need to support them.

The Local Food Act needs a lot of amendments to it, and we're going to put those forward when this bill passes. We just need to ensure that our farmers stay strong. For Elgin–Middlesex–London, it's a key component to our economy, and for southwest Ontario, ditto.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. He had a lot to say which was commendable, but there were a couple of points that I think need to be emphasized here.

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First of all, he said rightly that this bill requires a number of amendments. I am in total agreement with him. But the amendments cannot be made here in this Legislature during second reading. The amendments have to be made in committee, and many of us want this bill to go to committee so that those good amendments that he says he has can be heard, can be debated and can be implemented.

He talked about the NDP members selling their souls, and I'm not sure whether that's still on the record, but he was asked to withdraw it. But we think that the process in a minority government and in this Legislature, and even in a majority government, should always be one of consultation, of negotiation between the parties and the party leaders and the party House leaders, and that the proposal

of new ideas is what is going to move Ontario forward. That's what we're trying to do around the budget process, that's what we're trying to do around this bill, versus what I would suggest at this point has become little more than a filibuster on a bill that every single member of this Legislature agrees with and that every single member of this Legislature knows has to be amended in committee. I would hope this is the last speaker. It was a good speech. Please, just let us get on with this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London sometimes never ceases to amaze me. To say that agriculture is the only sector of the economy that is actually growing jobs is so patently absurd, and it's an insult to businesses across this province.

Mr. Speaker, 4.4% of small businesses right now in this province are generating about 50% of jobs. That is 400,000 jobs. We as a government—and this is also true in the agricultural sector—have doubled our university education places, because 70% or 80% of jobs being created in Ontario now require university education.

Some of those small businesses are in the agricultural centre, people like Lloyd Wicks up in Haliburton right now, who is trying to turn his goat farm into a place to produce a lactose goat milk for babies. Why can't he do that, Mr. Speaker? Because the federal government's health regulations won't allow him to do the research and won't give him the certification to get the research. So we have more bureaucracy.

My dear friend Lloyd Wicks has to compete with goat's milk made in China, which has to go through no inspections, no research. He can't get the permission in this country to do that. What happens if the goat's milk from China is tainted? The only safety regulation is that you can call Health Canada and complain. But my friend Lloyd Wicks, who runs a clean operation, has to do that. We want to bring that innovation economy to rural Ontario in a bigger way.

But I find it insulting. My family had a dairy farm in Glengarry and I, as a member in an urban area, get really intolerant of some of the ignorance about farming, but when I have people from rural Ontario trash our small business sector and don't realize that we have the highest growth in clean technology, information technology—the XLV lab, started by two students, didn't exist five years ago and now has 1,000 employees in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I love farmers, but let's not play the game against city folks; some of us are doing a lot for this economy as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to commend the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London on putting forward a number of great ideas, including some from our recently released white paper on respect for agriculture. In this paper, we look at ideas to solve the challenges that our agriculture industry is facing, and we commit to those parts that are working, like supply management. Ob-

viously, there was some debate earlier in this meeting about the issue of supply management. I know that this is something that the PC Party has consistently supported. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has been a strong champion of supply management—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Attorney General, come to order, please.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: —agriculture round tables across Ontario, like the one in Grey–Bruce, committing to it in our last platform and included in our white paper.

I also want to just quickly commend the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London for his going through the white paper but also recognizing one of the great concerns that the agriculture community had, which was to put more food literacy training in our educational system, and that's why we are hoping to be putting forward, when we can get this bill to committee, a motion to include food literacy in the classroom, through the Education Act, into the curriculum, so that students will learn more about where food comes from and what it means and what types of foods one should eat. I think it's very important that we put that into legislation, to make sure that it's being done and it doesn't get left behind as an optional as opposed to a mandatory topic that must be taught to all children.

I think that's why our education critic mentioned it in her remarks last week or the week before, that that's what we were hoping to do collectively as agriculture critic and as education critic, to make sure that we provided a type of education for our students in the curriculum that would help them become healthier in what they eat and also in how they grow up. Obviously, the better you eat, the better you'll grow up. Obviously, our pages know that and, obviously, they've done a very successful job of it so far.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, I'm pleased to get up and talk to the Local Food Act. I want to commend the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. He did bring up a few good points, and I'm really appreciative that he kept them local to his area, which is productive in here. If we're going to just repeat some of our bullet notes, it's really not useful. So I was listening to your comments, and I really appreciate it.

However, you did touch on a couple of points. You said something about adding food literacy and financial literacy. I would encourage you to talk to your caucus members and also look at budget literacy, because you need to read the budget before you make a decision, because you don't know what's in it before you can actually bring that benefit back to your constituents back home. Yes, we're in trouble. We're in even greater trouble if you're not going to take the time to review, negotiate, think and talk on behalf of your constituents in order to implement the changes that you need.

I want to introduce you to a little piece of red tape that we have in another region of Algoma–Manitoulin, which

is along the North Shore. I want to introduce this House to a passionate gentleman. His name is Dale Wedgwood. He's an individual who has taken upon himself the passion, the anger and the frustration of farmers in that area in order to address what I'll refer to as red tape—along with the mayor of Huron Shores, Mr. Gil Reeves. They have taken it upon themselves to propel and bring the frustrations of farmers because they cannot constructively farm their lands. They're not fighting with bureaucrats. They're not fighting red tape. They're fighting with elk, and it's destroying their livelihood. We're talking about 15,000 to 30,000 to 50,000 a month.

I have no problem with elk and—you know what?—neither do these farmers. But they do have a concern that they cannot properly farm. When they're chasing elk and they're being told they cannot protect their livelihood, it is very difficult for a farmer to make a living.

So I would really expect that my biggest concern in this is that there is a sincere opportunity for all farmers on the North Shore, on Manitoulin Island, across Algoma-Manitoulin and across Ontario to really have an opportunity to give their views as to how we can improve this act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has two minutes for a response.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to thank those who offered their thoughts on my debate: the member from Beaches-East York, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, the member from Oxford and the member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

I have to start out just by saying I'm glad I had the opportunity to speak on this bill. It's what I was elected to do. I consulted with my area farmers and other constituents who aren't farmers, on this bill. I've had conversations on it, and I wanted to bring forth their thoughts and our party's thoughts to this floor. For any member to say that I shouldn't speak, and to get this to committee, I think that's wrong. I don't agree with that. We're here to represent our constituents. That's what I was doing, and I will continue to do so. I will never cede the floor to pass something and rush it through without having the opportunity to bring forth the thoughts of my constituents, because I think it's very, very important.

I also think we need to keep our discussion focused on the province of Ontario. It is up to the government to deal with the federal government, but to always blame them for any inadequacy of the province, I think, is not helpful in any discussion.

With regard to this bill, we need to keep the discussion going, ensure we get all the ideas out, so when it does go to committee, they have our thoughts in front of them, so when they bring members to bring their thoughts forward to speak at committee, we can make the appropriate recommendations and changes to this bill.

I look forward to more discussion on this bill. I think it's very important that each member gets the opportunity, if they so choose, to speak, to bring forth their ideas. It's up to the member themselves; it's not up to other parties to say, "Stop speaking." That's dead wrong. That's not democratic.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013. Let me begin by just summarizing a bit of what the bill does. It enacts a food week; the week before Thanksgiving Day is proclaimed Local Food Week. I would say at the onset, I hope this doesn't take away from Agriculture Week. I remember our past PC member Bert Johnson was very proud of bringing about Agriculture Week, and Local Food Week and Agriculture Week are very different.

The bill also allows—the Minister of Agriculture “may ... establish goals or targets to aspire to in respect of local food.” “The minister may direct a public sector organization to provide ... information in order to assist....” The only thing the minister must do is prepare a report about local food activity at least every three years. That's basically all the bill does, which is not that much, Mr. Speaker.

But it does give me an opportunity to talk about some of the local agriculture and local food initiatives in Parry Sound-Muskoka of which I am very proud. People may not think of Parry Sound-Muskoka as being a big farming area, a big agriculture area, but there is certainly a strong history of agriculture in Parry Sound-Muskoka, and that's demonstrated every fall. I think I have some 14 fall fairs, of which I try to attend just about all of them, and they're a great opportunity for people visiting the area to sort of have more of a connection to rural roots and see where food comes from and learn a bit about it as well.

But we have some initiatives promoting local food. There's Savour Muskoka, which is an organization that is really trying to promote local food. I had the opportunity to go to Brooklands Farm, which is located in Milford Bay. It's owned by Ken and Katya Riley; they've had a farm for a long time there. They're really involved in all kinds of initiatives. I was there in the peak of maple syrup season, because they do produce maple syrup there. They also grow berries; you can pick your own berries. They grow asparagus, and they grow many other different products there. They supply a lot of the local restaurants as well from Brooklands Farms.

Some of our agriculture businesses are not maybe that traditional or common everywhere, partly because our landscape. So we have Johnston's Cranberry Marsh—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask members to my right to keep it a little quiet?

Mr. Norm Miller: —which is located in Bala, which of course is the cranberry capital of Canada. I would encourage all people, if they haven't gone to it, to make sure they visit the Bala Cranberry Festival, which is always the weekend right after Thanksgiving. Shortly after Local Food Week, should this bill pass, you can have the opportunity to visit Bala and tour Johnston's Cranberry Marsh and the other cranberry marshes in the area.

Murray Johnston and Wendy Hogarth have Johnston's Cranberry Marsh, and they've started a new business. Things were tough a few years ago, so they got into making cranberry wine as well. They now have Muskoka Lakes Winery, and that's been a popular addition to it as well.

We also have some retail businesses that are promoting local foods. I think in particular of Muskoka Meats, which is located on Highway 11 just south of Gravenhurst. David Purdon operates it, and it's a 100-mile store, so everything within the store has to come from within 100 miles of Muskoka Meats. I would certainly recommend stopping to visit that as well if you're driving up Highway 11 just south of Gravenhurst.

Other local agricultural businesses: We have Milford Bay Trout Farm, which is run by Ralph and Wendy Uhde. They not only grow, I think it's rainbow trout there, but they also produce some very delicious smoked trout from their family recipe, and trout pâté, which if you haven't tried it, you absolutely should try it. I'd recommend it. Again, you can visit the farm, but also there are local retailers that sell it. I have seen it for sale even as far away as Toronto, so you can get it in a few places in Toronto, the Milford Bay trout, as well.

But other businesses you may not think about that are members of Savour Muskoka, like Riverglen Farms in Port Sydney: Dave and Meredith Hiscox. There are producers of a lot of different fine products, like Yummies in a Jar's Lynn Murden.

Of course, we have a new industry starting in Parry Sound–Muskoka that is food-related, and that is breweries that we have coming up. We now actually have three different breweries in Parry Sound–Muskoka, the first being Muskoka Brewery, I believe it was. I'm pleased to see that they've just won some awards at the 2013 Ontario Brewing Awards in April of this year. Muskoka Cream Ale, which is one of my favourite beers, has won the gold medal in the British pale ale category, Summer Weiss won the gold medal in German-style wheat beer, Mad Tom IPA won the bronze award in North American IPA, and Muskoka Craft Lager won a silver award in North American lager. They're doing a great job. They've just expanded. I know last year, their expansion—they are producing 90% more than they were.

Lake of Bays Brewing Company, located in Baysville, is also doing a great job and produces some fine beers; they're also my favourites.

The newest brewery is Highlander, which is located in South River, in east Parry Sound. That was started by Brian Wilson; now he has a partner, Dwayne Wanner. They were down here at Queen's Park recently for the competition that happens annually, the Speaker's competition where the best beers are picked. I'm happy to say that their Scottish Ale was selected as one of the winners here at Queen's Park.

So there is a lot of activity going on in Parry Sound–Muskoka, but there are also some significant impediments that the government should be dealing with, that

are within the provincial purview, in terms of making more food accessible.

The first point I'd like to make is abattoirs. There are so many rules nowadays to do with abattoirs, particularly—I think they're designed for the great, big factory-sized abattoirs, but we have very small abattoirs in Parry Sound–Muskoka. We have Sprucedale Quality Meats and we have Northern Meat Packers—just outside the riding in Trout Creek, but they serve the riding. I know I've talked to the owners of Sprucedale Quality Meats, and they've complained about how onerous the rules are. You don't hear about the small abattoirs having problems; it's usually the large meat packers. I think we need a little flexibility with those small producers, because the problem is, we've had fewer and fewer abattoirs. More of them are going out of business around the province, mainly because of the rules the government comes up with. The result is that farmers—beef producers and other producers—don't have a place to take their products to get them packaged and slaughtered. That's a real challenge, and we've seen fewer and fewer abattoirs.

I know at Sprucedale Quality Meats, in talking to the owner, he also complained about the reliability of electricity. He actually can't operate in the summer because he can't depend on the electricity; if it goes off, it means he has to throw everything out.

We've also seen in recent years in our riding the closure of the only sales yard that I'm aware of. That closed in 2012. There's an article here written by Rob Learn that was on NorthBayNipissing.com from April 2012; his dad, Gord Learn, was the president of the board of directors for many, many years. This was a local sales yard that would operate a couple of days a year, and it provided the opportunity for local farmers to bring their cattle in and not have to drive hours and hours and hours.

Now that that's closed—and I remember that it closed partly because they had a huge property tax bill; the sales barn would operate two or three days in a year and they had a huge property tax bill they just couldn't support. That was kind of the final nail that shut them down, so now I believe the closest sales yard they have is three hours away in New Liskeard. When you look at the posting here in response to this article, it's one farmer saying that he wasn't actually aware of this sales yard being there, but he said he's no longer farming because it was costing more than the animals were worth driving up to New Liskeard, this three-hour drive. If you don't have a local place to sell your cattle, you can't have local beef.

There are things the government could do that would be a lot more substantive than simply proclaiming a Local Food Week. So I would like to see them address those issues, the rules and regulations of abattoirs and making it easier for people to sell their products locally. Also, I would like to make sure that as this new week is created, Bert Johnson's Ontario Agriculture Week doesn't get lost, because they are two different things: local food versus the whole agricultural industry.

Mr. Speaker, those are my comments.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1010 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It is a great privilege to introduce Laura Degraw to Queen's Park today. Laura is from my hometown of Newbury, Ontario, and she's at Queen's Park today with the College Student Alliance. Welcome, Laura.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: I wanted to welcome Laura Degraw as well, a student at Cambrian College in Sudbury. We're happy that she's here today, along with Curtis Bell and Mike Bleskie. These are three very, very positive advocates for the College Student Alliance. Good luck, and have a great day today.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a great honour to introduce a very special couple from Wingham, Ontario: Dave and Doris Inglis. Welcome.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to introduce my niece's husband, Kent Hadfield. Kent is involved in banking.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Page captain Simon Osak's family is here today, and I'm delighted to introduce them. We've got Mitchell, who is the father; Dr. Roberta, who is the mother; Summer, the sister; Bernice, the grandmother; Brenda Cunningham from New Zealand, who is an aunt; Vanessa Torres, who is a friend; and Elyssa Torres, who is a friend who recently arrived from the Philippines. The Osak family.

Hon. Mario Sergio: These students are winners of a citizenship and responsibility award and are visiting the Legislature to celebrate their success. The students are from Shoreham Public School—15 students in grades 5 and 8, with their teachers Ms. Ibrahim and Mr. Dominicos. Welcome to Queen's Park. They are in the gallery.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to welcome Joyce Zhu, the mother of page captain Kelly Ge. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to welcome back Paul Tye, who used to sit at the desk back there when he was working for the government House leader. He's now living and working in Calgary. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce three talented young women who have started as interns in my office at the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. They are Dagny Pawlak, Alexandra McKeen and Alison Duffy. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. Premier, I have several questions for you today regarding Liberal priorities. As critic for health and long-term care,

I get letters from Ontarians across the province who are not getting the health care they need.

Janice from Chatham writes me that she was scheduled for a knee replacement in 2012. Due to funding cuts, her surgery was delayed until 2013, and now, because funding for orthopedics has run out altogether, she now won't have her surgery until 2014.

Forgive me, Premier, but I have trouble understanding your government's priorities. When it comes to Liberal seats, you have billions of dollars to spend; when it comes to Ontarians, you're out of money. The NDP may have to solicit advice on how to hold you responsible, but we think that this is just plain wrong.

Premier, on the basis of this, with priorities like this, do you think that you've earned the right to govern?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me talk just a little bit about what our budget would do in the area of health care if it were to pass. It would increase investment in home and community care by an additional 1% annually: \$260 million this year and an increase of more than \$700 million by 2015-16. That's the priority. It is our priority that people get the care that they need in their home and in the community. We're going to focus on new investments providing care in community to reduce those home care wait times, because not only do we want patients, people, to get care in their homes, we want them to get it in a timely way. We're going to invest in community health links that will promote collaboration in patient care so that patients have one unified care plan. Those are priorities that I think will make the health care system in Ontario stronger. I think it's a priority that the member opposite should support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Well, the Premier talks about spending more money in health care but what I'm hearing from people across the province is that it's death by a thousand cuts in health care. It's getting worse. It's not getting better.

Here's an excerpt from another letter I've received: "My husband is battling a deadly brain tumour, and we as a family have struggled for almost two and a half years...."

"A medication approved by Health Canada in March of 2010 for treatment is not provincially funded under the Ontario Drug Benefit program, but is available in the provinces of British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba."

Dana from Belle River, Ontario, has difficulty understanding why she has to cash in her life savings in order to provide her husband with the medication he needs. Premier, I also have trouble understanding, when your government clearly has billions on hand to save Liberal seats, why you can't spend money to save this woman's husband's life.

So, Premier, I'll ask you again: Do you think that your government, which prioritized saving a few seats over saving the lives of Ontarians, has earned the right to govern?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say that it is obviously our highest priority that we provide the best care possible for all the individuals that the member

opposite has named and for all Ontarians. That is the focus of the health care system. The reality is that we are in the process of transforming that system. It's very interesting to me that a member of a party that has said, "Government has to change. Implement the recommendations of the report that Don Drummond wrote. Change government so that it works better"—the moment we try to do that, when we actually transform the area of the largest expenditure in government, which is health care, and that means change in the delivery of services, that party stands up and says, "Well, we don't want that kind of change; we don't want change that's going to make the health care system more effective and more efficient." It really is a contradiction in terms. I hope that the member opposite will reconsider and support our changes.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The only real change we're seeing is continued cutbacks in health care and no accountability for the money that's being spent. Like many Ontarians, I have difficulty understanding how your government can continue to underfund orthopaedic surgery, drag your heels on approving life-saving drugs and cut physiotherapy services for seniors by \$44 million, but it's got \$1 billion on hand to cancel gas plants.

Premier, we're not the NDP; we think these priorities are wrong whether you set up a financial accountability office or not. Do you think it's right when your government prioritizes the Liberal Party over the life-saving needs of the people of Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I think is not right is to mischaracterize changes that are being made in order to deliver service in a better way, in a more timely way. I'll just use one example: the physiotherapy issue. We are changing the way physiotherapy will be delivered in the province. That will mean that more seniors will get access to those services because the model that was in place was not working. It does mean that there's a change, and there is always some disruption when there's a change, but we will continue to invest in services that will improve health care for people.

No matter how many times the member opposite talks about cuts, the only party in this House that would slash public services, that would cut across the top and change services irrevocably in this province, is the Conservative Party.

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POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Between the member from Nepean–Carleton and me, we asked you 32 times when you knew the tab for Oakville was more than \$40 million and the bill for Mississauga

was more than \$190 million. Sadly, we don't have that answer. I use those numbers because you and others have repeated them in the Legislature over and over, but neither you nor the former Premier would answer that one burning question: when? Premier, is the reason you won't tell us when you knew the costs were higher than you reported because that would prove you and your entire cabinet would be held in contempt in this House?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I guess this is the 33rd time that I'm answering this question, Mr. Speaker, and I have said repeatedly that every time I used a number, it was a number that had been given to me, through the Ministry of Energy, from the OPA, and it was the number that I understood to be the reality.

I answered these questions at committee. I have taken responsibility for improving the process going forward in the planning of large energy infrastructure projects. That is what we need to do going forward. I have opened up this process. I wrote to the Auditor General; I asked him to look at the Oakville situation. I worked to broaden the mandate of the committee so that all questions and all documents could be requested. We have worked very hard to make this an open and transparent process so that all the questions of the opposition and the people of Ontario could be answered. The process did not work. It should have been better, and it is my responsibility to make sure it doesn't happen again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, we still don't know when she knew the numbers were higher. Here's what former energy minister Chris Bentley had to say about the hundreds of millions already spent in Oakville: "Over the coming days and weeks you will read and hear lots of numbers related to the cost of the plant relocation. The only accurate cost to taxpayers for this relocation is \$40 million." Again on Oakville, your current energy minister said that "it ends up with a net cost of \$40 million...." But, Speaker, the energy experts are telling us it's at least \$310 million.

Premier, you knew the number you were using is wrong. You can't be trusted to govern. Will you support our motion to call a non-confidence vote in the House on your scandal-seized Liberal government?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the member is aware that the Premier has personally asked the Auditor General, an officer of the Legislature, to look into the matter of the costing for Oakville.

But you know what I find very curious, Mr. Speaker? He's talking about questions that have not been answered. Let me put a few on the table that we're still awaiting the Progressive Conservative Party to answer: Why did they oppose the Mississauga gas plant in the last election, why did they campaign so aggressively, and what was their costing? I do not believe those are overly

complicated questions, yet when we ask Conservative candidates to come before committee, they refuse. When we ask the Leader of the Opposition, it takes weeks and weeks and weeks for him to show up. Someone pointed out to me that the Leader of the Opposition seems to be able to find lots of time to go on CP24 and talk about gas plants, but he won't appear in front of the committee and answer those simple questions. So maybe the member from Nipissing will, in his supplementary—

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Listen to what former finance minister Dwight Duncan had to say in the estimates committee about the, at that time, \$180-million Mississauga cancellation.

He was asked, "What about any penalties?"

He answered, "not that we're aware of."

Question: "So you're not expecting anything else ... over the," at that time, "\$180 million on Mississauga.... any additional claims on penalties?"

Answer: "No. The \$180 million should cover all of that."

Now, of course, his answer grew to \$190 million a week later, and we know now from the auditor that at the time they were swearing that in the estimates committee, the auditor told us they had already paid \$245 million.

Premier, you know the costs were more than \$190 million. I'll ask you again: Will you support the motion to bring a non-confidence vote on your failed leadership?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member wants some quotes: "The only party that will stop the Sherway power plant is the Ontario PC Party. On October 6, vote Ontario PC," Mary Anne DeMonte-Whelan.

And you know what was interesting, Mr. Speaker? We asked her to come to committee, she agreed to come to committee and, surprisingly, at the last minute, she cancelled. We asked the Leader of the Opposition to come. I understand now he may be there on the 14th. It's taken week after week after week. He finds time to go on CP24; he doesn't find time to go to the committee.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you about Geoff Janoscik. Here are some of his quotes: "Only Conservative leader Tim Hudak will cancel the Eastern Power gas plant slated to be built on Loreland Ave." We asked him repeatedly to come to the committee. He told the Clerk to stop calling him. That's PC transparency—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. New Democrats have been very clear that we needed to see a balanced approach to balancing the budget, and we insisted on seeing real guarantees of results for people.

People are telling us that they doubt the government will keep its promises because the government won't define how long people are going to have to wait for

home care for their loved ones or the government won't define how long drivers will have to wait to get a break on their auto insurance. They've seen decisions made behind closed doors by this government, and they feel like they almost always come out on the losing end.

Does the Premier agree that we can do a better job of showing Ontarians their government can be accountable and transparent?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party yesterday, I guess, put forward an interesting idea, but I really believe that it would be useful for me to be able to have a face-to-face meeting with the leader of the third party—I've been trying to get that in place for a number of weeks—and have a conversation about exactly the other issues that she wants to raise.

We have put in place a number of accountability measures since we came into office, and we can go through a list of them: the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act in 2010, which put in new rules and higher accountability standards; it banned the practice of hiring lobbyists and increased accountability for hospitals and LHINs. We put in the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004, which put in a new framework for the conduct of fiscal policy.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've got accountability measures in place—

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

Mr. Michael Prue: Ontarians and even the members of this caucus want to trust this government, but after all of the waste in eHealth, in Ornge, the gas plants and the ongoing attempts to hide the cost from Ontarians, no one over there should be surprised that many people are very skeptical.

New Democrats put forward a simple, positive and practical idea that would start to build trust: a financial accountability office that would create some real accountability and transparency. Is this an idea the Premier's ready to consider?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said it's an interesting idea. I had a number of conversations with the leader of the third party before we introduced the budget.

We talked with hundreds of thousands of people across the province in developing the budget. We went to great lengths to make sure that we wrote a budget that reflected the concerns that we had heard and reflected issues that are of common interest to us all. That's what the budget document is.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to have another conversation with the leader of the third party about another idea. The question is, will there be another idea and another idea and another idea? We've gone through a long process, and you know that I am not averse to conversation, but there is a time—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —for decisions. The time is now to make a decision on getting the budget passed

and doing the work of the people of Ontario. That's what the timing is now.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: Our priority over here should always be the people of this province, and we're not going to stop listening to what they have to say, whether it's today or tomorrow or the next day.

Canada's first federal budget officer told reporters yesterday that a financial accountability office for Ontario makes a lot of sense, and I quote him: "We're spending taxpayer money. I don't think anybody should be left in the dark."

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One Ontario resident named Marilyn from North Bay says, "I am not happy with what the Liberals have done with eHealth, the power plants or Ornge, and find the payouts to CEOs to be obscene. There needs to be independent oversight."

Is the Premier ready to take some prudent, affordable steps to address the concerns of people like Marilyn?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There are a number of prudent steps in the budget that address concerns of people in the province, people who are worried about their son or daughter not being able to find a job. We have put in place a youth strategy—we would like to put in place a youth strategy, if the budget can pass. People who are concerned about getting home care for their children, municipal leaders who are concerned about having money for infrastructure, for roads and bridges—all of those concerns are reflected in the initiatives that we have put in the budget and that we talked about with the members opposite before we wrote that budget.

I have said that the idea that the leader of the third party has put forward is not a bad idea. It's an interesting idea. It's something that we can talk about. But we need to know how long the ideas are going to flow. How many days are we going to hear an idea a day? And then, what is the decision-making process? I'd like to have a face-to-face meeting. I look forward to that opportunity in the near future.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday at the public accounts committee, we heard more testimony about public health care dollars being diverted to private businesses and to creative accounting practices at Ornge. Does this Premier admit that there was a serious failure of oversight and transparency at that organization?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've said long ago that it's clear that the past leadership at Ornge let Ontarians down. It was our government that called in the forensic investigators. The results of the review have now been handed over to the OPP to assist with their investigation. Yesterday's testimony at committee reinforced the decision that our government made to bring in new leadership

and enact measures to increase transparency and accountability. So we absolutely agree that there was a failure of leadership in the Ornge situation.

Patient safety is our number one priority. That's why we've introduced legislation that would increase oversight. That legislation is at committee, and we'd like to see the air ambulance act go ahead. I hope that the party opposite will work with us on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: In tough times, people want to see their scarce and precious health care dollars invested into front-line services, yet the scandal at Ornge shows very clearly that those public health care dollars were spent on CEO salaries, to build private businesses, and even to purchase ski boats.

The government has insisted that they didn't know what was happening at Ornge. Does the Premier admit that there's a serious systemic failure with respect to accountability and transparency at that organization and in this government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've said clearly and our Minister of Health has said clearly that there was a serious issue of oversight at Ornge, that the past leadership failed to deliver what Ontarians needed in terms of service and accountability. That did not work.

That's why the legislation that we've introduced would appoint special investigators or a supervisor when it's in the public interest to do so, similar to the situation and the process we have in hospitals, would appoint members to Ornge's board of directors, would prescribe terms of the performance agreement between government and Ornge and put that in regulation, and would provide whistle-blowing protection for staff who have disclosed information to an inspector, investigator or ministry. That's why we brought the legislation in, because there was a failure of leadership at Ornge. We have said quite clearly that the past leadership at Ornge did not function in an appropriate way, and that's why we've taken action.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The problem is that the people of Ontario are very skeptical about a government that struggles to invest in their priorities, but allows at the same time connected insiders to profit and get rich off of public money. The government has insisted that the public interest was protected at Ornge, and it simply was not, just like insiders were billing millions of dollars at eHealth, just like the government spent millions of dollars on cancelling gas plants. People are seeing a problem with this government. They want accountability.

