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of Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Monday 13 May 2013

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Lundi 13 mai 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Deborah Deller

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
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Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
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Toronto ON M7A 1A2
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 13 May 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 13 mai 2013

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm excited to welcome two friends from my riding: good family friend Mary Hamilton, from Glencoe, and also friend Sondra Sasse, from Wardsville. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Frank Klees: It is Community Living Day today at Queen's Park. The objective is to raise awareness toward issues faced by people with intellectual disabilities and their families. I'd like to extend a special welcome to my constituent Colleen Zakoor, from Newmarket, and Helen Clark, from Mount Albert.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'd like to officially introduce a wonderful, opinionated, very dedicated, strong-working intern who is working at my office with me. I'm going to be losing her soon, but she's going to stay with me for a very long time because she has given me great laughs and great joy at my office. Her name is Lauren Tarasuk and she's here with her mother, Anna, and her father, Steven, from Sault Ste. Marie.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to introduce and to welcome two good friends from the riding of Richmond Hill, Roozbeh Farhadi and Banafsheh Salim, visiting Queen's Park today.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to introduce members from my community who are with Community Living in north Durham: Cathy Parker and Karen McKeown, as well as their friends Andrew Stewart, Jalissa Francis, Candace Castle and Angela Wakefield.

Furthermore, I'd like to introduce the group that is joining us from Community Living Oshawa/Clarington: Julie Neely, Crystal Little, Judy Quail, Caroline Kara, Patrick Grist and Jeffrey Dillon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm extremely proud to recognize Gabriel Demizio. He's a page here, and today he is the page captain. With us today is his entire family. We have his mother, Peggy Demizio; we have his father, Dean Demizio, who is also president of the Fort Erie Chamber of Commerce; we have his grandmother Regina Demizio; we have his grandfather Michael Demizio; and we have his grandmother Lynda Sawatzky.

I also have one special guest from Niagara Falls: Nancy Caruso.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Today, I have two constituents here in the audience. They are the aunt and uncle of Benjamin Comley, who is one of our pages. I'd like to welcome personally Bobbi Moore and Brad Shibish from Riverside South, in my riding, for coming all the way down to Queen's Park.

Of course, Speaker, I've got great news: The Ottawa Senators won the first round of the playoffs.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, no. Actually your microphone was turned off, but you were still able to let everybody know.

The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my privilege and honour to introduce people who are here today for Madison Hogg, one of our distinguished pages. Her mother, Dianne Ryan, and her aunt, Marianne Ryan, are here in the gallery, and I hope we treat them well.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Mike Town from Community Living North Perth in Listowel. He's here with us today.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to welcome folks from my riding who are here today to talk to me about the crisis in special services at home. Mary MacLauchlan and Scott Legault, who receive support, and Rosa Amicarelli and Barry Keith, who work for Community Living.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome today Roxane Villeneuve Robertson from the great riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, who is the daughter of former Minister of Agriculture Noble Villeneuve, who sat here about 10 years ago.

And just to remind everybody, the best game last night was the Wings going into the next round.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce Kelly Lovell, a constituent of mine. She's a student from Western. She's taking a dual degree: medical science and honours business. This is her first time at Queen's Park. Please help me welcome her.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I have some folks from Community Living in my riding here today in the west gallery: Justin Marr, Kerry Thomas and Richard Taylor.

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

The member from Newmarket–Aurora on a point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees: I seek unanimous consent to ask a question of the leader of the official opposition. If granted, my question would be how he can possibly support the Boston Bruins over the Toronto Maple Leafs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think I heard a no.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It sounds like hockey brings us together and also separates us.

Interjection: That's deep.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know it is. It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: Before I begin, Speaker, I do want to extend, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, our deepest condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Peter Worthington. The man was a giant in the media. He was a leader. He is a great Canadian, and he will be deeply, deeply missed in this province of Ontario.

1040

I have a question for the finance minister. Last year's budget by your predecessor claimed \$2 billion in annual savings from a wage freeze on all government workers. This year's budget removes any reference whatsoever to a mandatory wage freeze. Instead, you used soft terms like you propose to "work together to get outcomes."

I ask the finance minister, without a wage freeze how are you going to find those \$2 billion in annual savings?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I think he actually read part of the budget. Thank you. And he makes reference to the tone of working together, collaborating and working for the benefit of the people of Ontario. That's right.

That's exactly what we're doing, and we've proven that we've been able to control spending at below 1% year over year. It's why we exceeded our targets last year by \$5 billion. We've negotiated and collaborated with the broader public sector, and we're dealing with our compensation review by maintaining our envelope at zero. That's very clear in the budget.

We're working together for the benefit of people. You should be working with us as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Speaker, there's not much to work with in the finance minister's budget, quite frankly. You, sir, chose to increase the deficit. It should have gone down. You're piling on \$20 billion more in debt, putting more burden on the back of a newborn here in Ontario because you cannot make the decisions necessary to hold the line on spending. In fact, Minister, you've gone in the opposite direction by ramping up spending and throwing out the window even the small steps we finally got Premier McGuinty and Minister Duncan to come around to. That was an across-the-board mandatory wage freeze and arbitration reform.

I did read your budget in detail. With my economics background, Speaker, budgets are actually pleasure

reading for somebody like me, but I took no pleasure in the fact that he dropped the wage freeze altogether.

Why did you throw out a mandatory wage freeze that could save us \$2 billion a year and that you yourself had previously voted for?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The budget is all about creating jobs, helping people in their everyday lives and tackling and eliminating the deficit in a very pragmatic, practical way. We're not taking extreme positions. We're trying our utmost to collaborate and initiate those positive changes for the benefit of the people.

The Leader of the Opposition just talked about his economics background. Well, it's interesting because, not long ago, the critic for the opposition sent me a package of their projections—projections which would necessitate mathematics.

If I could give this to the page, please, and if he can provide it to the Leader of the Opposition.

Here are their projections. It is over \$1 billion off. It doesn't add up. He himself has been cut off by his own party for reckless spending. Now, with these projections that don't even equate, he's anticipating that he cannot only balance the budget a year earlier, he pretends that he's going to be able to—

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I really don't know what to say about the increasingly bizarre performance of the finance minister on a very basic question that, quite frankly, calls into question his competence to take on such an important matter of actually getting the books back into balance for the province of Ontario, making sure we reduce spending, not increase it so that the deficit actually comes down so that you can balance the books. But you've gone in the other direction.

That's clearly why the PC Party believes the only way to get Ontario back on track, to bring good jobs back to our province, to get government to live within its means, just like families do every day, is to actually change the team, change the government in the province of Ontario to get us back on track.

Let me try a third time, Minister. I appreciate anything you send across to me, but what I'd appreciate is a yes or no answer on a very basic question. If you want to write it down—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —you want to answer my question. How are you going to balance the books? Did you actually toss out the window a mandatory wage freeze, yes or no? Where do you find the \$2 billion?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the only bizarre issue here is the numbers presented by the opposition, which don't add up. He has put this—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: Speaker, this is in fact very serious. It requires serious leadership, and it requires numbers that add up. The member opposite has put forward a YouTube video that talked about their projections which don't equate by over \$1 billion. Furthermore, they're estimating that they're going to be able to balance the books, knowing the challenges ahead, by cutting their revenues by \$5 billion, and somehow they're going to be able to balance the books. That is fantasy, Mr. Speaker.

We on this side of the House are doing what's necessary to control our spending. We're being disciplined; we're being determined. We've proven that four years running. Next year's deficit projection is \$1 billion lower because of steps that we're taking. Read the budget. It's very clear what we're doing. You should be supporting it.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the finance minister. No, we're not going to support a Liberal budget that digs a hole deeper and costs jobs in the province of Ontario. My concern, again: the finance minister is not answering my question if he's cancelling the mandatory wage freeze where he'll find the \$2 billion that will dig the hole deeper. The word "arbitration" appears nowhere in the 300-plus words in the budget papers either, so you've obviously tossed out binding arbitration reform.

Given that you've tossed out two cost-control measures that we finally got your predecessor to come around to before they closed down the Legislature, why is it, Finance Minister, that you in fact go in the opposite direction with 20 new spending initiatives? How is that affordable when we're already deep in debt?

Hon. Charles Sousa: This is very much a budget for Ontario by Ontarians. We have sought out a lot of input from a lot of people. We have a lot of issues that we share in common. There are a lot of fiscal matters that are before us. We're doing everything necessary to tackle and eliminate the budget and the deficit, and we're on target. We're on a path to balance, and it's very clear as to how we get there.

One of them is to maintain and restrain our compensation. We've made it clear that it's at zero going forward. We can work within that envelope, but what we need to do is be determined and be disciplined to control our spending growth, and we're doing that.

More importantly, the investments that are being made in our youth, in our infrastructure—that's stimulating jobs; that's stimulating economic growth; that is what's going to make us competitive in the long term; that you should be supporting, Mr. Speaker, because it's for the benefit of all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let's just be honest about this, Finance Minister. This is a budget written by the Liberals to buy NDP support. It's clearly a budget written to try to maintain your grip on power, to maintain your office space.

I think of the young graduates from college or university who are deep in tuition debt. They're back home with mom and dad with no job to go to. They thought they'd be better off by now, out on their own, buying their own home, their own career. This budget fails to help them because their budget goal is to buy support of the NDP to maintain office.

The last time we saw this, the last time we saw the Liberal-NDP coalition, we had a credit downgrade. We actually added on 48,000 jobs to the public sector payroll and lost 5,000 manufacturing jobs. Minister, people don't want to see a bidding war for more spending; they want to see an action plan for spending less. Why do you disagree?

Hon. Charles Sousa: This is very much a budget about helping create jobs and promoting economic growth. It's very clear as to how we achieve that. It's also a budget about helping people in their everyday lives. So what's at stake, Mr. Speaker, is this: Here we are, helping rural and northern communities with a dedicated fund to help—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll rein it in.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Here we have a dedicated fund to help rural communities with their roads and bridges—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: We also have a gas tax that we're making permanent and dedicated to the municipalities.

The member opposite just spoke about youth. He wants to cut off our youth fund, which is there to support an integration of businesses with young people, helping them build on their skills and provide for entrepreneurial training, and enabling them to succeed so that they can be at work more quickly for the benefit of their future. It's their future that's at stake. They should be supporting this budget for that.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, our plan will actually bring jobs back to the province of Ontario, good private sector career jobs so people can advance their skills, not a bigger government bureaucracy. There's an expression, Minister, that you've heard, I know, that says basically that time is money, and we're rapidly running out of both. You made a deliberate decision in your budget to dig the hole deeper. You're adding \$20 billion to the debt, and bizarrely you actually have made the deficit larger than the previous fiscal year. Quite frankly, this ongoing dance the last couple of weeks of budget bribery between the Liberals and the NDP—that's not going to bring one new job back to the province of—

Interjections.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know what I'm doing. It's on the edge, so I would ask him to be cautious of how he uses his words, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You've already caved in to \$1 billion in new spending for the NDP. This dance is continuing. You've not said no to date. Finance Minister, are you going to say no to any more spending that will dig the hole even deeper?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be clear: We have over 400,000 net new jobs since the recession. We're taking steps in this budget to create even more jobs, and it has highlighted how we're going to achieve just that.

The opposition don't have a plan. Their plan is across-the-board cuts, a slash-and-burn policy that will hamper our economic recovery that is very sensitive right now. What is necessary is not more government, and I agree. It's about more opportunity, and we are providing more opportunity in this budget. We are doing transformational changes to help Ontarians succeed.

The member opposite, by his own admission, is more intent on creating havoc and destroying labour relations and enabling cuts that will hinder our recovery. We won't stand for that. We're there to support Ontarians right through.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to start also, on behalf of New Democrats, by wishing our condolences to the friends and family of Peter Worthington and also, in fact, to Mr. Takhar, the member for—I don't know what his riding is, but the former minister, who of course has had a loss with his mother's death and is suffering some ill health. We wish him a speedy recovery, Speaker.

My question is to the Deputy Premier. People have had their faith shaken by scandals and billions of dollars of waste at eHealth, at Ornge and on the gas plants. Does the Deputy Premier agree that Ontarians are going to need to see something different than the same old status quo if they're going to be able to trust the government again?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I think the people of this province really want is a decision to be made on whether this budget is moving forward or not. It is time for the leader of the third party to sit down with the Premier and talk about supporting this budget.

You know who's waiting? I can tell you who's waiting for these answers. We've got nine million drivers in this province who are waiting to see whether or not we're going to be addressing the cost of their insurance premiums. We've got 30,000 young people who are really struggling to find that first job, who are waiting for the leader of the third party to determine whether or not they're going to get the help they need to get established in their careers. Speaker, 46,000 seniors and their loved ones are waiting for the NDP, to find out whether they're going to get access to the home care that they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would say there are over 13 million Ontarians who want to see a government they can trust for a change in this province.

New Democrats have been very clear: We are focused on delivering real results for families. People have heard governments make promises before, but they've seen those promises broken, and they're also seeing scarce resources wasted. They want to see a government that's truly accountable to them, and they want to see the tools in place that will ensure that accountability. Is the minister ready to consider this?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell you is that we are absolutely ready to have that conversation that we've been waiting for a couple of months to have with the leader of the third party.

But in the meantime, other Ontarians are waiting for answers. You know who else is waiting? The parents of kids in low-income families, who are waiting to see whether or not the Ontario Child Benefit is going to be increased this year. People are waiting. Those almost one million children who benefit from the Ontario Child Benefit are waiting for an answer.

People on social assistance are waiting for an answer. Are they going to be able to keep more of their earnings? Are they going to be able to have that opportunity to move off social assistance and into employment, where they desperately want to go? They are waiting for an answer from the leader of the third party.

People in northern and rural communities are waiting for an answer. Are they going to get the money they need to take pressure off their municipal taxes, to build the roads, to build the bridges? People are waiting for an answer. It's time we had one.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What people are waiting for are real results, and that's what New Democrats are determined to get them. Ontarians want to have their voices heard, and they told us that they don't think that the government has learned their lessons at eHealth, at Ornge and at the gas plants. They're worried that this government is going to go on wasting their money and then cutting important services to make up the difference. A financial accountability office could help us to stop these scandals before they start, and Ombudsman oversight into the health care system will stop the next chemotherapy crisis before it happens.

Does the Deputy Premier agree that more oversight is needed? Or does she think that the status quo is good enough for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's very important that we move forward on accountability measures, and that's exactly what we are doing. I also think it's time for the leader of the third party to have that face-to-face conversation that the Premier has been asking for for some time. We can have the conversations in question period. We can have them through the media. I think it's time for that sit-down meeting. The people of this province are waiting for an answer. Are we going forward with the

initiatives in this budget that are very, very meaningful to everyday people in their everyday lives, or are we going to continue to play the game of let's play this out in the media and in question period? It's time for a decision, Speaker. The time is now.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Deputy Premier. Is the minister ready to give Ontario seniors in hospitals and those receiving home care access to the same oversight and protection as people have in our prison system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's very important that people, when they need health care, have the assurance that they are getting high-quality health care. People of this province deserve to know that they're getting the best value for the money that they're spending on health care, and that's why we are moving forward with transforming the way the health care system is funded and how health care is delivered.

Our budget really speaks to this, Speaker. We are moving resources into the community sector so people can get home care faster, the home care that they need, so they can get out of hospital, back home where they want to be, where they can stay home longer so that they don't have to move into long-term care prematurely. Speaker, this budget speaks to the health care needs of the people of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario's Ombudsman provides accountability in our prison system, but he doesn't have oversight in our health care system. In every other province, provincial ombudspersons have the power to advocate for patients and provide them with accountability. Will the minister consider doing the same for Ontario patients?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As the Premier has said, the leader of the NDP has put forward some interesting ideas and she wants to talk about those ideas. It's time to have that face-to-face conversation. We've responded to a number of the NDP requests that overlap with our priorities too because we are absolutely committed to addressing issues that are facing the people of this province. The leader of the third party continues to add to the list of requests. I think it's time for a conversation between the Premier and the leader of the third party.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's disturbing. I really don't think that the Deputy Premier gets it. Families watched as governments dropped the ball at Ornge and wasted \$1 billion at eHealth helping their friends. Then Ontarians watched as over 1,000 people were given the wrong cancer medication. Now the government's promising that they're going to hit a target of five days' wait time for home care and that the quality of hospital care is not going to suffer as hospitals close facilities and lay off staff.

Will the minister admit that people actually deserve some real oversight, some real accountability, when it comes to their health care system and give the Ombudsman of Ontario the power to provide that accountability for patients?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I have said, the Premier has acknowledged that the leader of the third party has some interesting ideas that she's continuing to put forward, and she's prepared to have that conversation where it belongs: in a face-to-face meeting with the leader of the third party. In the meantime, we need to move forward with this budget because people are counting on us to get this job done.

1100

There are people who are waiting too long for home care. We acknowledge that, and we're on our way to addressing that challenge through this budget: 46,000 more people. Think about that for a minute: 46,000 more people will be able to access the home care they need so they can get back on their feet faster, they can get home from hospital faster, and they can avoid going into long-term care. But we need this budget to pass to be able to increase that access to home care.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Deputy Premier. The Premier likes to take credit for starting the auditor's investigation into the Oakville debacle. But the truth of the matter is, our public accounts committee tried to get the auditor to probe both Mississauga and Oakville last September 5. However, the Liberal members blocked that through procedures in committee. They ran the clock out on the committee, allowing only the Mississauga investigation. We should have known then just how bad Oakville was going to be.

The truth is that if it weren't for the Liberal tactics followed by prorogation, we'd have the auditor's report on Oakville by now. The Liberal Party continues to put their own interests ahead of taxpayers' and must be put to a test of confidence.

Will you support our motion for non-confidence to be held in this Legislature?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to inform members that on February 7 of this year, the new Premier—in fact, she had just become the new Premier—wrote to the Auditor General and asked him to look into the Oakville situation. I would also remind members that it was the new Premier who offered a select committee on this issue, which they rejected in favour of a witch hunt against a former member of the Legislature. It was the new Premier who asked Liberal members of the committee to put forward a motion to have a very wide document search across this province; to my astonishment, Mr. Speaker, that very member, his colleagues and the colleagues in the New Democratic Party voted against it.

The Premier has been forthcoming. She has appeared in front of the committee, something we haven't heard from the Leader of the Opposition yet. I understand he may be there tomorrow morning; we certainly look forward to that. But there are no apologies when it comes to the openness of the Premier of this province when it comes to this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's amazing how the Liberals talk about the race to the moon but lead the race to the bottom. The Liberal record on these gas plant cancellations is telling: a snap decision 11 days before an election to save Liberal seats, side deals totalling tens of millions of dollars to keep the proponents from exposing you, a deliberate move to withhold documents requested by members of this House and, finally, sworn testimony of documents being destroyed.

If this is the Liberal idea of responsible government, I can tell you no one else in Ontario shares that view. This scandal should not be rewarded, certainly not by the third party. Will you bring our non-confidence motion to the floor this week?

Hon. John Milloy: When the honourable member spoke about a snap decision before an election to support the cancellation of the plant, I think he was talking about his own party because, if I recall correctly, it was the Leader of the Opposition, the star of that famous YouTube video, who came out and talked about their support for the cancellation of the project. It was the candidates in the various ridings that were affected who put out robocalls, dropped leaflets, put out press releases and put out statements on Twitter saying the only way to see the end of this plant was to elect the Progressive Conservatives to government.

The question, Mr. Speaker, is why? Why are they blocking their own candidates from coming before the committee so that they can answer questions about why they made that decision, what motivated that decision and the type of costing that was put in place? As I said, we may hopefully see the Leader of the Opposition in front of the committee tomorrow, and we look forward to him discussing with us why he made that decision and why he so aggressively opposed the plant in Mississauga.

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last week, I asked the minister for details about his government's plan to implement high-occupancy toll lanes, but I don't think I got an answer, so I'm going to ask it again.

The KPMG report to Metrolinx said it costs about \$700,000 to implement one kilometre of high-occupancy toll lanes. That means we're talking about over \$300 million to create 450 kilometres of HOT lanes, and that's if everything goes perfectly.

But Metrolinx puts the initial revenue from HOTs at a mere \$25 million a year and says that the HOT lanes are not a significant source of revenue for transit. Why is the

province building a risky, costly and complicated new payment system for the sake of a mere \$25 million a year?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The budget elaborates two things. The budget elaborates a very dramatic expansion of HOV lanes, which are for high-occupancy vehicles only. The budget also says that we are going to explore and develop—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I guess the race for the bottom is continuing, Mr. Speaker.

We're also looking at HOT lanes. We are looking at the experiences of other jurisdictions. In some places, they've been very successful at alleviating congestion in certain conditions. We are not rushing into anything. We are carefully looking at the experience of other jurisdictions.

Metrolinx will be looking at the optimum implementation of these in locations and places where they make sense. HOT lanes also serve the full purposes of an HOV lane, in addition to opening it up to additional drivers in certain situations. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I mentioned that it would cost over \$300 million to implement the government's new tolling scheme if everything goes perfectly well.

But such schemes have not gone perfectly with this government, and I'm reminded of Presto. Presto was originally budgeted at \$250 million, but the costs have now ballooned to over \$700 million—a big cost to the taxpayer, but a wonderful benefit to the government's partners in the private sector. We have already begun the process of integrating Presto with the TTC.

Why should we believe that the government's new tolling scheme will not join eHealth, Ornge, the gas plants scandal and Presto on the growing list of this government's wasteful private sector misadventures?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This government's spending on services is the lowest per capita in Canada, which means that it's lower than in any of the provinces in which the third party is in power.

Second, the HOT lane proposals have not been developed yet. There has been no preparation in detail about where or how or what technologies would be used, so it's a little premature to jump to those conclusions.

Finally, I remember the good old days when my friends in the NDP liked transit, when they actually understood that subways and LRTs actually cost money. We have—

Interjection.

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

Please finish.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I know the official opposition really gets a little cranky when we talk about subways, because their only record in doing them is filling them in. They like to say they like GO transit; they just never fund it.

If we're actually going to deal with the congestion problems, governments are going to have to be honest with the people of Ontario and work with them to find the right funding tools to move this forward. This party will do—

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

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The 2013-14 Ontario budget is a forward-looking document that moves Ontario steadily toward a balanced budget. Much of the conversation on the budget has focused on issues affecting cities and southern Ontario municipalities such as Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton, Windsor, Kingston and Ottawa.

The Ontario budget is also a document that speaks to the concerns of northern Ontarians. Northern needs include stable and affordable electricity, secure jobs and a reliable infrastructure.

Would the minister tell the House what Ontario's budget does to help municipalities in northern Ontario become stronger, more sustainable and more prosperous places to live, work and raise a family?

1110

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank my colleague for the question—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There's far too much interaction going on between the ways and also within themselves. Please bring it down. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Again, Speaker, I'd like to thank my colleague for the question. I'd like to reassure this chamber that our government listens to all of the people of Ontario. We continued that dialogue last Friday when I and the ministers of natural resources, northern development and mines, rural affairs and aboriginal affairs and the Premier attended the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities' 53rd annual conference and general meeting, which was held in Parry Sound. We let them know that we heard their concerns.

That's why, if the parties opposite support our budget, in 2013-14 we will spend \$553 million on northern highways, create a \$1-million fund for small rural and northern municipalities to help them build roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure, and spend \$360 million to extend the northern industrial electricity rate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, northern Ontarians need an update on how this province has acted to reverse the downloading of the 1990s. Have these costs been uploaded again to the province, where they belong, and removed from the tax base of northern Ontario municipalities, where they never belonged? What does the recent Ontario budget mean for northern Ontario municipalities and the pressure they face on their municipal tax bases? Would you give property owners, ratepayers and mem-

bers of the more than 400 municipal councils in northern Ontario an indication of what the 2013-14 Ontario budget holds in store for them?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member again for the question. I firmly believe in what the Premier has said numerous times: In order for Ontario to be prosperous, all of our communities need to be prosperous. That's why we've continued our conversation with northern municipalities about how we can help them out. We've heard what they've told us and we've acted.

That's why, in 2012-13, northern Ontario municipalities will benefit from \$337 million in municipal supports through the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund and from our commitment to uploading. This means real relief for municipal budgets. It's taking a huge burden off property taxes across the north. Our budget will continue to provide assistance to northern communities and for all municipalities across Ontario. I look forward to working with 444 municipalities across the province to learn how we can better help them become stronger and more prosperous.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Finance. We know that the Premier is now preparing to give further ground to the New Democrats in secret budget vote negotiations, and we know that her government passed out a checklist of NDP demands on budget day. We know that the Premier likes to keep secret negotiations and backroom deals after we saw what happened with the gas plants and, of course, teacher union bosses.

Given all that, can you tell us here today how much more spending we can expect in order for the New Democratic Party to prop your government up?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We're very clear that our spending is being controlled. It's being disciplined. It's less than 1%, year over year. It's how we're achieving results.

My question to the member opposite: How do you justify a leader who has put out information from your party that talks about these very issues that you're telling me, and it doesn't add up? You're promoting numbers that don't equate, and you want the legitimacy of somehow telling the people of Ontario that you can lead when you can't even add. Answer me that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm quite comfortable standing behind Tim Hudak when he becomes Premier of Ontario in a few short months. The only spending that's being controlled today in this assembly is by the New Democratic Party. They're telling you what to spend on, and you're saying, "Yes; I'll give you a little bit more." This is an NDP budget for the NDP so that this government can be propped up.

Let's talk for a second about the economy. There's an old expression: "It's the economy, Sousa." Let's get back on track here.

Let's be perfectly honest here. This is a government that only values democracy insofar as it saves their own

political skins. After negotiations with rogue union leaders, we know that there is not enough money in this world that they can say no to. We know that they only value the truth when they have been caught.