Is the Premier ready to consider that there are some tangible steps that we can take to afford some accountability and some transparency to the people of Ontario and consider the idea of having a financial accountability office?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think this question goes to the first question that the third party asked, and that is the idea that was put forward by the leader yesterday about a new accountability officer. Mr. Speaker, I've said

that it's an idea that we could look at, but in the context of the budget discussion, we need to know how long the list is of new ideas that will be coming forward from the NDP, because we have had a process that has led to the writing of this budget that was very different than the process last year. This year we spent a lot of time listening to what the third party said. We had the opportunity to interact with more than 600,000 people around the province. I met with folks in communities across the province at 10 jobs and economy round tables, so there was a lot of work that was done in the lead-up, and there is much in the budget that reflects the common ground between us and the third party and, I would suggest, between us and the Conservatives as well.

We need a decision now. I'm happy to have that meeting with the leader of the third party.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The incompetence and mismanagement of this government goes from bad to worse, and it's no more evident than in the Ministry of Health. At yesterday's public accounts committee we heard from Mr. Richard Jackson. He told us that he was hired to head up the minister's new air ambulance oversight program. When asked what experience he had in either air ambulance or land ambulance, he said "none." He told us he hired six individuals into that department to help him with his oversight responsibilities. When asked how much experience those six staff members have in air ambulance or land ambulance, he said "none."

Can the Premier tell us who was responsible for hiring this group of inexperienced people to oversee the most critical oversight responsibilities in the Ministry of Health?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's just be clear about exactly what the member opposite is talking about. He's talking about the air ambulance oversight branch, and there's another branch called the emergency health services branch. There is plenty of expertise in land and air ambulance operations in that branch, the emergency health services branch.

What the air oversight branch is designed to do is to ensure that transfer payment agencies are transparent, that they're accountable, that we get value for money when spending taxpayers' dollars. I think that's exactly the kind of expertise that the official opposition would want, Mr. Speaker, given what has transpired at Ornge. We need to be very careful, when we talk about the expertise that's needed, that we understand that there are different branches and that different expertise is needed depending on the task at hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I think what's important is that the Premier familiarize herself with the Ministry of Health. There are not two branches. The emergency health services branch is headed by the same person that heads the department within the emergency health

services branch which is the air ambulance program. It is the same person who has no experience in either land ambulance or air ambulance. The people who now are responsible for oversight of air ambulance have no experience in either land ambulance or air ambulance.

My question back to the Premier is this: When will this Premier recognize and admit that neither the Ministry of Health has competent leadership at either the minister's level, the deputy minister's level, the associate deputy minister's level, or the assistant deputy minister who hired these inexperienced people to have this important, crucial, oversight responsibility?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has made my point: that within the Ministry of Health there's different expertise that's necessary. What's important is that we have the right expertise performing the right function.

I would ask the member opposite, who is so concerned about oversight, as are we, that he work with us to get Bill 11 through committee, to stop stalling that bill. We need that legislation in place. We need that legislation to come back from committee, and the member opposite has a lot of control over whether that happens.

I know that his concern is genuine. I know he wants to make sure that oversight is in place. My hope is that he will work with his colleagues, we'll get Bill 11 back from committee and we'll be able to get that legislation in place, because that's where the accountability measures are.

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. The government claims that building high-occupancy toll lanes could raise \$250 million a year for transit, yet there are no revenue projections in the budget and the government won't say where the lanes will be built or where the toll will be. Metrolinx puts the initial revenue from HOTs at \$25 million and says the HOTs are not a significant source of revenue for transit. So which is it: \$25 million a year or \$250 million a year?

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We are indeed, in this budget, extending HOV lanes significantly, according to our long-term plan. This is so that families can get home and get to work, and we can enhance the quality and better use our highways.

There are some interesting studies that have come out of Washington and California, demonstrating the effectiveness of HOT lanes. We're going to look at this as an evidence-based process to enhance transit.

But our Big Move plan builds 15 remarkably important, critical pieces of transportation infrastructure: LRTs;

bus rapid transit. It is the biggest single investment in the history of Ontario in public transit. It is already under way on the Eglinton crosstown line and on half-hour, all-day, two-way service on the Lakeshore line, the biggest single transit improvement for people in the 905. We're very proud of that. We hope the party opposite will join us in supporting the financing of it.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The minister keeps on saying "HOV," but you're really proceeding with HOT lanes. These are the toll lanes we're talking about.

The government made similar rosy projections when it rolled out Presto, but we now know that this private sector misadventure has been very costly to taxpayers. Experts say that building new high-occupancy toll lanes costs more than \$700,000 per kilometre. That means millions will be spent to build 450 kilometres of these lanes before they generate a dime, and that's if everything goes perfectly.

Metrolinx says we will need \$2 billion a year in new money to pay for transit. Why is the government playing games with another risky, costly and complicated new payment system for the sake of a mere \$25 million a year?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I will speak very slowly so I'm not misunderstood. We are expanding the HOV lanes, and we will be introducing—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence is not using his timing properly. He's not even listening while I'm trying to get him to stop.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know how to do that, if it's needed.

Carry on.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be very clear; I'll speak slowly. We are expanding HOV lanes, and we will be introducing HOT lanes. We will be doing that strategically on an evidence-based process. We have the benefit of about 18 other projects going on in North America that are similar, and we will use that experience.

But Mr. Speaker, my question for my friend in the third party is, how are they going to pay for the commitments that both the Liberals and the New Democrats believe are critical?

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, our Premier has been very candid.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We have a plan—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Time's up.

New question.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Strengthening the social safety net is a very important issue to many people in Ontario. Those who have depended on social assistance in times of need appreciate the support provided to them and their families, and I've heard that first-hand from constituents in my riding of York South–Weston. Others are simply glad to know that the system is there for those who may need it. However, many of us are concerned that social assistance, as it exists now, may not be delivering all of the results that it could be for the most vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: The Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario submitted their report to you at the end of last year. I remember, from earlier questions that you've answered, that you've been taking the time since then to review the report and to consider what actions the government might take to begin reform. Has the ministry undertaken to act on the suggestions for reform?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member from York South–Weston—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Hard-working, hard-working.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: She is hard-working, in fact—and I want to let her know that I share her concerns. She's correct; we have been reviewing the recommendations, all 108 from the commission. To do that, we've been listening to a number of stakeholders. I think my ministry's met with 64 different groups, and we're getting some good feedback. Based on all of that information gathering, we're investing \$400 million over three years to support the increases in OW and ODSP, to also provide single adults with a \$14 top-up and allowing social assistance clients to earn—as a work incentive—and keep up to \$200.

We're also looking at assets, special provisions for First Nations and northern communities, as well as simplifying rules.

Jobs, the economy—

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

Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Again, to the minister: It is encouraging that this government plans, again, to be raising social assistance rates for all recipients. This step can make a difference in their lives, as will the increase in the earning exemption. While I recognize some of the items that you mentioned from the Lankin-Sheikh report, I believe that there was a lot more that was recommended.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister speak about what plans he has for some of those other recommendations included in the report?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Back to the member: We're going to be working in a very close way, and in a collaborative way, with a number of stakeholders to move us forward. There were a number of things in the report

that groups said they didn't want to see us implement, so there are bound to be some trade-offs, and we need to be careful about those.

That having been said, I think it's encouraging to know that this government is about fairness and is about moving forward. Jobs, the economy and a fair society are, of course, the government's top priorities, and reforming social assistance is a key part of that priority.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we will be working very hard. We'll be working together, collaboratively, and we would invite all members to join us.

By the way, we can't do the kinds of things that we want to do for those who need special help unless we get the budget through, so let's get at it, folks.

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. Premier, we've heard that the disagreement between you and your environment minister over the Liberal eco tax program has been so bad lately that you've personally taken over the file.

After rejecting the PC plan last November to scrap eco taxes and set waste diversion targets, the minister did an about-face last month claiming he was suddenly against eco taxes, but he failed to present a real solution to eliminate them. Instead, he wants to continue to charge eco taxes while keeping them hidden from consumers. You, on the other hand, want eco taxes to remain visible to consumers.

Premier, now that you're managing the environment portfolio, should Ontarians expect to still have eco taxes on their receipts?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: As we have done for some time, we have identified the real problem. Some of the members who have been here for some length of time who don't get a chance to ask questions for the Conservative Party anymore—the wily veterans, the great people who have served their people well—don't ask these. They would fully understand that the real problem is the Conservative bill that was passed in 2002. It allowed for cartels to be set up to be able to charge these particular fees.

1110

We tried to work with your old bill. We've worked very hard on that. It's impossible. That is why we'll be introducing a new bill to make the kinds of changes people happen to believe are needed.

You should go back to some of your colleagues who recognize how bad that bill was and encourage them to support the new bill that we will be introducing in this House that will in fact address many of the problems that have been there for some period of time.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General will come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: You know what? Those programs were introduced by this government and the true godfather of the eco tax, the taxman himself, Dalton McGuinty.

Premier, we've heard your environment minister claim—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've reminded members in the past about this and I'll do so again. We refer to people according to their riding or their title.

Mr. Michael Harris: Premier, we've heard your environment minister claim on multiple occasions that the government doesn't receive any money from eco taxes. Well, he's totally wrong. The Liberal government has been secretly collecting its share of eco tax revenue for years, at a cost of up to \$100 million. According to Ontario Tire Stewardship's budget, right here, more than \$8.5 million of hidden HST charges were embedded in the Liberal's tire tax in 2011 alone, and that number is only going to rise with the Liberal's more than 2,000% tire tax hikes that unfairly target Ontario farmers.

Premier, do you continue to support eco taxes because you're profiting from imposing hidden taxes on Ontarians?

Interjections.

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

Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The legislation that the Conservatives put in place allowed that to happen. Now, we have implored, and I'm going to seek—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, you're warned.

Finish.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm going to seek the assistance of some members of your caucus who may know this individual, the federal Minister of Finance, and try to get him to change the system, which in fact allows for HST. But the bill has to be changed completely.

What we should know is, the real godfather of eco fees in this province is your leader. Your leader was the then-Minister of Consumer and Business Services, and he allowed eco fees at that time. So when we're looking for godfathers of eco taxes out there, I think you should speak to your own leader, my friend Mr. Hudak.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we move on, I will also remind the Minister of the Environment that we use people's titles or their riding names.

Interjection.

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

New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. In 2010, this government slashed—everybody knows this—the benefits that our consumers receive in this province when it comes to auto insurance. This slash in the

statutory accident benefits resulted in a 70% drop in payouts to residents of the GTHA within one year alone. That's a 70% drop in claims payouts. Yet over the past three years, these very same residents haven't seen a penny of savings in the form of lower premiums.

How long does this government think those residents should have to wait before they see a drop in their premiums?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: What we need to do is get this budget passed so we can start getting at the issue about reducing automotive premium rates. I look to the leaders of both sides of the House, so let's get moving on that. We've already identified that the costs of claims are much too high. We've taken the steps necessary to try to reduce them. Some of those transfers are starting to take place. We need to give FSCO more teeth so that the regulator can start passing on those savings. We need you to act with us now.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Later on today the Premier is scheduled to speak in Brampton and make some announcements regarding the budget. I want the Premier to be very well aware that the residents of Brampton know that the 15% reduction in auto insurance does not have any timelines whatsoever. This is a serious concern. This means that people in the GTA or in Hamilton could wait two years, three years, five years. No one knows how long it will take.

The benefits were slashed in 2010. That's three years ago. There has been a 70% reduction in claims payouts to residents of the GTA and Hamilton. How long does this government expect the residents of the GTA and Hamilton to wait before there's a 15% reduction in auto insurance premiums?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The timeline will be dependent upon how quickly we get this budget passed. The member opposite knows the complexity of the file all too well. We know that we need to take proper measures to help the superintendent get the oversight and the authority required to ensure that the filings of those new rates take place. You know that we need to work with the industry to reduce the cost of claims. You know that in dealing with the industry and the players, they are now receptive to taking those steps as well. But what we need is this legislation to pass so that we can act quickly. You, yourself, recognize that it takes a gradual approach to get at the cause. You put that in your private member's bill. We agree. We all want this to happen quickly—the faster the better—so let's get on with getting this budget passed.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Today, my question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. Yesterday, Minister Chiarelli and I visited a company called Temporal Power, in Mississauga. As Ontarians, we can all be really proud

of the fact that Temporal Power leads not just in Ontario, not just in Canada, but in the entire world when it comes to storing technology in flywheels.

It is companies like Temporal Power that are powering Ontario to new heights economically and creating new jobs, and I want to know from the Minister of Research and Innovation what we are doing to ensure that Ontario continues to be at the leading edge of technology and innovation.

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from Mississauga East—Cooksville for that question. Supporting research and innovation is a major priority for our government. Since 2003, we have invested \$3.6 billion in research and innovation. This investment has helped create 30,000 jobs, 75,000 people were trained, and it also fostered 10,000 industry and academic partnerships.

In our budget of 2013, we reaffirm this government's commitment to research and innovation. I am proud of our government's investment of \$100 million in the Ontario Brain Institute, which supports cutting-edge research in brain diseases.

We are transforming global challenges into jobs and economic growth, and even furthermore, we are making better health care for Ontarians and also quality of life for people in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that update and for reaffirming our government's commitment to research and innovation.

Research and innovation is great, but it's only useful if we can commercialize it to improve our economy and help our society. To do this, we need to support our entrepreneurs. So, Minister, can you tell us: What is the government of Ontario doing to help and support entrepreneurs?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member for that question. I am very proud of the leadership role our government has taken in venture capital. With the success of the Ontario Venture Capital Fund, we are partnering with our federal government and also the private sector.

Interjection.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't start right after I admonish you.

Hon. Reza Moridi: With a \$50-million investment, the Ontario Venture Capital Fund II has the potential to reach \$300 million. This fund will help to create the right environment for attracting investments to Ontario and also supporting innovation, the creation of jobs and the boosting of our economy.

Our recent budget will deliver a commitment on a commercialization and innovation voucher, and this voucher is going to help small businesses and entrepreneurs to reach research institutions in this province to solve their problems and also increase productivity.

Our government is taking important steps in order to support research and innovation—

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

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Premier. On March 5, the Premier received a copy of the package from the municipality of North Perth concerning the industrial wind turbine project that threatens the community. It included a letter from the mayor, the municipal consultation form and my letter of support. The Premier should remember it; it was about an inch thick and I delivered it right to her, right here in the Legislature. I trust she has read it, but it's now over two months later, and we have had no response. My question to the Premier is simple: What was the very clear decision taken by council, and will she respect their will?

1120

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. The member will know that the Ontario Power Authority has had standing-offer procurements for renewable energy. Through that process, over the last several years, we've created over 31,000 jobs. We have stated quite clearly in our speech from the throne, and the Premier has repeated, that we are looking and working together in a number of ministries to improve how we deal with the siting of renewable energy projects. I am pleased to announce that in the very near future we'll have some new rules on the siting of renewable energy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It sounds like the Premier will not support them. On this issue, the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals are showing no more respect to my constituents than they did in the gas plant scandal. We also remember the throne speech, which suddenly claimed to understand the need for willing hosts on projects like wind turbines.

Well, our councils have spoken. North Perth, West Perth and many more have passed resolutions. They are, and I quote, "not a willing host" for industrial wind turbines, but the Premier continues to allow the wind project in our area to move through the old, broken process. And so I ask her, when will you stop trampling the overwhelming will of our communities and declare a moratorium, and what part of "not a willing host" do you not understand?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm looking for some leadership and advice from the other side of the House. We just heard a very significant amount of dialogue with respect to cancelling contracts. The position on the other side is that the government ought not to be unilaterally cancelling contracts, and we now have a request from the other side to unilaterally cancel a contract. I'm looking for

advice from the other side in terms of how we deal with the number of contracts that have been signed for which there might be some objections in the community, as there were in Mississauga and as there were in Oakville, and I'm challenging the member: Should we break this contract?

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the minister responsible for seniors. My office has been flooded by calls and emails from concerned seniors who live in retirement homes and supportive housing for seniors. They have been told that the physiotherapy programs that are keeping them healthy will be discontinued as of August 1. Dorothy Johnston wrote, "They just gave us this program to keep us healthy and in shape, and a couple of months later it's ripped from beneath us." Can the minister assure us and Ms. Johnston that her physiotherapy program will continue after August 1?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I thank the member for the question. Let me say that, beginning August 1, 2013, Ontario will provide more than 200,000 additional seniors with one-on-one physiotherapy. We will provide group exercise classes and fall prevention services as well. This will be provided in long-term-care homes and local community centres throughout our province of Ontario. Some 92 physiotherapy clinics are delivering the service today, enhancing access to exercise and fall prevention classes for an additional 68,000 seniors, for a total of 150,000 seniors. This is one way we deliver more service to our seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Seniors living in buildings like Mohawk Gardens, a municipally run supportive housing building, will have no other options if their in-house physiotherapy is cancelled. The government can talk a good game about wanting seniors to stay active and healthy, yet they're about to discontinue a hugely successful program.

Barb Wyatt wrote, "If this program is cancelled"—

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: Excuse me; Barb Wyatt is speaking. "I have no other choice; I don't drive and I can't"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now I'm speaking. Stop the clock.

I'll stop it this time, but it's very difficult to have the question put when somebody on the same side is heckling, and it's hard for me to get to the people who are heckling on this side if somebody on that side is heckling. So please keep it down.

Finish your question, please.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker.

Barb Wyatt wrote, "If this program is cancelled, I have no other choice; I don't drive and I can't afford public transit that frequently."

What is the minister doing to ensure that seniors in retirement homes can continue to access physiotherapy?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Speaker, it's a fair and a good question. Let me assure the member and every member of the House that there are no changes with respect to accessibility to the system or to the care that seniors are receiving in community care, in retirement homes. As a matter of fact, Speaker, what's being proposed, the amendments that are being proposed, will give 280,000 more seniors access to home care on a one-to-one basis in more locations throughout Ontario, and this is what we want to do for our people, especially living in nursing homes, in seniors' homes, and in home care and at home as well.

Speaker, it's the intent of this government to provide more services when they are needed and where they are needed to our seniors, and this is what we'll be doing.

FIRE SAFETY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Last November, I heard the minister speak about expediting the technical consultation on fire safety improvements in residences for seniors, people with disabilities and other vulnerable Ontarians. I was glad to hear this morning that the minister announced the mandatory use of sprinklers in all retirement homes, nursing homes and residences for the disabled. Can the minister please tell us more about what this will mean for all our seniors?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Let me say thank you to the member from Oak Ridges—Markham for this question. Last Monday, I was very pleased to be with the Premier to announce the making of automatic sprinklers mandatory in residences for seniors, people with disabilities and vulnerable citizens—the first province to achieve that in Canada.

These changes to the fire code will include a phase-in of mandatory sprinklers for all existing care residences and retirement homes with more than four occupants over the next five years, annual validation of fire safety plans, enhanced fire inspection and staff training, and fire safety enhancements for all new retirement homes.

In closing, I wanted to congratulate the Minister of Housing, the minister responsible for seniors, the member from Niagara and the member from Hamilton East—

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Back to the minister: I'm delighted to hear about our government's groundbreaking announcement. I know that our government has always been strongly committed to fire safety. We've required smoke alarms on every floor of homes, we updated the safety requirements for hotels, and so much more.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell us what kind of input we received from the retirement home sector?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I thank the remarkable member from Oak Ridges—Markham for the questions. Let me say

that seniors in retirement homes need to feel safe and secure. By mandating fire sprinklers and enhancing fire safety measures, the Wynne government is demonstrating its commitment to the well-being of our seniors in Ontario.

But that's not all. The 2013 budget is a document written with seniors in mind: increasing investments in home care and community services, helping seniors with low and moderate incomes in getting their Trillium benefits program on a monthly or on a one-yearly basis, providing 30,000 more house calls to seniors and others with complex conditions.

It is the announcement, but it's about celebrating the positive results of a collaborative process that puts seniors and other vulnerable Ontarians first.

1130

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Premier. You know, we on this side of the House are also hearing from Ontarians about the budget. I'd like to share one story that we've heard. Andrea from Hamilton told us that people were "tired of being ignored by governments that seemed more concerned with themselves, more concerned with their own political skin, with their own political opportunity, with their own political well-being than they were with everyday people."

Andrea from Hamilton is 100% correct. People are tired of this government. So, Premier, will you call the PC Party want of confidence motion today, so that Andrea from Hamilton can have her wish: a new accountable government for the people of this province?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton, come to order. The member from Thornhill, come to order. The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Last call. The member from Halton is warned. The member from Barrie is warned.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I think the member should be aware that in several days from now, according to the standing orders, we will have a vote on the budget motion, which is a confidence vote. We look forward to that vote, and their participation in it.

When the budget bill reaches second reading, for example—just one example—that will be a confidence motion. When it returns here to the House for third reading, that will be another confidence motion—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just say yes one more time.

Hon. John Milloy: But again I want to go back—

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

Finish.

Hon. John Milloy: I just want to again go back, and perhaps the honourable member in his supplementary could answer a question that we've been asking over here: Why did his party oppose the gas plants in the last election? Why did they campaign so aggressively? When will they put forward their costing and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Hon. John Milloy: —when will their candidates appear in front of committee and why has it taken his leader weeks and weeks to agree?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: You know, it's funny that the government House leader mentions the budget. Let's see what Andrea from Hamilton has to say about that budget: "We want to see a balanced approach with a budget that's accountable to people, a budget that tackles people's concerns about creating jobs and growing our economy while helping them in their daily lives and balancing the books in a balanced way."

Mr. Speaker, Andrea from Hamilton knows, the Ontario PC Party knows, the people of Ontario know that the budget presented by that government doesn't reflect the priorities of Ontarians because the priorities of Ontarians are not to waste \$600 million on a gas plant scandal to save some Liberal seats.

Premier, the people of Ontario do not have to be held hostage by this dysfunctional budget negotiation sideshow. You can end the charade right now by calling our want of confidence motion. Will you do it today? Let's get on with fixing what's wrong with your government.

Interjections.

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

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member stands up and talks about the gas plants. Again, we want to know over on this side of the House why Tim from the Fort Erie area—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: —you trivialize the people of Ontario. You should be ashamed of yourself. You're disgusting.

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

Mr. Chudleigh was escorted from the chamber.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, come to order. You are warned. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, come to order.

Before I finish, as much as everyone might think that's cute on both sides, I think we should still be respectful of this place. If we think we can skirt rules, that means that you're not trying to find the highest ground here. My recommendation, clearly, again and again and again, is to

use members' titles or their riding. To try to skirt them is not what I call impressive.

Finish your answer, please.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think there's a lot of people that would like to know why the Leader of the Opposition so aggressively opposed the plants; perhaps because it's topical, Mr. Speaker.

We'd also like to know why the member from Halton had this to say to the Toronto Sun on October 7, 2010: "It was sad that it took so long for the government to listen to the people of Oakville ... so it was nice to see that decision overturned."

Mr. Speaker, these are not complicated questions. When will we see PC candidates appear in front of the committee? When will they be encouraging their colleagues to be there?

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. This government has just wasted \$600 million on the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants. But apparently you haven't learned your lesson. The government has now signed \$1 billion worth of contracts for refurbishment of the Darlington nuclear power plant, even though, according to the Toronto Star, you haven't even made the decision as to whether or not to go ahead. Why is the government continuing to waste public money on these secret energy deals?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, there are two separate issues. There's the issue of refurbishment of Darlington units and there's the issue of possibly building new units at Darlington. He's referring to something that appeared in the Toronto Star today that was totally referencing the possibility of new nuclear. In terms of new nuclear, we should be aware of the fact, of course, that the New Democratic Party built 3,500 megawatts of nuclear during their term. Those units are still in place. The important thing is that a decision has to be made on whether or not we're going to shut them down or proceed. We're taking some very, very serious advice on new nuclear. That's under deliberation. We're receiving the best advice possible, and we're not going to rush the decision. I assure the critic from the New Democratic Party that we're dealing with it responsibly and we're going to be proceeding—

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

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Hamilton Mountain has given notice of her dissatisfaction to the answer to her question given by the minister responsible for seniors concerning physiotherapy services for seniors in retirement and supportive housing. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

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

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Soo Wong: We are pleased to have members from YouthCAN and the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth here in the Legislature today. Maybe they will behave. Both groups were instrumental in organizing the Youth Leaving Care hearings, and publishing My Real Life Book and the Youth Leaving Care blueprint for change. Thank you for your work, and I want to acknowledge you for being here today for the discussion of the private member's bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our young people here.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Today I rise on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the Ontario PC caucus to recognize Jewish Heritage Month.

Last year, May was declared Jewish Heritage Month when members of all three parties supported this bill. The bill was co-sponsored by my colleague PC MPP Peter Shurman, the member from Thornhill, because we wanted an annual celebration of our Jewish Canadian communities' many achievements, recognizing their tremendous contributions to our province and abroad.

I am proud to say that Ontario has one of the fastest-growing Jewish communities in the world, full of accomplished individuals who have made a significant impact on our province and beyond.

I have had the chance to meet members of the Jewish community on numerous occasions and there has always been an unshakable determination to create a better future for their families. This determination is giving Ontario its leaders in business, politics, the arts, journalism, academia and more. Members of Ontario's Jewish community have helped grow the economy and shape our culture, hosting events and welcoming all Ontarians to join in the festivities.

The Jewish community is also to be recognized for its commitment to community and helping those less fortunate. This month we'll see many activities in our local communities, bringing together thousands of people, especially during the annual UJA walk.

Once again, on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the Ontario PC caucus, I wish everyone celebrating Jewish Heritage Month a wonderful time with your friends and family.

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: On April 28, I took part in the National Day of Mourning ceremonies in Kenora to remember those who have been killed or injured in the workplace.

With a resource-based economy, we in the northwest are no strangers to these types of catastrophic, life-altering events. There is probably not a single extended family or circle of friends who have not been affected by a workplace debilitating injury or death.

For those who escape with their lives but who are unable to return to work, they face a life of chronic pain and stigma. Many workers who do survive these events end up battling depression, addictions and, tragically, some end up taking their lives.

We often forget that these individuals are victims, yet the few supports that are in place for injured workers, namely WSIB, treat these survivors as if they were criminals. They are subject to humiliating treatment, and far too many are forced to fight for years to receive even the most basic benefits from a system that is said to be designed to protect them, but their only crime was putting in an honest day's work to put food on the table.

The system is in need of major reform, and there needs to be recognition that these individuals are human beings who deserve a life of dignity and respect.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Phil McNeely: I would like to highlight a wonderful local initiative in my community that will save lives. On Saturday, April 27, the Gloucester North Lions Club ran an organ donor drive hosted by Place d'Orléans, a local mall in my riding. They partnered with the Trillium Gift of Life Network to give local Ottawa-Orléans residents an opportunity to sign up as organ and tissue donors. As mentioned before in the House, April was organ donor month in Ontario.

In the past year, we saw Ontario's organ donor list grow by nearly a quarter million, as citizens registered their consent to organ and tissue donations. That brings the total number of registered donors in the province to 2.6 million people. I'm proud of the contribution that members from my community made.

The local effort was led by Lion Mark Marcogliese and by Lion Pierrette Woods, who's also a tissue recipient. She told me that without her transplant, she would not be able to take part in her favourite activity: watching her grandchildren play hockey.

Also present were heart recipients J.P. Carrière and Denis Richardson. I was amazed to learn that Denis is now in his 20th year since his transplant. He's a living testament to how far medicine in Ontario has come.

I would like to thank all the volunteers from the Lions Club and Trillium Gift of Life Network, as well as Place d'Orléans, for hosting this life-saving initiative.

I encourage all those who have not yet registered to take two minutes out of their day to give the gift of life at www.beadonor.ca.

STRATFORD ACCELERATOR CENTRE

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Today is the grand opening of the Stratford Accelerator Centre, a new facility created in

partnership with the University of Waterloo, Stratford campus, the city of Stratford, and the Waterloo Accelerator Centre.

Supporting early-stage technology and digital media start-ups is their mission. They bring entrepreneurs together to deliver world-class mentoring, coaching, programming and services. They accept clients through a competitive application and intake process, and work to accelerate their growth from vision to early market success.

The accelerator centre is a perfect fit for Stratford and for Perth–Wellington. It builds on our reputation for excellence in business, technology, innovation and culture.

Now more than ever, we need to accelerate the dreams of our entrepreneurs so that we can accelerate job creation and economic growth. After all, we have no greater resource than the dreams, knowledge and potential of our people.

In Waterloo, the accelerator program has helped to create nearly 1,000 jobs since it began seven years ago. They are creating a more diverse, more vibrant economy. That's a terrific achievement, and we look forward to similar success in Stratford.

I wish I could be there for today's grand opening, but I'm looking forward to joining Shane Pegg, director of strategic initiatives, at the accelerator centre later this month.

I know all members of the Legislature will want to join me in congratulating everyone involved with the centre, as well as the university and the city.

ELLIOT LAKE GAY PRIDE WEEKEND

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members' statements? The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I hope you won't forget that compliment I gave you yesterday, because I need to cash it in today.

I would like to recognize a group in my riding that is celebrating Elliot Lake's diversity and highlighting its inclusiveness. Elliot Lake Pride is the first annual pride festival in Elliot Lake. It was created as a celebration of diversity and a way to help community members connect with one another.

The event will be held on the weekend of May 31, and all visitors and residents are invited to come out and celebrate this community's diversity. It is our diversity that makes us a unique and resilient community and, together, we support one another.

The Elliot Lake Pride Committee is chaired by Douglas Elliott, who grew up in Elliot Lake and is now a Toronto-based lawyer. The committee also features Mayor Rick Hamilton.

The event will be held on May 31, with an assembly at Elliot Lake Secondary School, with featured speaker Mark Bonham, who started the Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies at the University of Toronto. He will be addressing the assembly about bullying of LGBT students in schools across the country. This is an

important message, as bullying is a problem that has made news headlines across the country, with many youth taking their own lives as a result of torment from others.

There will be many other events, including a flag-raising, a barbecue, a beverage garden, a comedy show and a youth party. There will also be a service at St. Peter the Apostle Anglican Church.

It is important we take a stance against discrimination and violence of any kind and promote equal rights to human dignity. This is a great opportunity to build our community and affirm ourselves as an inclusive community that welcomes all. And it all starts with me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'm just finishing a conversation which gave you that favour, so don't forget that I gave you your favour.

KNIGHTS TABLE

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's pleasure to rise in the House today to speak about the Knights Table food bank in my riding of Brampton West. It gives me great pride to say that the Knights Table is now in its 20th year of service to the people of Brampton.

The Knights Table is Peel region's only soup kitchen that is open 365 days a year. In addition to its meals programs, Knights Table also offers food bank services and other social supports to those individuals and families impacted by hunger, poverty and homelessness in our community.

1310

Just some numbers, Mr. Speaker: There are over 56,000 meals served annually. The Knights Table serves 1,800 families weekly. It has 1,500 volunteers and 42,000 volunteer hours.

The staff and volunteers assist the clients regardless of colour, culture, religion, economic status, gender, sexual orientation or social condition. We are dedicated to inspiring all people to achieve their full potential. The Knights Table helps by providing food bank services, hot meals and other services to the people of Brampton who deal with the daily issues of hunger, poverty and homelessness.

I would like to especially recognize the staff and volunteers at the food bank because without their hard work and dedication, nothing would be possible. Keep up the good work, and best of luck in your new location.

NURSES

Mr. Bill Walker: Today I rise in the House to talk about a unique experience that we MPPs are privileged to participate in: the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario's Take Your MPP to Work Day. For a day, we're invited to shadow our hard-working front-line nurses all across Ontario and experience first-hand what their working life is like.

I myself took part in my first Take Your MPP to Work Day last April when I joined nurses at the Sauble Family

Health Team and also at the Grey Bruce Health Unit to get a snapshot of their day-to-day realities.

I also have the greatest admiration for nurses. As executive director of the Bruce Peninsula Health Services Foundation, I saw first-hand for six years what our nurses do. To me, they truly are the heartbeat of our health system.

This year, on May 24, I will shadow the Grey-Bruce Alzheimer Society to learn more about how they help to improve patients' health outcomes and quality of life by providing expert, knowledge-based, client-centred or patient-centred—what I like to believe—care.

As I said in this House a few days ago in recognition of international Nursing Week, I think our nurses are world-class for their skills, compassion and dedication.

I know our leader, Tim Hudak, and my colleagues are heading to public health units, community health centres, hospitals and nursing homes this month to learn about the important work that our front-line nurses do. Our health critic, the MPP for Whitby, Christine Elliott, will be at a breakfast at Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences in Whitby tomorrow.

Speaker, our nurses truly are the backbone. They are the front-line care. They are the people who care and have compassion for the patients they serve. I wish them all the best and I'm glad that I can participate in Take Your MPP to Work Day.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise in the Legislature today to tell you about a very exciting initiative that's taking place in my community. It's called the Great Oakville Pursuit—Breaking the Silence on Youth Mental Health.

The Pursuit is based on the Amazing Race, and it features teams of high school students heading to different Oakville landmarks. There, they will be greeted by various mental health organizations at the locations who will lead them in challenges, with a goal to learn more about youth mental health and break the stigma that's associated with it.

The Pursuit kicked off a couple of weeks ago with a youth mental health expo at town hall that featured speakers and many local organizations.

The event is actually organized by members of my Oakville Provincial Youth Advisory Committee. Every year, two students from each high school are invited to take part and discuss issues that are important to them. One year, the focus was on the civics program. The next year the focus was on anti-bullying. But this year's committee chose to increase awareness about youth mental health and the importance of breaking the stigma and talking about it.

So I want to thank all those involved for organizing tomorrow's event and helping to raise awareness about youth mental health in our community. It certainly is something that I'd like to see spread throughout Ontario, because being able to talk about youth mental health is

one big step forward to being able to deal with the problems that we should have been dealing with for many years.

AGRICULTURE IN DURHAM

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a real pleasure today to stand up and put a voice to my riding of Durham, which is probably one of the leading areas in Ontario for agriculture. I'm so impressed with the innovation and leadership that I'm going to take the time to inform the viewer and the listener about things that are happening in my riding in the agricultural field.

It started this past weekend with the most famous spring fair. It was a maple fest, very widely attended and very widely appreciated. It really showed the harvest in the early spring within Durham, and the maple syrup and pancakes were fantastic.

I want to thank Garth for the breakfast that he provided for me; I'll leave it at that. I can't think of his last name at the moment.

But a more innovative thing that's going on is, Marlene Werry is a consultant in agriculture in our area, and she's part of a program that's being developed in horticulture at Durham College. I would commend Don Lovisa, who is the president of Durham College, and the program that they have put together.

The program at Durham College addresses the shift in the focus of food quality, and it's exciting to introduce a new horticultural food farming program which will start this fall. It's a two-year diploma program to prepare students to become part of the popular and rapidly evolving food sector. The food production sector is widely viewed as being immune from changing economic cycles, and with today's food costs, job opportunities will continue to increase.

In Ontario alone, there are 3,000 agri-food companies with nearly \$34 billion in manufacturing revenue. Currently, the agriculture and food sector in Ontario is a leading part of the economy—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows—I think you've heard this one before:

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

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

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

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

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

This is a large issue at this time of year, and I don’t think the ministry is paying attention—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will refrain from making editorial comments.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Applause.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the applause.

This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families have for several 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 couldn’t agree more. I’m going to affix my signature and give it to Brigid to be delivered.

1320

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

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

“Whereas the Ontario Health Insurance Program (OHIP) previously covered one ... (Pap) test a year for women in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the Canadian Cancer Society estimated that 1,350 Canadian women were diagnosed with cervical cancer and 390 died from the disease in 2012, and that this valuable test is a simple screening procedure that can help prevent cancer of the cervix; and

“Whereas the province through OHIP now only covers the cost of a test once every three years under new rules that took effect January 1; and

“Whereas women who want an annual Pap test now have to pay for the screening themselves under the new rules;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately return the OHIP funding for annual Pap tests for women in order to help prevent” cervical “cancer and ensure women’s overall health and well-being.”

I affix my signature in full support, Speaker.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the process popularly known as ‘declawing’ is actually an amputation of a cat’s toes that is both painful and unnecessary;

“Whereas research has shown declawing a cat significantly reduces a cat’s quality of life and leads to both behavioural and health problems;

“Whereas declawing removes a cat’s natural defences and leaves them helpless in situations where their life may be in danger;

“Whereas most reputable cat shelters have a no-declawing policy, due to the permanent damage it causes; and

“Whereas the process is considered to be” an inhumane practice “and is banned in many jurisdictions;

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

"To ban the unnecessary and inhumane medical procedure known as declawing in the province of Ontario."

I support this. I will sign it and give it to page Megan to deliver to the table.

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve to be able to look after their sick or injured family members without fearing that they will lose their jobs at such a vulnerable time;

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve to be able to spend time looking for a child that has disappeared, or take time off to grieve the death of a child that was murdered without fearing that they will lose their jobs;

"Whereas the federal government has recently extended similar leaves and economic supports to federal employees;

"Whereas the government of Ontario, and the Premier of Ontario, support Ontario families and wish to foster mental and physical well-being by allowing those closest to sick or injured family members the time to provide support free of work-related concerns;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, during spring of 2013, Bill 21, the Leaves to Help Families Act."

I fully support the petition and I give it to Gabriel.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario relating to the Preserving Existing Communities Act, 2013. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the town of Newmarket official plan was developed through extensive community consultation and commits the town council to manage growth based on specific principles;

"Whereas section 1.3.3 of the official plan states that growth should occur in a way that not only increases the quality of life for existing residents but also provides a functional environment for the future by protecting and enhancing existing natural features and systems;

"Whereas a key principle set out in section 2.1 of the official plan is a commitment to protect and strengthen existing neighbourhoods;

"Whereas section 3.2.1 states that the objective of the stable residential area policies of the official plan is to sustain and enhance the character and identity of existing residential communities;

"Whereas the town of Newmarket has received an application from Marianneville Development Ltd. that, if approved, would impose an additional 730 housing units into the existing, long-established Glenway community;

"Whereas the Glenway community was not designed to accommodate the water, sewer, traffic and other infrastructure requirements of the proposed development application;

"Whereas the proposed development would not only change the character and identity of the Glenway community, it would have a negative impact on quality of life, would erode property values and would threaten the health and safety of its residents;

"Whereas the Places to Grow Act, 2005 and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006 provide for a significant portion of new growth to take place through intensification of built-up areas;

Therefore, "we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Preserving Existing Communities Act, 2013 ... that amends the Places to Grow Act, 2005 to provide that a decision made by a municipal council is final and may not be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board if the following conditions are satisfied:

"The decision is to refuse a request to amend the municipality's official plan with respect to land that is designated for one or more of the following: stable residential area and parks and open space;

"The municipal council has passed a resolution stating that the requested official plan amendment would not be in the best interests of the municipality."

Speaker, I affix my signature to this petition. I believe it's the right thing for this Legislature to do to preserve existing communities.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

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

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to add my signature and give it to Karinna to be delivered to the table.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition fully and will give it to page Chedi.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for northern families;

“Whereas the government has a duty and an obligation to ensure that essential goods and services are affordable for all families living in the north and across the province;

“Whereas government policy such as the Green Energy Act, the harmonized sales tax, cancellation of gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga have caused the price of electricity to artificially increase to the point it is no longer affordable for families or small business;

“Whereas electricity generated and used in northwestern Ontario is among the cleanest and cheapest to produce in Canada, yet has been inflated by government policy;

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

“To take immediate steps to reduce the price of electricity in the northwest and ensure that residents and businesses have access to energy that properly reflects the price of local generation.”

I wholeheartedly support this. I’m going to sign it and give it to Daniel to deliver to the table.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Jim McDonell: “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; and

“Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces, leading to constituents in eastern Ontario buying tires in Quebec to

avoid the tax and driving Ontario’s businesses out of business; and

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

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

“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:

1330

“To 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 agree with this and will be passing it off to page Brigid.

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MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s mineral wealth belongs to the people of Ontario;

“Whereas the people who collectively own these natural resources should stand to enjoy their benefits;

“Whereas Ontario’s Mining Act presently calls for resources mined in Ontario to be processed in Canada, yet allows cabinet to grant exceptions to the clause;

“Whereas these exceptions ensure residents of Ontario are told why our resources are being shipped elsewhere—information that can be used to better plan for infrastructure and job training needs to ensure a more competitive environment” in Ontario;

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

“To amend the Mining Act to ensure that people living in Ontario maximize the benefit of their natural resources.”

I wholeheartedly support this. I’m going to sign it and give it to page Ethan to deliver to the table.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

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

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

“Whereas the chair of the WSIB—in committee meetings last year—admitted this will not help cover the accumulated WSIB debt, but make the problem” even “worse by adding further liabilities;

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

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

I agree with this petition and will be signing it and passing it off to the page.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Speaker, I move that, in the opinion of this House, be it resolved that every member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario unite to end violence against women and girls in all forms, by building awareness, better law enforcement and by encouraging more emphasis on coordinated community response.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Mangat has moved ballot item number 22, private

member’s notice of motion number 27. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin by thanking Mark Creedon, executive director of Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin, in the west public gallery; and also Robert Varga, the president of performance management and accountability, who is here on behalf of Central West Community Care Access Centre .

I would also like to thank all the women and girls and other organizations who are supporting this motion and who are not able to come to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the fundamental human right of all women and girls to live their lives free of violence. Violence against women and girls is an evil. Women have been the victims of violence all through the ages, in all societies, cultures and regions of the world.

The United Nations theme for International Women’s Day this year is “A Promise is a Promise: Time for Action to End Violence Against Women” and girls—a great theme, but a monumental task. It calls for a strong political will, allocation of ample resources and coordinated efforts by governments and communities all across the world.

Mr. Speaker, today let’s look back on a year of shocking crimes of violence against women and girls and ask ourselves how to usher in a better society. One young woman was gang-raped to death. Another committed suicide out of a sense of shame that should have attached to the perpetrators. Young teens were shot at close range for daring to seek an education. Those heinous crimes, which rightly sparked global outrage, were part of a much larger problem that pervades virtually every society and every realm of life.

In some societies, rigid cultural norms and patriarchal attitudes devalue the role of women, expose them to violence and ruin their peace and happiness. In many societies, religious traditions have played a negative role in shaping the attitudes and personalities of women and in determining their unequal social status. In some societies, a family structure in which the man is deemed to be the absolute ruler of the household and activities within the family are seen as private allows violence to occur at home.

The roots of violence against women and girls are founded in the belief that the needs, feelings and beliefs of one person or one group are more important or more correct than those of another person or group. This creates a rationale for humiliation, intimidation, control, abuse and even murder.

Despite great strides made by women activists and governmental and non-governmental agencies all across the world, gender inequality is starkly visible in all areas of human life, including politics, religion, cultural norms and the workplace. We need not look too far to find gender inequality. We just have to look around us. It’s everywhere, in one form or another.

There can be no progress made in this area if societies across the world continue to foster gender inequality and

tolerate physical and emotional abuse of women and girls.

The most common form of violence that women experience all across the world is physical and emotional violence inflicted by an intimate partner. Yet there are other forms: rape, mutilation, degradation through dowry, prostitution, sexual slavery and infanticide of female fetuses. According to the United Nations, on average at least one in three women is beaten, sexually assaulted or otherwise abused by an intimate partner during her lifetime.

On average, every six days a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16. There are about 580 known cases of missing or murdered aboriginal women in Canada.

It is estimated that, worldwide, one in five women will become a victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime. Every minute of every day, a Canadian woman or child is being sexual assaulted. These statistics describe the enormity of human suffering that victims experience.

The cost of violence against women in Canada for health care, social services, criminal justice and lost wages and productivity has been estimated at \$4.2 billion per year.

We also must remember that, too often, silent victims of this form of violence are our children. Children who witness family violence often display elevated rates of depression, aggression, delinquency and other forms of emotional problems, and tend to have low school achievement and social skills.

Witnessing violence increases the chances that boys will grow up to act violently with their intimate partners. For girls, it increases the chances that they will accept violence in their dating or in their marital relationships.

1340

Victims too often stay silent or feel that they have to live in shame, that somehow they have done something wrong. They feel trapped and isolated. As a result, domestic violence too often ends in greater tragedy.

Violence against women and girls happens everywhere—at home, at the workplace, in the schools and on the street—during peacetime and in conflict. Not ending violence against women and girls is not an option. At the same time, ending violence against women and girls is not something that governments can do alone. Each and every one of us has a role to play. By working together, we can raise awareness in our communities, work towards better law enforcement, and encourage more emphasis on a coordinated community response. Every woman or girl deserves to live her life free of violence, and every child deserves to grow up knowing that there is no threat of violence in the home, in school, or on the streets.

While the United Nations theme to raise public awareness and to encourage political will for ending all forms of violence against women and girls is laudable, the violence will only end when many voices, including our

voices, say in unison, “A promise is a promise; let’s end violence against women and girls.”

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today on the motion by the member from Mississauga–Brampton South requesting that the members of the Legislature unite in their efforts to end violence against women and girls. You heard her speak very passionately about the issue and heard some very staggering examples and statistics that she brought forward.

As my party’s critic for women’s issues, I’ve spoken on this matter on a number of occasions. Violence against women is a serious and far-reaching issue and is not acceptable. No community in Ontario or the world is immune. We have all heard the frightening statistics of violence and sexual assaults against women and girls in Ontario and Canada, as well as the ones that were brought up by my colleague today.

What makes it even more disturbing is that, as bad as these figures are, nine out of 10 sexual assaults are never reported to the police. Consequently, the problem of violence against women is even worse in our society than the numbers would indicate, which I know upsets me and upsets all of us. There is this daunting problem that crosses all boundaries—cultural, racial, economic and social—and impacts females of any age. The motion that we are discussing this afternoon talks about the need to build awareness within our society of the destructive impact that such violence has, not only on the victims, but also their families and our whole society.

The law enforcement and judicial systems need to deal with this problem in a way that the victims aren’t made to feel guilty and ashamed. And, as I said in my comments last week marking women abuse prevention month and the great work that’s being done in organizations just in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and across Ontario, they do help victims of violence. They are critical and essential. But these initiatives, as important as they are, are, by their very nature, designed to treat the results of violence against women, not the root causes of the problem. Violence against women is not an issue that should be reserved to whispered conversations; there needs to be an honest, open and ongoing dialogue about the issue and a candid exchange of our ideas. Our ultimate goal must be to stop all forms of violence against women and girls before it even begins. There is no one solution, but education and understanding is a prerequisite to any serious attempt at addressing the problem.

Young men need to learn at an early age that displaying violence against women—and that can be verbal as well as physical—is not acceptable behaviour in a civilized society.

We all have a part to play. When we observe violence or abuse against women and girls, it’s not acceptable to turn a blind eye. The health and safety of the victims is far too important. We cannot keep silent. Domestic and sexual violence will not end until both men and women become part of the solution.

I am proud to say that there are many members of the PC Party who want to speak to this issue today. I will say that we are in full support of the motion brought forward today, and I thank the member for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I will always remember, back in my days in ministry, a Saturday morning when the church was extremely busy—there were yoga classes, there were youth groups meeting—and I was in my office when one of the women in our congregation, the wife of a very prominent business person who earned a good salary, came racing into the church and asked if I could hide her. I said, “What do you mean, ‘hide’ you?” She said, “My husband is after me, and I’m frightened of him. I’m frightened of what he will do.”

I put her in my office, and I closed the door. He came in, and he was in a rage. I gathered that he had been drinking. He went around the church banging on doors, looking for her. In that instance, I had a very good illustration of what her life looked like at home. At home were three small children; in fact, she had left them with a babysitter so that she could run out. Finally, we managed to move him out of the church. Clearly, even calling the police would have taken too long in that instance.

It’s the only real time that I felt true terror in my job in that church, despite the fact that we had a high-needs community. We had people who had crack addictions and mental health issues, but never had I felt true terror until that moment with that woman.

I asked her after we got him out, “Why do you stay? Why don’t you leave if this is what you’re living with?” She gave a very telling answer. She said, “I can’t afford to go. Where would I go? I would lose my children if I left, because I can’t afford to keep them. I can’t go to a shelter with my children.” I understood why she wouldn’t want to go to a shelter with her children. She said, “I’m there to protect them. That’s why I stay, and I’m there because I cannot afford to leave.” This was a woman of some means, presumably; imagine all the women out there who haven’t those means.

I want to talk about the backdrop to violence, because there’s active violence—those are the perpetrators of violence. We can all agree, I think, in this House, that they should be dealt with, and swiftly. But then there’s the backdrop that allows it to happen, and that is the issue of poverty, which is a women’s issue in the province of Ontario. Poverty is a women’s issue. It bears a woman’s face.

Yesterday, you heard my friend from Beaches–East York, who talked about the length of time a woman-headed family with three children would wait for affordable housing. That time is 24 years. That’s the waiting list: 24 years, in this province, for affordable housing. That’s something we can do something about. We can do something about the housing file. Instead of having the worst record in all of Canada in terms of per capita investment for housing, we could have the best. That’s something that we could do to help women.

Women make 72 cents on the dollar to men. We could do something about that equity issue. We could move on that. That would help women who experience violence.

We could, for example, help an organization called Victim Services, which is just down here on College Street. Luckily, they get free housing from our police—thank you, police, for giving them free office space. They are the only agency in all of Toronto that, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, goes out when there is a domestic violence call; actually goes out to the house and assists the victim. They do so with a huge army of volunteers and very few professional social workers. Why do they need such an army of volunteers? Because their funding has not gone up in 20 years. They’re funded by this government. In fact, their funding has fallen per capita in that time from over \$200 in the 1990s to \$31 per victim today. Again, this is something we could do. This is something the government could act on tomorrow if they had the will to help women who are active victims. That just takes money—that’s all it takes—and that’s something we could do.

1350

Yes, act of violence: Do something. I believe when one in three women are being assaulted at some point in their lives, this is a tragedy; this is a disaster. This requires input from all levels of government. Of course we’re going to support the motion the member has brought forward, but—and the “but” is a very large one—it’s not enough to just ask for awareness. Women who are being abused and beaten as we speak here in the comfort and safety of this Legislature need help now. That help has a dollar value attached to it and that help should be forthcoming.

On the brighter side—it’s such a horrible topic to have to speak about; we speak about it every year and we’re going to speak about it more, hopefully, if this motion passes—but on the side of who’s doing what about this, I do want to bring the members’ attention to tomorrow. This weekend, as we know, is Mother’s Day. Tomorrow, here, we are having a press conference featuring the leaders of a number of faith groups across Ontario who will all sign on to a document that says that they, as leaders in their faith groups, are committed to ending violence against women. That has a powerful symbolic value because many of us who are faith leaders know that within our scriptures there are problematic passages. We are more aware of that than anyone. So it’s important, it’s very important, that faith leaders stand up around this issue and speak out in support of women—and they are. For the first time, we have a Sikh member coming tomorrow. We have Buddhists, we have rabbis and we have leaders of many Christian faith groups who are coming. All will sign on to that.

That is a powerful statement. It’s a powerful action that says wherever you are, if you’re part of faith groups—and we know that women are large parts of faith groups. In fact, in most congregations, women take the lead in terms of keeping the congregation vibrant across the face. To have their leaders come and take time out to

focus on this just before Mother's Day is the best Mother's Day card I can think of that faith leaders can give to women in our congregations.

That, by the way, was an all-party effort. We all came together to make that happen under the umbrella called Ruth's Daughters of Canada. Every few years we do this here, and it's always very moving and very important. That's happening. I'll leave some minutes for my colleague as well.

But—but—we have to do due diligence in this Legislature. We have to fund groups like Victim Services so that they can do their work, my goodness. We have to do something about the housing crisis in this province—it's been going on for 10 years—because it affects women and children the most. We could have moved faster on the child tax benefit—25 in 5 has asked us to—because wherever children are, women are, and it helps them. There is so much more we need to do that we are able to do here. I certainly hope that before this government ends its term, we do get some action.

Again, to all of those women who are perhaps listening and to those families who are listening—because violence against women affects families, not just women—please know that there is help available. Please search for it. Please look for it. Please know that everyone here's heart is with you. Our prayers are with you. Our support is with you. You do not have to go through this alone.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. John Milloy: It's a pleasure for me to rise and speak for a minute or two on this private member's motion. I say only a minute or two because there's a great deal of interest in our caucus from various members who want to speak on it, and many of them want to come forward and share their thoughts.

I'll be very brief and begin by congratulating the member from Mississauga–Brampton South for bringing forward this very, very important issue, this motion which, obviously, I intend to support very, very strongly.

The issue of domestic violence, violence against women and children, is something I will confess, before I got elected, I was of course aware of, as we all are through media and other experiences that we've had in a general sense. But it wasn't until I had the privilege of being a member of provincial Parliament and got to see the outstanding agencies and the outstanding work that happens in my community that I realized the seriousness of the issue, the severity—unfortunately, I have to say “the severity”—of the issue. But I think also more importantly, these are not issues that are out there somewhere vaguely in another part of town or another part of the community; these are issues that cross socio-economic lines—as the member spoke so eloquently about, are not limited to one particular group or another. These are issues which, unfortunately, we are confronting as a society everywhere.

I want to pay tribute to the number of people, the number of organizations, that have come out to, first of all, raise awareness about this but, of course, more

importantly to make sure we are a safer society and one that deals with people in crisis situations. I come from Waterloo region, and we're very proud of an initiative that was put in place a number of years ago based on an experience in the United States. It's called the Family Violence Project of Waterloo Region. What it was, or its foundation—I speak of it in the past tense—is that a group of organizations came together so that they could create one access point for a woman, or women and children, that are in crisis so they could go to one location and receive support from the police and from counselling. If they needed help to go to a shelter situation, they would have all that support under one roof. What we've seen is a transformation in our community in Waterloo region where women are able to access the services in a very timely way.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to leave time for other members, but I want to pay tribute to the leadership of the Family Violence Project of Waterloo Region. I want to talk about all the different agencies that are involved with it and collaborate with it. I can think of Anselma House, which has a shelter in my community: a brand new shelter which is, I think, a source of pride for all of us, that we're there for troubled individuals. I want to pay a special tribute to the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region, which this very day is hosting a conference called Understanding Survivors of Human Trafficking, another aspect of this topic today, and I certainly want to give credit to them.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to wrap up by once again congratulating my colleague. This is a very, very important issue, and certainly I think all members should come together not only to support the motion but support the principle and spirit behind it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a distinct honour and pleasure to stand and support the motion from the member from Mississauga–Brampton South. I commend her for her efforts putting this bill forward.

I'm also proud to stand with the vast majority of men, Mr. Speaker, who respect and value the women in our lives, whether they be our mothers, our sisters, our daughters, our co-workers—any female who has had influence in our lives, and I know I've had many.

To think that anyone could even dream of abusing anyone, especially some of the recent events we've seen in the States that are just appalling—it really brings this to light, that it is an issue that we need to address. I've had the pleasure and sometimes the displeasure of acting as a mediator for family mediation, and I've been up close and personal with domestic abuse and have been trained to spot it. It is out there and it is particularly heinous. It really needs the attention that it deserves.

I want to take an opportunity to shout out to Lynda Muir, who leads the Women and Children's Shelter of Barrie. She does a fantastic job, and, not only that, contributes to the community in so many other ways as well.

I can't stress how much I believe that there's absolutely no excuse; there's no religion, there's no culture that

can even remotely come close to excusing abuse of women or girls. There is absolutely no lower form of life, in my opinion, than someone who abuses a girl or woman, especially when they have a position of influence over them.

Anything we can do in this House to eradicate it and make it go away forever is commendable. Unfortunately, it's going to take a lot more than a motion to do it; it's going to take the will of the people in our communities, the will of all our organizations, whether they be churches or women and children's shelters, to work together to make sure that we eradicate any sort of violence against women and children and girls.

I fully support the motion; I'm happy to stand here and support it. I think it needs to start here. We're leaders in our communities, and we need to make sure we address this in a way that makes it explicitly obvious that this is something that we will not stand for, and we'll do everything in our power as an assembly, after we pass this motion, to eradicate it.

1400

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm very pleased to stand and have the opportunity to contribute to this very important debate and to speak on this motion, which states, just for the people at home, "Be it resolved that every member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario unite to end violence against women and girls in all forms, by building awareness, better law enforcement and by encouraging more emphasis on coordinated community response."

I'd like to start off by saying that we need to do more than what this motion proposes. As a government and as a society, we need to stand up to all forms of violent behaviour and invest in strategies aimed at eliminating the root causes, not just actions that are designed to help when the pain has already been inflicted.

Today's private member's motion, however, fails to recognize or even address the ways that the system is letting women and families down. I'm probably going to be the negative ninny in the debate; I'm just throwing that out there. This is something that's very, very important to me and personal to me. I have been in receipt of these services that we're talking about, of women's shelters. My stepmother has dedicated her entire life to helping women in their time of need by running a women's shelter, and I know that we can and we need to do more.

The issue of the safety of women—of all members of society, particularly vulnerable sectors—is of paramount importance. I'm going to say it again, I'm going to be negative, but this government cannot hide behind a private member's motion. It needs to prioritize this issue and put it at the forefront. I know that there are people on the opposite side who think that this is an important issue, but we really need to do something about it.