I want to know: What dirty deal has this government cooked up with the NDP in order for the NDP to continue calling the shots and for this government to continue to be propped up?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The only deal we're making here is a deal with the people of Ontario. This is a budget that speaks to the people of Ontario, the contributions that they have made, because what they want is leadership and what they don't want are extreme views. They do not want to see an excessive slash-and-burn policy that puts things at risk, and they do not want excessive spending. They want control and they want discipline. We're offering that.

Mr. Speaker, it is about the economy. The members opposite don't seem to understand that the economy's recovery is challenged and we need to take steps to stimulate that growth. So there are occasions when you have to provide support for our youth, for our infrastructure, for those most vulnerable, for the things that we all share in common in this House. It boggles my mind that you would put that at risk. You should be supporting this budget.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Deputy Premier. As racetracks across Ontario close down, it's clear that your OLG privatization plan is in shambles. One day Toronto's getting a special deal to host a downtown casino, the next day it isn't. One day there's a transition program for the horse racing industry, the next day there's a new committee that's going to start the process all over again.

Will this government admit that its OLG privatization strategy was a disaster from day one and that it's time to put a complete stop to this mess?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we all know that transforming OLG is an essential part of trying to enhance our revenue, support our schools and our education, and ensure that we continue to be socially conscious and socially responsible in those initiatives. This modernization plan is on the right track to take those and to deliver on that promise.

But in regard to transition around racing and in regard to our transition around service delivery, we need to be methodic, we need to be careful. We recognize that those initiatives were initially brought forward by the opposition in terms of an OLG component, but now we need to transform them. We're taking those appropriate steps to ensure that we protect the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I really don't think the government has any clue what they're doing in terms of their modernization strategy, because rural Ontario has been dealt a massive blow with the decision to cancel the Slots at Racetracks Program. Thousands of jobs have been lost in rural Ontario and thousands more will be lost in the near future. Meanwhile, the OLG invited gambling operations to bid on a downtown casino and tried to entice Toronto city council members with a sweetheart deal on a hosting formula.

Will this government admit that its privatization plan is a complete disaster and end this sorry spectacle once and for all?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Our government is committed to a sustainable horse racing industry in the province of Ontario. We appointed three very distinguished former members of this House. The honourable Elmer Buchanan—he served on the benches over there, one of Ontario's most successful ag ministers, from 1990 to 1995. I actually spoke to Mr. Buchanan last Saturday—I was in Havelock, Ontario, for Celebrate Havelock—and Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Snobelen and Mr. Wilkinson are doing an incredible job to provide a framework—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Essex asked the question. I'm sure he wants to hear the answer.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —to sustain horse racing in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my friends opposite to join me this Saturday at Kawartha Downs in Peterborough for the first race. I recommend that they bet Yankee Nick in the sixth. I think that's a very hot prospect.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Across Ontario and in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, we are concerned about aboriginal youth, who are recognized as Canada's fastest-growing potential workforce. Almost half of aboriginal peoples—First Nations, Inuit and Métis—in Canada are under the age of 24.

Constantly, we're hearing the concerns of high drop-out rates for First Nations youth living off-reserve—Métis and Inuit youth are 22.6%, more than two and a half times the rate of non-aboriginal youth. We need to ensure that all youth have an equal and fair opportunity to be successful. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can the minister inform the House what Ontario is doing to narrow this gap?

1120

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that question. Properly educating and providing for the proper education and closing the education gaps between our aboriginal communities, both on and off reserves, is absolutely crucial to developing the health and well-being of the aboriginal community.

In that regard, I was in Winnipeg about a month ago at the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group. Ontario had chaired that for the past four years; Manitoba is the chair this year. One of the issues we discussed at that conference was this whole issue of closing the dropout rates, and the educational achievement metrics of aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities. There was a recognition across the board by all of the provinces and all of the territories that this had to be done. This was the right thing to do. But you know, Speaker, who was missing from that meeting in Winnipeg was the federal government. The federal government was not there. This is a gap—

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

Ms. Soo Wong: It's good to know that action is taken on this very important issue.

Another very important issue is violence against—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, I've been tolerant of you continually shouting people's names out, and I'm not going to be tolerant any longer. Would you please either call them by their title or their riding? Thank you.

Ms. Soo Wong: Another very important issue is violence against aboriginal women and girls. I heard that about 15% of aboriginal women in Canada who had a spouse or a common-law partner in the past five years reported being a victim of spousal violence—more than twice the proportion among non-aboriginal women. I read that missing and murdered aboriginal women represent about 10% of female homicides in Canada, despite the fact that aboriginal women make up only 3% of the total female population in Canada. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what is Ontario doing to address this issue in Ontario and in the national context?

Hon. David Zimmer: First, let me put a human face to those statistics. At a recent meeting—I think it was in Sault Ste. Marie, and we heard about this in Winnipeg. There was a meeting of some 231 women. The speaker at that conference asked the non-aboriginal women to stand up, and about 200 of them stood up. Then she said, "Please raise your hand if any of you have had a sister, a grandmother or a wife who has been murdered?" One person put up their hand. She then asked the 31 aboriginal women in the audience to stand up and asked the same question: "Of the 31 of you, how many have a female relative who has been murdered or is missing?" Of the 31 who stood up, 29 raised their hands—29 out of 31; one out of 200 for the non-aboriginal community.

This is a tragedy. This has to stop. The Aboriginal Affairs Working Group in Winnipeg has called for a national inquiry into this issue of violence and missing aboriginal women. Ontario is pleased to support that call.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Deputy Premier: I was at US Steel Nanticoke last night. One thousand Steelwork-

ers are locked out—the third lockout in three years between Lake Erie and the Hamilton works. One thousand steel jobs support 4,000 others, and up to 9,000 jobs can be affected. Ontario has already lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Look at London.

Deputy Premier, what are you doing about these lock-outs? A government mediator was involved. I asked your government, what does the mediator do? And I was told that can't be divulged. What is he doing? What are you doing? Have you talked to the company? Have you talked to the union? What steps are you taking to get Steelworkers back to work?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for raising an important question. As we all know, some negotiations are very challenging and some take place in the public eye. I want to commend all those who represent employers and unions at the negotiating table who have come together to develop a strategy that could work for both of them.

We know that agreements that are reached around the negotiating table are the best ones, and we really encourage, in this situation, both parties to come back to the table. As the member opposite noted, a Ministry of Labour mediator has been engaged in the negotiations. The mediator has been assisting the parties and has met with the parties on seven different occasions.

Our services are still available. We encourage the parties to come back to the negotiating table. We are willing to facilitate that conversation and come out with a negotiated settlement that will be in the best interests of all parties.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Ontario has 600,000 people out of work. Jobs are fleeing the province: Look at London, 9.9% unemployment; Caterpillar closed Electro-Motive and moved to Indiana; now they're closing Toronto and moving to Michigan. And here we have the third US Steel lockout in three years. What have you learned from that? What have you done?

I've been talking to the union, I've been talking to the company. We have government for a reason. Will you personally pull all sides together—at least call a meeting personally? The steel business has changed. Your approach has not changed. You're getting rusty. Please explain: What are you doing to deal with this new reality, not only in the steel business but in Ontario's manufacturing in general?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think the member opposite knows exactly how the labour relations process works, where both parties need to come together at their own will around the table and be able to negotiate a settlement.

I think the member opposite also knows the role of the government or that of the Ministry of Labour is to mediate or facilitate that conversation, and our mediators are available. They have participated in the process on seven different occasions and they are willing to get the parties back, but both parties have to agree to do so.

Now, what's concerning is the approach that the party opposite continues to raise, and that is their right-to-work-for-less strategy. We know, Speaker, that approach does not work either, so I ask the member to stop advocating for a system that will take a race to the bottom for workers, and ensure that we have a robust labour relations process, like we have in the Ontario Labour Relations Act. I encourage both parties, in the case of US Steel Canada Lake Erie Works, to come together and negotiate a final settlement.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Just over a week ago in London, Andrea Horwath and I met with a group of distraught Londoners who are the victims of yet another damaging cut to health care. Despite all the talk about health care transformation, this Liberal government's cuts to health care have led to the closure of St. Joseph's hydrotherapy pool, a unique and vital therapy service for patients.

Will the minister explain how she can encourage people to be active, then cut this hydrotherapy program with no regard for the consequences?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks to the member from London—Fanshawe for that question. This hospital, of course, is in my riding so I know this issue well.

We are embarking on a very important and serious transformation of our health care system. We are committed to moving services that are currently delivered in hospital to the community whenever possible. We're changing how we fund hospitals so that going forward, hospitals are going to get the money—their budget is going to depend on how many people they serve, what their community is and how many actual procedures they perform. There are changes under way. It's all about delivering the best possible, highest-quality care in the most appropriate place.

Hospitals are making difficult decisions; I understand that. But the goal is better care for the people of this province, and that includes the people of London.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: St. Joseph's hydrotherapy pool is health care too. Patients in London and across Ontario want to see accountability in our health care system—accountability measures like Ombudsman oversight over the health care system, which would prevent harmful cuts like this one.

Will the minister please explain to Londoners why her government can spend billions of dollars recklessly on scandals like eHealth, Ornge and the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants but can't afford to keep St. Joseph's hydrotherapy pool open?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite unfortunately is not looking at the whole picture. This budget that we have presented in this House, that her party is so far dithering on whether or not they will sup-

port, speaks to improving health care for the people of this province, including the people she represents.

1130

This budget expands home care to 46,000 more Ontarians. This is the kind of transformation that we must all support, because our constituents, the patients of this province—if they're ready to go home from hospital, that's where they want to be, and we need to be there to support them at home. People want to be home. They want to be able to be in the comfort of their own community with the people that they love. This budget is going to help more people get the care they need so they can be where they want to be.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, in a few weeks families in my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville are going to be celebrating the fact that young men and women are about to graduate from universities and colleges. Regardless of whether they are graduating from a university or a college, I know that these kids are really well positioned for the job market because they have a post-secondary education.

But, Minister, not every young graduate wants to look for a job. Instead, they want to go into business for themselves. What I want to know is—if you're going into business for yourself, you cannot be worried about having to pay your OSAP loan. I'd like to know what this government is doing to help young entrepreneurs defer payment on their OSAP loans.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's a really good question. There's nothing more inspiring than this new, next generation of young Ontario entrepreneurs coming out of our colleges and universities.

When you see some of these young people and you go around the world, they're seen as some of the best and brightest young entrepreneurs anywhere in the world today. When you think about starting a business up as you're graduating from university, it's not only tough physically; it's tough financially as well. So we want to give our young entrepreneurs a break.

The 2013 budget will, if passed, allow graduates choosing to start a business in Ontario to defer paying off OSAP loans and payment of interest until one year after completing post-secondary education, rather than the standard six-month grace period. This will support young entrepreneurs across the province as they work to build their careers, turning them from job seekers to job creators. But we need to get this budget passed in order to achieve that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that great answer and for making sure that our young people have the opportunity not just to seek jobs but also to create jobs.

But there's also a lot of young people looking for jobs in my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville, and I know

that this government has been working hard to help these young, bright graduates. Can the minister tell this Legislature what we are doing to help young graduates find jobs?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Absolutely. One of the barriers our graduates and young people face upon entering the job market is lack of experience. It's the old adage we've heard before: You can't get a job without experience and you can't get experience without having a job. So it's kind of tough. They're kind of in that no-win situation.

We need to take action to help our young people get the opportunity to enter the workforce. This is a top priority in our 2013 budget. I urge all members on all sides of the House to pass this budget, because our budget will launch Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy, including a youth employment fund of \$195 million over two years. The province would provide hiring incentives to employers to offer young people in all regions of the province an entry point to long-term employment. The fund would use Employment Ontario's extensive network of employment and training services across the province to find appropriate job placements. We've got to get this budget passed, though, in order to implement this.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Four months ago, Liberal insiders and special interests coronated Ontario's Premier. At that time, Ontario's unemployment stood at 565,000 people. Fast forward to today and, sadly, you will know that Ontario's unemployment situation is even more dismal. Worse still, over the past 12 months Ontario's government sector has grown by 48,000 people, but we haven't added one net new job to the Ontario economy. In fact, during this time we've lost over 5,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs, which the Premier often refers to as a myth.

Do you think it's right to force unemployed Ontario residents to pay for your political decision to move gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville to save a few Liberal jobs and buy the last election?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know he might not say it in here, but I know outside of the Legislature the member opposite believes that we're on the right track in this province. The reality is—and he knows this—that last month alone, we created 9,000 new manufacturing jobs in this province. The member opposite knows as well that in the last few years since—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: So not only 9,000 new manufacturing jobs last month alone created in this province, but we're on the right track because we've created over 400,000 new jobs since the bottom of the recession. We've brought back all of the jobs that were lost and 50% more. Compare that with other jurisdictions, like the

United States, which has only brought back 70% of their jobs; we're doing better than the United States. We're doing better than the Great Lakes states around us as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Well clearly, minister, you need to get out of Queen's Park more.

Speaker, back to the Deputy Premier: Sadly the numbers in London are even more devastating. The unemployment rate in London soared from a dismal 8.6% in January to a devastating 9.9% last month, giving London the highest big-city unemployment rate in the country for the second month in a row. In Windsor, the unemployment rate is now at 9.2%.

Minister, the stats don't lie. Job creators in southwestern Ontario no longer have confidence in your Liberal government's ability to help create jobs and grow our economy. With one in 10 London residents unemployed, do you think it's right to ask unemployed Londoners to pay for your political decision to move the Oakville and Mississauga power plants and buy Liberal seats in the last election?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, I know just how difficult it was for the member opposite to actually express that question, because he knows as well as I do that the reason we created the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund was to address important issues like this. I hate to embarrass him, but I've got to bring up again that the first project that was funded, in fact, by the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, a fund that the members in the official opposition voted against, was in your riding. I'm sorry; it was in your riding. It was in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. I'm so proud that Lambton Conveyor, with support from the Ontario government through this very fund, is not only doubling its workforce, but it is contributing to an important local economy, and I know the member opposite in his heart of hearts agrees with me.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. On Saturday, the weatherman was calling for snow across northeastern Ontario, and heavy snow is not uncommon in May in our part of the world. In Timmins, they got 26 centimetres.

The OPP closed many highways across the north after a dozen accidents. Fortunately there were no fatalities. There were a couple of cruisers in the ditch. They didn't close the highways because of the snow; they closed the highways because of a total lack of snow clearing. There was no snowplowing. There was one snowplow between Highway 144 and Matheson. That's an area bigger than some countries. There was no maintenance at all. Once again, snow in the spring is not that uncommon.

This is the second time that we've had to ask this question. Are the contracts not up to snuff? Are the contractors not following the rules? Are they not being paid enough? Or is the privatization scheme—

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I will be very, very happy to review what happened on the weekend. I appreciate the member's question; I think it was sincerely asked.

It was very unusual weather this weekend, Mr. Speaker. In my neighbourhood, we had hail three times and rain and snow. This was not the kind of weather that one is used to.

Mr. Speaker, I have raised this when I was meeting with mayors in the north, and they have all said to me very clearly that this was one of the most difficult winters for municipal snow removal services because of the irregularity of the weather and the challenges of the weather. So we know we've been dealing with some difficult matters, Mr. Speaker, but I do take the member's question as a sincere one. I will look into it and get back to him. I appreciate him raising it.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on a point of order.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I wish to correct my record. Earlier I spoke, in an answer to the member, with regard to a \$1-million fund for small, rural and northern municipalities to build roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure. In fact, our budget speaks to \$100 million to do that work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is a point of order; members are allowed to correct their record.

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

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

WEARING OF POPPIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order for the Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I would ask for unanimous consent this afternoon, when we do the tribute to the Hon. John M. Turner, that we wear poppies for that tribute as he served in the RCAF from 1939 to 1945 and flew 30 missions over Europe in a Halifax bomber. So I'd ask for unanimous consent to wear the poppy during his tribute.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I understand that there have been poppies made available—they will be made available.

Before I ask for unanimous consent, just to bring clarity, the office contacted the Legions at my request, and the Legions apparently have given permission to do so under some circumstances. In this case, I would remind us that the poppies should be worn above everything, meaning if you have pins on or if you have anything else, the poppy is the highest to be worn.

Point of order on—

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Further on this: The poppies need to be worn on the correct side, which is the left side, and the highest emblem on the lapel or any other aspect that people may be wearing.

Hon. Jeff Leal: If I could just continue—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We'll continue on. I want to get this right.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank Mr. Fred Rathburn, who's president of Branch 52 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Peterborough. Mr. Turner was a member of that Legion, and they very graciously supplied the poppies for everybody today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): With the clarity offered by the member from Oshawa, do I have unanimous consent to wear the poppy during the tribute? Agreed? Agreed.

It's now time for introduction of guests.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a number of guests from Oshawa Community Living. We have Julie Neely, Patrick Grist, Judy Quail, Crystal Little, Caroline Kara and Jeffrey Dillon joining us this afternoon.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to welcome the students from North American Muslim Foundation, the Islamic Academy. They're here with us this afternoon, and I want to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to welcome a group from Community Living Tillsonburg, who are here with us today. In the gallery are Michael Kadey, Joanne Maertens, Gary Pidgeon, Sandra Bray, Della Derrough and Crystal Saunders. We want to welcome them all here to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Joining us today in the members' gallery as part of Community Living Ontario are: Rick Strutt, vice-president of Community Living Ontario; Alan McWhorter, interim executive director; Chris Beesley, incoming executive director; Gordon Kyle, director of social policy and government relations; Sheila Kirouac, communications director; and Yvonne Spicer, who's the self-advocate on the Community Living Ontario Council. I'm sure we'd all want to welcome them here today.

Mr. Bill Walker: I too would like to introduce my guests and welcome them to Queen's Park; from Community Living Owen Sound and District: Tara Einoff, Shawna Shank, Karen Aspinall and Michael Drvodelic.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased today to welcome to Queen's Park from Walkerton Community Living on the 15th anniversary or annual reception—we have Harv and Dave Benninger and Linda Batte.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I too wish to welcome Yvonne Spicer to the Legislature today. She's here on behalf of Halton Community Living. We had a meeting this afternoon, and she does a super job of advocating.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in this House today to speak to a very important issue that has affected a number of communities in my riding, as well as across central Ontario. The effects of the recent floods have caused significant damage to the property of local residents, businesses and many cottages.

While the towns of Huntsville and Bracebridge are preparing to make claims to the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program, there are immense challenges facing these and other small communities already. I feel that Bracebridge's deputy mayor, Rick Maloney, sums up the local sentiment when he recently commented that the current program left a bad taste in his mouth, to kind of reconcile that the ability of people to get back on their feet rests with the generosity of bake sales and barbecues.

The current conditions of ODRAP rely heavily on matching provincial funds to local fundraising efforts. This is an extremely heavy burden to place on small rural communities that reported damages running well into the millions. As well, it would take months for these communities to receive relief funds, due to the current structure of ODRAP, which was created in the 1960s. Surely there is room for improvement within this program to better meet the needs of Ontarians requiring assistance through disaster relief.

At this time, I would like to add my voice in support of my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and the motion she put forward requesting that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing undertake a review of the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program in order to better meet the needs of communities that are adversely impacted by extreme weather events.

LYNNE WOOLSTENCROFT

Ms. Catherine Fife: Today I would like to recognize with great sadness the passing of Lynne Woolstencroft this morning at the age of 69. Lynne was a former mayor of Waterloo, a three-term city councillor, chair of the Waterloo Region District School Board, and president of the Association of Large School Boards. She was also a dear friend.

I had the pleasure of knowing Lynne on both a professional and personal level. She was warm, open and a true leader for our community. It was during her term as mayor that planning and agreements for the Perimeter Institute, the Centre for International Governance Innovation and the University of Waterloo's research and technology park began.

Just this past March, Lynne was honoured with the Jack Young Civic Award, the highest honour awarded by the region of Waterloo for those who exemplify the highest standards of political and civic life. She also received the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for her outstanding contribution to the community and the region.

Lynne was well known for her commitment to making government more accessible. She served as chair of the region's first environment committee during her 12 years representing the city of Waterloo at the regional council.

Over the course of her career, she inspired many young women to enter political life, myself included.

I would like to offer my deepest condolences to Lynne's husband, Peter Woolstencroft, and to the rest of her family and friends during this difficult time.

Thank you, Lynne, for your dedication to the environment, to education and to our community. You set an example of service that we should all aspire to. Your voice and your passion will be dearly missed.

GUL NAWAZ

Mr. Bob Delaney: Mississauga lost a strong, generous, passionate community leader this past weekend, and Liberals and Conservatives lost a decent, honest, principled chartered accountant in Gul Nawaz. Allah called him home Saturday afternoon, May 11, while working at his desk.

Gul Nawaz obtained his chartered accountant designation 40 years ago and was a leader among his peers, serving as the president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario. He was honoured for his contributions to the CA profession with his FCA fellowship among chartered accountants, a rare honour.

Gul's community and board governance contributions are as long as they are distinguished. Gul has helped the Mississauga Arts Council, the Credit Valley Hospital, Peel Multicultural Council, Canadian Spectrum, Sheridan and Etobicoke colleges, and the University of Toronto at Mississauga. And, Speaker, that's only a partial list.

Gul stood as a federal Alliance candidate in the November 2000 election, and although he did not win that election, Gul Nawaz got my vote. He was our provincial Liberal riding association auditor. He was my constituent, and he was a friend of mine and Andrea's.

His native land of Pakistan was always important to Gul Nawaz, who worked constantly to build better ties between Canada and Pakistan.

Our heartfelt sympathies to Gul's wife, Ghazala, and to his family and his many, many friends. The legacy of Gul Nawaz Zindabad. Thank you, Speaker. Shukria.

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to recognize the Reid's Corners Women's Institute in my riding of Huron-Bruce on the celebration of their 100th anniversary this Wednesday, May 15.

Women's Institutes have been in existence across the country for 115 years, since it was founded in Stoney Creek, Ontario, in February 1897.

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Over the years, the Women's Institute has worked hard to lobby for some of the very things we use every day. Because of their outstanding lobbying efforts, we

now have pasteurized milk, painted lines on the road, school bus signs, the flashing red lights on the school buses, bags for bread and small-town abattoirs.

Women's Institutes are well known for their fundraising and community service efforts. Specifically, Reid's Corners Women's Institute members have raised funds, knitted and sent clothing in support of our troops, the Red Cross and hospitals overseas. They also support countries ravaged by national disasters.

The Reid's Corners Women's Institute is very active locally as well. Through fundraising efforts, they support local fall fairs, local hospitals and other events in the community. Their monthly meetings give the ladies a chance to come together and socialize and plan for their next fundraising efforts and community events.

Women's Institutes play an important role across rural Ontario, and I'm very pleased to take this opportunity here in the Ontario Legislature to recognize the Reid's Corners Women's Institute on their milestone 100th anniversary.

CITIZENS' AWARDS

Mr. Paul Miller: Last week, outstanding local citizens were recognized with Stoney Creek Citizen of the Year awards for their unwavering contributions to our community.

Citizen of the Year Bill Needham is a volunteer coach, official and instructor in youth, men's and ladies' hockey and slo-pitch. He's also an OHL scout and a multiple sports mentor.

Honour student Gagandeep Viridi, Junior Citizen of the Year, has done 754 community volunteer hours. This list of activities that she has been involved in humbles those of us many years older.

Jayne Industries co-owners Duncan Robson and Chris Cashin received the Outstanding Large Business Award for donating to the food banks, ALS, MS, Sick Kids, and minor hockey, soccer and baseball teams.

Bobby Assadourian's Triple R Inc. received the small business award. Bobby has helped home owners avoid renovation rip-offs; written a renovation book, giving the proceeds to the March of Dimes; hosts a TV show; hires youth at risk, training them in contracting, renovations and life skills.

iMatter received the Community Recognition Award for taking care of teen mental health at Cardinal Newman high school.

McDougall's Garage, established in 1918, received the Legacy Award. It began as a carriage/blacksmith garage, and the first single-bay garage was built in the 1960s.

Josh Tiessen received the 2012 young entrepreneur award. As well as being an accomplished artist, he founded the Josh Tiessen Foundation to coordinate his endeavours for the community.

I thank all of these role models for their ongoing community involvement. I'm proud to represent them in our riding and here at Queen's Park.

ANNIVERSARY OF ROMANOV DYNASTY

Ms. Dipika Damerla: On May 7 last week, I was pleased to take part in a ceremony at Queen's Park marking the 400th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty and the independence day of the Russian Federation. It was a chance for Russian Canadians to celebrate the rich culture and history of their great land.

The day had a particular significance for me as a member representing Cooksville. That is because there's a little bit of Romanov history right in the middle of my riding in Cooksville.

Grand Duchess Olga was the youngest child of Emperor Alexander III of Russia. Olga was only 11 years old when her father, the emperor, died, and her brother Nicholas II became the emperor.

When the horrific murder of the Romanovs took place in the summer of 1918, Duchess Olga was already married with two children. Since there was a bounty on the heads of any surviving Romanovs, Olga, as the sister of the emperor, was understandably at risk and went into exile, first in Denmark; and when Europe became too dangerous, she came to Canada.

Duchess Olga arrived with her family in Montreal in the summer of 1948. They first settled in Campbellville, Ontario, where she and her husband farmed, and later settled on Camilla Street in Cooksville, where she lived until her death on November 24, 1960.

Although the duchess died, the Romanov connection continues to live on in Mississauga.

KIDS' FISHING DAY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: This past Saturday, we hosted our 13th annual Kids' Fishing Day at Heber Down Conservation Area. I would like to convey my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all the groups and volunteers who worked so hard to make this day special for the kids. Everyone looks forward to this day, and we had a record crowd to take part again this year. As a matter of fact, Speaker, by 10 o'clock the hundreds of rods and reels that we have out on loan were all loaned out.