Globally, one in three women will be the victim of sexual assault, and while conditions have improved, many women continue to experience discrimination,

barriers to employment, lack of affordable housing and child care, and lower wages than their male counterparts. These are all things that need to change.

The government needs to act now to implement the Step It Up! Campaign's 10 steps to end violence against women. It includes things like creating and maintaining more affordable housing and non-profit child care, providing fair access to justice for women, and providing secure funding for women's organizations. With all the accolades that have been mentioned, I think it's a reflection of the fact that these women's shelters, and these outstanding women and men who are helping, are doing it in spite of the lack of supports.

A very telling example of our failure to provide supports came during the recent pre-budget consultation meetings in Thunder Bay. Of just over 20 submissions, we had submissions from Red Lake's New Starts for Women shelter, Dryden's Hoshizaki House and second-stage housing shelter, and Faye Peterson Transition House shelter in Thunder Bay, all of whom were asking the province to provide them with very basic supports to help them provide services for abused and battered women and their families.

It has been more than a decade since any shelter in the northwest has received building funds. Many of these shelters, such as Hoshizaki House in Dryden, are literally crumbling to the ground, trying to exist in a building that's more than 100 years old. We lack basic supports such as affordable housing for women who have escaped violent relationships. In short, we're failing people who need the support the most.

I will support today's motion, but there's so much more that we need to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Grant Crack: I rise today not only to support my colleague from Mississauga–Brampton South, but to speak to and to support all the women in my personal life, my work environment, my riding, my province, my country and all over the world.

I take this opportunity to support the official United Nations International Women's Day 2013 theme: "A promise is a promise: Time for Action to End Violence Against Women." We stand to unite to end violence against women and girls today, knowing that we need to do this not just today, but every single day of every year.

In my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, we have groups of strong women that come together to help others who aren't so lucky, who aren't surrounded by a support system to help them get out of a potentially dangerous situation or to help them rebuild their lives.

J'ai eu le privilège de visiter à plusieurs reprises le Centre Novas, situé à Casselman. J'ai pu discuter avec la gérante, Anne Jutras, qui est très impliquée, ainsi que ses employées et son conseil d'administration, toutes des femmes bénévoles qui se tiennent au courant des réalités auxquelles font face beaucoup trop de femmes et filles locales. Elles font présentement la campagne « One Billion Rising ». Prescott-Russell dit non à la violence faite aux femmes.

Prevention and security are key elements to focus on when we try to better women's lives. We need to provide them with the tools to be able to heal, to create change and to move forward with the rebuilding of their lives. We also need to look at where the violence against women stems from and who is creating this violent and threatening environment for them.

We can no longer be silent when it comes to violence against women. We need to talk about it; we need to get involved. When one woman suffers, kids suffer, families suffer and communities suffer. Silence is not the answer. We need to come out of the silence to defend women, talk about who is violating them and talk about why men hurt women. Let's talk about what we can do to motivate them to stop controlling, stop demeaning, stop hurting, stop violating and even, in the extreme, taking a life. Everyone collectively needs to become an active partner in awareness, not only by telling women how to protect themselves, but by preventing violence against women in the first place.

We can no longer tolerate demeaning language, demeaning jokes. We can no longer tolerate actions that victimize and hurt a woman. I ask all Ontarians today to be positive role models. Let's start walking the talk. Please stand with us and help us put an end to violence toward women. It's in everyone's best interest.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I rise this afternoon to speak to the motion brought forward by the member from Mississauga–Brampton South. This motion proposes that members of this House unite to end violence against women and girls in all forms, and that we do so through better education and awareness, more effective and compassionate law enforcement, stronger community supports for those women who have suffered violence or abuse, and a coordinated community response.

I think that the last element is perhaps the most important. This is a struggle that requires all of us to be mindful of the world in which we live, and asks us to take action, whenever appropriate, to make a real difference in our communities and beyond. It is a struggle that will require sustained attention and determination.

Sadly, not a week goes by without us being reminded in some fresh and terrible way of the impact that violence has on the lives of millions of women across all social, economic and educational classes, and around the world. The fact that violence against women persists to such an outrageous degree is a discredit to civilization and, as I say, a significant social and cultural problem that poses a very serious threat to women and girls throughout the world.

From domestic abuse and rape, to human trafficking and female circumcision, violence crosses cultural and religious barriers, hindering the right of women to participate fully in society. And sadly, Ontario is not immune.

While there are some who have lived lives untouched by violence against women, the statistics suggest many

whose lives have been altered, or may yet be altered, by this ongoing problem. Every second, a woman somewhere in Canada experiences some form of sexual violence. Nearly a third of Ontario women 18 years or older will experience some form of criminal violence. And with lifespans increasing, we're seeing abuse and assault carrying on well into old age.

These challenges won't be overcome overnight, but they can be overcome. This is a first step.

I want to commend the great work that Halton Women's Place does in Burlington.

It is important that victims of violence and those in the community who are committed to supporting victims know that their Legislature stands behind them. I'm happy to step up, and I look forward to the ongoing debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm just delighted to rise in support of the motion brought by my colleague and seatmate, the member for Mississauga–Brampton South. This is an incredibly important topic and, as has been said already, no community is immune.

The piece of this resolution that particularly appeals to me is the emphasis on a coordinated community response. This is exactly the approach that's being attempted in York region. In fact, in 2009 the York Region Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee was founded, including so many of the agencies that are involved in this whole issue of violence against women. They have estimated that in York region, a minimum of 7% are affected by violent abuse every year.

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I'd like to highlight just a couple of initiatives that this coordinating committee has been involved in. First of all, the Women's Centre of York Region has helped in the last year, in 2012, some 88 women who are victims of domestic abuse become self-employed. They've helped these women launch viable and sustainable businesses. They've been provided with the tools to regain confidence and build a more successful future for themselves and their families.

Another group—and they were here in the Legislature just recently. The Yellow Brick House has served some 5,500 abused women and children in York region through its shelter and outreach services just in 2012, and they've taken a very dynamic and proactive community approach to end violence against women. In 2012, through its Schools for Change program, Yellow Brick House targeted 250 students from grades 1 to 8. The program promotes the development of healthy relationships by providing students with the skills they need to have before they begin dating. Through games, group activities, videos and discussions, students learn to challenge gender-role stereotypes, communicate effectively and respectfully, and handle strong emotions in a positive and helpful way. In fact, the Yellow Brick House has been so successful that just last month they were awarded one of the Attorney General's Victim Services Awards.

This program with the students is one that should prove very important in the future. It has been piloted; it has been a great success, and we hope that with its preventive approach, women in York region will remain much safer than they are to date.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I first want to stand and respect the member from Mississauga–Brampton South for her passion and her intuition or understanding of the issues you described. I listened to your remarks closely, and it is quite tragic. I'm a father of three daughters and two sons. My daughters—I often think of how I should be kinder to people myself. I always think of them because of the inappropriate—sometimes, when you're talking with a colleague or something, you may use more forceful language than when you're talking to someone else who isn't comfortable with that type of language. I would like to thank her for bringing this discussion forward.

I think it's right. I've heard my colleagues speak about it. The most important part is the education, the understanding, whether it's cultural, whether it's Canadian or anywhere. Violence in any form is completely unacceptable, and that is, I believe, where society is today. Certainly, I would respect that direction and that expected outcome, and I believe all colleagues here are supportive of the motion that you have brought forward.

What draws me to this more specifically is that just after I was elected, where my constituency office was, there was a young woman who was stabbed and killed just outside our office—just tragic. She was a bank teller at I think it was the National Bank at the time, and it was her estranged boyfriend who was really stalking her. Again, this is why I draw it to my daughters as well—they were about the same age at the time. That young woman's name was Jennifer Copithorn.

There was an inquest held from it, and it extended to many of the sentiments you'd expect here. How could she free herself of being pursued, threatened and intimidated—manipulated, really, about how to just neutralize the thing. When I looked through it, I talked to, at that time, the Attorney General for Ontario, who was Jim Flaherty. We tried to move a change of how to get a restraining order. This is very important, because at that very time, there was a very famous case; it's the Lori Dupont tragedy, where her estranged husband, a doctor, killed her right in the hospital itself. There was an inquest into that as well, and there were outcomes. What was missing: There was a bottleneck of how long it took to get a restraining order, because they had to get a judge. Maybe on the weekend they're not available. I'm not being critical of the judiciary system here. I want that understood.

I initiated a bill, and I called it the Lori Dupont Act. What it was is it allowed a member of the judiciary, be it a judge or a justice of the peace, to be available for issuing a restraining order 24/7—a reasonable regulatory change. Somehow or another, this provision has never been implemented. It may be symbolic, but it is symbolic

at this time, and I think your colleagues, whether it's the Attorney General or other members of cabinet who I see here are listening, need to make sure that's available to access.

Is that going to solve the problem of some of these stalkers and manipulators? No. When I look at the outcome in Cleveland for those three women who were, at the time, I believe they were—I just was reading the article—14 years of age or something like that, whose lives and the lives of their loved ones have been completely altered and shattered by this position of power or lack of understanding or respect for others.

On that, I commend you for bringing this forward. It's important that we all share some outcomes from this discussion today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member for Mississauga–Brampton South for bringing this important motion forward today.

As I sat in the chamber today, I spent some time thinking about the very first volunteer role that I ever played: working on yardwork outside of a women's shelter. At the time, I thought very much about the fact that I didn't really know the lives of the women and the children that were inside that building, and that if we could only know and understand, more would be mobilized. I guess that is why I'm so proud that the member from Mississauga–Brampton South has brought this conversation to the floor of the Legislature, because we do need to talk about it.

One of my favourite quotes is from Michelle Bachelet. She's the former executive director of UN Women, and she says it so clearly and concisely: "There is nothing excusable about violence against women and girls anywhere, at any time. Nothing." It is clear and concise. It makes us understand the steps that we all have to take.

I want to just remind those in this Legislature of the steps we have taken as a government. We have put forward a Domestic Violence Action Plan and a Sexual Violence Action Plan. Bill 13 has brought in initiatives into our schools to make sure that they are safe and accepting. We now have a gender studies course starting this September.

Many initiatives that have been undertaken, such as investments in terms of a 49% increase in the funding to domestic violence, the addition of new shelter beds, micro-lending programs for women, the training of front-line workers, new initiatives in the court and justice system—all those things remind us that this is a complex issue, and there is always more to do.

If we start by taking that personal responsibility—each and every one of us in our lives, in our communities, in our families—to recognize that we need to talk about this, we need to pull those curtains open on the lives of women and children in a shelter and say that we can all be part of that solution and find the solution. I think we will be better off for it.

I'm proud that our government has been acknowledged as a leader in Canada when it comes to the issue

of domestic violence. We've been acknowledged in that regard by the British Columbia government in the BC report, when they examined issues in their province.

But all that to say: There is more to do. Part of doing more of that work is talking to our children, talking to our friends and neighbours, being open to the realities of women's and children's lives. When we do that, Speaker, we will all be very proud of the positive impact we will have on the lives of women and children in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Mississauga-Brampton South, you have two minutes for a response.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to thank the members from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Parkdale-High Park; the government House leader; the members from Barrie, Kenora-Rainy River, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Burlington, Oak Ridges-Markham, Durham; and the minister responsible for women's issues for participating in this debate about this important issue.

We have all read or heard the shocking news about what happened to the three innocent women in Cleveland: forcible detention, rape and torture for over a decade. Violence against women is not something new; it has deep-seated roots. It's an evil which must end. It cannot end without vigorous action at all levels of government and a coordinated community response all over the world.

I would also like to acknowledge the work done by Catholic Family Services of Peel and Dufferin in my region. They are doing outstanding work. They deal with violence against women all the time on an everyday basis.

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In my response to the members from Kenora-Rainy River and Parkdale-High Park, I think this side of the government has done a lot of work. We have brought the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and we have introduced the Ontario Child Benefit. This side of the benches and the government have brought affordable long-term housing. Yes, there is more to do. There is always room for improvement. Let's work together to end this heinous crime.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will take the vote at the end of private members' public business.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES PRIS EN CHARGE

Ms. Wong moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act to proclaim Children and Youth in Care Day / Projet de loi 53, Loi proclamant le Jour des enfants et des jeunes pris en charge.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Soo Wong: I would like to begin my remarks this afternoon by acknowledging four individuals who have contributed to the creation of Bill 53. First, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Irwin Elman, has worked tirelessly since the inception of the provincial advocate position. Mr. Elman has been a true champion of children and youth in this province. He has earned the trust and respect of children and youth across Ontario. Second, Deb Deller, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, supported and welcomed the youth who attended the 2011 Youth Leaving Care hearings at Queen's Park. Third, I want to recognize the current Minister of Children and Youth Services for her leadership in initiating Bill 90 last year and now Bill 53. Finally, I also want to acknowledge the former Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Honourable Eric Hoskins, for his leadership in implementing some of the recommendations from the My Real Life Book report.

It is widely known that children and youth in and from care felt that they weren't listened to. Yet through their courage and determination, these same youth ensured that their issues and voices were heard at the Ontario Legislature at the 2011 Youth Leaving Care hearings.

As I present Bill 53 to the Legislature, I would like to provide some historical context of the children and youth living under the care of the crown and the children's aid societies of Ontario. On November 18 and 25, 2011, the Legislature held the Youth Leaving Care hearings and listened to the stories, songs, poetry and even dances of the children and youth who were currently or were previously under care. These amazing and courageous young people spoke from their hearts and shared many difficult stories that often brought tears to the eyes of the audience, special guests, youth panellists and government officials. There were over 300 people who attended the hearing on the first day, and over 500 people attended on the second day. I can still remember vividly some of the stories that were shared with me during the first day of hearings.

The hearings were the first of their kind in Canada, as young people in and from care held the first public hearings here in Queen's Park. I was very pleased to see that the hearings team provided a variety of youth-friendly support and encouraged young people to participate in these hearings. The submissions came in audio, video, art, songs, dance and even poetry. A total of 183 submissions were sent in from across Ontario.

The youth hearings team reviewed and organized their report, titled My Real Life Book, under six themes: "We are vulnerable," "We are isolated," "We are left out of our lives," "No one is really there for us," "Care is unpredictable," "Care ends and we struggle." I read this report and found it quite challenging to read at times, as the stories and artwork came from the hearts of young people in this province. I want to acknowledge the youth hearings team and all the witnesses for their bravery and

their perseverance in preparing the report, which was tabled in the Legislature by the former Minister of Children and Youth Services on May 14, 2012.

I was very pleased to see Minister Hoskins take immediate action on the number one recommendation in the My Real Life Book report by creating a working group comprised of youth with experience living in care, along with partners from across Ontario, with the direction of determining how best to ensure a stronger voice for youth themselves as we move forward with improvements to the child welfare system.

I understand that in their response to this submission, this government formed a 15-person working group. The working group included eight youth members and one alternate to provide expertise from a range of lived experiences in the care of the Ontario child welfare system, and seven members with strong knowledge on the needs of children and youth, from youth service organizations. The working group successfully developed a blueprint to help put recommendations from the Youth Leaving Care hearings into action.

One important recommendation that came out of the My Real Life Book report was to declare Children and Youth in Care Day in the province of Ontario, which is what Bill 53 does. By declaring May 14 of each year as Children and Youth in Care Day in the province of Ontario, we move one step further in helping to raise awareness, reducing the stigma and recognizing children and youth in care. Having a dedicated Children and Youth in Care Day would also keep the issues affecting the lives of children and youth in care in the public spotlight, and provide regular updates on the Action Plan for Fundamental Change.

The creation of Children and Youth in Care Day is widely supported across Ontario. The provincial advocate, Irwin Elman, stated: "The hearings demonstrated just how invisible children in care are to many in the province. A day each year on the anniversary of the release of the groundbreaking My Real Life Book report will allow all Ontarians to celebrate the children who we have made a commitment to through our child welfare agencies, and take stock of how we're doing in parenting them. Passage of this private member's bill is a significant statement of respect and support on the part of the Legislature to children in care."

Kenn Richard, executive director of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, stated that Bill 53 "stands as a reminder of our collective responsibility in the provision of quality care to children—children to whom we are not just legally but morally obligated to recognize as having a special relationship to the people of this province. Passing this bill can serve not only as a testament of our obligations under the law but as a continued reminder of the sacredness of such obligations."

Bill Bevan, the CEO of Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society, said with Bill 53 we will "see a day specifically dedicated to youth in care and look forward to seeing that the Action Plan for Fundamental Change is a government priority and that this plan reflects what youth are saying they need to not only survive but thrive."

David Rivard, the CEO of Children's Aid Society of Toronto, stated that "the passing of the bill would formally establish a day that recognizes the children and youth in care in Ontario's 47 children's aid societies is one that CAS Toronto strongly supports. We see regularly how the challenges and stigma of being in care can affect children and youth. Having a dedicated day for us to be able to not only raise awareness of the needs of these children but also to highlight the collective responsibility we all have to ensuring their successful futures would be an important milestone."

Mr. Speaker, all members of this Legislature owe our utmost respect and support to the children and youth under our care. It is important to us all that each of these youth reaches their full potential. We all know that youth in care are often disadvantaged, and most vulnerable. We need to work to ensure that they are successful in their transition into adulthood, in terms of student success and employment, and that they receive timely emotional support.

I'm very proud of the actions taken to date by our government to address and support children and youth in care. Let me share with this House some of the initiatives that we have undertaken.

We now allow 16- or 17-year-olds who have left care to return to a CAS and be eligible for financial and other support until the age of 21. Children's aid societies continue to provide support to youth, both emotionally and financially, from ages 18 to 21 through the Extended Care and Maintenance program.

Our government provides a range of support to encourage more youth in and leaving care to pursue post-secondary studies or vocational training, including grants for tuition, reimbursements for application fees; champion teams that provide direct supports to current or former crown wards; and OSAP exemptions for Extended Care and Maintenance. Through the Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent, we have increased their access to educational, social, cultural and recreational opportunities and savings when they leave care. Our government has introduced RESPs for children and youth in care to support planning to pursue post-secondary education and training. We have also increased adoptions and have helped more young people find permanent homes. The legislative and policy changes made in recent years have resulted in fewer children and youth coming into care; more of them are now placed in permanent homes. Today, there are currently over 17,000 in care; 7,500 of them are crown wards.

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Although our government has made major improvements, there is still more to be done, Mr. Speaker. I hope that by proclaiming May 14 of each year as Children and Youth in Care Day, we will continue to raise awareness and keep the issues that affect the lives of children and youth in care in the public spotlight. This is what Bill 53 is designed to do. I'm very pleased to reintroduce Bill 53, formerly Bill 90, into the Legislature. As a registered nurse and a former public school trustee, I had the

pleasure of meeting and working with many at-risk children and youth. These young people truly show us their strength, courage and resilience.

The My Real Life Book report captures the lived experiences, memories, achievements, challenges and hopes of our young people for the future. As legislators, we have a responsibility and obligation to ensure that we not only just listen but also act on the recommendations made by the young people who participated in the Youth Leaving Care hearings.

As I conclude my remarks, I want to share a quote from Justine, aged 25, former youth in care. She said, "We are, after all, your children, Ontario." Every member of this House is a parent to over 17,000 children in care. As parents, let us collectively transform our once-vulnerable, isolated, left out, uncared-for and struggling young people into strong, vibrant, successful and contributing young leaders in our communities.

I want to thank all my colleagues in advance who will be speaking about Bill 53, and I look forward to their support and the passage of Bill 53, important legislation on Ontario children and youth. Remember: May 14 is next week. We should do the right thing, and the right thing is passing the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'd like to welcome James McGuirk, who is a children and youth advocate at the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and the youth here today. I'll be sharing my time today with the members for Durham, Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry and Barrie, Speaker.

Thank you to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt for bringing this legislation back again. First introduced a year ago as Bill 90, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act names May 14 of each year in recognition of the experience and contributions of Ontario's roughly 8,000 children and youth in care.

This legislation was inspired by the Youth Leaving Care hearings, when youth in care or who were leaving care voiced their concerns about the province's child welfare system to the policy-makers. The significance of May 14 is that it was on May 14 of last year that the Youth Leaving Care Hearings Team delivered its report to the previous Minister of Children and Youth Services. That report inspired this legislation; it was a recommendation of the youth hearings team.

Drawn from first-hand, front-line experience, the report doesn't paint a very rosy picture of the state of children and youth in Ontario today, Speaker. Immediately apparent are the barriers in a system that can be impersonal and at some times dehumanizing. These young people move around so often they are unable to undergo the emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual growth that most of our young people take for granted. These young people are inspiring and possess exceptional strength and ambition, which is even more remarkable when you consider how much the odds are stacked against them.

We need to ensure that we have policies in place that give children and youth in care the tools to succeed. Among other things, participants of the Youth Leaving Care hearings told us that they felt invisible, isolated and anonymous. Creating Children and Youth in Care Day would give us all a chance to address those criticisms and have discussions that can change the lives of some of the most vulnerable Ontarians. It says to youth in care that we recognize their challenges and celebrate their achievements.

If there is a criticism of the bill, it's that this is essentially an awareness day. It's not a solution so much as it is an opportunity to wrestle with the bigger issues and trigger conversations, and it's important that this government walks the talk.

Here's one example. We've seen children's aid societies in the news in recent weeks and there has been a lot of concern about the government's apparent lack of engagement with agencies who are being asked to adopt to a new funding formula. The agencies are being left out in the cold, and the young people they serve can't help but be impacted by that.

In this Legislature, the current minister and her predecessor have both acknowledged the government's obligation to manage change without compromising quality or care, and on that, I think we all agree. Systemic change, however necessary it is, should not negatively impact the core mission of protecting children and youth.

As PC critic for children and youth, I would call on this government to honour children and youth in care, not just by decreeing a spring day in their name but by devoting ourselves every day to making their lives better and their futures brighter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will also be sharing my time today, with the member from Kenora-Rainy River.

I am also pleased to be standing in the House today in support of Bill 53, a bill to enact Children and Youth in Care Day on May 14 of each year. This bill comes from a recommendation made from the Youth Leaving Care hearings, and we have some of our youth here with us today. I am so proud of the work they do, and congratulations to all of them.

This is another piece of legislation that we could have been celebrating this month, and actually, next week. Unfortunately, the Liberal government prorogued this House and now leaves us beginning this process here today. This was the point where I was going to welcome and congratulate our youth, as well as our provincial advocate, Irwin Elman, and his team for all of the great work they do to make sure that they're bringing forward recommendations to ensure that we are strengthening our system for youth in care.

The Youth Leaving Care hearings were held here at Queen's Park in November 2011. From those hearings came a report, My Real Life Book, and from their recommendation came a working group—the Blueprint

for Fundamental Change to Ontario's Child Welfare System. They are both amazing, well-put-together reports, both filled with changes that are needed within our system to ensure that we, as responsible legislators who are elected by our communities, get it right.

These reports are filled with recommendations, one being to declare Children and Youth in Care Day, as we are speaking of today, but this is just low-hanging fruit. Let's look at the top priority recommendations that came from the final report of the Youth Leaving Care Working Group's blueprint for change.

It is essential and urgent that:

- every child and every youth in and from care has permanent lifelong relationships that meet their personal and cultural needs;
- children and youth have stable homes;
- children's aid societies work to find permanency for every child or youth through return to the family home, kinship placements, formal customary care, adoption or legal custody;
- children's aid societies provide the supports that parents and other caregivers need to keep children and youth in their homes;
- children's aid societies' boards of directors make permanency a key goal of their organization;
- children in youth and care grow up with many opportunities to develop permanent, supportive relationships with caregivers, staff, community members and extended family.

So, if we look at these top recommendations, let's take the opportunity of Children and Youth in Care Day, even before it is passed, to question how close we are to meeting these recommendations.

When it comes to these issues of high priority, and we see the current crisis in CAS funding, it's going to prevent us from actually making these a reality.

This morning, I met yet again with representatives of the children's aid society. They told me, as I and this government have been told before, that the cuts that are coming will make it impossible for them to fulfill this mandate, and while this government has basically said that these cuts are not their problem, the fact of the matter is that children and youth in care are vulnerable, and the vulnerable coming into care are the ones who are going to be hurt.

1440

Let me tell the House about a few cuts that are known, just in Hamilton.

—A family management program to deal with older children: Currently, there are 90 families who are being serviced by this, with 47 on the wait-list. This program will no longer exist. This is a program to keep families together.

—A parent support program for young children: Currently, 110 families are receiving services, with 30 on the wait-list. This is going to be cut to the bare bones.

—Get Connected, a program that helps St. Martin's Manor—they deal with young mothers and babies—will continue to exist with significantly reduced resources.

—Reduction and elimination of health and dental services, which includes our Healthy Babies program.

So many other good things are also going to be cut down to nothing. Services are going to be completely cut out.

These are only a few of the cuts to our front-line services that will affect our youth in care. These are the services that are meant to keep our families together and our youth at home with their families.

Every day, MPPs have a responsibility to take into account how well we are treating our children and youth in care. This crisis is going to affect our children in communities right across our province. Let's take today as an opportunity to commit to addressing this crisis before children lose permanency, access to medical services and many other services that are on the chopping block today.

As I said, today we take that step forward on the recommendations of this report. I will support recognizing May 14 as Children and Youth in Care Day—and help Ontarians recognize and appreciate children and youth in care.

It will help raise awareness and help keep the bigger issues in the spotlight. On May 14 each year, we will be reminded of the report and the recommendations within it, but we have a lot of work ahead of us. It is our duty to meet these expectations, desires and, more importantly, the needs of our children and youth in care.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's a real delight to be up and speaking to this. Prior to my current appointment, it was a real honour and privilege to serve as the parliamentary assistant for children and youth services to the former Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Honourable Eric Hoskins. I thoroughly enjoyed working on that file and continue to follow it with great interest.

There are over 17,000 children and youth in care in Ontario, of whom 7,500 are crown wards. In November 2011, as referenced by other speakers, many of these youth came down to Queen's Park and held the Youth Leaving Care hearings. There were many heartfelt stories told at those hearings. We heard honest stories and learned about the challenges facing youth who are in care and the ones who leave care.

One of the most important issues raised at these hearings was the need to tackle some of the stigma related to growing up in care. As a government, we should be helping to raise awareness and, indeed, support our youth in care. I know that in my own riding of Pickering–Scarborough East, I have enjoyed meeting with both the Durham and Scarborough children's aid societies to talk about the challenges, issues and opportunities faced by those organizations. I must say too that I'm very impressed with the dedication of all the employees in those children's aid societies who are dedicated to the very important work they do.

In proclaiming May 14 as Children and Youth in Care Day, we will be taking an important step. It will also help

recognize the importance of front-line youth workers who make a difference in the lives of some of Ontario's most vulnerable youth each day. I want to thank and congratulate my colleague the member from Scarborough-Agincourt for taking this initiative and bringing forward the bill, and I look forward to its quick passage in the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's an honour and a privilege, because very infrequently do I get the chance to participate in debates. But I made it a point, because as a parent as well as a constituent-type person—I think that being a parent of five children qualifies me in some respects as having youth in care. I'm not trivializing this. Every child is special.

Now, what is a determinant of outcomes, to a very large extent, is environmental. There are studies that would conclude that the richer your environment, the more opportunities will be available to you. If you take a young person specifically who hasn't had the opportunity, for a lot of reasons, often that affects their culturalization or their formation as a person, their reference points. They may be gifted children in art, music, theatre or whatever—the entertainment part of the community as well; that never get discovered. I quite honestly see in my own riding where—I'm going to bring one case, because I have very limited time. I have to share it fairly with people, unless, of course, I could have unanimous consent for more time.

What I've got in my riding—I'll give you one example. I'm going to mention it. New Heights is a youth detention centre. They receive children in care from CAS. Right now, the strategy by the province is to integrate these into communities. In fairness, it's a two-way street. In this case, they integrated it into a community that has already got some issues. The neighbours find out that they've got youth in care there, young people who are hard to treat and hard to service, coming from Toronto, primarily, and they're acting out to gain control.

Now the neighbours are freaking out. They've never been told that this is a group home. I think that's completely unacceptable. It's hard on the children as well, the young people who are being treated like they're a blight on the community. They could be the kids next door who have issues. Do you understand? But because it's a group home, nobody knows and all of a sudden there's this stuff going on there, the cars coming and going and the police, so it's very, very bad.

I did speak with a staff sergeant a couple of times. I spoke with the neighbours, one of the local councillors in the community. At the end of it, it comes down to educating the people first. I think the municipality has a role so that they're not dropping and parachuting these children into a situation that's going to make it worse for them.