Everything was free, and the many activities included conservation, wetland and trapping displays, lure-making, face painting, fly-tying and fish identification.

Numerous groups and organizations gave their time and effort to this special day and I'd like to thank them, including Ducks Unlimited; Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority; the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Zone E; Kids, Cops and Canadian Tire; Muskies Canada; Ministry of Natural Resources, Aurora District; Ontario Sporting Dog Association; the Ontario Deer Hound Association; Durham Regional Police; Pickering Rod and Gun Club; Lindsay Trappers Council; Valu-mart Lindsay; Gagnon Sports; Black Angus Fine Meats and Game; Boys and Girls Club of Durham; Simcoe Hall Settlement House; South Central Ontario Fish and Wildlife Association; WT Hawkins;

Calvary Baptist Church; Optimist Club of Oshawa; Kingsview United Church; Orono Fish and Hunt Club; Blair and John Wilson and the Westmount Kiwanis Club for all their help.

Once again, a big thank you goes out to Walter Oster and the Toronto Sportsmen's Show, who contributed greatly to the success of Kids' Fishing Day across Ontario, as well as Doug and Roli.

And special thanks goes out to Josh, Garrett, Simon, Max and Jacob, who made over a thousand snow cones and popped five gallons of popcorn, on top of the 1,600 hot dogs and hamburgers that were given out.

There were hundreds of rainbow trout caught by the young anglers, and Mr. Speaker, the smiles said it all.

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

JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I rise today to recognize those celebrating Jewish Heritage Month in Ontario this May. Ontario is home to approximately 200,000 Jewish Canadians, who together have formed a vibrant and distinguished community that continues to make significant contributions to both the growth and prosperity of our province.

As the MPP for Vaughan, I am proud to say that my own community has a very active and involved Jewish-Canadian contingent. Just last week, I held a town hall at the Joseph and Wolf Lebovic Jewish Community Campus, and I certainly appreciated the insight of those in attendance that evening.

Ontario's Jewish community has had to overcome tremendous challenges, but the tenacity and resolve that they continue to show is truly remarkable. Occasions like Jewish Heritage Month provide all of us with the opportunity to recognize and celebrate the important role that Jewish Canadians have played and continue to play in Ontario.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to extend my sincere thanks and greetings to all of those celebrating Jewish Heritage Month in Ontario this May.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today, on Community Living Day, to share the concerns and comments of my constituents in Dufferin-Caledon regarding the government's changes to Special Services at Home and the Passport program. Individuals with special needs, and their families, are experiencing many challenges when transitioning from one program to the next.

Interjection.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: You should listen, Minister. This is important.

Many families in Dufferin-Caledon and throughout Ontario have children with special needs who require

ongoing support to be able to live and participate in our community after leaving school. However, funding changes that came into effect last year have meant that those children are now falling between the cracks because the transition between the two programs is not seamless.

Community Living Ontario reports that there are over 4,000 adults on the waiting list for the Passport program. This means children today who are now reaching their 18th birthday and receive Special Services at Home will be cut off from funding and placed on a waiting list for the Passport program.

Worse still are those young adults with special needs who remain in school until the age of 21. They are not eligible for Passport until they complete school, but their Special Services at Home funding is cut off on their 18th birthday.

Children with developmental disabilities wake up with the same special needs on their 18th birthday. What changes is that the services they received when they were 17 years old will no longer exist. Instead, they will be forced to take a number and wait.

When will this government step up and remove the red tape it has imposed on families who rely on these vital support services? When will this government acknowledge—

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

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Haldimand-Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Labour concerning the US Steel and Steelworkers lockout. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

JOHN TURNER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Mr. John M. Turner, former member of this Legislature from Peterborough from 1971 to 1975; 1977 to 1987—and 1981 to 1985—with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader has asked for unanimous consent to pay tribute to John Turner. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member for Beaches-East York.

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Mr. Michael Prue: It is indeed an honour for me to pay tribute to John Melville Turner. Every day, when I come to my office, outside of my office there are pictures of the Speakers. One of those Speakers is John Turner. You can look at that picture and see a man of some considerable distinction and look at that picture and see how proudly he wears his war medals—his service

medals—on his chest and how the picture, I believe, captured who he was and the role that he played in this Legislature as Speaker.

John Melville Turner lived a life defined by service to his community, to his province and to his country. Like many of us here today, his path to Queen's Park came by way of municipal politics, after a successful career in the private sector. But that is only one small part of his story. John Turner was a businessman turned politician, that much is true, but he was also a distinguished member of Canada's greatest generation. We are all here wearing poppies today in remembrance of him.

He joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1942 as a 20-year-old and would serve as a pilot officer for the remainder of World War II. He was part of a special group of people who understood that their sacrifices were the foundation of a stronger future and who willingly rose to the challenge. This type of tenacity and commitment seems to paint a true portrait of the type of man John Turner was. As I said, that true portrait is hanging right outside room 153 of this Legislature.

After winning a narrow victory in 1971, John Turner's career at Queen's Park may have been a short one because of the election that ensued; he lost the election of 1975 by a very small margin. But as fate would have it, in 1977 John Turner was back at the Legislature and he erased, I think for all time, the heartbreaking memory of his small loss with a landslide victory. In the 1981 election, he cemented his place at Queen's Park, almost tripling the margin of his 1977 campaign.

From 1981 to 1985, he served the assembly as Speaker. It was clear that John Turner was not only a respected member of the Progressive Conservative caucus, but of the House itself. Even as the sun set on that government, the Davis government, and that party faced tough times in the elections that followed—remember, in the mid-1980s, it could not have been easy being called John Turner. People often, I would think, confused him with the other John Turner in Ottawa, who was, of course, a Liberal. Even though that was the case, the people of Peterborough knew who their John Turner was, and they sent him back to Queen's Park in 1985 with nearly a 5,000 vote margin.

As members, we are acutely aware of the role that our loved ones play in our success as MPPs. To the Turner family—and we have a great many people here today. His wife, June, and his sons Timothy, James and Ian are all present; plus there's a huge, long list of Turners who are here to pay respect to a very great man. To that family, we thank you for sharing John with us.

It is difficult, sometimes, in life for the politicians to spend so much time here, but it is even more difficult for the members of the family who have to wave goodbye on Sunday night and not see their loved one again until Thursday night or Friday morning. You sacrificed along with him for all those many years while he did service to the people of this province. Because of your sacrifice, because of his sacrifice, both Peterborough and Ontario are better places to be. We are thankful for the life and

the dedication of John Turner. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It is truly an honour for me to rise this afternoon to pay tribute to John Turner, a former member from Peterborough and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in the 32nd Parliament.

It's a pleasure for me, and an honour, because John Turner and I were good friends. I remember this past January—in fact, January 26 of this year—I arrived at the Rotary Club of Peterborough, where John and his brother Dr. Art Turner had been members for so many years. I knew instinctively that something was different on that occasion, because normally John and his brother Art would be sitting at the front tables. On 10 occasions, John was always most gracious to thank me at my rotary address, so it was very, very different to be at Rotary on that day and not to see a friend in front of me.

I'd also like to recognize John's family, who are here today for today's tribute to a kind and decent man who served his community and, indeed, his entire country. I want to recognize June and his children, grandchildren and many other family members who are here today for this tribute.

John was a member of Canada's greatest generation. Born and raised in Peterborough, he was a decorated veteran of the Royal Canadian Air Force, flying over 30 missions over Europe during the Second World War in a Halifax bomber. He was among a group of very dedicated veterans that, of course, led the restoration of the Halifax bomber that now sits at Canadian Forces Base Trenton as part of the Royal Canadian Air Force museum.

On many occasions, I had the opportunity to enjoy the hospitality of both June and John at 371 Park Street North, a very distinguished home, home of great warmth and a very friendly atmosphere. Of course, their home was beside the home of another Canadian icon, Dr. Tom Symons, the founding president of Trent University. It was remarkable that two homes would be side by side for two individuals who have made such a remarkable contribution to our way of life in the province of Ontario.

John was an alderman in Peterborough from 1969 to 1971. He was first elected to the 29th Parliament. He was then elected to the 31st, 32nd and 33rd Parliaments, served as the MPP for Peterborough from 1971 to 1975 and again from 1977 to 1987, and was Speaker from 1981 to 1985. You, Mr. Speaker, of course, often refer to decisions that were made by Speaker Turner.

Two members of this House served with Mr. Turner: the honourable member from York Centre, Mr. Kwinter, and the honourable member from St. Catharines, Mr. Bradley.

In 2003, he became a member of the advisory committee for the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship, a role for which the breadth of his experience and the integrity of his character made him uniquely qualified amongst Ontarians. His commitment to community transcended political affiliation; indeed, he worked to improve the well-being of everyone. He became concerned—often he

and I chatted about this—by the poisonous partisanship that has entered today's politics, which can prevent good things, and he always sought ways to assist everyone to do things in a community.

John Turner was a man who both fought for and served democracy. I know I am the beneficiary of that, because I am standing here today. I got the chance to serve because of John M. Turner. I recall, after I got the privilege to represent the riding of Peterborough in 2003, John called me for an invitation to his home to have a chat with me, to provide some very good advice as I assumed my responsibilities.

On that particular day, June—the wonderful, warm June Turner—was in the kitchen preparing a snack for John and I, and he called me into his study. He gave me a unique gift: four crystal glasses that are emblazoned with the coat of arms of the province of Ontario. What was so unique about those glasses was that they were a gift from Premier William Grenville Davis when John became Speaker in 1981—one of the gifts from his caucus. John gave me that gift and I was overwhelmed. I said, “Why?” John said, “Don't ask any questions, Jeff. I just want you to have these, and I know they'll be in safekeeping for many years to come.” So it's a personal gift that I'll always relish.

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It's a privilege to be standing here in tribute to an MPP for Peterborough, for a man who served so ably. He's deeply missed in this community. We always talk about things that John did in the fields of health care, education and business development. You know, not a day goes by when people remind us in Peterborough about the contribution that he made to our community, that everlasting contribution to our community.

So in that vein, shortly I'll be requesting my colleague the Minister of Transportation—I think one of the greatest projects that John was involved with was the four-laning of Highway 115/35 from the 401 in Peterborough. I'll be asking the Minister of Transportation, on that section of Highway 115 that comes from the boundary from the county of Peterborough into the city of Peterborough, to rename it the Honourable John M. Turner Way, and that signs be adorned with a poppy symbol. That will be a reminder for the generations to come that a man from the greatest generation did so much for Peterborough.

In closing, I want to say to my friend John Turner, farewell, my friend. Until we meet again. Thank you so much.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm very pleased to rise today in order to pay tribute to a personal friend and former MPP and Speaker of the Ontario Legislature, John Turner, who passed away this January at the remarkable age of 90.

I'm particularly pleased that so many members of John's family could come here today. They're up in the Speaker's gallery, which is very appropriate. We welcome them to the Legislature. We had a wonderful lunch just before we came down.

My family would often meet up with John and June Turner, as John's provincial riding overlapped the federal riding of my dad, Bill Scott, who was the long-time member of Parliament for what was then Victoria–Haliburton. I'm sure he would have enjoyed the lunch that we had before, because my dad just loved people and loved the Turners. I'm sure he's looking from up above with John and thinking, “That's very nice of them to do that,” and enjoying the company.

Over the years, John, and his wife, June, and my parents, Bill and Betty Scott, became good friends, with the families often joining each other at the many events that we have throughout our riding, which of course included attending the famous Kinmount Fair many times, I'm sure. I have very warm memories of that time, as does my mom, Betty, who is watching on TV today from Fenelon Court. She knew that the tribute was coming and was thrilled that she could be able to see it on TV.

We've heard that John was a devoted husband of June and a devoted father to David, James, Robert, Timothy, Ian and Heather. I know not everybody could come today but I think we're up at over 30. Some of the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren join us today also.

I think John is primarily remembered at Queen's Park for his years of service to the Legislature. There was far more, certainly, to that legacy, as has been said. In World War II he served in the Royal Canadian Air Force as a bomber pilot, completing 34 missions over Europe. He was highly respected in his profession as a mechanical contractor and president of W.R. Turner Ltd., a firm founded by his grandfather.

John was committed to his community, serving in a number of capacities. He was active in many, many organizations that have been mentioned—the RCAF, the Royal Canadian Legion, the Peterborough YMCA, the Rotary Club, the Masonic Lodge and St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, of which he was a staunch member.

In 1971, the PC Party was looking for a candidate to run against the famous NDP member Walter Pitman, a ranking member of the party and a former leadership candidate against Stephen Lewis. So when Sandy Fleming came to visit John and June and asked if he would run, he did, and we all know that he was successful in 1971.

In 1974, Premier Davis did appoint John as parliamentary assistant to the provincial secretary for justice. He had a short hiatus in provincial politics from 1975 to 1977, but John was re-elected again in 1977, 1981 and 1985.

One Saturday in 1981, Premier Davis called and asked John if he'd be willing to serve as Speaker of the Legislature. In those days, the Speaker was determined by an understanding between the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition. Bill Davis recalls that John seemingly sounded surprised—when I talked to Mr. Davis this weekend—at the offer and took a day before accepting, and I think that speaks to John's humility in life.

Because of the tight time constraints, there wasn't an opportunity for him to be measured for the customary tailor-made robes before he assumed his duties. On the day he took his seat in the Speaker's chair, he was quoted in the media as saying, "Everything I have on is borrowed, except for my trousers."

John served as Speaker from 1981 until 1985, a role which he excelled at, not just because of the booming voice that carried throughout the Legislature, but because he seemed to generally fit the chair. He combined the skills of a dignified statesman with the talents of a non-nonsense hockey referee. He was determined to maintain the decorum and civility which he had always personally practised. He was a warm, down-to-earth man who treated everyone with fairness and respect.

I know when I asked Deb Deller, the current Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, she fondly recalls that as a new committee Clerk, she was shocked one day to see that the Speaker had personally walked to her office and was standing in her doorway, looking for information on a bill that was before her committee. He could easily have sent a staff member or simply called, but he made a personal effort himself. Deb said that's who John was. He was everyone's equal and made every employee feel that they and the jobs they were doing were important.

John and June, I know, regarded the Bill Davis years as a marvellous time in their lives. Both John and June genuinely liked people, and it showed. They both threw themselves into their roles, developing warm relationships with members, spouses, staff, pages and visiting dignitaries, often hosting lunches, dinners and barbecues. I know Janet and Gloria joined us for lunch earlier because they have such fond memories of the Turner family, also.

John and June had the privilege of meeting Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on two different occasions. They also met the Queen Mother, as well as Pope John Paul II.

During John's time as Speaker, June told me the story that when they went over to England, they were invited by Sir George Thomas, the Speaker of the British House of Commons, to visit him for dinner at Westminster. They so enjoyed each other's company that Sir George gave them a personal tour not only of the building but of course of the antiques that were involved in the building. The dinner that was supposed to end at 8:30 ended at about 11:30, and I think everyone was very happy at the time they spent together.

When John stepped down as Speaker in 1985, all the party leaders paid tribute to him, and I just wanted to quote a few, because I think it sums up who John was.

Premier Frank Miller said, "In carrying out the duties through some of the most ... difficult debates ever witnessed in this chamber, the member for Peterborough evidenced a courteous and patient nature that often differed from the tone set by the debates themselves."

Opposition leader David Peterson praised the outgoing Speaker, saying that John was a gentleman who

"distinguished this province as its official host, along with his wonderful wife, June."

Bob Rae, the leader of the NDP, said:

"We too very much appreciated the way he served as Speaker and presiding officer of this House...."

"We congratulate him and Mrs. Turner on the wonderful job they did serving as hosts and, in a sense, as guardian angels of this place...."

It's the kind of unanimity that is seldom witnessed in the Ontario Legislature.

Premier Davis told me that he liked and respected John and he had such respect for him that John was the type of person that we should have more of at Queen's Park representing our communities.

John didn't seek re-election in 1987 but continued his keen involvement in Peterborough. I know from the many times I had to sit down with John and June after he finished his political career that they were always on top of what was happening in Peterborough and in the province and were razor-sharp on your memories, and I think corrected a lot of your judgments that you were recalling.

John's legacy will certainly live for a long, long time. Today is a continuation, I think, of the celebration of a life well led.

John exemplified the best of being a devoted family man, a tireless volunteer in his community and a dedicated public servant. He always lived his life based on a solid foundation of uncompromising decency, integrity and generosity. We are all better off in this House for having known him, and it is a better place for him having served here.

I would like to thank June and the Turner family for allowing me to be part of this tribute. Thank you.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to thank all members for their kind and heartfelt comments. I thank the family for being here. On behalf of all of us, we thank you for allowing us to celebrate the triumph of a special person. Thank you very much.

Just to show you that I probably wouldn't be able to fill his shoes, I forgot something, and that is to let the family know that we will have copies of Hansard and a DVD of the tribute sent directly to the family. Thank you all.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROMPT PAYMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES PAIEMENTS RAPIDES

Mr. Del Duca moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act respecting payments made under contracts and subcontracts in the construction industry /
Projet de loi 69, Loi concernant les paiements effectués

aux termes de contrats et de contrats de sous-traitance dans l'industrie de la construction.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I'm very happy to be in the House today to introduce my very first private member's bill, the Prompt Payment Act, 2013. The act sets out various rules and requirements in relation to payments made under construction contracts.

Among other things, part II of the act entitles contractors and subcontractors to receive progress payments and to suspend work or terminate a contract if such payments are not made. It also provides that payments can only be withheld if the payor notifies the payee that a payment application is disapproved or amended within 10 days after it is submitted. Limits are imposed on the amount that can be withheld.

Part III of the act requires owners to provide contractors with certain financial information before entering into a contract. It also entitles subcontractors to receive certain financial information.

I would like to very briefly thank my colleague the member from Mississauga East—Cooksville for some of the outstanding work she has done on this particular issue. I would also like to acknowledge that the member from Brant—the Speaker himself—in a previous Parliament did introduce a bill on the same subject—Bill 211, I believe—prior to the 2011 election.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy has asked for unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet for two days during the constituency week of May 20, 2013, for the purpose of conducting public hearings as part of its standing order 111(a) study relating to traffic congestion.

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

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is asking for unanimous consent to put forward a motion. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 27 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 27 be waived. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE CONFERENCE TRAVEL

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be authorized to attend the 2013 annual conference of the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees in Regina, Saskatchewan, from August 25 to 27, 2013; and

That the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to attend the 2013 National Conference of State Legislatures in Atlanta, Georgia, from August 11 to 15, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that the Standing Committee—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

All those agreed that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

COMMUNITY LIVING DAY

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize Community Living Day at the Legislature. I'd first like to welcome our guests who have joined us today from Community Living Ontario and from various Community Living groups across the province. You represent a wonderful legacy of change, and we are pleased—indeed, honoured—to have you with us here today.

Some 60 years ago, a group of families came together with a common goal: to ensure the right for their sons and daughters to go to school. This would become a monumental first step in a decades-long journey that would fundamentally change the way we provide services to people with a developmental disability.

Over the years, the Community Living movement became about far more than just the right to an education; it became about the right to be included in all aspects of community living. I applaud Community Living Ontario for their tireless efforts to help change public attitudes about people with a developmental disability. You have inspired countless individuals throughout this province to become involved in their communities, you have brought hope to families whose biggest wish is for their child to have the opportunity to fulfill their potential, and you have inspired governments to join you on this journey towards a truly inclusive society.

Together, you have helped open our eyes to new ways of thinking. Since then, we have worked hard together to help people live more independent lives in their communities. We closed the last three remaining provincially run institutions; we introduced modern legislation that better protects and supports adults with developmental disabilities; and, together, we gave adults and families greater choice about how they participate in the community by creating the Passport direct funding program.

Now we are in the midst of a large-scale plan to modernize Ontario's developmental services system to make it fairer for everyone, consistent across the province and financially sustainable in the long term. To support this plan, in the 2013 budget we proposed a new annual investment of almost \$43 million in developmental services that will provide about 1,000 adults and their families with new or additional support.

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I am proud of what we've achieved together so far, but I know there is much more work to be done. For example, we are continuing to look for ways to encourage more inclusive workplaces that help break down barriers for people with disabilities who can and want to work. That's why in the budget we also announced our intention to work with corporate leaders to establish a Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People With Disabilities to champion hiring people with those disabilities.

Community Living envisions a society where people who have an intellectual disability belong and feel respected, where everyone is worthy of dignity and respect. It's a vision that we, as a government, share. From education and employment to recreation and daily living, we strive to encourage the full inclusion of everyone, and together, with the support of our communities, we can make it a reality.

As we take our next steps, we are thankful to have partners like Community Living Ontario and like the families and individuals here with us today, showing us, helping us to lead the way. Today, we celebrate how far we've come and we celebrate our hope for the future. We celebrate the relationships and the partnerships that have been built throughout this journey together, and we celebrate all those whose lives have been made better, thanks to those inspirational first families, our Community Living organizations and everyone who has joined their efforts to make such important differences.

I invite all honourable members to please join me in welcoming Community Living Ontario and their members here today. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for responses.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to speak about Community Living today. Earlier, I and a number of MPPs enjoyed the Community Living reception, and many of us also met with representatives of the organization, many who are in the House this afternoon.

Since 1953, Community Living Ontario has advocated for people with intellectual disabilities to be fully included in all aspects of community life so that all people are able to live in a state of dignity, share in all elements of living in our communities and have the opportunity to be better enabled to fully participate.

Community Living Ontario has over 12,000 members across the province and is represented through 117 local associations in our own home communities, offering a number of things: support to children and/or adults to live, learn and work within the community; help communities themselves welcome and include people; and advocate for change so that people have a better time of it in their home community.

The work is not without its challenges. I think of the 12,000 with an intellectual disability on the waiting list for residential support. I think of 4,000 adults waiting for daily living support through the Passport program; 7,000 families of children are on the wait-list for Special Services at Home, the SSAH program. And we see more and more parents in their 60s, 70s and 80s supporting a son or daughter with an intellectual disability, with little help.

We've all seen the stories, regrettably, in the media: A desperate parent who has run out of options, dropping a child off at the doorstep of a social service agency that was unable to accommodate them—lack of funding, lack of space. I really cannot imagine anything more heart-wrenching than a decision like that.

Speaker, we hear of the \$42 million in the recent budget to support the needs of families and young people. We've asked for details; there are none. Last week, I asked twice for some more information on that particular program and how the money would be allocated that goes with it.

I note the proposal to encourage employment for social service recipients through allowing them to keep more of the money they make. At the same time, I do question why the disabled were shut out of a proposed asset limit increase that we did see for clients of the Ontario Works program.

As far as employment, those on ODSP—and I received a brochure today, and as it indicates, people on ODSP are ready, willing and able. Hiring those with disabilities is easier than one would think. They want a job, like everybody else. They're punctual. They want that independence that goes with it.

We welcome the representatives here in our Legislature. We know that, through the budget, we're looking

at something like \$10 billion budgeted for social services. Obviously, the opportunity is there. There's a lot that can be done with \$10 billion through effective support of the elderly, the disabled, the truly disadvantaged. So we do have an opportunity. We've got a chance to refocus, to reset priorities.

In my view, it's time to wake up Ontario's social services system through approaches, through programs, perhaps new programs, laden with fresh, cost-effective ideas to better help us to deal with these very complex problems—problems that can be dealt with in a flexible way and by offering choice.

Stay tuned. Our health critic, the member from Whitby–Oshawa, will be calling for a more clear focus with respect to developmental services later this week.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: First of all, I just want to say to all of those from Community Living here, a great thank you for all that you do and all that you are, from Andrea Horwath and all of the New Democratic Party. Thank you so much.

What you've done, as you know better than anyone, is without a great deal of help from anybody, and particularly this government. In fact, this government, since 2010, has envisaged cuts to many of the services that you have, I wouldn't say "enjoyed" because they've never really been there very much, but certainly they haven't got any better since this government has taken power—and in some cases, worse.

In fact, 30% of those agencies that have been put in place to assist you are now working with deficits constantly. Every day in the House, I read out petitions around that very fact.

As you've just heard, 23,000 children and adults are on waiting lists—you say, and you're right—and 12,000 are waiting for a home. The average wait time is from one year to four years.

For example, for something like IBI, the only sustained treatment paid for by the province, by the time children in that region begin receiving IBI, they are on average 7.6 years old, past the critical window between the ages of two and seven when scientists have shown this type of intervention has the best chance of success.

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We know, for example, that the Ombudsman is right now conducting a study and will have that report soon. We don't have to wait for that report, do we? We know what he's going to say. We know that he's going to say the services are woefully inadequate. I want to put a face to the inadequacy of those services, and it's not the Telford face, that poor family. It's a face in my own community—and this is a plea to my friend the Minister of Community and Social Services on behalf of this family. I helped, in a very small way, to build the house this family lives in.

Her name is Lorena Sinato, and she is a single parent who lives in a Habitat for Humanity house, one of the very, very lucky ones. Very few people have that opportunity; she's one of them. She lives in this house with her

son, Bryan, and a whole group in our community got together in 2012 to help build the house she lives in.

Her son, Bryan, was born at 27 weeks. He has cerebral palsy, he's autistic and he's blind. And she cares for him, but she also works. She works in a bank. She has to work, because if she doesn't work, she will lose the house we built for her—that she helped to build for herself. If she doesn't have a job, she can't get a mortgage, such as it is, a very small one, and she can't keep the house. And yet she's facing that very possibility because of Bryan's needs.

Because of Bryan's needs, she's managed to find some respite care—we're talking about after school and when she desperately needs it—just to the end of August. The CCAC has thrown up their hands. They can't help her. No wonder they can't help her. She's one of thousands waiting for that help.