I have others that are involved in violent things in another group home in the north part of my riding, which

I won't mention. They're ones that present a risk to the community. But these are all negative connotations for the youth itself, and this bill is trying to bring some respect to that by celebrating a day. The conversation needs to start with educating the people. These should not be treated as if they're not citizens like the rest of us because they're serving some kind of a court decision, I guess. Youth are going to grow up and we should treat them kindly, but the situations often, as I've described, in my experience, are bad for them from the very start.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to stand and speak to Bill 53, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act. If passed, this bill would proclaim May 14 of each year as Children and Youth in Care Day. It is hoped that by proclaiming this day, we will be provided with an opportunity to recognize the contributions current and former crown and society wards make to the province, while raising awareness of the supports and programs we need to provide to ensure that these individuals can reach their full potential.

The idea for this day stems from a report made by the Youth Leaving Care Hearings Team, and I am pleased to lend my support to this initiative, because we need to do everything that we can to ensure children in care receive the same opportunities for success that other children in our province receive.

The need for support is evident in the statistics. Just 44% of youth in care graduate high school, compared to 81% for the general population. That's almost a success rate of half. Forty-three per cent of homeless youth have had some interaction with the child welfare system, and many go through life feeling as though they're commodities, being shifted from house to house, feeling unwanted, unloved, and desperately seeking something that feels like a normal relationship with a caring family. Even when paired with caring and loving families, these children still face challenges that others simply do not.

Presently in Ontario, there are almost 17,000 children in the care of the children's aid societies. Of those, 8,300 are crown wards or children who are in foster care who do not and likely will not have access to their natural family.

1450

As the NDP critic for aboriginal affairs, I would like to take a moment to focus on a particularly disturbing trend that is especially important in the north, and that is with First Nations children within the child welfare system. Some 17% of the children involved in the child welfare system are aboriginal, despite making up only 3% of the general population. Many of these children are pulled out of their home communities, taken away from their culture, their heritage, and they feel a particularly strong sense of displacement. Despite many expressing concerns about the damage that pulling these children out of their home communities causes, it continues to happen. Sadly, it's not unlike the now-condemned residential

school system, where children were taken away from their close-knit communities and forced to adapt to a completely different culture, different language and different lifestyle.

Many of you may not be aware, but First Nations communities are very close-knit. When they lose a community member, the entire community mourns and feels that loss. And in many respects, when a child is taken out of a First Nations home, the entire community feels that loss. There are many who are saying that we need to take real and meaningful steps to find ways to ensure that these children can stay in their home communities.

The situation isn't getting any better with prescription drug abuse reaching epidemic levels in many communities across the north. One of the greatest contributions we can make to the quality of life of children in care and children at risk of being in care is to battle the social injustices that are happening in these communities. We can improve the situation in these communities and prevent future generations from turning to drugs and alcohol to cope with despair by investing in basic community needs such as schools, libraries, recreation facilities and housing, and by helping to promote and protect First Nations language and culture.

Many of the parents who have had their children taken away were exposed to drugs and alcohol as a way of coping with the desperation, boredom, desolation and hopelessness that all exist within communities that aren't provided with the basic necessities exist, and even more have turned to these outlets to cope with the demons of a residential school system that left them permanently scarred and without the family experience that is needed to raise families of their own.

What I'm saying is that if we don't take meaningful steps to support children in care, the cycle will keep repeating itself. Today's bill is one of a number of steps that need to be taken to support our youth, and I'm hopeful that other actions and initiatives will be forthcoming to ensure that nobody is a victim of circumstance, that all children are given equal opportunities and that we close the gaps that exist between children in care and the general population. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise today in support of Bill 53, brought forward by the member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

I think it's a bill that we should all get behind, because it's going to do something that I think we really need to do. That is, today, if you ask most Ontarians if they were aware that we had youth in care and about some of the problems that they were undergoing on a daily basis, I think the vast majority of Ontarians would say, "I know very little about that." What this bill proposes to do is to remind them that there are some young people who are struggling in our society to form a life for themselves, and it's about time that we paid a little bit more attention to them.

I spent 12 years of my life on the board of directors of the Halton Children's Aid Society—three of those years

were as president—and I had the good fortune to serve on the board of directors under three governments: under the NDP, under the Liberals and the Conservatives. Let me tell you, Speaker: No one is going to heaven based on what they've done for crown wards in the province of Ontario to date. We can do much better than that, and I think it's an issue we can all get behind together on.

I'd like to thank Irwin Elman for the work that he has done on behalf of young people in this province to make sure that politicians and people in general understand that there are some things we can do better.

When I was serving on the board, post-secondary education for a crown ward was just a pipe dream. It simply was not going to happen. I think it was during the NDP government that things got so bad that we ended up forming the Halton children's aid foundation in order to provide those extras: scholarships, bursaries, things that enabled young people to form a life for themselves.

Today, I think we've come a long way. We still have a ways to go. The Halton children's aid foundation is flourishing. It's providing bursaries and scholarships. The government is providing OSAP exemptions and tuition grants. It seems to me that this is an issue whose time has come. The member is asking us to pass a bill that will take effect on May 14, which is only a few days away. I suggest that we all support this bill and we pass it today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm proud to rise to speak to Bill 53 and to recognize the contribution and the struggle of current and former crown wards and the wards of children's aid societies and to help raise awareness for the importance of providing support and helping them reach their full potential.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of getting to know a number of these deserving children in my community of South Glengarry. Danny, a friend of my son Bernie, was a ward of the local children's aid society. Throughout his years at Iona Academy elementary school and Char-Lan District High School, I had the opportunity to coach Danny in soccer and get to know him. He was a great athlete, sportsman, a great student and someone who you were very happy to bring into your son's life. He has gone on to complete post-secondary school and is now contributing to society.

I know it was not easy for Danny, but with the help of his foster parents he was able to enjoy some of the joys of childhood that we believe should be available to all people growing up in Ontario. An awareness day is just a start.

I would like to commend the people of the various organizations, such as the children's aid society, that try to make a difference in the lives of children such as Danny. Diane and Hans Von Bornhoft for many years served as foster parents for Danny and for many other children in our community. I got to know them through their volunteer roles at the local schools as well as their roles in volunteering in minor soccer. Recently they were

recognized for their relentless work at the children's aid society.

Another deserving individual is John Jans, who I got to know through pickup hockey, the local volunteer fire department, and his work in the children's aid society. John put many hours into preparing potential foster parents for the challenging role of sponsoring young foster children. John was a very busy person with his work life and countless hours of volunteering. I remember him telling me how potential parents actually withdrew from the program once they found out how big a commitment it was.

I want to again reinforce the need for these organizations and the volunteers who work so hard for them—and to the children who grow up without the benefit of caring natural parents.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want on the record to say of course we'll support the motion. This is a "motherhood and apple pie" type of issue. I know the member is well-intended, so I don't mean to make this a swipe. But I come from a part of the world, like many of you that deal with the issue of children in care, and children that are supported by their children's aid societies—and specifically for Payukotayno, which is the agency that represents our families on the James Bay coast. They have been going through an epidemic of suicide and attempted suicides in those communities. Just this year, or I should say the beginning of last year, the government took away the \$2 million that we had secured for them in order to have an initiative to help combat and try to reduce the attempted suicides in those communities.

So yes, we'll support this motion, but what we need is a government to actually put in place a plan that is funded that deals with issues that affect children and to essentially make sure that we follow up on those things and continue to do so in a much more meaningful manner.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to begin by welcoming everybody in the gallery.

I rise today to speak in favour of Bill 53, to proclaim Children and Youth in Care Day on May 14 of each year. I'd also like to start by thanking everybody who has spoken to this bill.

One of the most powerful human emotions is a parent's instinct to protect and cherish their child. The classics and legends in every culture are full of stories of a mother's love or a father's sacrifice. Surely each of us in this House knows someone in our own families, parents who make sacrifices every day of their lives to give their children a better life. And yet we also know heartbreaking stories of children abandoned, ill-treated or hurt by those who are supposed to love them, care for them and protect them—stories of horrific abuse that are difficult to hear and read about. The lucky among these abused children are rescued. The unluckiest of them

suffer years of abuse silently, sometimes dying at the hands of their own parents.

1500

Using the word "lucky" for those who are removed from abusive parents or guardians is a relative term, and that's because while the state has nothing but the best interests for these children, the truth is that nothing can substitute a mother's love or a father's reassuring hug. It is difficult to imagine what it is like to move from foster home to foster home, to see another child being hugged by a father and feel the sting of tears, the loneliness and the sense of despair of being rejected. Yet many of these crown wards, despite such tragic and difficult childhoods, show a resilience difficult to fathom, rebuild a life for themselves and go on to become adults and good citizens.

This day is a tribute to their strength, their resilience, and is much needed. I hope every member in this House will find it in themselves to support this initiative.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's an honour to stand here again and speak to this bill. I was proud to speak to it when it was introduced last session as well.

We still have a long way to go, as has been noted by many here in this chamber today. Studies show that young people—and young people tell us that when crown wards transition out of care, they don't do as well as other adults. They're less likely to finish high school, less likely to pursue post-secondary education and less likely to even earn a living wage. They're more likely than their peers to spiral into homelessness, poverty, mental health issues and challenges with the justice system.

This doesn't need to be this way. It's unacceptable, and we must work to change this in any way we can. It's time we address these changes head-on, and this bill, Bill 53, I think is a great start. It's one important step in creating dialogue with youth and fostering awareness that can change the lives of some of the most vulnerable Ontarians that we represent.

Creating a day to recognize these youth affirms our commitment to them. It recognizes the additional struggles they go through to achieve things we sometimes take for granted in our own lives, and celebrates their achievements—and there are many. Youth are the future of Ontario. Their well-being should be the utmost priority for all of us not only in the province, but certainly and especially in this House. We must ensure that every youth has the advantage to succeed in life, every opportunity to reach their full potential.

Irwin Elman, as many people have mentioned here today, and former youth in care had great hearings and a great report that was very touching.

Many people here know I have a very personal experience with how well these kids can do when they're given an opportunity to succeed. Anything we can do to place these opportunities in front of them, we need to take advantage of. Whether it's by chance or whether it's by design, it's up to us to try to make this happen. Right

now we have an opportunity not to let chance take over, but to actually do it by design. Let's seize that opportunity.

This is a great starting point, a great bill, but we have a lot further to go to make sure these kids get an equal opportunity to excel and be productive members of our community. They can do it, but they need our help to get it done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm certainly going to be supporting Bill 53, brought forward by my colleague from Scarborough—Agricourt. I think we've heard it's a very important bill—it's very important to the kids—and I think we owe it to them to move this forward.

I find that when we have a bill like this, there's always an opportunity to look in our own community and find out a little bit more about the situation. I was most interested to find out a little bit more about the activities of the York Region Children's Aid Society. In 2012, they in fact served 6,147 families and they were supported by an amazing number of volunteers, some 213 volunteers, who actually provided and donated over 20,000 hours of service. I would like to thank these volunteers for the work that they've done. One of the things they did was apparently drive children and youth in care a total of over a million kilometres to various events. So we're getting wonderful community support.

Having said that, I think we're also very aware of the funding challenges of children's aid societies. In York region, with our rapidly growing population, funding has not kept pace. I know the members on this side of the House, those of us who represent York region, have advocated with Ministers of Children and Youth Services, and I'm very reassured that the new funding formula is going to be coming into force and that additional assistance will be there.

I think we have said, and we know, that every child and youth deserves to feel that they are cared for and loved, and as elected members of this House it's our duty to support these children and youth and to ensure they meet their full potential.

This is a very simple, short bill asking for one day a year to acknowledge the struggles that these children and youth face, and this will go some way towards education, awareness and reducing the stigma about children and youth in care. May 14 is only six days away. I understand a kickoff is planned at 9 a.m. Let's not make these children and youth wait. Let's do the right thing and pass this bill through second and third reading today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's a pleasure to rise in this House and speak to this private member's bill, Bill 53, brought by my colleague the member for Scarborough—Agricourt.

First of all, I want to thank the youth for being here today, and it's my hope that we pass this very simple, short bill today.

As the member for Brampton West, I'm proud of this government's commitment to assisting Ontario's most vulnerable citizens. In November 2011, we heard directly from youth in care. They came here to Queen's Park and told their stories. They told us of their unique challenges and asked us for help. I'm pleased to say this government has listened. We enacted a series of reforms that will help our children and youth in care and leaving care to succeed. Yet we must do more to tackle the stigma and raise awareness.

I commend my colleague from Scarborough—Agricourt for bringing this issue forward. By recognizing May 14 each year as Children and Youth in Care Day, this Legislature will be taking an important step forward in eliminating the stigmas related to those who grow up as crown wards and in the care of children's aid societies. This is also an opportunity to celebrate the many successful youth who have left care and gone on to live meaningful lives and have positive impacts on our society.

Finally, this official day each year will also remind us of the fantastic work done by our caregivers, foster parents and youth workers. These individuals work on the front line and make a big difference in the lives of these vulnerable young people each day. To these committed Ontarians I offer my sincere thanks and appreciation.

I fully support Bill 53 and encourage all of my colleagues from both sides of the House to join me and vote in favour of this very important initiative.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

The member for Scarborough—Agricourt for a response.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the members from Burlington and Hamilton Mountain, the Minister of Consumer Services, and the members from Oakville, Brampton West, Mississauga East—Cooksville, Oak Ridges—Markham, Durham—who is a grandfather—Kenora—Rainy River, Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, Timmins—James Bay, and Barrie.

The bill is here to support young people, and this is what it's all about. I'm very thrilled to see so many members of the House supporting young people. We're here as a Legislature to ensure that every young person in Ontario is being heard.

I want to share, Mr. Speaker—normally, I don't pull out my BlackBerry. I just received an email from a constituent, but also a youth, telling us, "We are extremely grateful to you for putting forth this very important private member's bill. This means a great day to us and across the province. We hope that it can be proclaimed."

So at the end of the day, we need to look upon, each one us, why this bill is before us, because we need to listen; we need to listen to the recommendations, and we need to act. As my colleague the member from Oak Ridges—Markham just said, next week is May 14, and it is the right thing to do, to deal with this bill.

1510

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I just want to make a comment to the member that the use of

electronic devices is not permitted in the House, but I did not want to interrupt your final comments.

Ms. Soo Wong: Sorry.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will vote on this item at the end of private members' business.

**ALZHEIMER ADVISORY
COUNCIL ACT, 2013**

**LOI DE 2013 SUR
LE CONSEIL CONSULTATIF
DE LA MALADIE D'ALZHEIMER**

Mrs. Cansfield moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act to establish the Alzheimer Advisory Council and develop a strategy for the research, treatment and prevention of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia / Projet de loi 54, Loi créant le Conseil consultatif de la maladie d'Alzheimer et élaborant une stratégie de traitement et de prévention de la maladie d'Alzheimer et d'autres formes de démence et de recherche en la matière.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: First and foremost, I would like to thank my co-sponsor of the bill, the member from Whitby-Oshawa. I'm eternally grateful for her support.

This is the third time I've had this bill in front of the House, and some people ask me, why? So let me share a little bit of information, just as we start, before I get into some of the nuts and bolts of what I'd like to speak about.

Looking at the relative percentage of seniors in the province's adult population, it has actually increased over time, reaching 17% in just 2008-09. The absolute number, the oldest seniors, those aged 85-plus, have grown by 36%. If you take that data and you look at it today, our own finance ministry has indicated that the people who are aged 65-plus will double from 1.9 million or 14.2% of the population to 4.2 million or 23.6% of the population by 2036. So, what particular difference would that make and why would we be interested?

In Ontario today, nearly 200,000 Ontarians over the age of 65—that's one in 10 seniors—have dementia. That's an increase of over 16% in the last four years. By 2020, which is just around the corner, a quarter of a million seniors in Ontario will be living with dementia.

What is dementia? It's a term used to describe a syndrome that could be caused by a number of illnesses in which there is a progressive decline in multiple areas of function, such as a decline in memory, reasoning, communication skills and the ability to carry out daily activities. This was a definition from Michael Stones, September 28, 2010.

Individuals can develop behavioural and psychological symptoms, agitation, aggression. They can wander, they can shout, they can repeat the questioning. They

have sleep disturbances. They have depression and they have psychoses. According to Mr. Stones, in Ontario, older people with dementia were prescribed anti-psychotic drugs—between 2000-07 from 1.1% to 1.8% of the whole of the age of 65-plus, roughly 25% of all people with dementia.

Why should that be of any consideration to us? Why should we deal with the fact that anti-psychotic drugs are being used in our long-term-care homes or by people with dementia? Because they are prescribed more once individuals are in the homes. I think it is particularly important that roughly 25% of those people receiving those anti-psychotic prescriptions—41.8% were over the age of 85 and 70.5% were in nursing or long-term-care homes. For those not admitted using the same medication, nearly 25% received that medication once they were admitted to a long-term-care home. Indeed, about 25% of all residents in long-term care and patients with complex continuing care in Ontario receive anti-psychotic drugs.

What is this drug and what is its use? It's a medication that's given to control symptoms of dementia in elderly patients, such as wandering and aggression. But this drug is not without its significant problems. It has some very serious cerebrovascular side effects, including strokes. Actually, the FDA in the United States spoke to these adverse events and mortality. In fact, they have an increase of 1.7% in a randomized control—actually said it increased the rate of death by people using these drugs by 1.7%.

Interestingly enough, in the United Kingdom in 2009, Professor Sube Banerjee reported to the Minister of State that, in fact, they have the same problem in the United Kingdom. They are dealing with the challenges of dementia, and they are going to have to find ways and means to be able to support these challenges that are going on within.

When he looked at it, he also spoke to what was happening in Ontario. This is a particular comment that I think really resonates well with me. The report goes on to say, "What is worrisome in a Canadian context seems to me to be a cultural apathy toward the problem not just within the health care system but also in wider society. With a health care system perceived to be under some threat, who dares criticize or to relabel accepted practice as systemic abuse?"

I think that's something all of us should be quite concerned about. Why do I say this? I'll go on and quote from Paula Rochon from Baycrest on improving the pharmaceutical care of older adults, who indicated, in a series of studies on the use and impact of antipsychotic drugs that are used to manage behavioural problems associated with dementia, that these therapies have the potential for serious adverse events including drug-induced Parkinson's, falls, stroke and death.

The research found that almost one in four elderly Ontario patients started treatment on antipsychotic therapy within a year of admission to a nursing home. I repeat that: almost one in four within a year. At the same time, the use of these drugs among the community-dwelling elderly was also increasing. These drugs are expensive,

and we are one of the highest developed countries in the use of drugs among the elderly—in fact, in our society as a whole.

The Law Commission of Ontario has indicated as well—I think this is really an important study they put through. Their study indicated that older adults residing in long-term-care homes in Canada are more likely to use atypical antipsychotic drugs than those living in the community, and there's sufficient data to be able to identify this. But what's really troubling is that these results suggest that antipsychotic therapy is not being prescribed based on clinical indication; rather, the decision to prescribe an antipsychotic therapy appears to be related to the nursing home environment, with some environments being more permissive about drug use.

Of course, according to our own law, you are not supposed to prescribe without consent. Interestingly enough, in our law in Ontario, we talk about the use of restraints, but those are physical restraints. They are not chemical restraints, which is in fact what they call an antipsychotic drug.

There still should be required in every long-term-care home a patient care chart that speaks to consent, what the drugs are being used for, who prescribes them, the dosage etc. However, again the Law Commission goes on very clearly to say that, “In addition to the requirements of consent, the current legislation governing long-term-care homes requires a resident's plan of care to be reviewed at least quarterly by the multidisciplinary team.”

So I thought, “Do you know what I'll do? I will go and ask them questions about what, in fact, is happening in our long-term-care homes,” and I would like to share that with you. There are 634 long-term-care homes in Ontario. Just over 300 of them use physical restraints. The use of physical restraints, on average, is 13.9%, depending.

The interesting part is that some long-term-care homes have 1%; others have as high as 50%. Obviously, it depends on the clientele. And restraint can also mean not just being restrained in your bed or your wheelchair, but also if the wheelchair is tilted, for particular individuals who might require that. So the reporting structure is really, really important.

1520

But interestingly enough, between 13% and 50%—302 or 304 homes, give or take one or two if my math isn't correct—use restraints: over 13%, 13% to 50%, or some 300-odd homes in this province. When you look at the client base within a long-term-care home, they're roughly similar. You have individuals who come in with early forms of dementia to those who have chronic and complex needs. Why would some homes be at 1% and some homes at 30%? Why would some be at 1.2% and some at 15% or 18%? Is there a correlation between the use of antipsychotic drugs and the use of restraints in long-term-care homes? That's a really important question to ask, because it's the Ontario Drug Benefit that actually keeps track of the use of those antipsychotics for people over the age of 65.

I think this is an important issue for us to look at. I'm looking at it from the point of the use for Alzheimer's. In fact, if you look at it, the evidence from Ontario indicates that, once administered antipsychotics, 80% of the residents remain on that medication nine months later. This is from Professor Sube Banerjee in the United Kingdom in 2009, and he spoke to his own. These drugs appear to be used too often in dementia, and, at their likely level of use, potential benefits are most likely outweighed by their overall risk. This is a problem across the world. It's certainly a problem that we have to be able to deal with.

So what this bill is to do is to actually set together an advisory committee, made up of the people who are on the ground and living and dealing with this disease, to make recommendations to the minister on developing a strategy for this tsunami that I think is going to overtake us in the not-too-distant future.

Somebody asked me today, “Why are you interested?” Well, the obvious is because it's my constituents. Another is that maybe I'm over the age of 65 and reaching that time, because there are more women with dementia than there are men. That's because, typically, women live longer. But the other is, for me, a fundamental belief that you can age with dignity in this province. It's just not a place to grow old; it's a place to live while you grow old. It's a place to be respected as you age.

Interestingly enough, our First Nations talk about their elders and we talk about our old people. I think that we need to start talking about the folks who are older with respect and the dignity that they deserve. In the case of those who are vulnerable, it's our responsibility to ensure they have the best oversight we can provide and that nobody is put in a position where they feel, or their families feel, they are compromised. I think this is an important part for all of us, so I look forward to the comments and to your support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 54, An Act to establish the Alzheimer Advisory Council and develop a strategy for the research, treatment and prevention of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

I would like to start by thanking the member for Etobicoke Centre for tackling this important initiative, for bringing it forward three times, and hopefully this is going to be the time when it will actually see its way to and through third reading. You can just hear the passion that she has for this subject, and she is to be congratulated for continuing with it. Thank you; good work.

This bill comes at a time when our society is facing a tsunami of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. The statistics are alarming. As Ontario's baby boomers enter their senior years, the number of people suffering from dementia will increase from 200,000 in 2013 to approximately 300,000 by 2025.

My riding of Whitby-Oshawa and the broader area of Durham region are also seriously impacted by this disease. With some 7,000 seniors in Durham region suffering from Alzheimer's and dementia, Durham

region currently has the seventh-largest population of individuals living with Alzheimer's and dementia in the province of Ontario. Incredibly, that figure is projected to double to more than 15,000 cases of Alzheimer's and dementia by 2030.

It's clear that as our population ages, Ontario's health system will experience a serious influx of Alzheimer's cases. While Alzheimer's itself is a serious issue for the individuals and families that suffer from it, this seriousness is elevated when one considers the disease's impact on the broader health system.

I'll give you just a few examples. Persons with dementia are three times as likely to be hospitalized compared to persons without the disease. Moreover, hospital stays are twice as long, on average, for people with dementia—primarily seniors—compared to people without the disease. Since dementia patients are intensive users of health care resources, it's also vital for the sustainability of our health care system to develop a long-term strategy for tackling this disease.

There are many issues that need to be resolved to deal with the challenges of dementia. We need to continue research into the causes of Alzheimer's and promote proven therapies and services which can slow the progress of the disease. Of equal importance to research into Alzheimer's is the need to support family members and caregivers who care for their loved ones under very difficult circumstances.

I'm sure that all of the members of this House will have constituents where there are two older spouses, one of whom may have Alzheimer's disease, and the other spouse is left to care for them, with little or no support or respite. They are exhausted and have little hope, but that's what Bill 54 offers; that's what it's attempting to do.

Over the next 10 to 15 years, Ontario will be facing major health care challenges as our population ages. We need to support families who are affected by this disease and invest intelligently in community supports and services in order to be able to provide appropriate levels of support.

The member from Etobicoke Centre talked about the use of antipsychotic drugs in long-term-care homes. Clearly, this isn't a best practice. We need to develop better systems and better ways of dealing with Alzheimer's and dementia, find those best practices and then be able to disseminate them across the province.

Bill 54 makes significant strides towards developing these long-term strategies in our health care system. I certainly support it and I urge all of the members of this Legislature to support it as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure and a privilege to rise and speak to this bill. Absolutely, we support it in the New Democratic Party. I want to personally attest to the integrity of the member from Etobicoke Centre in bringing this forward for the third time, but not only that, for her integrity and her courage in all things in this House. This is a woman who stood and voted with us for

CAS—children's aid society—Ombudsman oversight, the only person in her party to do so, and she's the whip. It's very rare you see those displays of courage around here. She was one of the ones that evidenced it, and I just wanted to give her a shout-out for that.

You can't help but think, in light of recent news reports, when you support this bill—and of course we do—about the story of the family in the Ottawa region that gave up their son because of a developmental disability and because of their exhaustion in trying to look after him. Can you imagine how many families are going to feel exhausted with this issue at the other end of life? We are, as has been said, facing a tsunami of aging and a tsunami also of diagnosis for both Alzheimer's and dementia of various sorts. Many families will do what families who love their relatives tend to do: try to accommodate them at home and try to look after them, and eventually become so exhausted and overburdened that they can't any more. Then they're faced with institutions, long-term residences, where overworked staff—just about every day here I read out a petition about the overworked staff dealing with developmental disabilities. Well, it's the same in long-term-care homes. Years ago, we were calling for 3.5 hours of patient care per resident per day, and we never even came close; I think we're around 2.8 or 2.9. So, imagine: With this kind of diagnosis going into places, at best we are going to get custodial care.

The member for Etobicoke Centre outlined what kind of abuses could happen in a situation where barely custodial care is being able to be extended, not because of any lack in terms of the compassion of the staff but simply because there are not enough hours in the day and there are not enough staff, so you start looking for shortcuts. This is what can happen.

1530

It reminded me also of the other end of life, of a petition that my friends to the right here have been reading out that I also have supported, and that is the overprescription for children. So at both ends of life, we have some serious issues that we really have to look at here.

The developmental disability issue: We know that there are 11,000 on a waiting list for residential help and agency help. I can only imagine what that's going to look like in the future for those who have a diagnosis of dementia or Alzheimer's. We have to do something; it's incumbent upon us to do something. We are the sandwich generation and we have to act. Kudos again to the member.

One thing: When my husband and I were in Sweden, we met with a number of MPs there from all political backgrounds and stripes. Of course, for a social democrat, Sweden is as close to heaven as it gets. So we went, and one of the things they do so much better than we do here is the way they look after seniors who had diagnoses, who needed care, whether it was Alzheimer's or dementia, or even just help fetching groceries or mowing the lawn. This was a really innovative program. You could, as a relative, go and get training. If you wanted to look after them, let's say—many relatives do,

but either they give up their job etc. or they don't have the training—you could go get the training and then join the union, because they were all unionized positions, who would then supervise you, but then go back into your home and be paid for looking after your own relative. I thought that was extremely innovative, and they said it was way, way less expensive than institutionalizing folk. There was still the same level of unionization and supervision, but for those who wanted to, at least some support. Right now, folk are doing it without any support, and that's what this bill hopes to address.

Of course, as New Democrats, we would like to see some teeth put into the bill in the sense that eventually, this advisory committee would get to a point where it needs money—money will be required to help. So we would hope that in the process of discussing this bill and when it gets to committee and before it gets back, there is some dollar amount attached to this so that it actually, even in its work, discussing and making recommendations, can have some sort of budget to be able to do that job well—because you can't do that for free either. So that's what we're hoping for.

Of course, it also raises the spectre of the five-day home care guarantee. We know that the government has met us in terms of dollars, in fact exceeded, but what concerns us is the guarantee for the five days' wait for home care isn't there. That also will help the member from Etobicoke Centre's quest.

Again, I want to leave some time for my colleague from Beaches—East York to speak to this, but kudos to the member. She really is a sterling example of passion made real in this place. I hope this passes finally on the third go-around and just a real shout-out to her as a vision of courage and dedication for all of us here at Queen's Park.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm very pleased to rise in support of Bill 54. First, like all our colleagues who spoke before me, my colleague from Etobicoke Centre—I mean who would come back to the House three times? Member from Etobicoke Centre, what can I say? Your commitment, compassion—our colleague from High Park already mentioned your tenacity—and hopefully this is three times a charm. I also wanted to recognize my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa for co-sponsoring the bill, because it is the right thing to do.

I remember my predecessor, Mr. Phillips, who served this House for over 20 years. He always reminded me in my first few months here at the Legislature that when you have a difficult issue with the House, always do the right thing. It may be contrary to some of the other people, but doing the right thing is the right thing to do.

During my time here to speak, I want to focus on a couple of things. The member from Etobicoke Centre spoke eloquently, with facts and with information about antipsychotic drugs. As someone who has worked in long-term care for a number of years, this chemical restraint has always been a concern to front-line health care providers, because at times it's an easy fix—easy in

the sense that you give a pill and you hope the situation will be resolved, but in reality, there are a lot of complications such as side effects, contraindications, and the fact here is, many of the family members who gave consent to this chemical restraint may not be familiar with or understand the contraindication or the side effects of the medication. So I want to applaud the member from Etobicoke Centre for raising that awareness today in her opening remarks.

I also want to remind every member of the House the bill is very thorough. I read the preamble, in terms of statistics. The data that the member proposed are that 181,000 Ontarians in 2011 had the diagnosis of Alzheimer's or dementia, but that just means that they were diagnosed. There must be thousands more who are not diagnosed who live among us in the community, and what are we going to do about it? This is the fastest-growing population, because we know, across Ontario and across Canada, the data and the demographic of the aging population is tenfold. So we are projecting, by the year 2020—about a quarter, a third, of our population is aging, so what are we going to do about it? With this particular disease, it is very, very tragic. I know the member from Whitby—Oshawa talked about caregiver fatigue and caregiver distress and the potential for elder abuse. This is right here. This is what it's all about.

The proposed Bill 54, if passed, will focus on, first of all, education and awareness. On page 2 of the bill, it talks specifically about the purpose of the Alzheimer Advisory Council, which focuses on education and awareness, and that is the right thing to do. I know the Alzheimer Society has done great work across Ontario, but we need to do more. Our government, both sides and parties, have to work to do more in terms of leading, not following on this particular illness.

The other thing is that this bill also focuses on seniors. We're now finding more and more young people with early Alzheimer's and early dementia. I remember, as a young nurse working at the hospital now called Bridgepoint, previously known as Riverdale Hospital, that one of the first women called to the bar as well as the bench had some form of early Alzheimer's. The tragedy here at that time is that the community, the family and the health care provider did not know the disease or how to properly treat it. So awareness and education is really critical.

The other piece is that the purpose of the council is clearly laid out on page 2 of the proposed bill. It talks about training to strengthen the skills of a person with Alzheimer's. But the training is not just about the person with the disease but also the caregivers, both the family members as well as the front-line professionals. At the end of the day, the strength of any bill is the fact that we communicate to the constituents and in this case across Ontario.

The other part of the bill—and I know my colleague from High Park talked about it—is the whole issue of providing more services. Page 3 of the proposed bill talks about the minister, his or her responsibility, and, as well, timeline reporting, because I believe it's the right thing to

do. In terms of the minister responsible for developing and implementing a strategy for research, treatment and prevention of the disease—because we know that the strength of any medical condition is how well we do in terms of research. I'm very pleased our government took the lead, recently funding the Brain Institute, because that again will support this particular bill, Bill 54.

The other piece—the last page of the bill, page 4—talks about government responsibility. Right there in section 7, it talks about raising awareness of the disease but also the issue of facilitating the training and professional development of health care providers. As someone who has worked a number of years in long-term care, I cannot stress enough about the funding and support of training. The number one challenge in many of the long-term-care facilities is the turnover rates of the front-line health care providers in these facilities. By providing continuous training and professional support, you're not only ensuring best practices but, more importantly, you make sure the best care is provided at the right time at the right place and to the right client or patient.

The other piece here in the bill is that the government will undertake partnerships. This is a very complex disease. It focuses on health first, but you're talking about financial challenges for the family. It may require the Minister of Finance. It may require education, because we need to ensure that the new future front-line health care providers—meaning Training, Colleges and Universities—will understand the care and treatment of dementia, early Alzheimer's, and the signs and symptoms of Alzheimer's and dementia, and also ensure that the public knows about this particular disease. At the end of the day, this disease does not improve; it progresses further. The last stage of dementia and Alzheimer's, of course, is death, but the progress of this particular disease requires proper training and support for the caregiver, whether they are family members or health professionals.

1540

The other piece that the bill talks about is the whole issue of improved accessibility. Again, oftentimes we focus on the elderly person with the disease. What do you do in this House and with front-line personnel in terms of the 40-year-old, the 30-year-old with early Alzheimer's or early dementia? What are we doing? They are among us. They are in our community. They are in long-term-care facilities right now.

The other piece here is that the bill also clearly lays out the membership: who it should be comprised of. Again, this allows the advisory council to be successful. The member from Etobicoke Centre was visionary and was persistent in making sure this bill not just clearly outlined the purpose of the council; it's telling the members, when they choose to vote on the bill, who in fact will be the membership, because there's nothing worse than having the establishment of a council or committee and we don't know who should be sitting on this particular committee.

Last but not least, I cannot stress enough why we need this particular bill. Speaking for myself for a minute, Mr. Speaker, having been in health care for almost 30 years

as a front-line nurse—I taught nursing for a number of years before I came to the House—this is one issue that front-line health professionals are having a lot of challenges with, because it's so complex, so challenging and multi-sectorial. Oftentimes, it focuses on the health component. We're not talking about the whole issue of housing. Patients or clients with Alzheimer's or dementia are very, very challenging to provide care for, because oftentimes we focus on their aggressions, and many times we focus on the disease, when in fact there's a multi-sectorial piece about this particular illness and disease.

I'm very, very sad that many of the families we know every day among us in our community—all 107 of us in this House know somebody in our community with this particular illness. How to provide the proper care and support in a timely and respectful way?

Again, I want to thank my colleague from Etobicoke Centre and my colleague from Whitby-Oshawa for their leadership in championing something that each one of us in this House needs to move on, making sure it passes and goes through third reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: As deputy critic for health, rural and northern Ontario, it's my pleasure to speak to this bill.

The member for Etobicoke Centre, Donna Cansfield, has done a wonderful job championing for people with Alzheimer's, and we thank her for that. I know this issue is dear to her heart, and I commend her on her passion.

I also commend Christine Elliott, the PC member for Whitby-Oshawa and a colleague of all of us. Christine is a very caring, compassionate person and leads by example in many actions and personal initiatives in her community.

Speaker, I am proud and pleased to support Bill 54. I support the establishing of the Alzheimer Advisory Council. Ontario needs to start a new page in how we combat dementia in the near future.

Dementia is expected to affect 300,000 people by 2025. It's going to impact all of us and all of our families at some point in time, and I trust there is no one in this room or no one watching at home who has not been impacted already.

In my case, I worked very closely with a hospital in my former capacity as executive director of the Bruce Peninsula Health Services Foundation. A lady, Grace Featherston, worked at the hospital for many, many years. She was the X-ray technologist, just a delightful, warm, wonderful, loving lady. About a year after she retired, she ended up contracting Alzheimer's. Maybe it was in process before, but it was just such a sad thing. I was a pretty young guy at the time, and she was one of those people who was just an open, warm hugger—you loved her to death—and she went down very, very quickly. Her decline was very sad to see. The saving grace in her case is she did pass fairly quickly—but there are other people. A friend of mine, a friend of our family—I grew up with his youngest son, all the way through public school. He now is in a retirement old-age home

because of his dementia. It's sad to see because he's as healthy, probably healthier than I am, yet he just doesn't really have the capacity from the mental side of things. It's very tough on the caregivers and very tough on the families, and just to see someone who was a dynamo of our community go through this. It really paints a picture and sends the message home. We all need to be doing what we can to push this forward. Again, I applaud the member for bringing it.

In my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, we have an above-average seniors population, so this is particularly relevant to me, Speaker. It's one of the things, as I started considering running for office, that I knew I was going to be encountering as we come forward. It's one of the things that we have to be doing more today, to put a plan in place. We need to give those families and caregivers hope, and we need to do what we can to try to find, hopefully, somewhere down the road a cure.

I'd like to acknowledge and thank Deborah Barker and her staff and fabulous volunteers from the Alzheimer Society of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. They, again, do wonderful work. What I hear from her is that her numbers are just continuing to ratchet up every time I speak to her. We need to ensure that we're putting programs in place. We need to have early diagnosis and we need to put the mechanisms in place to ensure that the patient is always first and foremost: an early diagnosis, an early prognosis and plan so that everyone is being helped along the way.

Dementia patients are intensive users of health care resources. It's absolutely vital for the long-term sustainability of our health care program that we do tackle this, that we do make it a priority agenda.

One thing that came out in our Paths to Prosperity papers was the whole venue of mental health challenges. We've kind of parked those off to the side for many years, and we haven't treated them with the same importance that we have with physical maladies. We need to do that because this is going to be become paramount; in fact, I would suggest today it is already paramount. If we're going to ensure that down the road we have a health care system that we can sustain and have those programs and services, we need to make sure this is a focal point as we go forward.

One of the most promising chronic disease management models is the patient-centred health care model. As we've put in our paper, we need, again, to ensure that the patient is first and foremost. We need to have collaboration; we need to have all the front-line health care partners working in collaboration. We can't be sending people off on 15 different visits. We need to coordinate that care much more effectively. That will be good for the families, certainly, most importantly, good for the patient, but also good for the economics of our province, because we can't continue to treat people with separate illnesses as separate. They need to be coordinated. They need to make sure that we have one centre of care and a patient is treated truly as a patient and not as a number. As we all know, disease prevention starts in the primary

care office, and we want to be focused on strengthening primary care by taking a more proactive approach, by reaching out with that early diagnosis and ensuring that every step of that process is covered by coordination and collaboration.

As Ontario contends with budget shortfalls and a debt totalling \$300 billion, management of chronic conditions such as Alzheimer's is among the most costly, so we have to address this. We need to make Alzheimer's a focus and ensure proper programs are in place, with a patient strategy for each person going forward, a proactive patient strategy with the patient absolutely at the core. It is critical to the sustainability of the health care system and is most important to the patients and their family.

I definitely will be supporting this bill, and I hope that we can get it to committee as quickly as possible and in fact get it initiated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Prue: It looks like this is going to be unanimous because I want to talk in support of the bill as well. Whatever criticisms I may have of the bill or the government, it needs to be held and known from the outset that we all need to support this because it is the right thing to do.

As the other speakers have said, we have 200,000-plus people in this province who either suffer from Alzheimer's or dementia. Those who know the disease know that at first it's a little bit of forgetfulness. People live their ordinary lives; they struggle somewhat but are still able to feed and clothe themselves. They're still able to interact with their family members and still do most of the basic things every day that they need to do. But this is a disease that is quite horrible because, for many, it progresses very rapidly, and you can literally watch somebody waste away in front of your very eyes as the days and weeks go by, forgetting ever more things, forgetting family members, suffering sometimes with bouts of violence—not becoming the person at all you have known all of your life.

1550

It is so incredibly sad when I go into old age homes, as I know all members of this House do, to see people that you have known for so many years sitting there, really a shadow of their former selves, not many times knowing who you are although you've known them for 30 and 40 years and you're going there to visit. It's especially sad when it's a loved one, a member of the family that you're going to see, who has one week or one month been a vibrant, caring, wonderful individual and a few weeks or months later is starting to show all the signs of progression.

It's a hard thing to talk about to people who've had that experience in their family. I dare take it that almost everyone in this room, if they've not had an individual family member, has at least had a close friend or somebody they admire and love who has succumbed to this horrible disease.

Until we find a cure for it, though, we need to start thinking not only of those who have the disease but of the 500,000 or so people who offer some form of care to their loved ones. Oftentimes these people are husbands or wives, their children, in-laws, close relatives who come forward and care for someone who finds themselves in this kind of distress. We know from statistics and anecdotal evidence that a person with Alzheimer's or dementia requires 75% more care than people who have other infirmities; a lot more care is required. We also know that the caregivers have a 20% higher stress level than other caregivers, because it is a really tough thing to try to get someone to understand. It's tough on them listening to the same story over and over and over again. It's tough on them seeing a person disintegrate. It's tough on them having to coax and cajole someone to do those things which they would have ordinarily done in their lives.

Another thing is their inability to continue. We know that many, many caregivers of patients with Alzheimer's can't go the long distance; in the end they have to give up. We also need to look after them. That's one of the reasons why New Democrats put forward in our budget bill—one of the demands was for a five-day home care guarantee, because people need to have that kind of guarantee for a loved one, that there will be someone there, not necessarily to do all of the care but to do some of the care, in order to free up the husband, wife, spouse, child to do the things that they have to do in their life as well.

The government answered part of this a time back with a caregiver bill, but with the greatest of respect, I don't think that was the whole answer or even part of an answer. The whole answer is to develop a system which allows people dignity when they get the disease, and family support so that they can deal with it individually, in the most humane and family way possible.

My colleague talked about her experience in Sweden. I will tell you that this is universal throughout the other countries in that part of the world. Denmark, for one, which I visited, and other places—Finland—have similar things that they do to help their aged and allow them to remain in their own homes.

To close, because I've only got just a little bit, we need a comprehensive approach moving forward and annual reports, which this bill contains, but we also need to give it some teeth and some money. I look back. We had a similar debate in this Legislature a few years ago about the Passport system for adults with disabilities. I said then, and I will say it again now, it's all well and good to put in a Passport system, it's all well and good to do what we're doing here, but if there is a failure to fund, in the end it will not work. If we pass this today, and we must, we have to think, down the long term, where does the funding come to make it work so that everybody who develops Alzheimer's is protected?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm going to just speak for a couple of minutes because the member from Barrie would like to also speak.

I'd like to thank the member from Etobicoke Centre, and also the member from Whitby-Oshawa.

I was personally touched with Alzheimer's in my family. My mother passed away when I was 10, in a car accident, and my mother had seven siblings; six of them lived together as spinsters, actually, in a house right here at 29 Cheritan Avenue on Yonge Street. My aunt got Alzheimer's at a very young age, roughly around the beginning of 60 years old. It was heartbreaking to watch, because she was such a part of our life to come in and take care of my twin sister and my other sister when my mom had passed away.

To watch that start and evolve at such a young age, and watching my aunts take care of her—that was so stressful for my aunts, because they wanted to take care of her. They were very strict Catholics and wanted to make sure she stayed in the home. They worked so hard. Of course, we all know that with anyone that has had Alzheimer's, they become very aggressive. They go back to a very childlike state. It was just so exhausting to watch them and to go over and help them so they could get a few minutes of time to either go get their hair done or go over and get groceries—because they were so proud to take care of my aunt.

I'm very touched by this, and the one beautiful thing about the House is that we have these opportunities to do compassionate things for people that have contributed to society and have given their all to be the best that they can. We owe it to them to give them this opportunity with Bill 54, and I'm grateful to have this opportunity to stand up and thank you both so much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to stand here and speak to this bill today. It is something that's critically important. As has been mentioned before, it's one of those things that has touched just about all of our lives in one way or another, whether it's a friend or a family member who's got Alzheimer's or we've helped someone with it. I know in my case, a good acquaintance of mine had very fast, early-onset Alzheimer's in her forties. By the time she realized she had it, she really only lived for a couple of years afterwards—very tragic—and left a lot of people behind.

To actually enact an Alzheimer Advisory Council Act, I think, is very commendable. It's something that needs to be done. It has economic reverberations too, where we can actually start to deal with these things before they become a big problem in our society and actually end up costing us a lot more health care dollars at a time when we really need to look at different ways to do health care in Ontario, with the stress our system is under. If we can be more proactive, start to deal with these things a little bit faster and find ways and strategies to do that, I think this helps to actually accomplish that end.

Congratulations for putting the bill forward. I think it's a really commendable bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

The member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to say thank you, obviously, to my co-sponsor from Whitby-Oshawa, and to the members from Parkdale-High Park, Scarborough-Agincourt, Beaches-East York, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Burlington and Barrie for their kind words and their support. Everyone spoke very quickly about the issue of the caregiver. Let me share with you, this year alone, 87,100 hours—that will increase by 65% by 2020 to 144,000 hours. Caregivers are primarily the spouse—31%; the rest is family.

I'd like to tell you a very quick story. It really relates to the member from Burlington. I met a lady who was sharing with me about someone she knew, her husband, who had the progressive disease of Alzheimer's. He'd been the CEO of a company—a big man, really engaged, vibrant, in sports; he just did everything. The disease took him over, and she cared for him in her home. She supported him; they didn't have a family. She was tired, but she worked hard to make sure that she looked after him, and she did.

With that was a little element of shame, because they lost their friends; they were no longer invited out for dinner. She couldn't take him out for dinner because he would react somewhat differently in a restaurant, so they spent all their time together. Finally, one day he turned to her and he said, "Who are you?" She said to herself, "Oh, my God. I've forgotten to say goodbye."

I thought, that's when we have a responsibility to help those caregivers so no one else ever has to feel that they're so alone that they don't have the kind of support that they need to care for someone they deeply love. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

1600

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 22, standing in the name of Ms. Mangat.

Ms. Mangat has moved private member's notice of motion number 27.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES PRIS EN CHARGE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Wong has moved second reading of Bill 53, An Act to proclaim Children and Youth in Care Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Wong?

Ms. Soo Wong: I ask for unanimous consent that this bill be ordered for third reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Wong has asked for unanimous consent to have Bill 53 ordered for third reading. Is there consent? I heard a couple of noes.

Ms. Wong, which committee would you like your bill referred to?

Ms. Soo Wong: General government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Agreed? Agreed.

ALZHEIMER ADVISORY COUNCIL ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR
LE CONSEIL CONSULTATIF
DE LA MALADIE D'ALZHEIMER

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Cansfield has moved second reading of Bill 54, An Act to establish the Alzheimer Advisory Council and develop a strategy for the research, treatment and prevention of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Canfield?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Send the bill to private members.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Canfield has requested that the bill go to—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): —regulations and private bills. Agreed? Agreed. So declared.

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 8, 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 Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to speak to second reading of Bill 65, what the government calls Prosperous and Fair

Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2013. Of course, as we recall, Mr. Speaker, the provincial government presented its budget in this Legislature on May 2. As we know, budgets in recent years have been presented in the Ontario Legislature lately in the last week of March or thereabouts. This budget was a little later than normal, but of course we're not living in normal times in this minority Parliament, as the government continues to reach out to the New Democrats, veering left in order to seek their support for the budget motion, the vote that will come sometime in the next couple of weeks, I guess.

I want to lead off my remarks with respect to Bill 65, the budget measures act, by reading to the House something that I presented in a newsletter in my riding a few years ago. On the front page of the newsletter, I talked about the skyrocketing provincial debt. I said to my constituents, "There is an important distinction between a deficit and a debt. A deficit is the difference between the amount of money a government takes in and the amount that it spends. The debt of a province is the total of each yearly deficit added together and is usually referred to as 'accumulated debt'....

"Many people have developed a tolerance to governments accumulating" massive, "mammoth debts, but this is a dangerous attitude because the payment of the accumulated debt and its interest costs will ultimately come from taxpayers' pockets. Today's deficits and accumulated deficits are tomorrow's taxes. If the present trend continues, taxes will skyrocket.

"It is absolutely essential that the government learns to live within its means and stop adding to the debt, otherwise the future standard of living of our children and grandchildren will be jeopardized."

This is from my newsletter in December 1992, more than 20 years ago. I was privileged to serve at that time in opposition to the New Democratic government of Bob Rae, and, of course, the Liberal Party was in opposition as well. I was disappointed that, unfortunately, those words were not heeded by the government of the day, and I don't think are being heeded by the government to this day.

So we have Bill 65, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts. Of course it lists, I think, 14 schedules, changes to various acts—42 pages of changes. The government has, I think, primarily tried to reach out to the New Democrats in this bill, as I said earlier.

Our caucus, in response to this bill, has a number of consistent messages that we are bringing forward in this debate. We believe that the solutions to Ontario's problems aren't really that hard to figure out, in fact; they're just not easy to do. The province of Ontario needs a government that has a plan to reduce spending and create jobs, and the courage to implement that plan.

We believe that too many people in Ontario are having trouble finding work and are losing hope in our great province. Of course, we're aware that in recent years the provincial government has presided over a policy agenda which has, I think, indirectly led to the loss of 300,000

manufacturing jobs. There are today between 500,000 and 600,000 people in the province of Ontario who would like to work but can't find a job.

The unemployment rate in the province of Ontario is something like 7.7%—persistently high. For many, many months, even years, we have had an unemployment rate in the province of Ontario which has been higher than the national average. I think that's something that the government has overlooked or, in recent years, even forgotten. They don't spend too much time thinking about it.

We believe that instead of taking necessary action in this particular provincial budget, the Premier used the 2013 budget to take us on the same failed Dalton McGuinty approach as was pursued by the Liberal Party in the last decade. If you look at page 208 of the provincial budget papers, you will see that spending has actually increased by \$3.6 billion next year alone. There is no real plan—I'd say no credible plan, no effective plan—to balance the budget. We've argued that the program spending projections going forward to the year 2017-18, which is the target year for balancing the budget that was set out by the Drummond report and that the government claims it can balance the budget by—that those numbers are actually fictitious. It's now clear that the only way to help Ontario become strong again is to set a new course with a new team. That is the position of our Ontario PC caucus.

I had the chance, of course, to respond to the budget after it was presented, as we all do with our local media. Actually, while I was in the lock-up, I had a chance to review the budget papers and the budget speech. Again, all of us as members of the Legislature have that opportunity—many of the members of the news media avail themselves of that opportunity as well—so that when we come into the House at 4 o'clock on the anointed day of the budget, we have, in most cases, read the budget and are in a position to respond immediately. In fact, I was writing the column that I was going to send to my local newspapers while I was in the lock-up and while I was in the chamber. So I was ready to respond, really, at 5 o'clock, which I was obviously wanting to do.

Mr. Speaker, I've now heard 22 budgets in this place as a member of the Legislature. We missed out in 1995 because you'll recall that the NDP government of the day did not present a budget in this chamber. They, in fact, had a budget statement that Floyd Laughren presented in the news, I guess at the press gallery or in the media studio. Then of course we had, remember, the Magna budget, which was not presented in this House—

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Arnott: As a matter of fact, I was there, and there were seats set aside for all the members of the Legislature. I know some of the Liberal members chose not to be present at the time, at the Magna training centre. But I know for a fact they all received invitations, and there were seats set aside for all the members of the Legislature.

As we know, the Speaker of the Legislature eventually ruled—and, I believe, ruled correctly—that budgets

should be in the Legislature. He was quite right to draw that conclusion, and I agreed with his ruling in that respect.

But I have to say, when you think about it, the ruling was that the budget should be presented in the chamber. Implicit in that ruling is that the members should be the first ones to hear the budget contents, in the chamber. But, of course, we've seen a recent trend, especially in the last two or three years, where the government has thrown out the convention—thrown it out the window—of budgetary secrecy.

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As we know, a few years ago, Frank Miller, when he was Treasurer—apparently there were some documents that made their way into the garbage and some reporter was able to get hold of them, and there was serious consideration on whether or not the Treasurer would have to resign because some of these documents had been made public before the budget speech was presented in this House.

Of course, you remember the response of the Liberal Party, in opposition, when the Magna budget was presented at the Magna training facility. Of course, they were obviously very aghast that this would happen, and they were making the point that the budget should be presented in this House. So I wonder how they feel now and how they sort of square that with the reality that their party has taken a strategic approach to divulge the contents of the budget, through strategic leaks, in the days and weeks leading up to the budget speech itself. I would argue that perhaps we should consider bringing forward a point of privilege on that. Maybe that's something that we could consider doing and see what the Speaker would have to say about that, because I believe in budget secrecy. I think it's an important principle for a whole list of reasons, and when you put that issue in the context of the Magna budget, perhaps we should give that some thought.

I said that, you know, every budget that I've heard in the course of my tenure in this House has had a central story; every one has an interesting subtext and each one included some significant numbers. I've argued that the central story of the 2013 budget speech is that Premier Kathleen Wynne is taking the same overall approach to budgeting as her predecessor, Dalton McGuinty, and that is bigger government, higher spending and higher deficits. All of these trends continue. Little has changed in terms of the basic budgetary approach under the Wynne government when compared to the McGuinty government.

The subtext of the 2013 budget, I would argue, was the political auction sale that led up to it, with the Liberals bidding higher and higher, with taxpayers' money, to secure the support of the New Democrats. The Liberals were prepared to meet every single demand that the New Democrats brought forward, and then some. The government veered to the left in an effort to get the NDP onside so that they could hang on to power a little longer. Of course, it remains to be seen what the New Democrats

are going to do, but we all look forward to hearing, hopefully next week, what they plan to do.

The 2013 budget included some significant numbers that I want to bring forward in this debate. The deficit is up almost \$2 billion this fiscal year, from \$9.8 billion to \$11.7 billion this year. In effect, the Liberals are borrowing \$1.3 million an hour, every hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. That's what an \$11.7-billion deficit means. The debt this year is up \$20 billion, this year over last, from \$253 billion to \$273 billion, and we note again that the Liberals have almost doubled the provincial debt during their last 10 years in office. I think it's important again to remind the House that spending is up \$3.6 billion this year after last, from \$124 billion last year to \$127.6 billion this year, and we note that spending continues to go up in at least 15 ministries. So when the government starts talking about how they're trying to hold the line on spending, I think we need to inquire, why is overall spending going up \$3.6 billion this year alone?

I think it's also very important to point out that transfers from the federal government to the province of Ontario are going up this year as well, from \$21.7 billion last year to \$22.5 billion this year, up something like \$765 million. I heard the Attorney General heckling our side during question period today about the transfers, and I think he needs to take a look at his own budget, because that clearly indicates that the federal government is increasing funding to the province of Ontario, through equalization, of course, and also, the health transfer goes up quite dramatically. Again, it was interesting that some on the government side weren't aware of that, and I think they need to take note of it. Obviously, one of the things that the Liberal government might be doing in the next few weeks or months is calling attention to the transfers from the federal government, but the fact is, federal transfers are up this year.

Another important number to consider in the debate on the budget and this budget bill is the fact that interest on the debt is up \$233 million this year, from \$10.4 billion to \$10.6 billion. As we know, we're currently in a climate where interest rates are relatively low, historically low, I guess, for some period of time. I hope that the government is making plans for what might happen and what we might have to do if interest rates go up; and I think interest rates most likely have nowhere to go but up in the medium term and long term. Of course, that will put dramatic additional pressure on our budget.

I know that the Liberals would have hoped to generate at least some good news in the days leading up to budget day and its immediate aftermath. But of course we know that the Oakville and Mississauga gas plant cancellations overshadowed the budget presentation. People in Wellington-Halton Hills now know the government dramatically and repeatedly understated the true cost of cancelling the gas plants. That is probably the number one issue that's being talked about in the coffee shops and on the main streets in our communities today. There have been repeated revelations at a number of the

standing committees of this Legislature which have called into question the integrity of the provincial government in terms of the public communications that they've made about the true cost of the gas plants. We see quite clearly that they certainly appear to have made a deliberate effort to dramatically underestimate the true costs, but now the truth is coming out.

I have to say publicly in this House, as I have to my constituents, that I do not support the overall budgetary policy of this Liberal government. I speak against it and will vote against it.

Now, because there is generally a considerable amount of latitude given to members when we're debating budget motions and budget bills, I want to raise an issue that was brought to my attention by one of my constituents when I was returning a phone call on Sunday afternoon. It concerns the Auditor General's reports from 2009 and 2011. I know that these Auditor General reports are very important documents that are released once a year, the annual report. There's usually a great deal of media interest for a day or two. We debate the Auditor General's report, usually in question period, for a day or two afterwards. The Auditor General's report is then referred to the public accounts committee, a standing committee of the Legislature, an all-party committee. The ministries that are identified as having had spending issues are brought forward into the committee, and they're asked to explain to the members of the committee what they're doing to address the issues that the Auditor General has identified. I think that that process, most of the time, works pretty well. But at the same time, this issue was brought to my attention, and I wish to bring it to the attention of the House.

I have an excerpt from the 2009 Auditor General's report, chapter 3, "Government User Fees." Just very briefly, the report indicates that there was a Supreme Court of Canada decision in 1998 that "concluded that user fees could be considered unlawful and therefore may be repayable if they were determined by a court to be a tax that was not established by enacted legislation or if the fee amounts charged were excessive and did not have a reasonable relationship to the cost of the services provided. Although the Ontario government has taken some actions over the past decade to help address this ruling, there are still fee revenues from alcohol, gaming, and registration services of over \$500 million annually that may be at risk because they may not fit the Supreme Court's criteria for valid fees."