We've heard about the \$42 million. My friends, you know better than anyone that that represents about 14% of the people on the waiting list. What about everyone else? I've even talked about aging parents with children with developmental disabilities and others. There's no response at all for them right now. So a personal plea for this family, because time is running out. I can't imagine a tragedy like hers, again like the Telfords and other families across the province face. In this case, she'll lose a house that was a charitable work as well.

So what are we saying to my friend across the aisle? We're saying this is a start, but it's a very small start. Please step up—please, please step up for Lorena. Please, please step up for Bryan. Please, please step up for all the families that are here today, pleading with you to step up. They've done what they can. They've done more than they can, and they continue to work and do a yeoman's and yeowoman's task here. But they need your help, and that help has to be more than a promise. It has to become a reality.

Please, on behalf of Community Living, I make that plea on behalf of all the families here.

Again, thank you for what you've done with very little help in the past.

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

RENÉ FONTAINE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Mr. René Fontaine, a former member of this Legislative Assembly from Cochrane North from 1985 to 1990 and a former provincial cabinet minister, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is looking for unanimous consent to pay tribute to—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I may go a little bit longer than five. I just want to let you know.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. It throws me off when I'm in the middle of a sentence.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we have unanimous consent for the tribute, please? Agreed? Agreed. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's an honour to pay tribute to René Fontaine. He was, as the Kapuskasing Times newspaper headline declared following his death on March 17, 2012, a true northern icon.

On behalf of the entire Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, I want to extend my deepest condolences to his wife, Yolande, and the other members of his family who are here today in the Speaker's gallery. Thank you for coming today.

René Fontaine served here at Queen's Park as the MPP for Cochrane North for two terms between 1985 and 1990. As a new member, he stepped right into the cabinet as Minister of Mines and Northern Affairs. His service in this place wasn't long when measured in years, but like everything else René did in his remarkable life, he used his time effectively. When one studies his record, there is no question that he managed to accomplish what he came here to do: to make a real difference in the lives of those he was elected to serve.

I was a young mayor of Brockville at the time René served in the cabinet of Premier Peterson. Although I didn't get to know him really well, I do distinctly recall meeting him on several occasions when I was involved with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. René Fontaine was one of those people you really never forget meeting. He knew how to leave a lasting impression. He was a larger-than-life character. If you went to central casting and asked them to come up with a man who personified the spirit of northern Ontario, they'd come back to you with René Fontaine.

Hearst Mayor Roger Sigouin chuckled last week when recalling René's personality: "He was so colourful. Even today, when I see people who worked with him, they say what a character he was. What a great guy he was."

René Fontaine was 51 when he became an MPP and cabinet minister, but he had already accomplished so many things in his life. He was a successful businessman, operating the Fontaine family's lumber company since the 1950s. He was no stranger to politics, having served as a municipal councillor in the town of Hearst from 1963 to 1966, and then on to being mayor from 1967 until 1980.

During his quarter-century of municipal service, he left a very impressive legacy as a builder. It's evident when you look at Hearst today, including the airport that bears his name.

One of the most notable achievements came in 1977, when Hearst was proclaimed officially bilingual, a step no other Ontario municipality had taken. In addition to standing up for Franco-Ontarians, he was a visionary in understanding the need to include First Nations in the dialogue about developing the north. That's considered

essential today, but 30 years ago—that was when he was promoting that approach.

When he decided to enter provincial politics by running as a Liberal nominee in 1985, I have to say, he didn't exactly pick what was considered a safe seat. In fact, Cochrane North hadn't been represented by a Liberal MPP in 37 years. So what did René Fontaine do? He went out and beat the incumbent PC by nearly 2,000 votes, and he increased that margin to nearly 4,000 votes in the 1987 general election. Of course, history also shows that René went to the people of Cochrane North one other time between 1985 and the 1987 general election. In June 1986, he did the honourable thing and stepped down from cabinet until questions about his personal holdings had been dealt with. But that wasn't enough for him. True to form, he wanted his constituents to be the judges of his actions, so he resigned his seat, and he was promptly swept to victory in a subsequent by-election. He later returned to cabinet and served until 1990, when he decided not to seek re-election.

I could stand here, and I know other members could stand here, for hours and talk about his contribution to the north during his time as MPP and cabinet minister. The list includes founding the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp., which we all know continues today. But I think it's more appropriate to talk not about the things he did but why he did them.

I've reviewed Hansard and looked at some of René's days here, and his passion for the north is so evident in his words. He was such a fierce defender of northern Ontario, a champion of its economy, and a proud promoter of the hard-working people and beautiful natural spaces.

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There's one particular passage that I found in Hansard that reveals to me so much of his character and why he was so committed to public service. It was from a night session on February 6, 1986, and I think he really spoke from the heart when debating youth unemployment. Here's his quote: "As I have said lots of times, when I go to meet my creator he is going to ask me, 'What did you do for the youth in the north between 1980 or 1990?' That is why I am here. I will at least be able to answer that I went into politics to try to do something; that is one of the reasons.

"I did not come here to see my name with the Honourable René in front; I did not come here to have a car driven by a chauffeur. I came here to try to give the rest of my life, if I can, and with my energy to try to give a ray of light to those young people who are suffering."

As we honour René Fontaine today, those of us with the privilege of serving here can pay him no greater tribute than by resolving to live up to those powerful and deeply personal words. Thank you.

M. Gilles Bisson: Parler de René Fontaine, c'est une histoire d'elle-même. René était assez un caractère, une personne qui était—lui, c'était un individu qui n'était rien autre que René Fontaine.

C'est difficile de parler de René sans dire une couple d'histoires du temps de René. Ce que je demande à la

famille, s'il vous plaît, ne fâchez-vous pas contre moi; j'ai une couple de belles histoires qui décrivent votre père pour qu'il était, et je vais faire ça dans les deux langues.

Comme on le sait, M. Fontaine ramenait le bilinguisme à Hearst que les anglophones pouvaient se trouver incapables de comprendre de quoi nous autres parlions à Hearst dans le temps. Moi, j'ai toujours pensé que c'était un peu drôle, mais c'est une autre histoire.

I was just saying that to talk about René Fontaine is quite something because René was nothing but René. He was a type of character who didn't emulate other people, didn't pretend to be anything else other than he was. He was just a real, genuine, genuine human being who saw something and tried to do something about it, and tried to do the right thing all of the time.

My good friend from the Conservative caucus talked about his experience when he found himself in a bit of a situation, having forgotten to disclose that he owned some shares in a mining company. It was raised by the Tories, and Mr. Fontaine, as was pointed out, didn't just resign his cabinet spot. He decided to go out and seek the election of the people of Cochrane North in order to make sure that he cleared the air and people understood where he was coming from. That's something I think maybe we should think about every now and then, because I don't think anybody else ever did that, and I think it says something about the man.

Listen, I will say this about René: He spoke a language that is seldom spoken in Canada. We called it Fontainese, because when René spoke with passion, which was most of the time, he was speaking half in French, half in English, and always very animated. The good people of Hearst, a few people that you know—we used to refer to René and his colourful discussion as speaking Fontainese. I want to give an example of that that happened here in the Legislature during that particular time.

A Conservative member whom I won't name, because it wouldn't be fair—he's not in the Legislature today—got up in the House and asked a very pointed question to Mr. Fontaine, who was on the government benches, and was very pointed in regard to the question that he was putting forward, at which point René took exception. So René got up, as René always does, and says, "Monsieur le Président, I got to tell you, j'ai toute une affaire, puis oh boy, ce gars-là"—and he was all over the place, as only René can do.

Everybody was sort of listening and wondering where he was going with it, when all of a sudden, the supplementary had to be put. The Conservative member gets up, looks to the House across the way, looks at René, and says, "What do I ask?" He says, "He is unintelligible," at which point a member of the NDP caucus, Gilles Pouliot, gets up, rises to a point of order, and says, "Monsieur le Président, sur un point d'ordre. That vile little man in the front row of the Conservative caucus—il ose—he dares to stand in this Legislature and say that Monsieur Fontaine is not intelligent. First of all, as a francophone, and number two, as a member of the assembly and as a

fellow northerner, I want to say that that is not the case. In fact, Monsieur Fontaine has a very high IQ. The only problem is, half is in French and half is in English."

The reason I tell that story is that some people might be offended, but René understood that, in the cut and thrust of this place, sometimes you give it and sometimes you take it, and you've got to take both sides of it. That's something that René really understood. He understood that at times, yes, you had to fight hard for what you believed in; even if you had to fight with your friends, and often with the foe, you always had to remember that at the end of the day, we're all human beings. If we can't laugh about ourselves, what's the point? René understood that to quite an extent.

J'ai eu l'occasion dans la ville de Hearst de travailler avec René sur beaucoup de dossiers. Puis l'affaire que j'ai toujours appréciée de René, c'est que même si on sait tout que René—il était partisan libéral. Ce gars-là avait une couche rouge; il restait avec sa couche rouge toute sa vie, puis ça, il est fier.

N'importe ce qui se passait, quand ça venait à la ville de Hearst, quand ça venait au nord de l'Ontario, puis il y avait un dossier que tu étais incapable d'avancer, pour lui, il n'y avait aucune différence avec qui il travaillait. Si tu voulais travailler avec lui sur quelque chose qu'il pensait était important, si tu étais conservateur, néo-démocrate ou libéral, ça ne faisait aucune différence.

But wait until you got into a campaign. That was a whole different story, because René was the ultimate campaigner and, in fact, put a stranglehold on the town of Hearst to quite an extent. I think it took me two elections before I was able to win after he had been gone for three or four terms. People had—just out of the work that René had done and the respect that people had for him in Hearst—still been voting Liberal even though he wasn't there. Thank God, I've been lucky over the last couple of elections in the town of Hearst, but a lot of that was René, and I think that says something: that people respected what he did even after he was gone.

We talk about the northern heritage fund that was created under René Fontaine. Another thing that he had created was what they call the development corporations. The development corporations were regional committees within northern Ontario that sat as northerners together—mayors, people from the business community, people from labour and others—to sit down and say, "How do we deal with this issue that's affecting us now?" For example, if there was a forestry issue, if there was a mining issue or if there was a transportation issue, these regional councils sat down and gave advice to the minister about what can be done.

I can tell you, that was something that was very appreciated and something, maybe, we should think about again, because certainly people in northern Ontario want to be part of the solution, as always. René understood that, but he was quite proud of that. That's one of the things that he told me, when I first got elected, that he was proudest of, because some of the best ideas came

from the work of those councils that he was able to act on as minister.

Like I say, I've had the opportunity with René to see him at many community events within the riding and to see him a whole bunch of times during the campaign. I'm going to share another little story about René, because it goes without saying that he was a good campaigner.

I believe it was the election where Mike Doody had run as the Liberal candidate; I might be wrong, but I think it was that one. I was up canvassing on the day that the Liberal opponent was opening his committee room, so I was up canvassing in the town of Hearst, and my campaign manager, who was Chris Mockler, said, "We'll meet up after you're finished campaigning at night," because you normally canvass until it gets dark, "and we'll meet back at the room" we were staying at, in whatever hotel we were at.

We get in. He said, "How'd it go?" I said, "It's starting to feel okay. There's a big, long shadow in this town, and it's called René Fontaine, because I'm picking it up on the door. But I seem to feel as if things are starting to go." I think that was the first election I actually won in Hearst.

He said, "I went to Mike Doody's committee room opening." I said, "How'd that go?" He said, "Oh, it wasn't bad. They had a few people there. They ordered some Chinese food." I said, "What did you do?" He said, "Oh, I went in. I had Chinese food. I had to eat; what the heck? I went in, sat down, had some Chinese food, and sat with some wonderful people. I recruited a couple of volunteers and I brought them to the committee room afterwards." I said, "Chris, you don't do that. You don't go in the other guy's committee room. That's not a good thing."

The next day, I end up at CINN FM, where we're all doing our radio ads for the campaign, and René is there with the candidate. René stops me and he says: « Ah, Bisson, tu n'as pas une chance. Tu as dit—on a toute une équipe ici, Mike Doody, et ça va tout bien aller, tu vas voir. On va gagner Hearst puis on va gagner tout le comté, puis ça va être rouge, tu vas voir. » J'ai dit: « Bien, je te souhaite la bonne chance, René. » J'ai dit: « Je vais faire ce que je peux. »

He turns around and he says, "As a matter of fact, it goes so good, last night we had our committee room opening down there on George Street and we had people coming in off the street. People who moved into town for the first time: The first thing they do is they come to our committee room and say they're going to be Liberal." I say, "Oh, yeah?" and all of a sudden my campaign manager walks through the door. He goes, "He's the guy!" and I said, "May I introduce you to my campaign manager?"

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But again, I say that story because some people might have gotten mad. I was certainly mad at my campaign manager for having done that, because that's not the way I operate things. I don't like that. It doesn't feel good. But René took it for what it was, and he thought it was

funnier than I did. Actually, I was telling René after, "Listen, I talked to my campaign manager and told him that wasn't good." "Hey, inquiète-toi pas," he said, "we had lots of Chinese food. It was all good. Don't worry about it." That's the type of guy he was.

I want to end on a couple of things I already touched on. One is his role with First Nations. René worked with the Constance Lake First Nation and other First Nations long before it was in vogue—quite frankly, when it was quite the other way. He understood, probably more so than anybody else because of his background—he wasn't just a politician; he wasn't just the mayor; he also ran a forest company in Hearst and understood that if you're going to develop northern Ontario, you've got to bring First Nations along with you and they've got to be able to benefit. Long after he left business and long after he left politics as an active politician in this place, he continued working with First Nations, with Constance Lake and others, in order to try to make things better and to try to find economic opportunity for the First Nation of Constance Lake. I can tell you, I've heard lots of stories from many people whom he affected in a very positive way there.

The other thing is—and it has to be said, for the town of Hearst: Never have we had such a champion as René Fontaine in the town of Hearst. That guy, I've got to tell you, was involved in almost everything and got a whole bunch of things done because he was a very tenacious individual. He knew how to reach across the aisle and work with people when he had to, he knew how to fight you when he had to, but best of all, he knew who he was fighting for, and that was for his community and the people of northern Ontario.

To the family, écoute, c'est difficile de perdre un père. Moi je le sais; j'ai passé à travers avec ma mère puis mon père. Ce n'est pas facile. Bien, vous avez des mémoires qui vont toujours rester avec vous autres et qui vont vous rappeler qui votre père était. Je peux vous dire, vous avez beaucoup à avoir fier que René était votre père. Moi, je suis fier que c'était mon ami. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. Further tributes? The member from Sudbury.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd like to thank Steve and Gilles for doing such a great job of trying to shape this very, very unique and wonderful individual.

Before I go any further, I'd like to recognize Ninon and Sylvie Fontaine, who are in the gallery, along with Sylvie's husband, Mario; David Fontaine, René's son; and Lucie Boutin, David's wife. Thank you for coming today.

When you think of René Fontaine, you think of words like "icon, pioneer, builder, innovator, advocate, champion, visionary," and descriptive words like "colourful, emotional, excitable, passionate, powerful"—at least, that's the way northerners described him when they heard of his death on March 17 of last year at the age of 78.

It is a privilege to expand on these words and talk a little bit about our friend René Fontaine on behalf of the Liberal Party. René was passionate about Hearst and all of northern Ontario. He was very successful in the world of business, helping to establish a lucrative lumber business in Hearst, which grew into a large enterprise employing many people in Hearst and the surrounding area.

But his real love was people, so he started his political career in 1963, serving as a town councillor in Hearst. In 1967, he ran successfully for the mayor of Hearst and remained in that position until 1980. In 1977, René was bold enough to declare Hearst a bilingual community, a step no other Ontario municipality had taken. Why? Because he passionately believed in bilingualism. He passionately believed that the mix of cultures bring about the best in any community. But that was only one of the many firsts we can attribute to this dynamic individual.

He ran in the provincial election in 1985, defeating the sitting Conservative—a very good member by the name of René Piché—in the riding of Cochrane North. He was the only Liberal MPP elected from northern Ontario and so was appointed to the Peterson cabinet as the Minister of Mines and Northern Affairs.

René was a man of incredible integrity, as Gilles said earlier. Found to be in a conflict-of-interest position, René first of all admitted his mistake and resigned not only his cabinet seat but also his seat, by which a by-election was set in motion, saying he had to be exonerated by the people who sent him here. He was so respected for this position that the Conservatives and the New Democratic Party chose not to run candidates against him, and he easily defeated the spread of minor candidates to return as MPP for Cochrane North.

You know, whenever you heard René speak to young people—after you deciphered what he was saying—he told young people about the importance of being honourable. To him, “honourable” meant something. It was a very, very special word, term and title, and he made sure, both inside and outside of politics, that people understood that if you’re honourable, your credibility always remains intact.

After the Peterson landslide of 1987, René was appointed as the first Minister of Northern Development, a post he kept until August 1990, when a provincial election was called. René chose not to run in that election.

René was way ahead of his time. He implored governments of all stripes to engage our First Nations communities. He said that realization of the north’s potential was impossible without First Nations’ engagement. And until the day he died, he believed that and preached that.

To say that René was colourful would be an understatement. He had a very distinctive voice, which was always filled with much emotion. Not always easy to understand, René would simply say, “I don’t know. I don’t understand why they don’t understand me. I speak two languages: broken English and broken French.”

René was never afraid to poke fun at himself, but he was always very respectful of the people he interacted with, be they friends or foes.

René understood the alienation northerners felt, and so he convinced Premier Peterson to create the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. in June 1988—we celebrate 25 years of René Fontaine this year—as a way to pay northerners back for the enormous wealth extracted from northern Ontario through mining and forestry. Today, this fund stands at \$100 million a year and, since 2003, our investments of \$834 million have leveraged over \$3 billion, creating 22,182 jobs. I say that not to brag. I say that because it was the idea that René Fontaine had for northern Ontario; another idea, another first that made a difference in the lives of northerners.

René loved people, he loved northerners, he loved his area of Ontario and he loved his family, and so, on behalf of everyone here, I am very, very proud that his wife, Yolande, their children, Sylvie, Gilles, Pierre, David and Ninon, and their extended family, will have a permanent testimonial to René’s very, very important contribution to the people of Ontario.

I last saw René several weeks before his death, when he was in Sudbury for treatment. We had a great chat. He did most of the talking, and I did all of the listening. He was very, very happy with what he’d been able to achieve and champion. He definitely was at peace with himself.

I was reminded by my father, on his deathbed, that death only ends a life, not a relationship, and I am convinced that northerners will always have a relationship with René.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank, again, all members for their very heartfelt and warm comments about René. I would also like to thank the family for this wonderful gift of René Fontaine. I would also like to let you know that we will have a copy of Hansard and a DVD of today’s tribute presented to the family.

Again, I personally would like to thank all the members for the kind words that they say about each other in this place. Thank you very much.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a very substantial petition that I wish to present to the Legislature this afternoon. It has been signed or supported by 2,237 people in my area. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas an evaluation of Highway 6 south was initiated in the early 1980s and the Highway 6 Morriston bypass project was presented to the MTO in 1994;

“Very little progress has been made since then despite numerous meetings with a succession of MTO ministers by Puslinch councillors and local residents;

“Traffic has increased dramatically since 2006 when 12% of truck traffic used this portion of the highway, whereas today it is closer to 30%;

“Frustrated drivers speed over Puslinch/Flamborough rural roads to avoid Morriston congestion;

“Morriston residents’ health is affected by the chronic congestion;

“Safety is a major issue: 22 lives have been lost since 1994 and many motorists and their families have suffered serious injury. Since 2004 four people have been killed in head-on collisions which may have been prevented had the bypass been in place;

“Morriston’s chronic congestion negatively affects the economy of southwestern Ontario;

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

“To prioritize the Highway 6 Morriston bypass project by placing it on the southern highways program, the transportation ministry’s five-year investment plan in highway construction for southern Ontario.”

I agree wholeheartedly with this petition and have affixed my signature as well.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Jonah Schein: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Enbridge Canada is proposing to reverse the flow of the Line 9 pipeline in order to transport western oil and tar sands oil through the most densely populated parts of Ontario;

“Whereas this pipeline project proposes changes to the pipeline that merit serious consideration, like the increase in oil carrying capacity and the transport of significantly more corrosive oil through the pipeline;

“Whereas this pipeline passes under cities and major rivers and a spill would risk the drinking water and health of millions of Ontarians and cause permanent damage to ecosystems;

“Whereas Line 9’s reversal will have impacts that must be analyzed beyond the National Energy Board hearings held by the federal government;

“Whereas the government of Quebec has already indicated its intention to conduct an independent review of the line reversal impact, including the flow of oil sands crude into Quebec;

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

“That the province of Ontario act in the best interest of the health and environment of the province and conduct a full environmental assessment of Enbridge’s proposed Line 9 reversal and capacity expansion projects.”

I agree with this. I’m going to sign my name to it and give it to page Simon.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: I’ve got a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the growing number of unlawful handguns in cars is threatening innocent citizens and our police officers; and

“Whereas only police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess handguns; and

“Whereas a growing number of unlawful handguns are transported, smuggled and being found in motor vehicles; and

“Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver’s licence of persons possessing unlawful firearms would aid the police and their efforts to make our community safer; and

“Whereas current federal laws dealing with handguns in cars need to be strengthened and are not a deterrent; and

“Whereas the flow of smuggled guns into Ontario goes on and continues without interruption;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass MPP Mike Colle’s PMB entitled the Unlawfully Possessed Handguns in Vehicles Act, 2013, into law so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving unlawful handguns and drive-by shootings in our communities.”

I support this petition and I affix my name to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 30(c), the time allotted for routine proceedings has expired.

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 9, 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 Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We were at the completion of the comments from the member from York Centre’s two-minuter. Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: It’s my pleasure and honour to rise on behalf of the residents of Davenport and speak to the budget bill, Bill 65. I welcome friends in the gallery today and also welcome Grandma Grace, watching at home. Grandma Grace, I’m going to be up here for about 15 or 20 minutes, so if you’d like to make yourself comfortable with a cup of tea and some snacks, we’ll be here for a while.

Speaker, residents in Davenport and across Ontario have sent a clear message that they want MPPs to work hard for them in this Parliament. They want MPPs to work hard to make life more affordable in Ontario, to improve health care and public services, and to create jobs. They want MPPs to work hard to make this a fairer, more prosperous province. They want accountability from this government, and they feel betrayed that this government has wasted billions of public dollars on eHealth, Ornge and gas plant scandals. New Democrats hear these concerns and we continue to listen to Ontarians about how to make this budget begin to meet their needs and how to make this government more accountable.

Bill 65 is entitled the Prosperous and Fair Ontario Act. Most of us probably read 1984 in high school. Even my friends in the PC Party probably did read that document back then. We read about George Orwell's Ministry of Truth, but it never fails to surprise me to see the lengths that this government goes to create misinformation. It's my belief that the people of Ontario will not be fooled by fancy titles like the Prosperous and Fair Ontario Act or by words like "the new government of Ontario." Just introducing a bill with a good name does not change the material fortunes of people in this province. The people of Ontario know that two plus two does not add up to five just because the Liberals say it does, although we are learning to get used to Liberal math, where they can turn \$40 million into \$600 million, for example.

Before I talk about the content of this bill, I'd like to talk a little bit more about prosperity and fairness in Ontario. Since I was elected in 2011, I've had the honour to work hard with our NDP team to make Ontario better for my constituents in Davenport and for all Ontarians. So when the Liberal government shut down Queen's Park last fall, my NDP colleagues went back into our communities. We went to talk and to listen to the people we represent. We all heard from constituents across the province that they were disappointed with this Liberal government. Across the province, people were shocked by the Liberal government's lack of accountability and were disappointed with the policies that this government has implemented. Let's just say that "prosperous" and "fair" were not, and are not, the words I hear from constituents to describe this government.

Knocking on doors, I continue to hear that life is getting harder for people, it's getting more expensive for families in Davenport and that many people are struggling to pay the bills. I hear from young people who are looking for work, hoping that somehow they can get a break, but too often they can't find a good, stable job. I hear from young people who have invested years of their lives and thousands of dollars on their education. They assumed that when they graduated, they would be able to find a job afterwards. Yet they are stuck struggling with debt and underemployment; they're stuck in precarious situations or stuck in their parents' basements.

When people do find work, youth and workers in general are not getting the kind of protection they need.

So after somebody pays some of the highest tuition fees in North America—or in Canada, I should say—they are left without access to good jobs. They're left in jobs that are less than secure and safe. Just last week, my office helped a constituent who was working in a fast-food joint. She had been told, in her first week's work, that it was training and therefore she wasn't eligible to be paid, which is against the law in Ontario. But because there is such competition for even low-paid jobs in this province, it's difficult for workers like this woman to feel safe and secure about speaking up about this. Luckily, she was able to get assistance from my office and we were actually able to secure her wages that she was owed.

1440

Mr. Michael Prue: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches—East York on a point of order.

Mr. Michael Prue: I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if there is a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the table staff to ascertain whether or not a quorum is present.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

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

I return to the member for Davenport and recognize him.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you, Speaker. It's always great to have an audience here in the assembly to talk about the needs of people in Ontario. I was just talking about a worker who hadn't been paid their fair dues in Ontario, and that's partially because this government is not doing what it should be doing to secure the rights of workers in Ontario. In 2008, for example, under public pressure, this government agreed to invest \$10 million a year for more employment standards officers. But five years later, this is just another broken Liberal promise. Youth and all Ontario workers have the right to decent jobs, to live and work without constant insecurity and without fear of arbitrary violations of their rights at work, but this government is doing nothing to protect their rights.

I hear from low-income constituents who are vulnerable, and they feel completely abandoned by this government and completely betrayed. These are people who had high hopes for government to deliver on their promise to reduce poverty and who have only heard talk and seen little action. For years, advocates and people living in poverty have identified the tangle of rules that prevent people on social assistance from getting ahead. Yet instead of changing these rules, this government has allowed people to struggle for the last 10 years while they delay and commission more studies. Meanwhile, we continue to see more cuts to critical emergency programs.

Most recently, this government cruelly cut the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit program. This is a program that helps low-income families keep their housing, it helps low-income women escape violence, and it helps vulnerable Ontarians deal with emergencies like bedbug infestations. Speaker, no matter what kind of math you believe in, this kind of cut makes no sense. It is absolutely cruel, and it just doesn't add up. This is going to create more people depending on shelters, more people depending on crisis services, more people in hospitals. Yet this is the short-sighted kind of public policy that we can count on from this government.

Many of my constituents have aging parents or are seniors themselves, and health care is at top of mind for them. Constituents are telling me that they need more reliable home care and a health care system that's there for them and their families when they need it. I hear from constituents who are tired of the austerity measures that this government takes to "balance the budget." They're tired of a government that has been asking struggling families to do with less and pay more while this government squanders millions of dollars on privatization boondoggles in our health care and power systems. Constituents are sick of this government putting themselves first, while people in Davenport are left behind.

My constituents don't appreciate a government that calls itself new or calls itself social-justice-oriented just months after that same government imposed contracts on teachers and unilaterally stripped workers of their rights to bargain with their employers. Speaker, we want to see real social justice in Ontario. People want to see a balanced, accountable approach to the budget and a more respectful approach to politics and government.

My experience is that people in Davenport want to see corporations pay their fair share in Ontario, because people are dismayed to see that while most people in Ontario are trying to pay the bills, trying to pay for child care, trying to pay for summer camp, the Premier is now considering new taxes, new revenue tools, on these same people by refusing to take concrete action to close corporate tax loopholes that allow big corporations to write off expensive restaurant expenses, luxury box seats at hockey games, and five-star hotels. Speaker, this simply does not feel fair.

People in Ontario know it's not fair to keep giving handouts to the wealthiest corporations while asking hard-working families that are struggling to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads to pay more and get less. That is why the NDP is advocating for high-quality, accessible public services and a progressive tax system to make life more fair and affordable.

After listening to the people of Ontario, our NDP team began this legislative session by introducing a short series of proposals to help create jobs for young people, ensure that families have access to home care, protect the earnings of people on social assistance and make life more affordable for families by lowering auto insurance rates by 15% over the next year. We proposed these very

reasonable and modest affordable investments in our province, and we proposed a fair way to pay for them.

The Liberal government has addressed some of these key issues in this budget, but this budget does not include the cost-saving proposals we made, like capping hospital CEO salaries or closing corporate tax loopholes. This is desperately needed revenue that could deliver more than \$1.3 billion each year.

There's also a lack of timelines or firm commitments made in this budget, and so it's unclear whether this government, despite more promises, will actually be able to deliver for the people of Ontario. The one thing we do hear over and over again in Davenport and across Ontario is that people have a hard time trusting this government.

Even if we could trust this government, there's a question about whether this budget is the right approach for this economy. In a recent Toronto Star article, Thomas Walkom called this a restraint budget. He says, "Wynne, like her predecessor Dalton McGuinty, has drunk the metaphorical Kool-Aid of the right, insisting that the only way out of the economic slump is to balance Ontario's budget by 2018."

He says that while "the Liberals have agreed to new spending demanded by the NDP ... they have also pledged to let overall spending grow on average by less than 1% a year.

"Translation: The new NDP spending increases are to be offset by unspecified cuts somewhere else."

Walkom quotes the finance minister: "'Eliminating the deficit is the single most important step we can take to grow the economy and create jobs,' Sousa told the Legislature Thursday. His words echoed those of his predecessor Dwight Duncan. And both are dead wrong."

Walkom says, "The single most important step the province can take to boost job growth is to create more jobs. Cutting government spending doesn't do that. It does the opposite."

I agree with Walkom, and many Ontarians do as well. The austerity measures which the Liberals have fully embraced are not the key to economic growth and recovery. It's clear to the NDP that we need a balanced approach and that we will not successfully cut our way to prosperity.

Even though this government has adopted some of our proposals in this budget, I remain very concerned about the overall direction this government is headed. As Walkom has pointed out, the Liberals are not willing to invest in jobs and public services in this province. They're looking for ways to cut. That's why, when some media folks say this is an NDP budget, it's hard not to laugh. This is a budget that was created by the Liberal government, and it promises more of the same economic ideology that's shared by Liberals and Conservatives alike.

In this budget, we see that real GDP growth in Ontario is going to be stuck at 1.5%, which is one of the lowest growth rates Ontario has experienced since the Second World War. Liberals and Conservatives always promise that tax cuts will spur growth in Ontario. But these cuts

have meant that revenue in Ontario has fallen from \$18 billion to \$12 billion in recent years. Even as the government plans to continue to cut corporate taxes in the future, we now have a large deficit and crumbling infrastructure, and our economy is stagnant.

Six hundred thousand people remain unemployed in Ontario, and job growth will rest at around 1.2%. Private sector growth will sit at a measly 1.6%. Our economic growth continues to lag behind even countries in Europe that faced catastrophic conditions in past years and well behind the United States. Despite cuts in spending and increasing tax breaks for corporations, the austerity embraced by the Progressive Conservatives, and now the Liberals, is not working. It's flawed, and it's clear Ontarians are paying the price.

1450

The province needs to invest money to run and maintain our social services, to expand transit and road infrastructure, and to pay down the deficit. So why is this government so unwilling to generate this revenue? Just this morning in question period, the Minister of Transportation was boasting that the Ontario government spends the least per capita of any province in Canada, and then when he was asked why people in northern Ontario can't drive on their roads, he had nothing more to say. The government's approach isn't fiscally responsible, and it doesn't work for people in Ontario. This province has a revenue problem, and while this government may be content to try and solve the deficit on the backs of Ontarians by cutting their services and increasing taxes for regular people, New Democrats know this isn't the way to go. It's not the way to build a prosperous and fair Ontario.

Another good example of the flawed Liberal logic is the debate over transit. The Liberal government likes to pretend that somehow it's our party that is creating political gridlock in Ontario, that somehow it's the NDP that's caused the transit funding crisis in Toronto and the GTHA, but we know that history speaks for itself. It's only the Ontario NDP that has shown consistent support for public investment and for transit operating and capital funding. It is the Eves, the Harris, the McGuinty and now the Wynne government's commitments to cutting taxes that have left Ontarians with billions of dollars less each year in revenue, and they have left the overwhelming majority of Ontarians with decaying public infrastructure and no money to pay for repairs or new public investment in transit or other critical infrastructure.

In recent years, when she was transportation minister, Kathleen Wynne cut one third of the funding from the original Transit City plan, and the Ontario Liberal government cut the bus replacement program and continues to pursue a path of transit privatization and starve municipalities of the funds they need to operate and maintain our transit systems. Now, Speaker, Premier Wynne insists that we have to find new revenue for transit.

New Democrats have rightly pointed out that a good portion of the \$1.3 billion that we have asked for could be saved by closing new corporate tax loopholes. This

money could be used to help pay for building of new transit and cycling infrastructure in cities like Toronto over the years to come, and yet the Liberal government cannot part with its continued logic of cutting taxes and keeping corporate taxes as low as possible. This government did not incorporate this suggestion into the budget. But, Speaker, the government is now investigating HOT lanes, and this is a venture that we believe won't encourage more drivers to use transit, and it will raise only \$25 million a year; that's what MetroInx estimates.

But the NDP knows that we need to pay for public transit and we need to pay for it in ways that are fair to the broader public who have not prospered over the last 20 years. Closing corporate loopholes will not be enough on its own to catch up on 20 years of neglect when it comes to public transit infrastructure, but it would be an important step to raising that revenue, and we remain committed to adopting additional equitable revenue tools that meet the infrastructure needs of this province.

In the time that remains, I'd like to return to what New Democrats are hearing from Ontarians on this budget. I've received a lot of emails from constituents in my riding of Davenport. People are aware that this government has incorporated some of our asks in the budget, and they are happy to see that, but they're also aware that this government continues to cut vital services and ask people to make sacrifices while they squander billions of dollars on ill-conceived private power deals, Ornge and eHealth, and they don't want this to continue.

After years of broken promises, people want to see some accountability and transparency from this government. That is why New Democrats are calling for the creation of a financial accountability officer. This office would be like the federal parliamentary budget officer. The officer would provide independent information about how the provincial government spends money and ensures that this government is accountable to the people of Ontario. This is just one tool to ensure some accountability from this government. Given the failures of this government to act responsibly on behalf of the people of Ontario, I hope that we will be seeing support from the government and from all parties to push this initiative through.

I'll just take a minute to go back to the transit conversation. One thing that people continue to tell us is that they want dedicated revenue for transit, because they're concerned that when they pay taxes, they don't have any idea what happens to that money, and I understand that. But I think this speaks to a much broader issue, and it's an issue of a wider lack of accountability. We desperately need to invest in transit in Ontario, but we also need to restore the people's confidence in this government to spend their dollars wisely, and that's why I truly hope that this government will consider the proposal we've made for an accountability officer, to make sure that when people go to work and pay their taxes, that that tax money goes into the public institutions that we so badly need.

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

Hon. Mario Sergio: I was listening to the comments from the member from Davenport. I appreciate his addition to the budget documents which we are debating for the next few days, I hope—until we get to decide what this House is going to do with it. I do appreciate the comments from the member.

I have to say, however, that this past—I believe it was Friday or Thursday; I forget now. I've been holding my own meetings in my own community with respect to the contents of the budget. The result that I got from the people that I spoke to that were present was, actually, they said, "When, when, when are you going to move on this particular piece of legislation?" after I explained all the benefits contained in the budget.

I think the member from Davenport has mentioned some of the benefits incorporated into the budget and suggested by the leader of the third party as well, especially auto insurance. The heart of my area is Jane and Finch. I don't have to tell you how much our wonderful area—and I don't say that metaphorically, Speaker; it is a wonderful area, but we are being penalized because our drivers are paying a much higher rate of car insurance. I do hope that this alone really brought a breath of fresh air, if you will, to my community. When they said, "Really, 15%? We are going to get it? When are we going to get it?" we said—

Mr. Michael Prue: Did they ask where you got the idea?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Yes, I mentioned that, and I have to remind my colleague that I also had my own private member's bill on that.

There are a lot of good things—I will be speaking later on. I hope I have a bit more time to expand on that, but for the moment, I just want to commend the member for speaking on the bill.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a privilege and an honour to comment on the member from Davenport, who just delivered a very good, well-detailed speech. He pointed out a number of factors which we often forget in this House.

The government is today talking about their belief in transit. They're talking about how we fund—and I use their words—"revenue tools" in order to fund that transit, but one needs only go back a few years to the then transportation minister, none other than our own Premier, Kathleen Wynne. She was the transportation minister under the McGuinty government, when \$4 billion was cut out of the transportation funds. It was not really cut out, it was delayed for a couple of years, but those couple of years' delay have had a huge impact on transportation within the city of Toronto in terms of subway building and LRTs, setting the whole process back. It would have been well on its way, and then the debate would have long been over, had that not happened, and I commend the member for bringing that up.

New Democrats believe in transit, although some days I sit here and I am occasionally mocked from the other side. We fundamentally believe in transit. Transit is an absolutely essential item in every town or city in this province. People need to get to and from work. We need to ease gridlock. We need to make sure it's affordable. We pay the highest single-use transit fees in all of North America, we receive the least subsidy—if you're in the city of Toronto—for any large municipality in all of North America, and we have to start talking about doing something about it.

But really what we need is an accountability officer, which he closed off on, to make sure that the money is being spent wisely, because we can no longer be in a position in this government, in the province, to be spending money or wasting money in any way that is not directly helping people.

1500

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: Let me say at the onset that I thought the member from Davenport made a very thoughtful speech today, certainly contributing to the ongoing debate we're having this afternoon on Bill 65, the Prosperous and Fair Ontario Act.

We have a bit of a relationship in Peterborough with Davenport. GE Hitachi, which is a nuclear division of GE Canada, is headquartered in Peterborough. They have a sister plant, part of that operation, in Davenport. It's an important part of that relationship in Davenport and Peterborough, and in fact in Arnprior. The three manufacturing plants work together, and they're very involved in building the fuel bundles that are used in the Candu system around the world. I just wanted to let the member know that we in Peterborough do have a relationship with Davenport.

Just a couple of things: When I was in my riding of Peterborough—it was actually Saturday—I was down in the beautiful village of Havelock, Ontario. In fact I was chatting with a former very distinguished member of the NDP caucus, the honourable Elmer Buchanan, who lives in Havelock. He was your ag minister from 1990 to 1995, and hailed as one of the very best ag ministers ever. Elmer and I were chatting about a number of things. He just wanted to pass on to his former colleagues here at Queen's Park that something that's very important to the families in Havelock, Ontario, is the Ontario Child Benefit, which provides financial support to one million children and to about 500,000 low- to moderate-income families, and which has helped to lift 40,000 children out of poverty in Ontario. I know the member from Davenport is very interested in that. So if we could get this budget passed, on July 1 we would move the OCB to \$1,210. I know the children in Havelock want that, and the children in—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I just want to start off by saying I'd like to thank the member of Davenport for his fine presentation.

He touched on two important issues: Ombudsman oversight and accountability. Speaker, I don't know why this government is afraid of Ombudsman oversight and accountability. I don't know why they won't put it in. It's a no-brainer. In fact, we're trying to keep them out of trouble in the future by installing these types of situations. We need fiscal responsibility, so we need an office of finance to oversee the dealings in this Legislature, which would keep any government out of trouble. I don't know why anybody would not want that.

What our leader has asked for is reasonable, doable and profitable for the province. It's going to stop crazy spending; stop lobbyists from getting into a position where they spend more than is in the budget. For example, eHealth went out to three firms that ended up spending more than what the population got out of it. They spent \$388 million, and they got \$100 million worth of hardware, software etc., and they spent \$288 million on consultants. It's beyond me the waste around here. So why would any government stand in the way of these types of initiatives? This is very important. This should be part of this budget.

I really get aggravated, Speaker, when I hear the Liberal government or the Toronto Star say, "We gave them everything they wanted." No, you didn't. No, they didn't. They've top-ended the front of it by the money they want to give for the health sector; they gave more than they should have. But on all the other ones, there's a lot of grey areas, and it's extremely weak. So don't tell me you gave us everything. The Toronto Star should know better than that. They keep saying it, and I think they're trying to influence somebody. Can you imagine that, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now return to the member for Davenport for his reply.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you to all members who contributed, made comments to my remarks.

Speaker, it's clear to me that the reason why we're in this situation must lie with the government. They've been here for 10 years, they're not a new government, so the fact that people are struggling with high student tuitions in this province is the fault of this government, the fact that we can't regulate our auto insurance industry and it continues to rip people off and charge them the highest auto insurance rates in Canada is because of this government, and the reason why people don't have jobs—and when they don't have jobs, they don't have any protection—is because of this government.

Yet it's now urgent that we make a decision today, according to this government, because 10 years later they're now going to finally take care of kids in this province. That's what the Minister of Rural Affairs was saying a minute ago, that we must pass this budget so that we can implement the Ontario Child Benefit. Speaker, we need to support children and families who are struggling, and this is something we should have done years ago. Instead they're acting as if this is something

we're holding up at this time. This is simply inaccurate, and I don't think the people will fall for this.

I have to say I think we need to aim higher in this province. The truth is that a lot of people in Davenport don't want an election. But it's not because they endorse this government, it's not because they like this government; it's because they can't stand the policy ideas of the people on the other side of here, the PC Party. That's just the truth: 10% of people in my riding support the PCs. But this is not an endorsement of this government; they're saying, "Hold your nose and support these people, because this is as good as it gets."

Speaker, it is all of our jobs to make sure that people across Ontario know that we can do better, we have to do better. I'm going to let other people contribute to this debate now. Thank you very much.

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

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to have a few minutes to address this important piece of legislation here, which is our budget. I can appreciate the members on the opposite side making their contribution to the debate on the budget bill as well.

Let me say that prior to the document coming forth, it's quite normal that the Minister of Finance is engaged in consultations throughout Ontario. What are those consultations that take place? He meets with the Ontario people. He meets with corporations, stakeholders, various organizations and individuals at community halls. If my memory serves me well, I think he met with some 600,000 Ontarians through town hall meetings, some stakeholders and various other groups as well. I think the content of the bill represents—

Mr. Peter Shurman: You believe that?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Yes, my friend says I was consulted as well. He's one of those Ontarians who, through their deliberations, yes, incorporates some of those demands, if you will.

I'm pleased that the budget contains a lot of those interesting ideas that the third party has brought forth. I think we share those ideas. It's reflected in the responses that I have gotten from my own constituency, and I represent an area of about 110,000 or 115,000 people.

During one of my last encounters, it was interesting, a comment made by a young lady there, when she said, "Huh. It sounds like this is a working-class budget." "Well," I said, "you said it, and you know what? I have to agree with you," because once we went through with the proposed benefits that the budget contains, I couldn't disagree with her. She said, "When are we going to see this budget going through?" I said, "Well, hopefully—in the legislative agenda itself, we have to go through a process. But it's coming."

This, the bill submitted by the government, has been labelled as fair. We want to create this economic fairness, if you will, a balanced approach. Many names have been given to it. But I believe that it does both, especially at this particular time. We can talk about creating and laying out a credible economic renewal plan. Out of all

the challenges that the Wynne government is facing, we see and we can grasp the opportunity to kick-start economic growth by promoting the creation of a very positive and robust job creation plan, which we have proposed. Unemployment numbers, I have to say, continue to frustrate all of us: all of us as Ontarians, Canadians as well, and especially among our young people.

1510

We share this vision and we seize these particular opportunities with key economic business and industries and, yes, with other levels of government as well. Cooperation is indeed needed from all other sorts of government: federal, regional and municipal.

Speaker, I believe that our plan is sound. If we succeed, our people succeed. Our province will grow, and jobs will be created—and prosperity. It's all real if we can deliver what we promise for our people. Our people, after all, aren't asking for anything less.

How can we create this renewal, this potential of opportunity, Speaker? I would say, create a business climate that is realistic and competitively smart. It's a fair tax system—and effective regulations, investments in job creation, and entrepreneurship. We have a huge potential to revitalize and move into the 21st century with new technologies and to modernize our own infrastructure, investing in transit, roads, schools, hospitals and helping our municipalities. In 2013 alone, we put \$699 million into the budget with respect to the partnership fund and supporting our regional and municipal governments.

If we look for our people to prosper and to succeed, we have to invest in new skills, in education and in training, to sustain the competition and pressure from outside. Our people must be ready and well equipped to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

We also understand that we are not alone; that the prosperity and success we seek is sought by others as well, often by our own competitive partners in trading and exchanging goods and services in our global economic innovations of goods and services. Ontario must have an eye on the world, Speaker, supporting our businesses to expand in global markets, promoting goods and services beyond our own Ontario borders and beyond the borders of our friend to the south, and seeking out new economic partners and new emerging economies and markets as well.

I have to say that we are blessed with a wonderful country and a very enviable province. As a government, we must always be very much aware that this bright and prosperous future lies in having healthy partners as well. Our many towns, villages, cities, townships, municipalities and regional governments all hope to be vibrant and to build strong communities of their own. As a government, we have to recognize and embrace their wanting to share in the economic benefits, the job creation and the potential for prosperity.

This is part of our vision and economic plan, if you will. But if I have time, Speaker, let me go into some of the details of the other goods that are within the budget.

We said from the beginning, and I think both the Premier and the Minister of Finance have made it quite clear, that eliminating the deficit by 2017-18 is a major priority. Well, I have to say, that we are on track. We are down to something like \$9.8 billion, and I have to say—and I am very pleased to acknowledge this—that we are the only jurisdiction in Canada who reported the lowest deficit forecast for four years in a row.

In support of our families, of our working-class people and the people who are in need of some help, we have the Trillium benefit. We made some changes to the Trillium benefit. Now it is optional—it can be received in a lump sum or it can be received on a monthly basis. I am speaking of the Ontario Sales Tax Credit and the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit. That alone amounts to around \$1,200 of benefits and rebates.

We've talked about auto insurance and reducing it by 15%. I've been dealing with this now since 2008 or 2009, when I first introduced my bill on reducing auto insurance, so it is not surprising to see it in the budget now, but it is a surprise that we have our third party that is very supportive of it, and I'm grateful that it's here and that our people finally can see some major improvements with respect to—

Mr. Peter Shurman: Very supportive of it? They made you put it in there.

Hon. Mario Sergio: And yes, we'll make it work, because it's going to be legislated. For the benefit of my friend, who—I don't know at this stage if he has read the budget yet or not but it will be legislated.

I am commenting on the wonderful comment by my friend the member from Thornhill. I know he is very supportive of the major parts of the bill, because he always says, "No, it's not against the budget that we are talking; it's about the government." I can appreciate and I can understand the difference and the perspective that the member brings.

It would be a good thing—

Mr. Peter Shurman: Listen, you get the comments from Doug Ford.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Yes, absolutely. We all loved him as well. As long as we get support, let it come from all sides. Rob Ford? Yes, I'm sure that he loves the 1% gas tax that he gets every year from the province of Ontario. It is a first. It goes a long way in making sure that it is well used, and therefore, yes, we welcome Rob Ford.

With respect to other parts of the bill itself: \$700 million in investment to help some 46,000 people receive in-home and community care—these are some of the major announcements that are being incorporated within the bill. When we speak about health care and home care, we are talking about the most needy people. We have, again, support of our ideas coming from the third party and giving the five-day guarantee, and we agree. We said, "Look, if they are entitled to receive benefits, if they are going to get it, they might as well get it on time."

One of the major benefits that I think is good for our people who are in need of monthly support is increasing

the Ontario Child Benefit plan. It goes from \$1,210 to \$1,310. I think this is good news. What is also good news, and I think I mentioned it before, is that the jobless amongst our youth—it's frustrating, because it's still up there, 7.7% or 7.8%, but it's affecting mostly our young people. We have, in this budget, set aside some \$295 million over two years establishing a Youth Jobs Strategy to create jobs and mentoring opportunities for some 30,000 of our youth. I think this is great.

We can't wait until we see the budget approved so we can commence to initiate these programs to make sure our young people will avail themselves of these programs, and we hope that this will be done soon.

1520

Another plank in the budget is not only the young but supporting adult people with developmental disabilities as well—an extra \$42 million.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: That's fantastic.

Hon. Mario Sergio: It is absolutely fantastic, \$42 million to help those in need when they need it.

I want to dwell on this for a moment, because my friend brought up Rob Ford, infrastructure jobs and growth, and potentials. Speaker, we are not talking \$3 million or \$35 million. We are talking about an investment in our future, in the future of our province, of our people—some \$35 billion. It's a major, firm commitment for investment in infrastructure, public transit, roads, bridges, hospitals and schools, and I know that our communities, big and small, are looking for help.

In good economic times, everybody is working and money is coming in, and municipalities also enjoy the benefit of that. When times are tough, they suffer as well, as we do—perhaps more. Being smaller municipalities, they don't have the same tax base we do. So it is nice to see that the Premier has thought of our rural areas, helping small municipalities with infrastructure money.

I don't have to say, thinking of our city of Toronto and Mayor Ford—myself coming from municipal government, I know the money that is needed on a regular basis, year after year, to maintain our roads, our bridges, our infrastructure, our sewers and all the other facilities we take for granted sometimes. We just get in our cars or jump on the subway and go from one place to another without considering what it takes to maintain good services, good roads and good infrastructure. But of course, people don't want to know how it's done; they want to see that it's done. I think this is going to go a long way to helping not only metro Toronto but all the municipalities throughout Ontario.

But what is important is still keeping the major planks, and the minister and Premier Wynne as well say we will have to do it in a very balanced way. We must be fair in what we're doing. We still have to see that education and health care are a major component, and we have to look after the needs of our people.

Today, if we see some changes to the health care system—how we are providing it—it's because for years, if I may say, some parts of the delivery of services come from an old, antiquated system, and it's not fair. We see

that throughout Ontario—I can see it in my own ministry now, for example—the way we deliver some of the services is not being done in the best interests of all the people throughout Ontario.

I don't have to tell you that we have seniors, in many cases, living in the north, the east, the south and the west, and they are all the same. They all have certain needs, certain requirements. They need care. I don't have to tell you, Speaker, that from the age of 65 to 100 they are living longer and healthier now. Their requirements or health care needs vary. They are all different. What we have to look for—this is part of delivering the health care I was talking about. We have to be ready to meet this challenge and create opportunities out of this challenge. So when our people, not only seniors, but young ones—with respect to education, we're taking care of the young ones at a very early age.

So when our people need the care they need, it has to be there. Now we are starting to see, thanks to the hard work that the Minister of Health is doing on a regular basis, trying change how we deliver those services with the same money, if you will—and there is an increase in the budget as well. We have to deliver those services in a reasonable period of time to the people who need it when they need it, and make sure those services, those care levels, are delivered.

I am proud to say, Speaker, finally—and I'm going to throw this in at the last minute—that I was delighted to see that in 2010 we created the Retirement Homes Act, because it wasn't there before. As you know, retirement homes are all private; there was no control. So our seniors especially were paying their monthly rents, if you will, but they had absolutely no protection. They were at the mercy of the deliverer, the caregiver there, but there was no control. Today, I'm happy to say—and it's part of the government's delivery of providing better service to our people in Ontario. Long-term homes already had it, but not seniors living in retirement homes. So it doesn't matter if you live in a public or a private place, people are people. They deserve to be treated with fairness, with justice, with care and with tenderness, because especially at that age, they deserve it. And we should make sure that we never forget that our seniors, many of them, are in situations where they no longer have family members, so we have to give them peace of mind that they live in facilities where they are safe and service delivery is done in such a way—am I done, Speaker? Oh, my time is done. Speaker, I thank you for your time.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the minister of seniors' services, and he said many times during the course of his speech that this was a working-class budget, as if somehow this party, this Liberal government, has suddenly discovered roots on the left that they had long forgotten existed. I would like to remind them that it wasn't very many months ago when they were cheering on right-wing budgets put forward by the previous finance minister as if that was the gospel truth. I welcome

whatever change of heart they have had, but New Democrats remain skeptical. It's why New Democrats, even though we appreciate some of the those items found in the budget—largely because we wrote them. It's because we are skeptical about the change of heart which seemingly has so effortlessly been undertaken by the members opposite.