The report goes on to identify the fact that the auditor determined that "revenues collected by the Ministry of Government Services for certain registration services significantly exceeded the cost to provide the services by approximately \$60 million, which is six times more than the costs to deliver them. At the time of our audit, the Ministry of Government Services had not established an action plan to address this issue."

Of course, the ministry's response to the Auditor General, which was included in the report, which I'm sure was discussed by the Standing Committee on Public

Accounts was, "The 2009 budget noted that the government plans to introduce legislation to replace various alcohol and other fees, levies, and charges with taxes to enhance their operational structure and legislative clarity. The government proposes to introduce this legislation at the earliest opportunity." That's what the Auditor General's report said.

Of course, going forward two years to 2011, again the Auditor General made reference to this issue under chapter 4 of his report, government user fees, and he again reminded members of this Legislature and the general public of the Supreme Court of Canada ruling in 1998, concluding "that user fees could be considered unlawful" and that basically the government would have to pay them back to the people that they charged them from, "if they were determined by a court to be a tax that had not been established by enacted legislation or if the fee amounts charged were excessive and did not have a reasonable relationship to the cost of the services provided."

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In the annual report in 2009, he also references back to it, and reminds the House that it "noted that the Ministry of Government Services was collecting revenues for certain registration services that were at risk of constitutional challenge because the revenues exceeded the cost of providing the services by approximately"—again—" \$60 million, and it did not have an action plan to address this risk. The Ministry of Government Services has since completed a costing and pricing review of its fees as part of the 2011-12 results-based planning process and has identified potential remediation strategies, including the possible development of a plan to reduce the fees over time. We were informed that the Ministry of Government Services is currently working with the Ministry of Finance to develop a strategy to address this issue for consideration by the Treasury Board/Management Board of Cabinet; however, no timetable was provided for completing this."

My constituents told me that I should wave these auditor's reports in the House and ask this government what they have done to respond to the auditor's recommendations. I put this to the government: I would ask that the Minister of Finance respond to me in writing with an explanation as to what the government has done with respect to this issue because clearly it's an issue of serious concern when it's been identified in two Auditor General's reports in 2009 and 2011. If the government is in fact collecting fees which are in excess of the cost of providing that service, it would appear that they are contravening a Supreme Court ruling from 1998. So I put that to the government, and I would ask for a response.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I know I'm running out of time, and I've got a lot more to say. I hope to have a chance to speak to the budget motion when that is called for debate at some point in the future. I don't know if you're going to call it this afternoon perhaps or maybe next week—the actual budget motion. Some of us will have the chance to speak to that motion as well, and we will be able to

express our concerns on behalf of the people of our ridings who we're so privileged to represent.

But again, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to hearing the questions and comments of the other members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to take these two minutes to make a couple of comments. I guess the first one is that the budget process is never an easy one in a minority or majority government because it is the key thing that this Legislature does, to decide how we're going to order up the finances of the province of Ontario for the next year.

I'm quite proud that our caucus, under the leadership of Andrea Horwath, has taken that very seriously, both in the last budget and this budget has said, we're in a minority Parliament, so it is a question of being able to try to do what's right for the people back home and not just in our own constituencies as New Democrats, but for people in Ontario. She put forward last year, as she has this year, along with our caucus, a number of proposals which the government has accepted. That, I think, bodes well for what this Legislature should be all about. It should really be about how we, as legislators, come together and decide these issues about how we order up the finances of the province of Ontario.

I still don't know what's going to happen in the end, if we are ever going to be able to conclude a final budget motion or conclude a third reading on the budget bill, because there's a couple of steps to get there before we go. But it's clear that there's a couple of things that we are very keen on that need to be addressed, and that's the issue of accountability.

Yes, the government in this budget has responded by accepting most of the requirements that we had put forward as New Democrats. For that, I think that's a good thing. But the problem we now have is that we need to make sure that those things actually get delivered. This government has got a very long history of saying one thing and then doing absolutely nothing or doing the opposite when it comes to what the announcement was. That's why Andrea Horwath, for example, said yes today, that we need a parliamentary budget officer, essentially. Why? So that we can examine and scrutinize the expenses before they're made so that this Legislature can make better decisions about, "Is this the right thing to do?" I think that is a measured and reasonable request, and I certainly hope that the government follows through in accepting it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a pleasure for me to rise again in the House today to speak for just a couple of minutes in response to some of the remarks made not that long ago by the member across the way, from Wellington–Halton Hills, and also the member from Timmins–James Bay. I did have the chance to listen closely to the comments from the other side, and I have

to say that it was a good opportunity for me to hear some of the same concerns that have been raised time and time again.

As I said in my remarks in this chamber yesterday, this year's budget, as we propose it, is a document that is all about balance, fairness and moving forward in the most responsible way possible to make sure that we continue to have the kind of economic recovery here in the province of Ontario that the people of our various communities certainly desire and want us to have.

It's also very important to note that we are on track to balance our books by 2017-18. The fact that we continue to hit all of our deficit reduction targets and are one of the only governments in Canada to have done this consistently and repeatedly is something that I think speaks well in terms of making sure that we hit our targets over the course of the rest of the time between now and 2017-18.

Also in this budget, we continue to invest in crucial areas like public infrastructure. I think of my own riding, and I think of Highway 427, that this budget proposes to be extended, something that the people of York region and Peel region have been talking about for a number of years.

We are moving forward with these kinds of initiatives in this budget because we recognize that when it comes to economic recovery, when it comes to job creation and when it comes to fairness in society, this is the kind of budget that is going to keep moving Ontario forward. I would encourage the members opposite today, as I did yesterday, to take a look at what's in the budget, to reconsider, in the case of the official opposition, the stance that they took weeks and weeks and weeks ago, long before they had a chance to even hear the budget, that they would support this budget, and so would the members of the third party, so we can keep moving Ontario forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti): Thank you. The member from Barrie.

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to stand and speak to the member from—

Interjection: Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Rod Jackson: —Wellington–Halton Hills and his comments. They were very appropriate, I believe. What we're looking at in Ontario isn't necessarily supporting this budget as a party. We're talking about supporting this government. This government has gotten itself to the point where not only can we not support this budget, we can't support this government anymore.

They have not shown an ounce of respect for the Ontario taxpayer. We've seen this through massive scandals, billions of dollars worth of scandals at a time when our debt is increasing by billions and billions of dollars. In fact, Ontario's debt has doubled since 2003. The debt per person has also doubled—

Interjections.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Absolutely. Can you believe that? The debt per person in 2003 was \$11,000; it's \$20,000 now. I just can't help but feel that the Liberal government

has no idea how much damage they've done to the state of jobs and the economy: 300,000 new bureaucratic jobs at a time when there's 600,000 people out of work in Ontario.

You don't generate wealth by creating government jobs; you create wealth by creating small jobs. You create wealth by creating jobs for small businesses. Seventy-five percent of all people who are employed in Ontario are employed by businesses with four or less employees. Those are the people who we need to help employ more people. That's how we do it: We make it easier for them. Get rid of the red tape. Start actually doing things of action.

Actually take Don Drummond's—your own hand-picked economist—advice and implement more than 60%. He said that you need to implement, within a year, 100% of his proposals or take equivalent action. You haven't taken barely even half. Show the Ontario people that you mean what you say and actually take action instead of talking about it. We need more than window-dressing, folks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just wanted to say that it's a pleasure to rise, always, in this House, but to follow the member from Wellington–Halton Hills—he's been here a great many years—

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: He looks so young. And he always delivers a very measured talk. For that, I just want to say kudos. It was measured.

But I want to talk about accountability, because it has been raised. We in the New Democratic Party have talked about creating an office to ensure accountability from our friends across the aisle, but more to the point, we actually came to the table and negotiated with this government, and hence—even though this is not a New Democratic Party budget; it is a Liberal budget—moved the bar forward on some issues for our constituents, whereas the Progressive Conservatives didn't sit at the table, didn't negotiate, and as a result, the bar has not moved one inch for their constituents.

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In terms of accountability, when they go back to their ridings, when they speak to folks about what they have accomplished for them in terms of the budget process, they're going to have to say, "We just walked away. We didn't negotiate. We didn't ask for anything. We were going to vote against it; we said it before we were going to read it." The response, I would say as a constituent, would be, "Why not? Why didn't you?" We're talking about a budget with well over \$100 billion to spend. Shouldn't you go to fight for your constituency in some way, shape or form to hope that some benefits—again, it's not going to be your budget—accrue to them?

We in the New Democratic Party believe in accountability. We actually think we need an office of accountability, a financial officer. But certainly we came here, and we're elected by our constituency to get things done,

to make a difference, to change their lives in some small measure, and I believe that we will do that. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have decided not to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have the chance to respond very briefly to the members who provided comments with respect to my remarks: the member for Timmins–James Bay, the member for Vaughan, the member for Barrie and the member for Parkdale–High Park.

I want to say to the member for Vaughan, who indicated that this budget is one of balance and fairness and that the government is on track to balance its budget—I would refer him to page 109 of the budget papers. Of course, that indicates the government's so-called plan to balance the budget by 2017-18. If he looked at his own party's budget, he would see that the program spending from 2014-15, which would be the next fiscal year, through to 2017-18 would be frozen at about \$118 billion a year. We would question whether or not the government has the will to do that. I certainly don't see any details as to how that would be achieved. We know that this Liberal government has a propensity to raise spending, not freeze it. Certainly, this year's budget is a good example; it is, of course, going up by \$3.6 billion year over year.

I would say that the member for Barrie made a lot of good points in response to my remarks, and I thank him for that. He mentioned the Drummond report. Of course, we recall the Drummond report that was presented to the Legislature just over a year ago, where a significant number of recommendations were brought forward, some of which the government has shelved and some of which the government has adopted. But of course, we remember Don Drummond's recommendation that if we didn't do all of the recommendations and implement them all, it would be impossible to balance the budget by 2017-18. Our party has certainly argued that if they're going to pick and choose amongst the recommendations and not implement some, they've got to put others on the table if we're going to be successful in balancing that budget by 2017-18. We would urge the government to redouble its efforts in that respect: prioritize spending and ensure that the future of Ontario, the children and grandchildren, will in fact inherit a province that isn't including a massive provincial debt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always a privilege to stand in this House and an honour to speak on behalf of Ontarians and also those wonderful people from Parkdale–High Park.

When people tell you that you're going to be debating the budget and you're going to be speaking about the budget, there is a tendency for eyes to glaze over in the viewing public. I want you to stay tuned, though, because I am going to attempt to actually make this debate entertaining in some small measure.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Tell us a joke, Cheri.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm not going to tell any jokes, as the member from Davenport suggested. No, there are no jokes, unfortunately. It's far from a laughing matter. But I do want to tell some stories.

The first one is this: At a conference that I attended of state legislators and also members of provincial Parliament from across Canada and the States, there was a keynote speech. The keynote speech was by a governor—I won't mention the name; in fact, I don't remember his name—who was retiring from his role as governor in Pennsylvania; a Democrat. He said, "I'm retiring, so now I can tell the truth. I don't have to bow to any pressures; I'm outta here."

"Here's what we need to do in the United States—not just in the state of Pennsylvania; here's what we need to do in the entire United States. We need a medicare system like the Canadian one, that single-payer medicare system. We need to put more money into education and more money into infrastructure."

Interjections.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Absolutely. "And to pay for all of that," he said, "we need to roll back the \$900 billion of tax cuts to the wealthy and corporations"—brought in by Bush alone, \$900 billion; the number is staggering, but it's true—"and \$1.6 trillion in corporate and wealthy tax cuts since the Reagan era."

Then he said, with a note of sadness in his voice, "And we're not going to do any of the above." So sayonara, he said; off the stage. That was it, one of the better political speeches I've ever heard.

If you hold that image in your mind, you get at some of what we're facing here, and it's a problem. It's a problem because even when it comes to what seems paltry in comparison to those figures, the \$1.3 billion we've been asking for that we don't want to be spent—a gift to corporations, as it were, to be able to write their HST off of their entertainment expenses—we find out late in the game, well after we've had this as one of our asks on the table in the New Democratic Party, that, lo and behold, it obviously wasn't taken very seriously or seems to have slipped the Minister of Finance's mind. But in the days before the budget was tabled, he writes a letter to the federal finance minister asking to negotiate around this.

Our critic Peggy Nash, who is the MP in my riding of Parkdale—High Park, actually stood up and asked a question on this topic in the House. The response that she got was no: "No, we're not going to renegotiate." To leave it, first of all, that late in the game; second of all, to pay it such small heed as to treat it that way; and thirdly, to absolve the responsibility this provincial government has around revenue sources is very strange, I have to say, very strange indeed.

There are some other notes around here that go to the former governor of Pennsylvania's problems with his own government. For example, in this budget, we see that corporate taxes are going down again—and I just pointed out how—from about \$11 billion as a revenue stream to about \$10 billion. On the other hand, where is

the new money coming from? We see income taxes going up about \$4 billion. They're going up about \$4 billion, from \$26 billion to about \$30 billion. One wonders why? How? Who is going to pay these extra income taxes? It's not really spelled out in this budget; it's kind of a question mark, the assumption being, and it's somewhat fleshed out, "Well, we're going to be growing. We're going to be earning more. We're going to somehow make these targets." I would say a red flag, a suspicious red flag there.

Really, if you look at the history of corporate taxation in this province—by the way, one of the lowest corporate tax bases in the western world, far lower, my friends, than the Americans. Our friends to the right here and our friends who pretend they're not to the right across the aisle would say, "This is how you create jobs. What you do is you pour the money in at the top to the wealthy and to the large corporations and, somehow, it's going to trickle down into jobs." But the reality is it hasn't. It never has, it never will, and it hasn't. About 86 billion in Canadian dollars spent on that theory have ended up in banks, just stashed away by those very same corporations and wealthy individuals who didn't use the money to create jobs, who didn't invest in infrastructure, who didn't invest in education, who didn't invest in machinery or creating jobs of any sort. They just have it sitting there. So it didn't work.

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I always love the "tax and spend" expression when it's applied to us, of course, or to the Liberals by my friends to the right of us here, because what government doesn't tax and spend? Every government taxes and spends. The only question is this: Who do you tax and who do you spend the money on?

I would warrant that the Liberals and Conservatives have something in common here. Clearly from this document, and clearly from words from the mouths of my friends in the Progressive Conservative Party, what they would like to do is spend it on corporations and wealthy individuals, and tax the middle class and those below, both directly and also by way of cutting social services. That's a different kind of tax, right?

What we in the New Democratic Party have said, always as part of our DNA as social democrats, is that what we think you should do is, of course, tax more progressively and fairly, that corporations and wealthy individuals should pay their fair share and that money should be spent fairly on social services where they're needed. That actually generates wealth, and by the way, it's been proven around the world to do just that. That kind of progressive economic thinking—not the thinking of bookkeeping but progressive economic thinking which, by the way, is progressive business thinking too. I used to be in business. Business works this way too. You invest money first, and then you see the profits come out after. You don't slash and burn and somehow expect to make money. It doesn't work that way anywhere, and it doesn't work that way in government either.

We are now dealing with a province that spends less on social services per capita than anyone else in Canada,

so clearly the Liberal government has a lot in common with the Progressive Conservatives; in fact, we on this side like to say that they're Conservatives in a hurry. That's what is happening over there. What else can we say about taxing corporations and wealthy individuals fairly so that others are not unfairly taxed?

A member over here, when he was speaking about this budget, brought up the spectre of Greece. Greece is a popular spectre to bring up in these circles and in these discussions, but it's always done ill-advisedly, because in fact austerity budgets in Greece are what caused the problem. It wasn't social democracy or socialism in Greece; it was a conservative government, time and time again, that slashed and burned, that created the problem Greece had. So if you're going to compare us to Greece, then that's comparing one conservative government against possibly another.

Again, what we proved—and I think we in the New Democratic Party proved this in the last budget go-round—was that there is an appetite among Ontarians for fairness: fairness in taxation, fairness in revenue tools. We proved that with, I think, one of the best things we've done, and that is to push this government across the aisle, a Liberal government, into a wealth tax. Now, it was more symbolic than actual; I'll give that, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't a lot of money that was generated by that, but it polled at 78%. Seventy-eight percent of Ontarians thought that somebody making over \$500,000 a year could afford to pay just a little bit more to keep what we value as Ontarians going. You know, this isn't rocket science.

I'll share another story. I met a broker at a function I went to. He made \$500,000 a year. He came up to me in the last budget go-round, and I expected to be criticized because he was one of the ones we wanted to levy that tax on. He didn't complain, but he said, "You know who you should really go after? Some of my clients are getting away with sending their money south to the Cayman Islands and other places. You should go after them." That's what the broker said, who made \$500,000 a year. So there is clearly an appetite for fairness there.

I've already spent some of the time. I want to spend time on the other part of the equation, and that's where the money is going, because I had a very poignant call from a constituent who's on ODSP and wanted to know what was in the budget for him. I explained to him, you know, "Instead of being clawed back the \$200 you make, you can keep the whole \$200," and he said, "But I'm disabled, and I can't work." Then I said, "Okay, so you get a 1% increase on your disability cheque," and he said, "My rent went up 2.5% last year."

Now, that to me is—I know I'm not alone in this, but one of the reasons I ran for political office, one of the reasons I have the privilege of standing here today, is because of the issues of poverty. I have to say that if this is a social justice Premier and this is supposedly a social justice budget, then it's sadly lacking when at the end of the day those who are most marginalized in our community are actually worse off than they were under

Mike Harris. And that is the reality. That is the reality. They are worse off.

Now, did we put forward minimal demands in order to work with the government to get something done? Did we want the bar pushed ahead a little bit? Yes, we got that, Mr. Speaker. We got that. But this, I remind everyone, is a Liberal budget; it is not a New Democratic Party budget. As such, it does a very Liberal thing. It does the least required of it where the marginalized are concerned, and it does more than was ever asked where the wealthy and large corporations are concerned. So that's really what we see.

Is there anything about community start-up in this budget? No, there is not, sadly, even though those who work in the anti-poverty area would have liked to see that come back.

Is there anything, even a mention, about housing, when we have the worst per capita investment in housing of any province across Canada? No, not one word about housing, unfortunately.

Are there some good things? Yes. But let me put this forward, Mr. Speaker: We really have to shift our thinking. Poverty actually costs us money. It costs us, in fact, and this is proven, about \$10 billion a year.

On another file, I want to use the example of Quebec, because when you look at Quebec and their investment, for example, in child care, where you could get child care at \$7—I think it's \$10 a day now—they put the money in. Just like the example of priming the pump for corporations, you invest and you expect a return. They did that with child care in Quebec. They invested heavily in child care so that folk who needed it could have it. And guess what? After a number of years, it not only pays for itself; it makes them money. It makes \$1.05 to every dollar they invested in subsidized child care in Quebec. That's true economy. That's how good business thinks. You invest and you get a return on your investment. That's what they did.

If we invested in trying to eradicate poverty to the degree that the situation calls for, we would in fact save—not only save money; we would make money in our budget. For example, poverty costs about \$2.9 billion in health care costs. Child poverty costs between about \$1.3 billion and \$1.6 billion. You know, locking people up, the justice system, a lot of the social determinants of health—and a lot of folk who end up on the street end up using the justice system—that is around another billion.

I mean, productivity costs alone make up the balance. When you have people living and dying on the street, you are wasting not only human potential; you are wasting economic potential as well. That's the way an economist thinks. It's even the way some business leaders are coming around to thinking on the issue of poverty. But we don't see that reflected here.

Another story: I remember when I used to be the housing critic, and I sat when John Gerretsen, who is now Attorney General, was then the minister in charge of housing and municipal affairs. There he was in government agencies and we showed him the figures to

prove that it costs over \$100 a night to keep somebody in a shelter. What, you say? What kind of economy would pay that money to keep somebody in a shelter? For \$100 a night, there are some motels I could direct you to where you get a night in a motel. But that is what poverty means. Poverty is a skewed way of looking at the economy.

So why is this government not investing in housing, knowing it costs so much to keep people homeless? It costs money to keep people poor. It costs money to keep people homeless. It costs money to keep children in poverty. This costs us in real dollars. So where's the political will to really tackle these issues? I don't see it. I don't see it here. I see some minimal steps forward, yes, but certainly not enough to see the return on investment that one would expect, the kind of return on investment that I've just described happens in Quebec, where \$1 into child care gets \$1.05 back; it's just that you have to put the dollar in first. Just like business: You put money in and you get profits out.

1650

Finally—I'm running out of time—I just want to use an example, again, of Sweden, where my husband and I travel and talk to people. Here is a community of nine million people; we have 13 million-odd in Ontario. Somehow in Sweden they manage to do things we can only dream about. Somehow in Sweden they manage to have free post-secondary. Somehow in Sweden they've managed to eradicate poverty for all intents and purposes. Somehow in Sweden they manage to have a minimum wage well over \$13 an hour, a unionized McDonald's to boot, an 85% unionization rate, by the way, and dental, pharma care and all of those programs that we wish, in our dreams, we could have here in Canada or in Ontario. At the same time, they have an incredibly vibrant economy. They have Sony Ericsson. They have Ikea. They have Volvo. We could name a number of Swedish companies. They're doing very well, thank you very much. They're essentially baking a bigger pie and dividing it up more fairly.

Ultimately, as we move forward in the budget process, you move forward to the point where I think an NDP budget could actually be tabled. When we're in government, we'll be looking at issues like that. For now, it's enough to say, on two fronts: Number one, on revenue streams, there's some discussion to be had. In light of the Pennsylvania governor's story, do any of us here really want to walk away from this chamber and say, "We should have, we could have and we didn't"? Should the wealthy not pay their fair share? Should corporations not pay their fair share? It's a question.

On the other side, the poor gentleman on ODSP for whom \$2 doesn't mean much because he can't work and for whom a 1% raise doesn't mean much because his rent just went up by 2.5%, we have to answer to him too, and we have to answer to all those like him, all those children and women and men in our community who barely get by, who are doing worse now than they ever did under Mike Harris and his drastic and draconian cuts and who

we need to answer for, both ethically and economically, because not only would money invested in their lives easily pay back \$1.05 on \$1, but because it's the right thing to do. Just very simply, it's the right thing to do.

I'm almost out of time. Suffice it to say, I didn't get time to talk about holding the government's feet to the fire on their promises, because that's another piece of it. That's why we proposed a financial accountability office, which is nothing novel. This is what the feds have been doing for a while; we just want here what they have.

I think, in light of the gas plants, eHealth and Ornge, it's the very least we can ask for, and, in light of the promises, such as they are, that are made in this budget, it's the very least we could ask for too. I'm going to stop there and let others have a kick at this can. All I can say, to the person on ODSP and the governor in Pennsylvania who didn't see the American reality he wanted to see, is: We're working on it. We've pushed the bar a little bit, but boy, we've got a long way to go.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to commend the member from Parkdale—High Park, who put a number of views on the record this afternoon. I think it's very important.

I just happened to see a couple of interesting quotes today from a number of very prominent Ontario leaders. One is by Sid Ryan, the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour:

"I don't think [the NDP] should call an election. I don't think they should bring down the government. Labour leaders have spoken to Andrea a couple of weeks ago, and we relayed that message that we think now is an opportunity to get some decent gains for our people in Ontario."

Then we have Dave Coles, another significant labour leader in the province of Ontario. He's the national president of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union. His quote is, "This [budget] is proof that a minority government can work to the advantage of working people."

Then we have Fred Hahn—Fred does great work on behalf of CUPE in the province of Ontario: "I don't think the people of Ontario necessarily want an election. I don't think this is the time for one," from Mr. Hahn, a very distinguished labour leader in the province of Ontario.

I just want to highlight what I think is one of the most significant aspects of this budget, and it's the increase to the Ontario Child Benefit, which will move up to \$1,210 per child on July 13, which is time-sensitive to getting the budget approved. Together, these increases will extend the OCB benefits to an additional 90,000 children in 46,000 families in the province of Ontario.

I always recall what the late June Callwood—a very distinguished Canadian—said when we introduced the OCB; she said it was the most progressive piece of legislation in the province of Ontario in the last four decades. What better person to support the OCB?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member from Cambridge.

Applause.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member from Northumberland–Quinte West, who thought it was a good idea to applaud when I rose in this House.

I'm very pleased today to speak to the comments made by the member from Parkdale–High Park, who obviously expresses some of the sentiments that she has not only felt over the last little while, but heard from residents across the province of Ontario.

I do want to restate a quote that I think is very interesting; it came from the leader of the third party, where she states that people were “tired of being ignored by governments that seemed more concerned with themselves, more concerned with their own political skin, with their own political opportunity, with their own political well-being than they were with everyday people.” That was part of the leader of the third party’s response to the budget motion that she spoke to earlier this week.

I have to wonder how you can make such comments and still potentially prop up this government. I know the member from Parkdale–High Park stated that this isn’t an NDP budget, because the NDP would have written a different budget. I note with interest that she suggested that the NDP will table an NDP budget when the NDP forms the government. I find that very interesting, that she phrased it in such a way, because certainly—as the Premier likes to talk in this House—this is not just a budget, but it is a confidence motion. It’s an expression of this House on whether they have, and continue to have, the confidence of this Legislature, and that is something I think the member from Parkdale–High Park should address.

But I also want to ask her in my concluding few seconds here: Does the member think that we have a revenue problem in the province of Ontario or a spending problem?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: It’s my privilege to rise and speak on behalf of people in Davenport. I’m always privileged to speak after my colleague from Parkdale–High Park; we share a boundary, we represent similar communities and what that member said in this chamber just a few minutes ago is a refreshing change of pace. It’s something we don’t hear enough of in this House.

I think she made it very clear—and I need to make it clear to people in my community—that this is not an NDP budget; this is a Liberal budget. In fact, it shares more similarities with the Conservatives here than it does with us. However, I know that we have done our very best to engage this Parliament, to make sure that the other members in this chamber understand the kind of sensible perspective that the member from Parkdale–High Park brought forward: the understanding that we live here together collectively, and that we invest in our communities.

That’s the role of government, to make sure that we make that investment and that it pays off for us all in the future—it should. It’s clear that that has not been happening in the province of Ontario.

It’s interesting to see members on the government side who actually—their eyes light up when they hear the member from Parkdale–High Park speak, because, I think, in their heart of hearts they think that this is actually what we should be doing. For whatever reason—maybe they’ve been there too long—they have not been able to deliver that.

She speaks in this way that is inspiring, because it’s about the kind of society that we could have, that we should have and that we can have, and yet it’s the kind of society that this government is not delivering. This government has run out of steam and, in fact—well, I don’t know if that’s true. I think it continues to steam along in the same way that it has been, and it is in the direction of austerity. It is in the direction of cutting off the very tools that we have in this Legislature to make life better for people in Ontario. We’re going to continue to engage to try to make this government work for now, but I do not have a lot of faith in what they’re doing.

1700

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: For the second time today, it’s a pleasure for me to stand and provide some commentary with respect to the remarks made by the member from Parkdale–High Park.

I agree with what has been said both by my colleague from Peterborough but also the member from Davenport. The member from Parkdale–High Park, I think, did speak eloquently and put a lot of very interesting issues forward here in the chamber today. I think it’s actually, from our perspective on this side of the House, a welcome change as compared to what we’ve seen from the official opposition over the last number of weeks and months, in that members of the third party, while they may not agree with us on every single aspect of this budget, are at least demonstrating to the people of Ontario that there’s a willingness to have that conversation and engage in that dialogue.

What I find particularly interesting listening to the debate so far on the budget in this chamber is to witness the members of the official opposition trying to untie themselves from the pretzel, that sort of entanglement that they put themselves in months and months ago when they told the people of Ontario that notwithstanding whatever might appear in this document, notwithstanding whatever we might propose to do to keep Ontario moving forward, they had no interest in playing a constructive role and they had no interest in doing the job the people of their communities elected them to do, which does stand in stark contrast to what we’re seeing from members of the third party, who I know support—I’m assuming, given the comments made by people like the member from Beaches–East York around the Ontario Trillium Benefit and moves that we’ve made regarding auto insurance.

I've said it before in this chamber over the last couple of days, and I'll say it again: I would call on the members of the official opposition to reconsider the unfortunate and irresponsible position they took weeks ago regarding moving our province forward, to reconsider their position and put the crass, partisan politics aside and work with us and work with the members of the third party and pass this budget. Let's keep Ontario moving forward together.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Parkdale—High Park, you have two minutes for a reply.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thanks to all who engaged in this debate. To the question of revenue and spending—and this government has a problem with both, of course. They have a problem with, I would say, taxing and spending, the classic adage. They spend too much on gifting corporations and the wealthy, and they tax families both directly and indirectly through cutting their social services. So they have a problem with both. In that, we're in agreement. The answer, of course, we're in stark disagreement on.