That's why we're asking for Ombudsman oversight in our hospitals: because we know that in our hospitals there has been a lot of wastage of money around the entire fiasco of eHealth. We are worried because in our hospitals we have seen the dispersion of cancer-causing drugs that were watered down in saline solutions. We are worried about our hospitals and our health care because we have seen how money was wasted and wasted again and again at Ornge. So we believe that before we start listening to promises and the change of heart, we have to see that change of attitude.

My friend also talked about the Ontario Child Benefit. I would remind the government opposite that you're a year behind in that and that, if you were not a year behind, you probably would be close to your poverty targets. But you're not going to meet the 25 in 5 which you had set because you have not kept up to date. That's why we think we need a budget officer as well. When we have those, then we can start believing the things you're starting to talk about.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It's always a privilege to follow the measured and not automatically vitriolic remarks of the honourable colleague from Beaches—East York. I appreciate what you say. You deliver your remarks with sense and with thought, and I think the government will do well to take heart.

I think this budget has so much that has been crafted and configured to help Ontarians where they live, whether we're speaking about health care, which of course from my own perspective as a physician-parliamentarian is very dear, as well as education.

1530

I'd like to highlight just a few aspects perhaps to drill down from the many, many numbers—and the 400-page-plus tome that came our way—of the budget. We have now, for example, in the province of Ontario 400,000 patients who interact with physicians on a daily basis. We now have 4,000 more physicians practising in the province of Ontario than when we took office in October of 2003. These are major achievements, and you don't have to go too far out of Ontario—for example, our neighbours to the south—to see that that's almost a miraculous aspect. Because you have, for example, a population in the United States with no health care coverage at all that exceeds the population of Canada.

We continue to screen for 30-plus diseases right at the newborn aspect: PKU—phenylketonuria—and cystic fibrosis. That doesn't even exist across Canada.

Closer to home, in the great riding of Etobicoke North, we recently funded Etobicoke General Hospital for an

expansion—a massive, four-storey new cardiac wing, etc.—to the tune of about \$200 million. Speaker, with your permission, I'd like to take this opportunity to commend CEO Matt Anderson for his leadership and his stewardship of the on-the-ground services.

All of this is to create a more just, a more fair society. “Just society” you'll remember, Speaker, as the phrase of Trudeau 1. “Fair society” is the phrase of Premier Kathleen Wynne.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is my first opportunity to speak on the budget thus far on behalf of the great riding of Essex.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you to my honourable colleague across the way.

I speak without vitriol and without prejudice and with all due respect, as the member would know. I would hope he would sense that despite all of the wonderful platitudes encompassed in this budget document, and the wonderful initiatives that have been pointed out, and concepts, ideas, priorities and otherwise, the people of this province do not, frankly, believe you; they do not trust you. Can we blame them at this point?

It is one of the most important measures. Despite all of the initiatives, despite all of the money that you associate the initiatives, we need to infuse hope, belief and trust back into this government. I say with great fervor that I hope this government takes that responsibility seriously and I hope they take our offerings—in terms of the financial accountability office and Ombudsman oversight for health care—seriously.

I've heard the Premier say, “When are these demands, when are these ideas from the NDP going to stop? When will you stop proposing good ideas? We have a limit on the Liberal side of good ideas; we can't handle too many more good ideas.” I would submit that the official opposition hasn't given you any, so we'll take up their space. They haven't read any of the document. There's a couple that they on the table there. We'll give you a couple of ours; you can add those into the basket and put together a document that people can finally have trust in.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My vitriol? I left it for the PCs.

Please, government officials, take it and deliver to the people.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Similarly to the member from Essex, it's my first opportunity to speak about the budget. Just a comment on the remarks made from the minister responsible for seniors, I think one area of the budget that I really, really like a lot is the focus on poverty and especially trying to help those who are in poor living standards or poor circumstances or income. My riding is very strange, in the sense that there's one half that is quite lower-income; then, as you get closer to the lake, the incomes are a bit higher. When I'm at my

constituency office, I get a lot of people who come in from various parts of my riding—mostly from the northern part, where it is a poor income area—and they're looking for help.

This budget—I mean, the minister spoke to it, but there are some parts in particular that are very, very helpful. I mean, we're increasing funding for children in poverty and we're helping people with disabilities. I have people that come into my office with disabilities—a lot of them—people that come in and ask me, “How am I going to feed my children?” or “My children can't seem to move on in life.” I think we're addressing those issues, and I'm glad we are, because in the end all politics is local. In my riding, when you're on the ground level, you get to see the local aspect.

Unfortunately I only have 13 seconds left. Hopefully, I'll get a chance to speak more on this, but this is a budget that helps those in need, and that's what I'm very impressed by. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I'll return to the minister responsible for seniors for his response.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I want to thank my colleagues the members from Scarborough Southwest, Essex, Etobicoke North and Beaches–East York. I really appreciate everyone's comments but especially the one from Essex, where he says, “You know, please, please, please, yes, we gave you some good ideas but now, how are you going to keep those promises”—

Interjection: You're on a roll.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Yes, we are on a roll. The thing is this: We are saying in here, what comes first, the chicken or the egg? You know? They say, “It's good, but now we want to see that you're going to do it.” Well, okay, let's move on and let's see how we are going to do it.

I have to say that we kept a lot of those wonderful promises. I mean, we have \$295 million to create jobs for youth. We have money in there to create a lot of jobs. Let me say something about jobs. Last week, I went to York University. I don't have to tell you the amount of work and the number of jobs that we have created only with one particular project. We are putting into this budget \$35 million—\$35 billion, rather—to create more jobs.

So I have to agree with the members that have made a contribution to my presentation: Let's get on with this budget. There are a lot of good things for our people. The member from Essex is quite right: “Are you going to do it?”

Well, we cannot do it unless the budget is approved. So I hope that in the next few days we can move it towards that area, because it's good on the social side and on the education side, creating jobs for young people and delivering more home care for our seniors. So I do hope indeed that we can speak as much as we want, but let's move on. Let's get the budget and let's move on with the good things that are in the budget. I thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, on a point of order.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I don't believe we have a quorum here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I will ask the table staff to ascertain whether or not the House has a quorum.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

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

Pursuant to standing over 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or his designate specifies otherwise. I recognize the Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to try to be helpful this afternoon. I know that people are watching this riveting debate today and we want to make sure it continues. So at this time, please stand by and say, Mr. Speaker, we would like the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate. I'm pleased to recognize the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

1540

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Speaker. Prepare for a riveting debate.

I think we've been hearing from the official opposition about who actually owns this budget going forward, and I believe that we have to remember that this is actually the people's budget. It isn't owned by any one party, and it certainly—there are parties who can opt out of the budget; we've seen that clearly, by the PCs. But the people of Ontario expect us to get results for the people of Ontario.

It's true that the NDP's asks have been reflected in the document, but we also have to remember that these asks—these policy and these program initiatives—came from the people of Ontario through consultation, through listening. I know some people are getting tired of the consultation process, but it's an important part of the democratic process: listening to people, serving the people of this province. That is why we are here. Certainly they expect politicians to work harder, not less.

Moving forward, we need to be absolutely sure that the government will deliver to Ontarians. You can't blame us for being distrustful and you can't blame the people of this province for being distrustful. And we are concerned.

Unlike the Conservatives, we have approached this budget process openly and have done so transparently. Indeed, we are being criticized for being too open and too transparent. But that's okay because, at the end of the

day, we are trying to get a stronger budget for the people of this province.

We believe that Ontarians deserve some clarity, some guarantees of service. That's why we have actually pursued the idea of accountability tools like the financial accountability office and like the much-needed Ombudsman oversight in health care. I believe that these tools should not actually be regarded as asks, because the Liberal government did not include a five-day guarantee for home care and they did not include a 15% reduction in auto insurance over the course of 12 months. So we have asked for accountability measures to be included. We take the responsibility of ensuring that this budget is stronger for Ontarians, and we take this responsibility seriously, unlike the party to our right. But we have to be clear: We aren't asking for more; we are asking for it to be done right.

The Premier and the finance minister have actually called these proposals interesting. We think that they're more than interesting. We think that accountability is actually needed in this House. It's actually needed to rebuild the trust with the electorate, the citizens whom we serve. We want to bring accountability to this budget and ensure that public dollars won't be wasted, as they have been on eHealth, on Ornge, on gas plants.

Last week, our leader put forward two proposals to bring accountability to government. The proposed financial accountability office would bring oversight and accountability to the government's books. I cannot understand why someone would not support this idea. It makes so much sense. It even makes sense from the Common Sense Revolution kind of sense that we're still dealing with in the province.

Ontarians deserve clear, transparent and independent information about their government. We need to provide forward-looking cost assessment so that we can stop scandals before they start. I know it's quite a concept, but it is needed.

Ombudsman oversight of health care would rebuild Ontarians' trust that has been broken through scandals and failure to provide clear guarantees in the health care system. In the last year, we've seen a scandal at Ornge and a scandal with compromised chemotherapy drugs. The Ombudsman could have potentially investigated when initial concerns were raised if his office had had oversight of Ornge and hospitals. We, in Ontario, are the only province that does not provide Ombudsman oversight to hospitals and long-term-care facilities, and it is time to right this wrong.

New Democrats have worked hard to put forward fair, reasonable, affordable ways to deliver results for people, and these measures need to be implemented to make sure that this happens. That's what people expect from us. They expect us to work to make a budget work for them.

In fact, those who live on the margins or are caught in the cycle of poverty—which admittedly is not easily interrupted—have great expectations of us, as they should. It isn't difficult to see why some groups who advocate for those without voices, or for the ability to speak

up and out, are dissatisfied with the progress made on poverty reduction, for instance. The long-promised strategy, which was supposed to be inclusive of housing, education, health care, public transit—this strategy was supposed to begin with early learning and care and go all the way to senior care. Indeed, you can measure a government's success by how they best deal with the most vulnerable in society. I believe that we have much work to do before us.

I was called to task by a resident in Kitchener–Waterloo over the weekend. He wasn't against our auto insurance plan; in fact, he was supportive of it. He understands our affordability agenda for everyday Ontarians, but he did raise the need for more affordable and accessible transit.

Now in this budget we saw the fact that a fair and effective approach to funding transit was not there. The proposal to charge people to use HOV lanes will only create—as our leader has coined the phrase—“Lexus lanes” for wealthy people and does not encourage car-pooling. This proposal to toll HOV lanes has no numbers or timelines, and I believe the member from Trinity–Spadina has rightly pointed out that this plan has some very big holes in it.

Thus the need to take the time to process the budget, to dig down and peel back the layers of what actually is contained within this budget—because the day that these announcements were made, the Minister of Finance announced that these would be everywhere, just as if you can wave a magic wand and make it happen. We need to see the strategy and we need to see the plan, and that is part of our job as an opposition party.

The government commits to converting selected HOV lanes in GTHA to HOV/HOT lanes, as done in Florida, Texas and California. The government's going to consult on the implementation of HOT lanes. Well, I can tell you already that the response on the HOT lanes has not been very positive and certainly there are more questions than answers on this.

There are also planned highway projects—again, very short on details; an investment in GO Transit to increase capacity. Public transit—this is where the investment is needed. We need to get people using public transit; we need to get them out of their cars. We need to make public transit work for the people so that it actually will translate into some real results for Ontarians.

So we have more questions than answers on this budget. Certainly when you look at the issue of transit through the eyes of those who live in poverty, one must wonder how HOT lanes are going to improve life for those in this province.

On social assistance, poverty and housing, the budget moved forward on the NDP's proposal to allow social assistance recipients to keep more of their employment earnings. Certainly this is a step in the right direction, as our finance critic has said, but this is the beginning of this discussion on how we can encourage and support those who are on social assistance. The 1% increase in social assistance recipients plus the \$14 a month top-up

for single OW recipients is hardly something that will alleviate the crushing experience of poverty which is certainly a carry-over from the Harris years and certainly continues on through the last almost 10 years of Liberal rule in this province.

Certainly, some mention of the Special Diet Allowance which, again, our finance critic has correctly referenced as an early intervention and a prevention measure that is needed to ensure that those who actually live on the margins, who live in extreme poverty, can access nutrition—because that's a preventive tool to use to ensure that those people stay healthy.

The continued delay in the implementation of the Ontario Child Benefit—as announced in the last budget, will rise to a certain level this month and \$1,300 in 2014, and that's a year behind schedule. Certainly, this is being held over the entire budget process in a fairly, quite honestly, threatening manner. But you know, what's really important on this portfolio is that we do need to continue to listen to those lived, experienced voices on the poverty agenda.

Finally, the government will establish a panel of business workers and youth to report back in six months and advise how to adjust the minimum wage. You know, we had in our platform from 2011 an \$11 minimum wage rate—a good place to start that conversation, but certainly I think that we have to be cognizant of the fact that there are people in this province who are working full-time and they cannot get above the poverty level. They cannot rise up out of poverty when they are working full-time and do not have access to affordable housing.

1550

There's nothing on affordable housing. As the critic for infrastructure, this is a key component of building a strong economy. People who cannot access affordable housing, who do not have an address to put on a resumé, have a very hard time finding a job. Our commitment is to move forward to try to address these key issues because they are not just human rights issues; these are economic issues. They affect the entire economy of the province.

It's worth noting that the wait-list for social housing in Ontario is up 24% since 2003. I think it's also worth noting that there are jobs to be created in the housing portfolio, and there are certainly supportive housing projects that need to happen as well. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing budget was cut for the third consecutive year, by another \$20 million. It is hard to understand how proposing cuts on key-economic-driver portfolios will actually stimulate the economy; it really is.

The NDP has called for a fair and adequate minimum wage—and I want to say, just for reference, that MPP Cheri DiNovo, the member for Parkdale–High Park, worked hard with community activists to force the Liberal government to significantly increase the minimum wage between 2000 and 2010. We continue to push the envelope. We continue to push these priorities to make

sure they are reflected in the budget documents of this government. We see that as a key piece of our work that we have to do. But certainly progress has been stalled in this regard under the Liberal government. There has been no increase to the minimum wage in three years.

We are looking at a state of affairs in the province of Ontario where the Liberals never took action on the 2011 promise to set up the minimum wage advisory committee. They recommitted to this. If this budget passes, if we can actually push through some of the reforms that are needed to ensure that the economy returns to a stronger state, and if we can be sure that those who live on the margins of society do not continue to be forgotten year after year, then this advisory committee potentially should talk about what a living wage is. What is that number? It's not a magic number. I think we have a pretty good idea of what people need to earn in order to make sure they can provide for their children and afford housing. I think it's very clear that a working wage is a signal that this government is looking to increase the prosperity of all Ontarians, not just some.

Over the years, I've gone through several budgets, both at school boards and at the provincial level. One of the statements that was very clearly made by the US President, Barack Obama—he has described a budget as a moral document. This document should articulate the needs of the people that you serve. It should clearly outline a plan, a strategy for action. It's not just about having a press or a media event; it's not just some threats about what will be lost if this budget isn't passed, especially when you've had almost 10 years of majority government rule to secure whatever flavour of social justice fits the thinking of the day. At the heart of this debate and this budget process, someone needs to acknowledge that this budget discourse should acknowledge the fact that, going forward in the province of Ontario, it is likely that minority governments will be the reality for this province.

What people tell me outside of this Pink Palace, what I hear, is that Ontarians want politicians to get to work for them. It may be annoying to some people, it may be annoying to the new Premier, and it may feel uncomfortable, even, in some instances, because traditionally political parties in majority settings have said, "We are right and you are not. We, the governing party, don't have to listen to you because we have a majority."

Actually, I saw this time and again in committees over the years. It's so frustrating when constructive and productive ideas come forward in those committee sessions, and because there's a majority in power, they don't have to take those ideas into account. Well, this is the new culture at Queen's Park; this is the new reality of the government. We have to listen to each other. Mainly, the focus is on the Liberal government to at least listen, to take into account some of those productive ideas and see if we can actually get results for Ontarians.

That's certainly what is driving us in this corner of the House, these 18 members. We are trying to drive the conversation—the "conversation" word—to make sure

Ontarians do get some results like home care in five days. That was missing from the budget. There's talk of what home care could be like and there's talk about what home care should look like, but there certainly wasn't a timeline. I'll tell you who is concerned about that: those who live in rural communities who don't have access to the kinds of resources that exist in urban centres and the kinds of folks who have already been waiting for almost 260 days for home care. They want to see a guarantee. We want to see a guarantee, and I think we articulated that priority very clearly prior to the budget discussions. We've heard from people, and we continue to hear from people, because we're still listening to people. I know it's quite a concept.

In a majority setting, once you move past that right and wrong in this minority setting, people are also saying to us that Liberals should acknowledge that there have been mistakes that have been made; not just regret, but there have been tangible mistakes that have been made. Because in doing so, you accept accountability measures to protect them in the future. In acknowledging that mistakes have been made, you're acknowledging that you've learned from those mistakes and, therefore, moving forward, your goal is not to make those same mistakes again, be it on chemotherapy drugs or gas plants or Ornge—what have you. It's important to do so not just because it's politically expedient or the popular thing to do; honestly, the citizens of the province would likely be shocked. It would, however, be an admission that we have learned from the past and we are willing to build a better future.

Finally, I would like to suggest that the work that is before us is a new task of working together, and I support our leader, Andrea Horwath, by not settling into the backrooms to hammer out a deal that works for the Liberals. I support an open and transparent process that very clearly gives an indication of what our priorities are, because our priorities come from the people we've consulted. I supported the consultation process before the budget and after the budget, and perhaps we all need to extend some additional energy to listen to those we serve. Perhaps servant leadership is going to make a comeback. I think it is important to acknowledge that in a minority setting the rules have changed, the culture has changed. That is why we have been able to secure some affordability rates around auto insurance and some home care—pushed the portfolio on home care. Certainly, these are measures that are important to Ontarians.

While the PCs have said, "You know what? We're not going to participate in this process. We are going to abdicate our responsibility with regard to the budget," we have come to the table in a very different manner. I think it actually resonates very well with Ontarians that we are trying to bring some accountability to this setting, that we are very clearly articulating the needs of the people of this province and that we have ensured, through this open, transparent process, that we are working for the people of this province, we are trying to make this budget work and we are engaging in what people expect from

politicians. They want politicians to work harder, they want us to work for them and not for our own political interests, and they are interested in this new setting. There is a genuine interest in politics. There's a new engagement in what happens here, because people are finally seeing their true priorities reflected in the conversations that are happening in this House, and it's been a long time coming.

1600

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to be given an opportunity to speak following my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo. In response to her eloquent presentation earlier, I want to make sure it's on the record that what was proposed by the Minister of Finance was what we heard at every public hearing. At every public hearing across Ontario, the people of Ontario have asked us—it's not just the NDP, the third party, that made a request; it's actually Ontarians coming before the public hearings and asking our government to address some of the issues.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo talked a lot about the whole issue of transit. As someone living in the greater Toronto area, Mr. Speaker, I do feel the concerns. If the budget is passed, our government is making a commitment that we will transfer two cents per litre of gas tax to all the municipal partners. That, again, is the right thing to do, because we now guarantee—guarantee—funding for public transit and public infrastructure as well.

The other piece is that the government had to acknowledge through—the Minister of Finance commented in his remarks when he tabled the budget the fact that government will ensure new revenue tools to support transit, transportation and public transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. Again, Mr. Speaker, it is a commitment of this government, recognizing that transportation and public transit are a priority for the government. We recognize that, any one of us living in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

We have a track record, a track record now to deal with this piece. So all the opposition can say, that we cannot follow through with it—we have demonstrated this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Kitchener–Waterloo said so many good things that I would have loved to have responded to. But I'm just going to stick to the issue of the matter connected to transportation, because we are getting from some of the members, including the minister, that they're finally going to do something on the issue of transit across Toronto, the GTA and Hamilton. Quite frankly, there isn't much to be proud of. The speech from the throne said, "As an example of the changes required, Mr. Speaker, we will turn select high-occupancy vehicle lanes into high-occupancy toll lanes."

In the very budget, it says that the government is committing to convert select high-occupancy vehicle lanes in the GTHA into high-occupancy toll lanes. “Committed,” he said. Yet to my question today in the Legislature, the minister said “Oh, no. We’re committed to nothing. What we’re simply going to do is we’re just going to review it and study the whole matter and just look across the continent and see who else has been doing this and see what we get.” But in the budget, he said he was committed to moving from HOV lanes to HO toll lanes.

So I’m saying to myself, how committed are they when on the one hand they are brave but to my question they appear to be cowardly? Here you have a government saying, “We are going to lead on this transit file,” yet when we ask about his government’s plan to implement the high-occupancy toll lanes, they don’t know what they’re going to be doing. They don’t really have a commitment. So how committed are they on this file? That’s the question I ask.

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

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to rise and to join in the debate. I want to commend the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for bringing forward some very important points. She’s right: This is a budget of the people of Ontario, and we want to see their concerns and their needs reflected in this.

I know that more than 600,000 people have been consulted. We’re trying to take everybody’s view into consideration, trying to do what’s best to bring forward a budget that can create jobs, connect communities and give everyone a chance to succeed. That’s what’s really important.

I do want to make a comment, though, in regard to transit and to what the member for Trinity–Spadina was saying. He said there’s not much to be proud of. Well, we’re investing \$8.6 billion right now in the city of Toronto. I want to remind the member from Trinity–Spadina that the Eglinton Crosstown is 100% provincially funded. We do remember—in my constituency, at least, people remember very clearly when the hole for the subway that was going to be built 20 years ago was filled—

Interjection.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Yes, and we are committing more funding and investing over \$35 billion to modernize infrastructure. That is what the budget is bringing forward

These are discussions that we need to have. When you say that perhaps we don’t know exactly which way we are going to go forward, again, it’s got to be a way that people agree to. That’s what’s important: listening to the people of Ontario.

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

I’ll return to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for her reply.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I don’t know if the member from Scarborough–Agincourt had been here at the very begin-

ning, but I certainly made clear that the priorities that we put forward for consideration for this budget came from our consultation. I agree, this isn’t a competition about who consults more or less, but I did appreciate getting a robocall from the finance minister asking me to be a part of the budget discussion, even though I sit on the finance committee and I sit in this House.

There is a diversity of voices that came forward to inform these requests, and I think—I mean, the PCs have made it very clear that they weren’t interested in this process, and to this day right now, they’re not even speaking to it. They’re not even criticizing it or trying to offer some constructive criticism.

For me, it just makes no sense whatsoever that you’re not actually contributing, because the weight and the responsibility that we have in this House is actually to try to make this government work for now. This budget actually has some things that would make you guys happy—which is just so ironic that you’re not getting up to even speak about it.

But you know, if you don’t want to do that part of your job—because I’m sure you want to talk about corporate tax loopholes, because that’s the one thing we need greater clarity on as well. You’ve got to close those corporate tax loopholes, because those are important revenue streams to fund the public transit system.

Fair taxation needs to be a part of the conversation going forward, as well. We’ve been driving this conversation, day in and day out, and there’s still some question about whether or not this really is a priority for the government.

But I want to thank the members from Scarborough–Agincourt, York South–Weston and Trinity–Spadina, of course, for always championing public transit. There’s a lot of work to do. We are certainly ready to do the work.

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

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I’d like to begin by, first of all, thanking everybody who took the time today to speak to this budget. That is our responsibility, and I really appreciate the members from the NDP speaking to it. I’m really disappointed that my colleagues here don’t want to speak to it. In fact, when I walked in, I was surprised to see only two esteemed members of the loyal opposition bearing the full weight of their responsibility as the opposition. It’s good to see that a few more members have joined, but I really am disappointed that you don’t want to join the debate, because it reminds me of—I hate to say this—a sullen teenager who just walks away when they don’t get their way instead of trying to find a way to make it all work.

The fact is that Ontarians sent us here in a minority Parliament. They sent us with the message that all three of us have to somehow find a way to work together. I appreciate all of those who try, even under the most trying circumstances, to make this work, and I’m disappointed in those who choose not to try to make this work.

1610

Coming to the budget, it's titled A Prosperous and Fair Ontario. I did some research going back 17 years on the different titles of Ontario budgets, and I found titles like this: Investing in the Future, Foundations for Prosperity, jobs and growth, Growing a Stronger Ontario. I do want to say that these are titles chosen over the past 17 years, so not any one government but all stripes of government. But nowhere did I find the word "fair." So for the first time in at least 17 years, perhaps more, in the history of Ontario, we have a government that wants not just a prosperous Ontario but a fair Ontario.

I've said this before and I'm going to say it again, and I know that the member from Kitchener–Waterloo made reference to this earlier in a similar vein: Budgets are not just tables and numbers. Instead, a budget is really a reflection of a government's value system, and more importantly, the value system of the people a democratic government represents, a value system that says a prosperous Ontario is meaningful only when it is also a fair Ontario, an Ontario that provides every Ontarian a fair chance to succeed. That is why this is a budget that I am so proud of.

It addresses the things that the residents of Mississauga East–Cooksville and the residents of this great province talk about every day. It talks about the issues that Ontarians are speaking about at their dining tables, at the water cooler, on their front lawns as they mow the early spring grass, issues that Ontarians care about in their everyday lives—issues like the future of our children. What will their future be like? Will they have opportunities similar to the opportunities previous generations have had? They worry about job security. They also worry about how they are going to take care of their parents. What do we have to do in an aging society? How do we look after our parents in a world where both spouses working is common? They talk about the time it takes to get to work every day. They talk about saving for retirement. They talk about saving for a long-dreamt-of holiday. These are the things that Ontarians talk about at the dining table, and these are the things that this budget represents and that this budget addresses.

Let me give you some examples of the way this budget addresses the everyday issues of Ontarians. Things like our 15% average reduction in auto insurance, our youth employment strategy, our investment in more home care for seniors, our measures to help small businesses stay competitive, our plan to help entrepreneurs, our investment in infrastructure—all address the things that Ontarians talk about, worry about and want their government to address. I could keep going on. Each and every single one of these budget measures speaks directly to what the residents of Mississauga East–Cooksville talk about at the water cooler. That is why I think it is simplistic and naive to say things like, "This is an NDP budget," or "This is not a Conservative budget," or "This is a Liberal budget." Because the fact is, this is a budget of the people of Ontario. This is quite simply a budget for the times, a budget that speaks to the

needs of Ontarians, a budget that is perfect for the times we live in.

There is another thing that Ontarians want, something that goes beyond the material, beyond job security, beyond affordable college tuition, beyond auto insurance rates—something more fundamental. And that something that Ontarians want is fairness. Like most members in this Legislature, I try to meet every constituent who asks to meet with me. They come into my office with all sorts of issues, issues that I'm sure every single one of us is familiar with, issues like WSIB, access to health care, their difficulties in finding a job, a landlord from hell. But when all is said and done, the subtext of every single one of these issues is a cry for fairness. All that Ontarians ask for at the end of the day is a fair chance, a fair opportunity, and that is what this budget is going to deliver.

That is why I ask that all of us work together to make this budget work, because this budget, I think, responds to the needs of the people of Ontario and our times. And I've said that I think this is a budget that hits the right tone for the times we live in. But there is always time to work together in committee, so to throw the baby out with the bathwater, to vote against it, makes no sense when it hits most of the right buttons.

As we all know, many of us sat on SCOFEA together and we toured all over Ontario, so this is a budget that was not made in a vacuum. This is a budget that was written after listening to thousands and thousands of Ontarians.

I do want to speak to one thing, which is that the member from—I forget the riding—

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'll help you out. Who is it?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Rosie.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Trinity–Spadina.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Trinity–Spadina—earlier spoke about something about being cowardly. I wanted to address that because I think that what is cowardly is not to make a decision, to dither. True courage, I would like to say, is to make a decision one way or another instead of constantly saying that this is good but we want more. There's a word in the business world for that, and that's called deal creep. You ask for something; it's given in good faith; you work out the parameters. But to constantly say, "Well, yeah, I know, we asked for that but we want this now and this now," that's not fair to Ontarians.

When you talk about courage, let's take a stand. What are you afraid of? Let's take a stand. I think this is a great budget. I invite all of us to work on it. If there are bits and bobs of it that you don't like, we can talk about it and address it in committee. That's why I just wanted to talk about the fact that we all need to work together.

Finally, Speaker, I'd like to wrap up and just say that this is a budget that I believe was written after listening to Ontarians across the province. I know that the member from Kitchener–Waterloo alluded to the fact that she got a call from the finance minister, which is just testimony to the fact of how broad our outreach was. We used all sorts of modern technology to reach out to as many Ontarians as we could.

The most important thing is that we are doing all of this without losing sight of our single most important goal, which is to balance the books. Ontarians intuitively know that we cannot live off of a credit card forever. They understand that. They know that you can use a credit card to fix a leaky roof; you can use a credit card to just buy a fancy car. That's important. They get that, they understand that because they own their own homes and they want a government that will balance the books but not on the backs of the most vulnerable, not by just firing thousands and tens of thousands of people, not by being mean but by being fair. That I believe this budget accomplishes. It's a budget that looks to balancing our books, that's fiscally responsible but at the same time builds the foundations for a prosperous Ontario and a fair Ontario.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Mississauga East–Cooksville talks about how this government and this budget speak about fairness. You didn't talk about justice; correct? Just fairness, more or less, for everyday people, men and women of this province? I was just thinking about it because this government has a very, very poor record in this regard, especially in the area of fairness to the people who are most in need. You've got to take this into account: Income disparity of the top 20% and the lowest 20% is the biggest—income disparity in Canada is why, but Ontario has the biggest income disparity of the top 20% and the lower 20% of people, and it's going to get worse in Ontario. The poverty rate fell in five provinces in the last 25 years but it has increased in the other five, and Ontario is at the high end of those poverty rates.

When it comes to affordable housing, Ontario has the worst record of affordable housing. You've got to work on this issue of "fair," because I don't know if you have a handle on it.

1620

The other one is that you have the poorest funding of public services in Canada, the poorest as it relates to health care, education, issues of justice and disability benefits.

And then you've got another little problemo as it relates to a fair society: We have the highest tuition fees in the country. I know you're probably number 10; I understand that. But you have a terrible record with respect to a fair society, and unless you do something serious, you ain't gaining nowhere and this budget doesn't get us there.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: I thought the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville made a remarkable address this afternoon, highlighting many of the positive aspects about the speech. She highlighted, of course, our sense of fairness that all Ontarians appreciate each and every day.

We're making a significant move on the Ontario Child Benefit, which the late June Callwood, a remarkable Canadian, said was the most progressive thing done to

alleviate poverty in the province of Ontario in four decades, when we introduced it.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Who said that?

Hon. Jeff Leal: That was the late June Callwood, a remarkable Canadian and somebody we should all listen to in many ways.

The member didn't touch upon something I think is so important. Just recently, the Mowat Centre released a study that said hard-working Ontarians are putting \$11 billion into equalization. Let us think about that for a moment. People talk about \$7-a-day daycare in the province of Quebec. They talk about low tuition fees in the province of Quebec. Eureka, we know how that has happened. It is because the hard-working men and women in Ontario, through equalization, are providing that to our fellow Canadians in the province of Quebec.

I know my friend from Trinity–Spadina will want to have a federal-provincial conference, when we get the Prime Minister to the table, to make sure we change the policy of equalization so that Ontarians can keep more of their hard-working dollars and we can put those hard-working dollars into such things as daycare. In fact, we've made great progress on affordable housing, because we're the government that got back into the business of affordable housing after a decade of a desert of austerity when there were no investments made in affordable housing in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I'm so pleased that the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville highlighted some of these important issues—

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

The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker. I cannot agree.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just want to make the point that the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville got up and talked about the quorum here. The quorum has been an issue today. The PCs are not participating, but at least they've shown up. The quorum has actually sort of been on that side of the House. So let's be clear about who's showed up to work today and who hasn't.

Also, the member mentioned that "fair" is in the title of this budget. Let's also be clear that just because you put "fair" in the title doesn't make the budget so. That's what we're trying to do: actually put some meat and bones on a budget and some tools of accountability so that the people in the province will understand what they're getting for the money they are investing in this.

Quite honestly, "fair" is perhaps one of the more over-used words in this House, like "conversation." But you can't tell the people who are in line at food banks and homeless shelters that life is fair for them, because those numbers are actually up. They are up, and they have been steadily rising over the last 10 years. So if we're going to have an honest conversation about fairness, then we should be honest about what really is happening in the province of Ontario

The child care comment resonates very well with me, because when you invest—this is about strategic investment, about priorities of the people of this province. When you invest \$1 in child care, you get a \$7 return. That's a good investment. That's a good return on investment. Moving gas plants around the province like chess pieces? That's not such a good investment for the people of this province.

So the work is before us. There's a lot of work to do, but please remember what fair means.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to first thank the members from Trinity–Spadina and Kitchener–Waterloo for taking the time to respond to my comments, as well as the member from—

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his very succinct—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: His profound remarks.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: —and very profound remarks.

I just want to say that nobody has a monopoly on fairness. My point was that this is the first time in 17 years that somebody, that some government, has taken the initiative to put fairness front and centre in their budget.

Interjection.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: No, no. The budget speaks to that, and I'm going to speak to some of those. The welfare reform that has been spoken about many times is a great example of great public policy that helps make Ontario fairer but also helps Ontario become more productive. The Ontario Child Benefit—we've talked about it, but again, we plan to increase it by \$100.

But there's one thing I want to talk about that nobody has talked about today, which is rent control. It is this government that brought in a new law, effective January 31, 2013, that caps the maximum that a landlord can increase rent by 2.5% or inflation, whichever is lower. I do want to say, because I've said that nobody has a monopoly on fairness, that one of the things that I did was—did you know that it was under the NDP that rents in Ontario were the highest? Not today; it was under the NDP that rents in Ontario were the highest.

All of this is to say that nobody has a corner on fairness. We are trying hard. Our initiatives show—we have a slew of initiatives that show that we are working hard to make Ontario not only more prosperous, but more fair.

I stand by this budget. It's a very good budget, and we welcome constructive criticism.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. McNaughton assumes ballot item number 33 and Mr. Pettapiece assumes ballot item number 47.

Before I ask for further debate, I would remind all members that it is not really helpful nor appropriate to

point out the absence of other members in this chamber. Obviously, we have to maintain a quorum, but I would ask them not to make reference to the absence of other members.

Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It is an honour and a pleasure to be able to rise and share my thoughts on the 2013 budget. I'd like to start off by thanking each and every person who took the time to return my 2013 budget survey, which was sent out to every home in the Kenora–Rainy River riding. I'm pleased to report that, for the second straight year, I was overwhelmed by the response. It shows just how much the people in northwestern Ontario care about the important decisions that are being made right now, and all the time, in this Legislature.

I would also like to thank each person who has taken time out of their day to speak to me and share their concerns. Over the past few weeks, I've met with hundreds, if not thousands, of residents across the riding. Whether it was at trade shows in Red Lake, Dryden, Fort Frances, Kenora and Rainy River, or through constituency appointments, emails or phone calls, residents of Kenora–Rainy River came through with their feedback, suggestions and priorities. I really appreciate the information that they have shared with me.

For those who have not filled out this survey, I encourage you, if you're watching this at home, to take a moment to share your thoughts, to pop it in the mail to me. You may not realize it, but the feedback you give me is invaluable, and it's necessary for me to be able to represent your interests in Queen's Park. To represent you effectively, I need to hear from you. I want to reiterate that I sincerely appreciate all of the time and the effort that people across my riding have taken to share with me their thoughts. I encourage them to keep the feedback coming.

With that in mind, I'd like to share some of that feedback with this House. As would be expected by anyone aware of the present situation in northwestern Ontario, the people of Kenora–Rainy River are not happy with this government's performance. When asked, "How would you rate the current government?", a whopping 62% responded that this government is out of touch, while only five respondents—that's not a percentage; there were only five of them—indicated that the government is in touch.

1630

I'd like to remind you that I sent this survey out to more than 28,000 households in the Kenora–Rainy River riding. When asked, "On what issue is the government performing the best?", the responses ranged from "Nothing" to "Ripping us off," "Looking after the south" and "Wasting money." When asked which areas of the government are performing the worst, responses ranged from things like "Hydro rates" to "Cost of living" and "Treating us all equally." I just want to point out that I didn't have a list of options to choose from; there was a fill-in-the-blank for this, because I wanted to get a

sense—not a directed sense—of what people are thinking about what's going on in Ontario today.

The responses to the survey I sent out show a critical disconnect between the people living in northwestern Ontario and the government, which is supposed to be the government for the entire province and not just a few select communities that contain enough seats to allow a party to cruise to victory.

I've spoken out about northern alienation before, but these numbers really tell the story of how poorly the government is performing.

That said, northerners are realistic. When it comes to defeating the budget, most of them are saying, "It depends on the budget," or that they're not sure. Despite an overwhelming level of frustration with this government, they're willing to give things a chance. They're saying things like, "Take your time. Review the budget. See if some of our key priorities are met. If they are, then allow the budget to pass and continue to fight for fairness and equality in a province where we're supposed to be equal partners. If they're not," they tell me, "we'll take our chances with an election and we'll see where that gets us," although most would prefer to avoid the \$100-million election in exchange for meaningful action on the issues that matter the most for them.

It's for that reason that I join my caucus colleagues to outline priorities for the budget. I have to say, it's nice to have some major northern priorities among the five things that we sought in this budget, such as lower auto insurance and a five-day home care guarantee. I think it's fair to say that things like auto insurance and home care are higher priorities in the north because we don't have the luxury of public transit as people who live in communities like Toronto and Mississauga and other places do, which makes the use of our vehicles essential to northern life.

Northerners are fed up with high insurance premiums. In fact, of the surveys that I received, a whopping 90% of the respondents labelled "Lower insurance premiums" as either a high or extremely high priority. Over the past few weeks, I've had people seek me out at public events to thank me and the NDP for the work that we're doing on this file because we in the north are paying far too much for a service that the province requires us to have and for a mode of transportation where there are virtually no other options.

It's true that this government has made changes. Unfortunately, those changes have benefited the insurance industry and not the consumer. Benefits were basically cut in half. Despite this, insurance premiums remained about the same. Reform is needed, and our proposal to cut premiums by 15% meets that. Unfortunately, though, with this government, while acknowledging a vague goal of hoping to accomplish this cut, they failed to set deadlines to provide any real guarantees, and the government is expecting us to take it at its word.

We in northwestern Ontario are a little skeptical because we've seen Liberal promises before that involve the announcement coming first, and the plan—if there

ever is one—coming second. I'll give you a few examples:

—the announcement of the Aspenware plant in Dryden. There was a bunch of clamouring to announce this. It got everybody's hopes up and then it didn't appear.

—the twinning of Highway 17 near Kenora, which has been announced multiple times, yet we still haven't seen any work undertaken.

—even the recent decision to allegedly save the Experimental Lakes area. This government has shown time and time again that it's only concerned with the announcement and not the results, and that simply isn't good enough for those of us living in the northwest.

Similarly, we the NDP have identified home care as a service that is in desperate need of attention. Once again, this is more of an issue in the north, particularly in the northwest, than it is in the south. In southern Ontario, most communities aren't doing too badly when it comes to delivering home care services. Reform is still needed, but the wait times might be about a week or two. In my region, people are waiting up to six months or they're being denied service altogether because it just isn't available in their community.

This past Friday I took part in RAO's Take Your MPP to Work day in Sioux Lookout, and I saw first-hand how urgently an investment is needed. At any one time, one third to one half of the hospital beds are being occupied by individuals in need of long-term care and home care. It boggles the mind: one third to one half adding cost to the system because proper investments haven't been made in northern health care.

Families literally have to fight to have their relatives stay in Sioux Lookout because many are being sent out to health care facilities across the region, at a distance of several hundred kilometres, where they are kept in virtual isolation with no family or friends for support because this government still refuses to pay close attention to the health care crisis that's facing northern communities.

One person who I met in the hospital has been there since October because the home care services he needs cannot be met. He's away from his family. He's suffering, his family is suffering and the system is suffering because the government cannot provide home care services in the northwest in a timely and effective manner, and that is shameful. But what's even more shameful is the fact that each and every patient who is admitted who could be in another facility or kept at home with adequate home care is costing the system \$2,000 per day. By failing to make strong commitments to ensure access is available, we are tapping the system dry. Something needs to change.

This is why almost every respondent to my survey identified a five-day home care guarantee as essential. While the government has listened to us and promised more money—actually, much more money than what we believe is needed to effectively implement a five-day home care guarantee—they refused to commit to a guarantee. My concern is—because it seems like it's been this

way in every other part of the health care system in the province—that the government improves the service in the south but we in the north are left in the cold, and that’s my concern because we’ve seen it time and time again.

The people of northwestern Ontario are fed up with health care that isn’t equally applied across the province. We’re fed up with the province not making firm commitments to improve access to the service. Frankly, the failure of this government to set firm goals shows that they aren’t committed. This is about fairness and this is about justice for the north.

The new Premier says she wants to be the social justice Premier. Well, social justice isn’t just the ability to say, “My policies aren’t as bad as the last guy’s.” It’s not about that. The Premier has been in office for a few months now and we’re still waiting to hear her grand plan, we’re still waiting to hear how she’s different and we’re running out of patience.

We need to see a budget that includes firm commitments to improve our situation. We need to see this province accept proposals to increase accountability, such as a financial accountability office, which can curb this government’s reckless spending, and we need to see Ombudsman oversight for health care services to ensure that we in the north can go to the government and say that we’re not being treated equally. Speaker, things need to change; the ball is in the government’s court.

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member from Kenora–Rainy River. I want to say to her that as one who’s been around this place for a long time, I’m actually quite impressed with what you said. I think you bring to this chamber a pragmatic perspective, one that’s forged in consultation with your folk, which I think is good. Your emphasis on northern issues is appropriate.

I spent a couple of days with your colleague John Vanthof—sorry, the member from whatever and whatever—and it was great. We picked up a great perspective about some of the opportunities for, say, agriculture in the north. It’s untapped. I didn’t know there were 2.3 million acres of high-quality arable land in northern Ontario just waiting for someone to come and farm it, nor that farming was the number one economy up in the north in terms of longevity. So it does help to have those conversations and to update one another about things.

I want to thank you for that and for your emphasis on fairness and justice. I want to say that I share that very much. I appreciate much of what was shared from the other side of the House. The gap between the richest and the poor is continuing to grow, and I think it’s the most shameful thing that all governments at all three levels have not been able to deal with.

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I just want to end by quoting words from Phil Ochs’s song that were recently sung at our colleague’s memorial service. The song goes:

“All my days won’t be dances of delight when I’m gone

“And the sands will be shifting from my sight when I’m gone

“Can’t add my name into the fight while I’m gone

“So I guess I’ll”—or we’ll—“have to do it while I’m”—we’re—“here.”

Let’s get on with it. Let’s keep having these good conversations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I congratulate the member from Kenora–Rainy River, who is a strong advocate for the north and for her constituency, which she brings to this Legislature each and every day. The things she speaks about, by way of making sure that governments are held accountable are to have the Ombudsman have oversight over hospitals and long-term care—God knows we need that. There are a couple of Liberal members who continually say they support this, and we hope they have sway in that government, because so far we have not been victorious.

It’s a simple thing. Most other provinces have Ombudsman oversight, over hospitals in particular. We spend approximately \$23 billion to \$26 billion on that file, and we ought to be able to have somebody who says, “Something has gone wrong there, and they can come to me. I will investigate it and recommend changes.” This Liberal government has been afraid to do that for a long time. Why? It is a way to be held accountable, and you ought to want that, otherwise people will say you don’t want to be held accountable.

Furthermore, the NDP has been pushing you for a financial accountability office, à la Monsieur Page at the federal level, who held Conservatives accountable for many, many years. I loved to read his reports where he would investigate government stories on any file and reveal the truth each and every time: “Here’s what the government said and here are the facts.” That’s what we need, such an accountability office, as the NDP is proposing, to make us politicians more accountable. Isn’t that what we want, really?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Sorry, I wasn’t sure if you were looking at me—not a problem.

It’s my pleasure, Speaker, to rise in response to the member from Kenora–Rainy River and her comments. Thank you for your comments. They were very reflective of what you’ve been hearing in your constituency, the surveys that you’ve been taking—very reasonable comments—so we thank you for that.

I thank you for that, as opposed to the opposition, who, interestingly enough, doesn’t want to take part in this debate—probably one of the biggest debates we should be having, with respect to the budget of the province of Ontario. We know they want to spend hours and

hours debating every other bill that's in front of this House, but not on the budget—but I digress on this.

I too have been listening to my constituents over the last week or so since the budget has come out. I was with many people over the weekend, in my office, at chamber events, at different events—when I'm out shopping. What I'm hearing from everyone that I speak to is that this budget must go through. This budget must pass. There are a lot of elements of this budget that individuals can support.

We say, "Whose priorities are these that are reflected in this budget?" Well, it reflects what I hear in my constituency office. It reflects what all of our members, I'm sure, hear when they are out in our communities. There's no surprise that what's in this budget is with respect to what we hear from our people—it's the priorities of Ontarians; it's the priorities of the individuals that we serve, that we are here to govern for.

When I look at the budget, I'm looking at the investments that we're looking at for youth employment, an area that was—the first job that I had out of university was working in youth employment. It speaks to the fairness and justice components of our society—again, areas that I have been working on my entire working life. We've been speaking about consultations. We consulted through a number of different elements, through SCOFEA consultations and budgets; we've gone all over the community, and—

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

I'll now return to the member for Kenora–Rainy River for her reply.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I want to thank the Minister of Community and Social Services, the member from Trinity–Spadina and the Minister of Children and Youth Services for their comments.

I have to admit—I believe I've said this in the House before—that when I was first elected in 2011 and I saw the results coming in on the screen and that we had a minority government, I was pretty excited. I mean, I'll admit that. I thought that it would be a good opportunity for change, that it would be a good opportunity for us to work together, to cast aside some of those partisan shackles that we all tend to wear at various points.

I'm honestly pretty happy to see that this budget has developed to be what it is. I mean, there's still some room for improvement, but I think it's important to say that it is an important step forward, that we were able to get a couple of the parties together, and we were able to work together in the best interests of Ontarians. That's what I see as a big part of my job.

I talked about the surveys. A big part of my job, and I believe it's a big part of all of our jobs, is to engage the people who are in our ridings, to restore some of that faith that they have in the political process. I hope, for the people who are watching this at home or if they're watching it on YouTube later, that they see that cause and effect, that connection, that correlation between them taking the time to fill out the surveys and them seeing

that their comments are being reflected in the discussion and the debate that we're having in this House, and for them to have faith in the process. If people get complacent, we can have a very dangerous government.

Anyway, I want to thank the members, and the people of Kenora–Rainy River.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a delight, the opportunity—I only have 10 minutes. I could probably take three or four hours, but I will be restricted to 10 minutes, and then I would—

Interjections.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's about quarter to 5. The good folks of Peterborough riding, I think, are now tuning in, just before they sit down to enjoy their supper. I want to extend best wishes to all the mothers and grandmothers in my riding. Yesterday was Mother's Day. I know we were all out celebrating the great contribution that mothers and grandmothers make.

Interjection: How about the Maple Leafs?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, I'm a Montreal Canadiens fan, but good luck to the Leafs tonight. They used to hold their training camp in Peterborough at the old Empress Hotel. I could tell a lot of stories about that, but I want to talk about the budget this afternoon.

First of all, I want to make a note about the budget; I think it's important. Some 40% of my riding is rural, and I want to talk about agriculture for a moment. The agriculture budget has increased by \$5.8 million as we get into this fiscal year of 2013-14.

I know I was in Havelock on Saturday, as I said earlier today. I had the opportunity to chat with one of the most distinguished ag ministers in the history of this province, the Honourable Elmer Buchanan. Elmer was in charge of Celebrate Havelock. I was down there; it's a spring show. It's great; 60 Havelock businesses were there. Elmer told me he was impressed that we increased the ag budget this year by \$5.8 million. Of course, we know the great job that he's doing with the horse racing panel.

Interjection.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Member from Sarnia, don't run away. The member from Sarnia—I was working with him to help his racetrack out at Hiawatha, and we're all looking forward to that first race at Hiawatha. I don't know the horses all that well there, but I do know it will be a great day when they're back racing at Hiawatha. I want to thank the member from Sarnia. He was working with us to make that happen, so that's a good thing.

Mr. Speaker, as I talk about agriculture this afternoon—I know you're a great supporter of supply management—and most of your colleagues—but I was highly distressed on Thursday when I read the remarks from the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, and—

Mr. Peter Shurman: A great man.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, he's not a supporter of supply management, because I want to get on the record what he said. I know most of the majority of that caucus over

there do support supply management. But I want the people—Steve Brackenridge, who’s president of the Peterborough County Federation of Agriculture—to listen to what Mr. Hillier said on Thursday. “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”—reference to supply management—“then you are often acting illegally and in contravention of the law.”

1650

I want to spend a moment on that, because when I was doing my economics degree, one of the requirements was to study supply management. Supply management is the best agricultural model in the world, because it’s based on a good return for the people who are delivering a product, it provides great prices for the consumer and it allows us to sustain an important part of our agricultural system.

Let’s put this in perspective. Wednesday will be Peterborough Day, the fifth annual Peterborough Day, so, Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to welcome you and your colleagues. I know you’ve attended in other years, and I’ll see you there on Wednesday.

One of the participants will be Kawartha Dairy. If you go to Kawartha Dairy, you can buy three bags of 1% milk for \$3.99. If I do my south-end math from Peterborough, that’s \$1.33 per bag of milk.

When I take Braden and Shanae to see the Petes play at the hockey—they didn’t make the playoffs this year, but next year they’ll be there—or the Peterborough Lakers, if I take them to the concession stand when they’re watching that, they want a bottle of water. Mr. Speaker, you’d be surprised what you pay for a bottle of water in the Memorial Centre: \$2.25. So, a bag of 1% milk from Kawartha Dairy: \$1.33; \$2.25 for a bottle of Neilson’s water. Mr. Speaker, you tell me the value of supply management: \$1.33 versus \$2.25.

That case should be explained to your colleague the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington about the value of supply management. I know, in your caucus meeting tomorrow, you’ll surround him and you’ll tell him about all the merits of supply management. I know you’ll do that, Mr. Speaker. I trust you to do that.

Let’s get on to the budget here. I didn’t mean to digress, but I get upset when somebody attacks supply management.

When you build a budget in Peterborough, you do it from two perspectives. You go and consult with the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, and then you consult with the Peterborough poverty reduction committee. Look, I also consulted with a mother from the great riding of Kitchener–Waterloo, a great friend of mine, a great person. I had a chance to talk to her about the budget about a week ago.

When it comes to the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, what did they want in the budget? I could reference a number of pages. We’ll start with page 261, a

very important page in the budget. Bear with me, Mr. Speaker; I’ll get there in a moment—261.