In terms of the Ontario Federation of Labour or CUPE and their so-called support, I would question that quite decidedly. These are organizations that were appalled at Bill 115, the bill that the Liberal government brought in attacking collective bargaining and attacking teachers, and of course are not supportive of this government when they make moves like that at all.

I also want to say just for the record that it's very important that both Liberals and Conservatives understand where the record really sits historically with our parties. The New Democratic Party, with one exception, has had the best record of balancing budgets in the history of Canada—we have, provincially. The only one who didn't is now the leader, or was until recently, of the Liberal Party, and that was Bob Rae. That was the only government that didn't have a good record of balancing its budget. All others have had exemplary—including Tommy Douglas, who I think balanced something like 16 different budgets and still managed to bring in medicare. So it can be done, Mr. Speaker; it absolutely can be done. It arguably should be done. But we have to think economically and not like bookkeepers. We have to put investment in to see the results out, and I hope we do that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: I've sat here all afternoon, and I've listened to all of the members offer their opinions on what's in the budget, what should be in the budget, what's not in the budget and whether that's good or bad. But the real, real test of this budget is not necessarily what we think or what the opposition thinks of the budget, but the real test is, what does the public outside of this place think about the budget? Because they're the ones who are going to convey to us their reaction to the budget, and it's incumbent upon us to take their views into account. They're the taxpayers, they're the public, they're the people who sent us here.

At the risk of really upsetting people over there on the opposition PC side and the third party side, I'm going to take a little different tack and I'm going to tell you what the public really thinks of this budget.

Let me start with Sid Ryan, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour: "I don't think [the NDP] should call an election. I don't think they should bring down the government. Labour leaders have spoken to Andrea a couple of weeks ago, and we relayed the message that we think now is an opportunity to get some decent gains for the people of Ontario."

What does the Canadian Federation of Independent Business say? "The Canadian Federation of Independent Business ... is pleased to see movement on some small business priorities in today's Ontario budget, including pooled registered pension plans ... the employer health ... tax exemption and plans to eliminate the provincial deficit."

There you are: two views arguably from the left and the right.

What do the banks think of the budget? Derek Burleton, vice-president and deputy chief economist, Toronto-Dominion Bank Financial Group: "A lower debt than we expected five, six weeks ago and a lower deficit, so [a] good starting point at least in which we can tackle the next four years of restraint."

What do the teachers think? Kevin O'Dwyer, president, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association: "We have seen a new tone of openness and collegiality in this new government. We saw this in the recent negotiations with teacher federations and we see this again with the Ontario budget. Clearly the government has listened to the opposition and to Ontarians in crafting this budget. It shows what can be accomplished if people and parties focus on making minority government work for the common good of all Ontarians."

What does distinguished NDP MPP and cabinet minister Frances Lankin think? Frances Lankin says, "We all know how important it is for people on social assistance to have the opportunity to find meaningful employment. Giving people the chance to earn more without lowering their assistance is a major first step. I am also pleased that the government plans to engage business leaders to champion hiring persons with disabilities."

How about this? Munir Sheikh, commissioner, Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario: "I am pleased with the first steps being proposed by the government to improve the social assistance program. The commission also recommended the structure of the program be fundamentally transformed. I am encouraged this transformation will continue to be on the agenda of the new cabinet committee on poverty reduction."

What do municipalities—important stakeholders—think of the budget? Russ Powers, president, Association of Municipalities of Ontario, AMO—we all go to their conference; it's a must-attend conference for MPPs. What does Russ say? "The government has indicated an accountability and transparency to move forward on dealing with gridlock ... I think this is a good start."

What does the president of OPSEU say? The president of OPSEU, Smokey Thomas—listen to this, third party opposite: “I don’t see it as an election budget.”

What do the universities think of it? Constance Adamson, president, Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations: “We’re pleased to see that youth and youth employment are priorities for Premier Wynne.”

What does Kaley Kennedy, of the Canadian Federation of Students, think? “We are happy to see that the government will be spending some money on a youth employment strategy.”

This may be of interest to the member opposite in the third party. Sarah Blackstock—she’s deeply involved in the network for poverty reduction—“We think this budget is an opportunity to continue reducing poverty in Ontario. We are really eager to see the opposition parties work with the government to ensure that we continue making progress.”

1710

Well, what does Gil Moore think? You might ask who Gil Moore is. Well, he happens to be the CEO of Metalworks Group, and he says: “On behalf of our 85 employees at Metalworks, I wish to congratulate the government of Ontario for its commitment to maintaining a vibrant music industry. As a result of today’s announcement, the industry will get a much-needed boost in the arm.... Today is a great day for music in Ontario.” And it goes on and on.

Now, here, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters—

Hon. Jeff Leal: They’re a great group.

Hon. David Zimmer: A great group. They’re the ones that are focusing on making stuff in Ontario and exporting it, because we need those export dollars, money that’s going to come in. That’s one of the great strategies: Jobs, jobs, jobs.

Ian Howcroft, who is the vice-president of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters: “We are pleased to see the government formally recognize the importance of manufacturing to the province’s economy....” And here’s the key: “Overall, this budget is a good signal that” Ontario “wants to work closer with industry.”

Well, what does our good friend of the third party opposite and our good friend—and I wish it was your good friend—Ken Lewenza, national president of the Canadian Auto Workers—

Hon. Jeff Leal: What does Ken say?

Hon. David Zimmer: “These investments in our social and economic fabric are both badly needed, and appreciated. Creating new jobs and protecting the well-being of our families should be government’s top priorities”—should be the government’s top priorities—and this budget acknowledges that.

And our concern about seniors, long-term home care, Sue Vanderbent, executive director of the Ontario Home Care Association—and we should all be deeply interested in this home care issue: “We are pleased with the budget today because we know it will help us to serve more Ontarians and keep them safe and independent at home.”

How could you possibly vote against what we’re doing on this issue?

Well, what do the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario tell us? I would think that the official opposition would be certainly interested in what the accounting profession has to say about the budget. The accounting profession, Merv Hillier, president of the CMAs: “We support the direction the government’s budget is taking and commend Premier Wynne and Minister Sousa for facing difficult issues head on....This budget sets the tone for renewed inspiration, continued conversations and achievable solutions.”

Hon. James J. Bradley: Wow, what a cross-section.

Hon. David Zimmer: What a cross-section.

So what does the nursing profession tell us?

Hon. Jeff Leal: How many more quotes do you have?

Hon. David Zimmer: Oh, I’ve got almost three quarters of an inch here.

Rhonda Seidman-Carlson, who is the president of the RNA of Ontario, says: “RNAO applauds the government for accepting the wisdom of Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh who made this recommendation when they reviewed Ontario’s social assistance system.” That should be of particular interest to the members of the third party.

Well, what does the Ontario Chamber of Commerce tell us? Allan O’Dette, the president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce: “This year’s budget shows progress on many issues that matter to our members. We applaud progress on pooled registered pension plans, and holding the line on corporate income tax will keep us competitive.”

Just to balance off what the chamber of commerce thinks of the budget, we sort of flip to the other end of the political spectrum, if you will. What does Fred Hahn, president of CUPE, tell us? Now here we are, chamber of commerce and CUPE. Fred Hahn: “I don’t think the people of Ontario necessarily want an election. I don’t think this is the time for one.”

What does the Elementary Teachers’ Federation tell us? Their president, Sam Hammond, says, “Along with employment initiatives, funding to support expansion of summer learning programs for students in low-income communities, and funds to improve aboriginal student achievement, are welcome investments in our youth.” As the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I was particularly touched and welcome those items in the budget that are going to make a contribution to a better life for our aboriginal Ontarians.

Here’s an interesting quote from a former high-profile and very competent Tory cabinet minister, indeed a Tory finance minister, Janet Ecker, who is the president of Toronto Financial Services Alliance.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Wasn’t she a PC?

Hon. David Zimmer: What does she say? Yes, a PC—a Conservative finance minister.

“We are pleased that the actual deficit is better than forecast and we encourage the government to continue on this path.”

Interjections.

Hon. David Zimmer: Well, here's one I think that'll tickle the official opposition next door, because you know, they speak from a certain point on this political spectrum: the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm waiting in anticipation.

Hon. David Zimmer: Are you ready?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm ready.

Hon. David Zimmer: Are you ready?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm ready.

Hon. David Zimmer: Candice Malcolm, Canadian Taxpayers Federation: "There are some indicators of economic growth ... and there's a payroll tax cut which helps; it helps small businesses looking to hire new employees ... there are ... inroads" here. That's the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

Here's another quote from the Pembina Institute, Cherise Burda, the Ontario policy director—and this is a think tank; it focuses on business, economic affairs, especially issues in the GTA having to do with transportation: "We are happy to see the Ontario government follow through on promises to fund transit expansion in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area by introducing paid express/high-occupancy lanes, calling for a national transit strategy, and committing to dedicated transit revenues." Aha.

What does the Ontario Long Term Care Association—now we're back to the seniors issue again. Candace Chartier tells us: "Today's 2% increase in funding will assist in providing safer quality care for Ontario's most frail and vulnerable" citizens. Would you really want those people out there in the polling booth voting against you because you challenged this thought? "Strengthening long-term care is a win for the whole health care system, and essential to building an Ontario where seniors can live well, longer and where we get better value" care for our health dollars.

Here's another quote from Sheila Block, director, economic analysis, of the Wellesley Institute, another think tank: "Kathleen Wynne's first budget provides concrete progress on social assistance reforms."

I say to my member sitting beside me, the Minister of Rural Affairs, you might be interested in the reaction of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'd love to hear; I'd love to hear that.

Hon. David Zimmer: I think you know one Bill Vrebosch.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Nipissing riding. West Ferris—I think he's the mayor.

Hon. David Zimmer: Northern Ontario.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Yes, he is. Great guy.

Hon. David Zimmer: Be careful what people are thinking in northern Ontario, because here's what the Rural Ontario Municipal Association thinks: "The \$100 million being dedicated to rural and northern" communities "is exactly what we've been looking for for years. A separation of the money to make sure that rural and northern Ontario get a fair share ... For the government to recognize that, to me, is a feather in their cap."

That's what they're saying, the folks that you're responsible for, Minister of Rural Affairs.

So I urge caution opposite when you're toying with the idea of voting against this budget. Do you want to bring down that hammer on your heads? Do you want to bring down that hammer on your heads?

1720

Well, what does a very distinguished and effective and senior union have to say about this? I would urge the members of the third party to keep this in mind. Here we go: the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union. What do they tell us? Dave Coles, who is their national president, says, "This [budget] is proof that minority government can work to the advantage of working people"—working people. I ask the third party to pay attention to that. "This [budget] is proof that minority government can work to the advantage of working people."

Ontario's medical doctors: What's their reaction to the budget?

Interjection: They want to hear it.

Hon. David Zimmer: Yes. Here's what the OMA says: "Ontario's doctors were pleased that the 2013 Ontario provincial budget reiterated its commitment to move ahead with the implementation of several key initiatives, including children's mental health, reducing childhood obesity rates, the expansion of e-consultations, shifting ... routine procedures out of hospital and into clinics, and further investments in home care and long-term care."

We've heard a lot about gridlock issues and transportation issues. So what do you suppose the Ontario Public Transit Association has to say about the budget? Norm Cheesman says, "The commitment to new revenue tools and a permanent dedicated gas tax in support of transit infrastructure contained in today's budget demonstrates that public transit is a key priority. These new measures will help alleviate ... congestion, provide ... efficient mobility options and boost the economy, not only in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, but" all of Ontario.

Speaker, I've got about a minute and a half, and I still have—I make this just slightly over half an inch of comments on the budget. I have comments from police officers; I have comments from health associations; I have comments from universities; I have comments from more health care.

I have comments from—here's one from the Canadian Restaurant and Food Services Association. They endorse the budget. Here are more comments from Sid Ryan; the Canadian Taxpayers Federation again; the Ontario Hospital Association—and it goes on and on and on.

In 45 seconds, what's the message contained in these endorsements? Two messages—taking a look at the budget, they like the budget. They think the budget is a good one. They think the budget is going to build the Ontario economy. They think that the budget is fair to all sectors in Ontario. Whether you're in social assistance, whether you're in business, whether you're a professional, whether you're an aboriginal, it's a good budget for everybody.

The second message, reading these quotes, is: At your peril, opposition members—official opposition, and third party—at your peril do you vote against this budget.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: With all your quotes, I guess we can expect that you will support our want-of-confidence vote.

First and foremost, I want to say to the leader of the third party: Hopefully, you're going to do your job and govern. If not, please let your 1-800 number be the leader of your third party. You can't lead from a crowd.

Second of all, I'd like to say to the government that you can't constantly start fires and then jump on the pump to put them out. Here are the facts: We have 600,000 people unemployed, we have 400,000 people on welfare, and we have 200,000 people who have stopped looking for a job. We spend \$1.8 million more an hour than we take in, and 20% of what we spend is borrowed money; it's our third-largest expenditure behind health and education. We owe it, as the Queen's loyal opposition, to do what is best for the Ontario people and to make sure that they have a life that they deserve.

You have taken our credit card and maxed it out. You've put our children and grandchildren in the terrible situation that they're inheriting a debt that they don't deserve.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, with all of us as PCs, has come up with our 13 white papers, our discussion papers. We have a plan. We need to get the economy going. Capital is mobile. Bay Street knows it. People aren't going to come to high debt and high taxes and high hydro.

We can't continue to have everybody leaving this beautiful province. We are now receiving equalization payments in what has now changed Confederation, for the first time ever. If that doesn't scare anybody, I don't know what else possibly could. We owe it to the people of Ontario to make a change and to change the team.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Prue: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: quite the speech. In my nearly 12 years in this place, this is the first time I have ever seen a minister of the crown speak for almost the entire 20 minutes and not have a single original thought come out of his mouth. He quoted all and sundry about what a wonderful budget this is. But, you know, I remember many of those speeches myself, and it's very easy in a two-page comment to lift a line or two; because almost all of those had a "but" at the end, but he conveniently stopped before the "but." He conveniently stopped any criticism at all that was contained in the majority of these people.

The plethora of quotes conveniently left out any and all criticism, but I think the telling thing was at the very end when he threatened the members on the other side of the House. He threatened them that if we act, we do so at the greatest moral peril possible for a politician, for an Ontarian and everything else, because this government is

so correct in his view; in his rose-coloured-glasses view, it is so correct that everyone in the province will think, "Oh, my God. This is the Mother Teresa of all political parties and we will, in our own way, find that great peril if we, for even one second, disagree with them."

I would beg to disagree. He never talked about anything that my constituents and his constituents are talking about each and every day. Some of it, a little bit, is about the budget, but most of it is how this government is champion of all governments at wasting people's money and opportunity. That's really what he should have talked about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Indeed, I listened very intently to the speech that was delivered by my colleague the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the MPP from the wonderful riding of Willowdale. I must say, the only endorsement that was missing this afternoon indeed was the endorsement from Mother Teresa. I'm sure, with inspiration from above, that she would be sending us a message to add to that long list of distinguished people in this wonderful province who have provided laudatory comments for the budget that was delivered just one week ago.

I do have a moment. I just want to share with you—it's 5:30; I know some people from Peterborough have started their dinner, but I'm sure they're just tuning in to the parliamentary channel just before the last course. I know that they want to know that in terms of jobs and growth, we're still providing the competitive advantage of keeping taxes low. We're investing \$35 billion to modernize infrastructure and create—I know the people of Peterborough want to hear this number—100,000-plus jobs in infrastructure for roads and bridges.

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We're creating a youth jobs fund—particularly important to those wonderful students that attend Fleming College in Peterborough and go to Trent University. In fact, next year we'll be opening, at Fleming College, the most modern trades and technology centre in Ontario, in Canada and in North America. We all look forward to that great day.

We're also investing in fairness in society. I noted the increase in the Ontario Child Benefit, and allowing for people an exemption on the first \$200 of their earnings on ODSP and OW—a significant step forward. Auto insurance—I know that in the GTA, to get that deduction—whether you drive a BMW or a Jeep Compass like I do, there will be an opportunity to get that deduction.

A great budget for all.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to respond to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and his comments on the budget. I think that I have to agree with the member from Beaches—East York that you can pull some quotes out of the air and make it seem like this is a budget everybody supports. I have to point out, particularly, the Canadian Taxpayer Federation. I read their press release, and let

me just tell you what the title of that press release says: It says, “The Ontario Budget Gets a Passing Grade—Barely.”

I was a professor before I came to this place. A barely passing grade was 50%, a D minus. The next grade would be an F. How can anyone stand up in this place and say that that’s actually an acceptable score on a terrible, terrible budget? Obviously, they can’t; they haven’t really come to grips with it.

Who wrote the budget? I think this is an important question that we ought to ask—a budget that lacked any originality—the only thing inspiring from this budget came from the New Democrats. Don’t you have anything positive to say, anything inspiring that you want to tell the people? No, you pick a few ideas from the NDP, you slap your logo on it, and you say, “This is a great budget.”

I have to wonder: Who is at peril? Who is at peril when they lack the originality, they lack the leadership, they’re mired in scandal and the only thing they have to offer the people of Ontario is a budget that nobody—and I repeat, nobody—believes they will implement, because they’ve lost all credibility? No one trusts them anymore, and that’s why this budget should be defeated on those points alone.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, you have two minutes.

Hon. David Zimmer: Here’s what I hear in Willowdale about the Tory position on the budget. I get calls—I’m not going to give names. I get calls that identify as Liberals. I get calls where some identify as NDP. I get calls, and people clearly identify as Conservative Party members, but what I hear from those Conservative Party members—and I haven’t had one call from a Conservative in Willowdale that has been critical of the budget.

What I have heard from those people—they are good, responsible Conservatives, and do you know that they’re upset about? They say, “David, I don’t know what’s going on with that party that I’ve been a member of, but how could they possibly, a day or two after the new Premier assumed office, say, ‘Look, new Premier, we know you’ve got to introduce a budget in the spring, and that’s going to be a couple of months down the road, but we’re telling you right now, today, that whatever is in that budget—and we don’t need to see it, we don’t want to see it, we don’t want to talk to you about it and we don’t want to give you any ideas about what we might think should be in the budget—we’re going to vote against it?’”

How does that fit the definition of Her Majesty’s loyal opposition? That’s the parliamentary tradition: Her Majesty’s loyal opposition. It seems to me that it’s incumbent upon opposition parties, if they don’t like the budget or they’ve got criticisms of it, to offer up some alternatives.

With respect to the third party, they had criticisms of the budget. Fair enough; they sat down responsibly and they offered up alternatives. They said, “Think about this.” We discussed it with them, back and forth. We put

some of those ideas—because, frankly, they were some good ideas—into the budget. That’s a loyal opposition. That’s a responsible opposition, not this, “We’ll have nothing to do with you—no conversations about the budget,” from the get-go. How can you say no before you’ve seen the document?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I’m going to take a couple of moments to respond to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. There are a couple of things that I think need to be said and put on the record in terms of our approach to this budget.

For months we have, as a party and individually, led by our leader, Tim Hudak, put forward ideas that have been systematically rejected by this government. We were the ones who looked at the advice that was provided to you by Don Drummond and said, yes, a public sector wage freeze was the right thing to do. You said no. When we looked at various other areas of our economy and made suggestions, you said no. So it was pretty clear that nothing that we would propose would be something that you would consider.

The idea that we rejected it before we read it—I am quite willing to say that all of you agreed to say yes before you read it. I was in the lock-up; I was there. I was able to read and see what was in this budget. So my comments, then, come as a result of reading it. But our positions are very clear: We’re interested in what we can do for the economy of this province.

My colleague from Burlington mentioned a startling set of statistics a moment ago. We all talk about the 600,000 people who woke up this morning looking for a job. But we also know that there are 400,000 people who are on social assistance and 200,000 people who have given up. So you’re looking, then, at a significant portion of the population that needs some assistance, particularly in the area of providing a job. When people have a job, it gives security to their families. It means that they are able to participate in their own community. So the starting point has to be the question of a job.

I want to also talk for a moment about the macro issues that are in this document. Our leader has said, if you don’t read anything else, it’s page 221. And I think here, when you look at the figures on revenue and the figures on expenses and net debt, these are your legacy. This is what is being put on the backs of our children and grandchildren. We know that a child born today inherits \$20,000 worth of provincial debt. When you look at a revenue figure for this budget of \$116 billion and then you look at the total expense at \$127.6 billion, you know there’s a problem.

And you know there’s a problem when you move along to look at the net debt; that is the debt that continues to grow. Today, it is \$272 billion, and it will go in two years to \$303 billion. Now, I know that those are figures that are beyond, I think, the ability of most people like me to have an idea of. It’s a lot of zeros. But the point is, when you then translate that into \$20,000 per

person in this province, and when you think of all the people like those I mentioned a moment ago who are unable to pay, it gives you a sense of how much of a burden this budget has presented to Ontarians.

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One of the other reasons that we said we wouldn't support it was simply in contrast to what we think is important. As I started to say a moment ago, the question of growing the economy to create good jobs—when I look in my own riding, and I have businesses that compete with a business, say, in Ohio, and they look at Ontario, in Bradford, Bradford-West Gwillimbury, they're looking at every possible way to be efficient. They're looking at the opportunities that new technology provides. They're looking at investments in their own staff and how those people can learn better and become more efficient and still have a job. Yet they find themselves in an untenable position. Why? Because they have to compete with the person in Ohio, with a business in Ohio, and the biggest single issue over which they have no control in Bradford is their hydro bill, the cost of energy in this province.

You might talk about holding taxes, but then there are all kinds of other things that government imposes on business, as well as individuals. The energy costs that this province is putting on the businesses and the residents of this province are frankly unconscionable. When you listen to many members who stand up, sadly more than once in many cases, to talk about the exodus of jobs from their community, this flies in the face of what you have suggested will be the future that comes from what you're doing. We don't see that. We see these people struggling with costs and they are unable to find ways to create more efficiencies.

I remember when the government used to talk about the value of conservation. If we just demonstrated our ability to conserve energy, well, it would be fine. Well, they don't talk too much about that anymore because it doesn't matter. The biggest cost is the cost that's been imposed upon us. When you look at the gas plant scandal and the kind of money that has been, frankly, just tossed away for that particular scandal and the fact that there was a way for the government to message it, that, "No, it really isn't taxpayers. No, it's really ratepayers." That's only one person with two pockets.

The kinds of things that we have said that we don't see the government interested in doing: simply reducing the size and cost of government. The fact is that we understand. We're not suggesting that we don't respect the work and the technology and the professionalism of people in the broader public sector, but we do know that one of the things that you have done over the last nine years is increase jobs in this province, and those are public sector jobs. Those are jobs, then, that we need to look at in terms of efficiencies. I go back to my employer who has done all the work on efficiency and still has to compete with hydro costs in the same way that we know there's overlap and duplication within government.

One of the other initiatives that we feel very strongly about is the question of cutting red tape. I want to give

you an example of what that means for individual businesses. I have two stories that come from my own riding, and one was a man who was having a paint booth built. Obviously there's a great many safety issues around a paint booth. He was working closely with the Ministry of the Environment and this was being built to their specifications, and everything was going fine until it came time to hang the door. Of course, the door had to be hung in a manner that would protect in the unlikely case of an explosion but the possibility, so that it would be harder to have that door blow out.

The Ministry of the Environment wanted the door hung one way, and then the Ministry of Labour came along and said, "Oh, you can't have the door that way. How would a person get out?" In an explosion, I'm sorry; the person isn't going to be able to get out. One hopes there's nobody there. But that's the kind of thing. So the door has to be hung one way for MOE and another way for the Ministry of Labour.

I have another example where the Ministry of Health has decreed the level of chlorine to be used in laundry, and the Ministry of the Environment has said, "No, that exceeds the strength of chlorine that we want used in the water." Again you have ministries that can't agree on their levels and their regulations.

Those are the kinds of things that simply drive people crazy. Sometimes many ministries show up. Those ministries may or may not come with any warning, and you are expected to drop everything and look after whatever it is that they want. I'm talking about people that are trying to make a living for whom this is non-billable time. These are people that have to scurry around and respond to these demands at an ever-increasing and ever-growing rate.

The other part of our plan is to look at lowering tax rates on job-creating businesses. I'm very interested in the part of the budget which talks about providing opportunities for young people. It talks about—I think it's almost \$300 million, but the Premier refers to this as interning; these people would have internships. Well, we have interns here, and there's a big difference between an intern and a job. So I think that it's a little bit—well, you could say it's more than optimistic that an internship is going to necessarily create a job. What creates a job is a demand for product and service, and what creates that demand is when people have money in their pockets. When people actually make a profit, they can expand their business, and if they can expand their business, they can also pay their taxes.

Modernizing our apprenticeship system is also something we feel very strongly about. There are numerous people in this province, particularly young adults, who would like to be in a trade and who understand the value, both monetarily and otherwise, of having that expertise. I am completely stymied as to why this government would refuse to look at ratios of one to one in this province. The reason I'm stymied is quite simple: because seven other provinces allow this; in fact, recognize—that's the rule they follow. What you're actually doing is making it more difficult for a young person in Ontario to become a

recognized, licensed tradesperson because of the ratio system, but they can come from somewhere else in the country with their qualifications being recognized—which I agree with—but they were able to get it more easily with a one-to-one ratio in their home province. That makes no sense whatsoever. I think you can appreciate that when you want to accuse us of not being able to support your budget, well, it's really simple not to be able to support your budget.

We look at the importance of job creation. I mentioned: That is the key to being able to afford. When someone has the confidence in the province that they can expand, that they can hire one more person, that takes that person off the welfare rolls. That gives the family the stability they need, the ability to pay the rent or have a mortgage. It also means that all of us are paying taxes, and when we pay taxes, that's how we are able to pay for the programs, health and education, and the infrastructure that we require and obviously benefit from.

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So when I look at this budget, I'm disappointed. I'm disappointed because there's not the recognition given to the importance of providing for people. Instead, we're looking at leaving behind the debt. We're leaving behind debt for our children.

Now, I wouldn't want to finish my remarks without mentioning the government's response to my private member's bill on the pooled registered pension plan. I was absolutely delighted to see this. I had recognized this some time ago, and I had asked the former Minister of Finance about his position. At the time, it was quite clear that the government was not interested. So I was very pleased to see that it is there. And I actually expected, when the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs was reading the many, many kudos that he found, whether by cut and paste or otherwise, I don't know—that he didn't mention the support for the PRPPs, because certainly very strong indications had come from the Canadian Federation of

Independent Business as well as the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

For people who don't know what the PRPP is, let me just take a moment. It stands for "pooled registered pension plan." People might want to ask, legitimately, "Well, don't we have methods by which people can save and have a pension?" This is simply adding to the suite of things that people can choose to do. One of the reasons why I felt it was particularly important to put it forward in the white paper was the fact that it would provide people who do not have a workplace pension and have difficulty saving, which we all do—saving isn't buying on sale, by the way, always. It was the fact that you could have something at your place of employment, and it ultimately would build into some kind of savings for you—it's in your name, and it will go with you to another employer.

The federal government created the framework legislation for each of the provinces to provide companion legislation, and so British Columbia and Saskatchewan have legislation in the works. Alberta and Quebec are not far behind. I always felt it was very important that Ontario get on board with this, because I think it would serve the needs of many, many people. Over 60% of the Ontario population have no pension other than—well, certainly have no workplace pension. So it's really something that I'm very pleased to see that the government included in the budget.

I just want to tie things together in the last moment that I have. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the budget. I think that from the analysis that I've provided, it should come to you as no surprise that we can't support it.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB) Shurman, Peter (PC) Singh, Jagmeet (NDP) Smith, Todd (PC)	York West / York-Ouest Thornhill Bramalea-Gore-Malton Prince Edward-Hastings	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Toronto-Danforth Mississauga-Erindale	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB) Yakabuski, John (PC) Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Hamilton Mountain Huron-Bruce Timiskaming-Cochrane Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound Simcoe-Grey Scarborough-Agincourt Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) Vacant Vacant	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke Elgin-Middlesex-London Willowdale London West / London-Ouest Windsor-Tecumseh	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Grant Crack, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Bill Mauro
Taras Natyshak, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Dipika Damerla, Steven Del Duca
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Monte McNaughton
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
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Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Bas Balkissoon, Rick Bartolucci
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Mike Colle, Rosario Marchese
Laurie Scott, Todd Smith
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Laura Albanese, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Joe Dickson, Jim McDonell
Phil McNeely, Paul Miller
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Teresa J. Armstrong
Steven Del Duca, Bob Delaney
Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

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Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Gilles Bisson
Steve Clark, Mike Colle
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Bill Mauro
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Dipika Damerla
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qaadri
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Margarett R. Best, Vic Dhillon
Joe Dickson, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Margarett R. Best
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Ms. Dipika Damerla 1951

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