In fact, why is this so important? Well, the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce asked us to change the exemption on the employer health tax—that’s the EHT—on payroll for small businesses. We listened to them very clearly. We’re now going to move that exemption to \$450,000. That will have a significant impact for small businesses in the province of Ontario. A lot of them are right in my riding of Peterborough. We’re prepared to index every year after 2014. That will have significance for small businesses, to use those extra dollars to hire people—very, very important.

The other thing that’s important to companies like GE in my riding, and Quaker Oats and Siemens is, what we did was—Jim Flaherty, God bless him, did the important thing in his budget to accelerate the capital cost allowance for new machinery in the province of Ontario. We thought, “Mr. Flaherty; federal Minister of Finance—a great idea,” so we thought we would incorporate that into our budget so that Ontario will mirror the capital cost allowance that’s moving forward federally. I know that’s something the loyal opposition would want.

Reducing the employer health tax credit and the capital cost allowance—that’s why I’m surprised they’re not going to support this budget. Two things that were suggested to us by the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and that great finance minister in Ottawa, Mr. Flaherty—so why wouldn’t you be on board to support your good friend Jim? Very important.

I want to get to the Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network. It’s chaired by Stephen Kylie of Peterborough, a very successful lawyer and a very good friend of mine. I want to reference page 95. Page 95 is very important because the Peterborough poverty reduction group has talked about the Ontario Child Benefit, and they’re pleased to see that the OCB would be moving to \$1,210 as of July 1. That’s why this budget is somewhat time-sensitive: to make sure that we get that provision in place. It’s very important for low-income earners. These increases will extend the OCB to an additional 90,000 children in 46,000 families in the province of Ontario. My goodness, Mr. Speaker; those are families from Cochrane to Kenora, from Cobourg to Coboconk, from Peterborough to Petrolia. All those families and every family in between will be helped.

The other thing that’s important and that we’ve been talking about for years when it comes to alleviating poverty in the province of Ontario is the earnings of people who work on ODSP and OW. It’s something, I believe, that is contained in one of the official opposition’s white papers. We thought that was a good idea. We wanted to take that and incorporate into our budget. I believe there will be no clawback for the first \$200 of earnings for people who are on ODSP and OW. That’s very important, because they want to work, they want to contribute to their communities, and we want to reward

them by not clawing back and by allowing them to keep up some of their earnings.

In my riding of Peterborough, I have a fairly high degree of seniors. I know that home care is so important to them. There was a proposal that was put on the table by the third party, a very worthy proposal: \$30 million. We looked at that. We said, "That's not enough for our seniors in the province of Ontario." So our investment will be six times that amount: \$180 million to provide home care for seniors right across this great province. In fact, we're also increasing dollar-amount support for long-term-care homes by 2%. Instead of flatlining, we're going to add 2% to that plan.

Mr. Speaker, when I was asked about the budget in Peterborough, I said that it's a budget for all. It incorporates things from the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, it incorporates things from the Peterborough poverty reduction group, and the good advice from the mother of the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. You can't beat that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Peterborough got two things right: One was the capital cost allowance, and number two was showing some respect for Minister Flaherty. I think in those cases, I agree with him.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I don't know what's going on over there. One minute you're sullen and sulky; the next minute you're standing up and setting the record straight. But at least you're here.

I do want to address some of the comments that were made by the Minister of Rural Affairs. You've made a point for us, and I want to thank you for that. You pointed out the fact that we asked for a five-day home care guarantee, costed out at \$30 million. We fully explained where that money would be coming from—not one extra dime to add to the deficit or the debt or whatever. Then you guys came to the table, and you said, "You know what? It's true; we haven't done anything on home care. It's abysmal, and 6,100 people are on that wait-list." You finally acknowledge that there has been such a lack of progress and action on home care, and as Rosie says, "God love you." You finally said, "Okay, we're going to do something," and then you up the ante. You up the ante by seven times, but you haven't explained where you're getting that money from. So you can understand why we are concerned, and you can understand why we don't trust that you actually have that money, that that is real money.

That is why we have made, I think, a very rational, pragmatic recommendation for a financial accountability office so that we would have a full understanding of where that money is going to come from and, actually, more importantly, the people of this province will have a good understanding that you're not taking the hydro-therapy pool out of London-Fanshawe—you're not

taking the service away from those seniors—in order to make a promise in this budget.

I think the financial accountability office warrants attention. I think it is needed. I think you also can then explain where that money is coming from. Let's get down to that financial accountability, I think.

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

1700

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a pleasure for me to stand in my place here today in the House to respond to the member from Peterborough, the Minister of Rural Affairs, and his frankly outstanding comments regarding this year's budget. I find it extremely hard to believe that anyone in this chamber would have been able to listen to the information put forward by the member from Peterborough—to understand how this particular budget, this year's budget, has responded to the concerns and to the hopes of the people who live in his particular constituency, a great part of Ontario. I know that this member is doing simply outstanding work as the Minister of Rural Affairs and that he is leading the charge from this side in those parts of Ontario that want to see meaningful improvement, which really is what this particular budget is all about.

As I said last week when I spoke on the budget, we are moving forward with a balanced plan, a responsible plan, a plan that's going to make sure that Ontario's economic recovery remains solid, that we continue to create jobs right across the province of Ontario, that we're on track to balance our books by 2017-18. We are the only government in Canada that over the last few years has been hitting if not improving upon all of our deficit reduction targets—to see the kind of impressive investments continued and impressive investments in crucial infrastructure: \$35 billion to be spent over three years on roads, highways, bridges and hospitals, whatever the case may be, employing tens of thousands of women and men across the province of Ontario.

It's exactly that kind of budget that we put forward. I encourage members opposite, from both caucuses, to take a serious look at the budget, like I said last week, and consider supporting it so that we can continue to move Ontario forward. The members of the third party have certainly put some interesting ideas out there in the public domain. I would call on the members of the official opposition to put aside the partisan games that they've been spinning over the last number of weeks and months and do what's right for the people of Ontario and to support this year's budget.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to concur with my colleague from Durham. I too support the member's thought in regard to the outstanding job the finance minister at the federal level, Mr. Flaherty, is doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the Minister of Rural Affairs for his reply.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank, for the very kind comments, my good friend the member from Durham, my friend from Kitchener–Waterloo, my friend from Vaughan and my friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Look, the options are clear. I read an interesting article not too long ago in the New York Times, in the financial section. They were talking about why governments should avoid the desert of austerity. The gist of the article was—they were talking about Mitt Romney, John Boehner, Sarah Palin and that cast of characters that are in public life south of the border. They said they're strong advocates of the desert of austerity, and they made the linkage to their kinds of suggestions to what we're seeing in Europe today. When you put the brakes on what government should be involved with, you get into the desert of austerity, you push unemployment up to 25% or 30%, aggregate demand in an economy is severely restricted and you get into the problems that you have.

This budget, the budget presented by this government, is not a Liberal budget, it's not a Progressive Conservative budget and it's not an NDP budget; it's a budget for all Ontarians. When you take a thoughtful approach to this budget, you see that it strikes the right balance: strategic investments, program restraint to make sure we can keep moving the economy forward in a very productive way, and I think that's important—keep making investments in health care, in education, in rural affairs—a small budget in rural affairs; it will put those dollars to work very effectively for the rural citizens of the province of Ontario.

The budget, as I said, just strikes the right balance. I'm looking for a vote of confidence in this budget so we can move this budget forward and start helping everyday Ontarians.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: When you only have 10 minutes, you've got to focus your time. You're quite right, member from Peterborough. So I'm going to try to do that. I'll focus my remarks—well, focus. I will start by talking about the transportation plan that Liberals are so proud of, because in the last couple of months, the Premier and the Liberals have been getting a great deal of praise about what they're going to do to implement the Big Move, Metrolinx's big \$50-billion move to get people moving in the GTA and Hamilton. It's impressive. It really is truly impressive, because you hear the Premier saying, “We've got to do it. We've got to tax; it's a question of which tax,” and so far we don't have a clue which tax they want to bring forward.

But the one thing they did bring in this budget—it's on page 33, for those of you who carry this like a Bible on the Liberal side. If you don't mind turning to page 33, because on page 32—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A few of you have the budget. There you go. Just take it all out. There you are.

On page 32, you talk about the Big Move at the bottom of the page. Then you go to page 33—the next

one, exactly. At the top, it says, “The province is committing”—“committing,” not thinking about, not studying it, but “committing,” which means we're going to do it; that's what I think it means—“to convert select high-occupancy vehicle ... lanes in the GTHA into high-occupancy toll ... lanes, in which carpooling drivers would continue to drive for free, but other drivers would be able to choose to drive in these lanes for a toll.” This suggests to me that the government is thinking that one of the ways to get the Big Move to happen is to move from HOV lanes—high-occupancy volume lanes—to HOT, where you actually ask individual drivers to pay a toll to have the privilege to be in that lane. It sounds interesting.

I asked the Minister of Transportation twice a question on this very issue, because, you see, there were no details here, so I thought we should ask him a question about it. I asked the minister for details about his government's plan to implement high-occupancy toll lanes in the province. For the life of me, I just didn't get an answer—twice—because once, as the question failed, I thought, “Let me try again,” and twice I didn't get an answer, which is highly unusual for this minister, because he's very thorough, generally, and very knowledgeable. He usually likes to give answers, except on this one.

The problem I have around this is that the KPMG report to Metrolinx said that it costs about \$700,000 to implement one kilometre of high-occupancy toll lanes. That's a whole lot of money. We're talking about \$715,000 just for the guardrails per kilometre. That's a whole heap of money, just to implement something around which we know nothing about what pecunia we're going to have as a government to pay for the Big Move.

I'd remind you, as well, that it's \$650,000 for each gantry, and that is the overhead crane upon which the tolling technology would be mounted—that's more or less a fair description, probably. So, \$715,000 for the guardrails and \$660,000 for these gantries—now, add it all up, because some of you are good at math. I'm not very good at it, but some of you are really good at it.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I suspect even Tories like to add these numbers up—

Interjection: We like to add.

Mr. Rosario Marchese:—except when they were in government and they sold the 407 for \$1.2 billion for 100 years. They're good managers; they know how to add. So I thought that maybe the Liberals knew how to add even better, because I'm not very good at it. We saw from the Tories how good they were, and I wanted to ask the Liberals how good they are with their numbers. So \$715,000 for the guardrails and \$660,000 for these gantries; I thought, hmm, if you add it all up per kilometre, that's a whole heap of money. We're talking possibly, what, \$300 million or \$400 million just to set the infrastructure for this? By the time you get a penny back, you say to yourself, is it really worth doing this?

Because that's the question I ask the minister, because I was really, really nervous about the whole thing.

1710

I say to you that Metrolinx puts the initial revenue from the HOT at a mere \$25 million a year. So I think to myself, the government says they're going to be making \$250 million out of this; that's why I asked for the details. Metrolinx says, at best, we might get \$25 million. Marchese says, holy cow, it's going to cost \$340 million just to build the structure for this.

Then I say, how many of these single drivers are going to be in these HOV lanes enough to be able to recover some of that dough from this infrastructure? I think to myself, not much, right? Nihil, zero, nada. So you press the minister because you say to yourself, maybe he's got answers that I'm not familiar with. Once he said he was going to do this slowly and I thought, "Okay, maybe when he says it slowly I'll understand it better." It didn't help because there was no answer, not fast or slow; there was no answer.

My worry is that this scheme that the government is thinking about implementing is going to be risky, is going to be costly and it's going to involve a new, complicated payment system for the sake, what, of potentially \$25 million when it's going to cost a heck of a lot more to build? I think the government's partners, the private sector partners, are salivating; I can see the saliva drips just coming down each side of the mouth, thinking, "This is going to be good. This is going to be really, really good," because Presto—remember Presto? It was going to cost \$250 million initially to have this new payment system. We are now up at \$750 million and still salivating with enjoyment, and the plan isn't yet implemented. Toronto, the biggest, hasn't yet come on board, and we've spent \$750 million thus far.

You understand why I say salivating, right? Because the private sector folks—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: God bless.

Mr. Rosario Marchese:—God bless, both Tories and Liberals, they love it—a new scheme; a new scheme for a new pecunia to be had. You know who pays in the end? The poor folks out there who are being asked to pay a new fee. Not income taxes, progressive, not corporate tax, God forbid, no, no corporate taxes, but the ordinary folks out there are going to be paying for this new scheme. We are worried that we're going to have another eHealth problemo, another Ornge problemo, another Presto problemo, another gas plant privatization problemo—you think about it, the Liberals got it.

This new scheme is about to come on board. This new scheme that the government was committed to so bravely in the budget—we now have a new Minister of Transportation saying, cowardly, "Oh no, no, we ain't doing it; we're just thinking about it." But on page 33, it says, "We are committed." So much for the brave new world on this transportation plan that was coming, and what do they have? A toll lane that they're committed to in the budget, but in practise and in reality, they're not doing it; they're thinking about it—for good reasons, be-

cause we're going to have another scandal coming. Thank you.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I certainly enjoyed, on this side of the House, having the opportunity to listen to the member from Trinity–Spadina provide his, as always, entertaining remarks regarding this year's budget—a budget which, as I said earlier this afternoon, is forward-looking and is going to make sure that our province continues to move in the right direction, as we have over the last nine years and continue to make the improvements.

I know I say this from time to time when I have the privilege of standing up in the House—I've only been on the job here as an MPP for about eight months. But one of the things that struck me just a little bit peculiar about what I heard today from the member from Trinity–Spadina, and what I've heard from that caucus over the last eight months when it comes to public transit and investing in public transit—and I do say this with a tremendous amount of respect for the member from Trinity–Spadina and for that caucus—what struck me over the last eight months is their repeated unwillingness to have a serious conversation, a constructive dialogue about how to make sure that the greater Toronto and Hamilton area continues to wrestle with and solve, or at least certainly alleviate, the significant gridlock issue that we have.

What we get instead, time after time in this House and outside this House, are the bumper sticker politics that appeal to sort of populism, that may make for great sound bites but actually does not move the province forward, does not move this region forward, doesn't get commuters home to their families sooner, doesn't move our economy forward.

The Conference Board of Canada said not that long ago that gridlock in the GTHA costs our province \$6 billion a year in lost economic productivity, and it's a real shame that the members opposite in the third party—who I think otherwise, at least historically, would have had certainly an enlightened view of how to invest in public transit—have taken the easy way out over the last eight months.

Notwithstanding the entertaining performance by the member from Trinity–Spadina, I could not disagree more wholeheartedly with their general approach to the public transit concept.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Trinity–Spadina, a good friend of mine, has made a comment—and we're speaking on Bill 65. He said something that I have to put on the record. He said, "I'm not very good with numbers," and I heard the NDP agree with him. That's my comment. That's why they're agreeing with this budget.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I am pleased to respond and build on some of the comments that were made by my colleague the member from Trinity–Spadina. One of the things he mentioned was the fact that there’s an issue of spending. Whether it’s HOT or HOV lanes, the Minister of Rural Affairs talked about spending—and he seems actually quite proud of it—five, six, seven, eight, depending on whose numbers you want to use, times more on home care than what we proposed, right? We said that it would cost about \$30 million and they came back with anywhere between \$185 million—I heard another number of \$260 million.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It’s \$260 million on community care.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Yes, there you go. And they still can’t provide a guarantee. That’s the problem.

We have a government right now that has a spending problem, and it’s something the people in Kenora–Rainy River just can’t understand. They can’t understand spending \$585 million to move gas plants in southern Ontario, all the while shuttering our travel information centres and slashing hours at our ServiceOntario centres. We have a government of Ontario that is literally withdrawing from parts of my riding. In fact, they’re withdrawing not just key services but all services, basic services that the people located in Rainy River, a small community in my riding—I mean, they’re told that they have to adhere to provincial laws, but when they look around, there is no evidence of the province of Ontario anywhere to be found. They live in an area where they depend on tourism as a main industry. When people come across the border to get their fishing licence, they used to go to the travel information centres. That’s closed. They go to the ServiceOntario centre and that’s only open 16 hours a week.

We have to prioritize spending. That’s why we need the financial accountability office.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I’m pleased to follow my colleague from Vaughan and my colleague from Trinity–Spadina.

Let me thoroughly read what page 33 said. It says here, “The province is committing to convert select high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes in the GTHA into high-occupancy”—so there’s a choice—“in which carpooling drivers would continue to drive for free, but other drivers would be able to choose to drive in these lanes for a toll.” So read the full sentence before you object.

The other piece here is that there is evidence that the HOV lanes have been successful in other states, as well as in Quebec. Read the book, okay? It’s in here.

1720

Ontario is not the first jurisdiction to consider a range of revenue sources for funding for transit infrastructure. For example, the Los Angeles county Metro raises significant funds by issuing debt backed by dedicated revenues, and Montreal as well. So I want to say to the member from Trinity–Spadina, please read the book thoroughly.

As well, the government has also made commitments in terms of infrastructure. The book is very, very clear—the budget book—in terms of investing in public transit as well as infrastructure. The government of Ontario is committed to putting public transit as a high priority of capital investment. That’s what it says here, again, on page 33, so if only the member from Trinity–Spadina was actually reading it.

It also talked about the fact that we’re investing two cents per litre of provincial gas tax revenues in public transit across Ontario. This is now permanent funding. Pennies and dimes: It all adds up. When you don’t want to read it, you should be reading it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the questions and comments, and I return to the member for Trinity–Spadina for his response.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: To the member from Durham, Tories are good with numbers. I understand that very much. That’s why they sold the 407 for 100 years for a mere \$1.2 billion. The member from Durham must have counted really well. But I suspect a whole lot of their friends knew how to do the math as well because they pocketed a whole heap of money. Boy, do they know about numbers.

The member from Mississauga East–Cooksville, I appreciate your enthusiasm and your excitement about this, but I read the same page to you. You repeated what I read. Yet you understood one thing, and I’m telling you another. Your government said, and your minister said, the province is committing to convert select high-occupancy vehicles. What I said to you earlier is, when I asked your minister this question, your minister said they are only studying the matter, to which you say, “Oh, but it’s been studied elsewhere and it’s working.” Well, if you studied the matter already, why didn’t your minister say, “We’ve studied it, and we are doing exactly what we said on page 33, which is, we are committed to converting HOV lanes to HOT lanes.” But that’s not what your minister said.

I read the same page you did, and you interpret one thing, and I tell you another. That is all you have committed to by way of a GTA transportation plan. That is all you committed in this file, on this page, in this budget. That is it. Even on this small item, you are not committed to it. You’re only committed to studying it.

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

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I’m very happy to get up and talk about the budget, the budget that has—as was so well said by the Minister of Rural Affairs—been built for Ontarians.

In my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East, I’ve hosted six meet-and-greet sessions in my community—some a few months ago, some more recently. At the more recent ones, I’ve had the opportunity to talk to folks about the budget and what were they looking for in it and what their reaction is to date.

I think, at the end of the day while you can’t make everybody completely happy, what I’m sensing is that

people are looking for balance—balance in the budget. They want us to be fiscally responsible, and they want us to get the deficit down, of course. But they also want us to protect the gains we have made in things like health care, education, social services, and to keep building on things like transportation and infrastructure, and to make sure we're taking care of our environment and our most vulnerable citizens. So I think when you look at the budget, we see something in there on all those fronts.

The other message I'm starting to get, and this has become a stronger message in the last few days, is, when is the budget going to pass? When are we going to get on with the business of implementing all the provisions in the budget? Someone asked if we have costed everything out. I remember speaking to this at last year's budget. The budget is costed out. It was costed out last year and it is costed out this year. However, if we don't pass the budget we do run the risk of not moving forward in a timely way on some enhanced provisions. So we need to get on with it.

Again, in my riding, when I think of both the Scarborough East side of my riding as well as Pickering, there are a couple of big issues all the time. One is transportation and transit—I'm going to come back to that in a minute—and another is the cost of auto insurance. Certainly, when you look at what's in the provisions for the budget on auto insurance, it was an average reduction of 15% over time. I think people are reacting very favourably to that. In fact, I was talking to some constituents this morning about auto insurance when I was out in my riding at the GO trains this morning. They are very, very interested to see us implement that provision in the budget.

In terms of transportation—and it's a pretty unique issue in my riding because my riding straddles Scarborough and Pickering, and the residents of that community go back and forth. Some live in Durham but do a lot of living in Scarborough, and vice versa. So it's not just an issue of good, affordable, reliable transit; it's about how to transit between those two areas, which cover two different major regions and municipalities.

Just looking at our track record, I think it's pretty strong. When I look at the Durham side alone, where my riding is and beyond—it's shared with some other members here in the House—we've invested heavily in transit: \$164.7 million in Durham since 2003, which is fantastic, as well as \$329.1 million in highway infrastructure, because at the end of the day, not everyone takes public transit. Of course, we want as many people to take transit as possible, but that doesn't always happen, and we need to maintain our highway infrastructure. Those are pretty impressive numbers at the Durham regional level.

This past Friday, I was just delighted to be with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure out in Durham to announce a fabulous project called the Durham Rapid Pulse Bus. There are 26 new buses—low-floor vehicles—in this fleet of 26. And guess what? They are going to go from U of T Scarborough across the great

divide into Durham region, all the way east to Durham College. Our government has invested \$87 million in that project. That's \$87 million of the \$164-million transit investment I mentioned. It's fantastic because it's going to help a whole bunch of people transit between Scarborough and Durham and vice versa, but especially the young people, the students, the ones who may live in Durham but are going to the University of Toronto Scarborough campus in my riding, or vice versa—they're in Scarborough and they're going to UOIT or Durham College or Centennial College; that's another campus in my riding. Having those 26 buses going between there, crossing the great divide of Toronto and Durham, is just fantastic news. That's starting very shortly. I was just thrilled to have the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure out for that.

That is definitely the number one issue—transportation—in my riding. I'm glad to see that we're continuing to make investments in transportation and in transit systems. It is important that we get the budget passed so we can get on with more projects like this.

1730

The other thing I want to point out is a very small thing in the budget, Speaker, but it relates to my ministry, the Ministry of Consumer Services, on page 223, where it spells out all the budgetary changes in the different ministries from one year to the next. It's a very small change in the Ministry of Consumer Services, but it's a very important change, Speaker, in that there's a slight increase in the Ministry of Consumer Services this year, and that's not the case in all the other ministries.

In fact, I'm very appreciative that some of the big ministries have helped out to make this small increase happen so that we can move forward with some very strong consumer protection measures. You'll remember that I introduced Bill 55 recently, which is called Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers. That covers things like door-to-door sales of water heaters, debt settlement services and real estate transactions in the province of Ontario. There's some really, really strong consumer protection measures there, Speaker, that will be supported by what's in the budget and all the things that are needed in a government office to make that happen, whether it's the technology, the enforcement mechanisms or compliance mechanisms. So very much what we're talking about under Bill 55 for consumers is indeed tied to the budget, as well as another piece of legislation I introduced recently, which is Bill 60, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, which is intended to strengthen protection with respect to cellphone agreements.

Again, it's something that constituents of mine, and Ontarians, have been asking for, and I think there's a lot of consensus about the need to get on with that. That includes provisions like capping the charge when you cancel a cellphone agreement. It also provides clarity in cellphone contracts, because, let's face it, cellphone contracts tend to be very legalistic and confusing. There's also provision in there to make sure all the pricing associated with a cellphone is there—what we call all-in

pricing—and there's a provision that if a consumer is owed a refund, they'll have the right to sue the provider to get three times the amount back, which is called triple recovery. That is a very important provision. Finally, there's a piece in the proposed legislation that requires consent by the consumer if a fixed-term contract is amended, renewed or extended, basically ensuring that consumers are well informed.

At the end of the day, Speaker, I think that when we have well-informed consumers, whether we're talking about cellphone contracts, door-to-door—

Miss Monique Taylor: I thought we were talking about the bill.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I am talking about the bill. In the budget on page 223, there are financial provisions to help operationalize these very, very important pieces of consumer protection legislation: door-to-door sales of water heaters, putting stronger measures in place to help protect consumers and make sure they make informed choices, also some provisions around debt settlement companies that will restrict the ability of companies to charge up front for those kinds of services and to provide clear contracts, and some great, great consumer protection items around real estate services in Ontario. I'm just highlighting these things, Speaker, because they are impacted by the budget, and we need to move forward—not just move forward on things in my ministry but all matters of government that are there to protect and serve Ontarians.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: After the numerous scandals of this government, we in the PC Party have lost confidence in the government, and we urge the House leaders to call our want of confidence motion.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm pleased to respond to some of the comments made by the Minister of Consumer Services. One of the things she said that hit me personally, as the member representing Kenora–Rainy River, is, “Look at our track record. I think it's pretty strong.” She's talking about transit in the Durham area and the need to maintain highway infrastructure. In my speech, I talked about the Kenora highway twinning as an example of a project that has been announced and re-announced and re-re-announced over many, many years and there's been no progress on it. I would say that's one example.

Another example, as I said—and I wanted to build on some comments I made earlier—is the \$585 million to move some gas plants versus shuttering or closing or scaling back the Service Ontario centres where the government is literally withdrawing services from Rainy River. As I mentioned, we have people in Rainy River who are told that they still have to adhere to the laws in Ontario. They still need a driver's licence to drive. They still need a health card to access health services. They still need a fishing license to fish. And the businesses still

need the tourists contributing to the local economy for their businesses to thrive. Every time these poor decisions are made, people lose just a little bit more faith in the system; they lose faith in government in general.

That's the reason why we need the financial accountability officer. We need that accountability officer not just to balance the books, but for democracy. We need to make sure that there is someone looking over the government's shoulder, no matter who the government is, to make sure that the decisions that they're making are in the best interests of all Ontarians, no matter where they live.

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

Hon. Mario Sergio: Just a few comments on the presentation by the Minister of Consumer Services: She spent quite a bit of time on the economic portion of creating jobs and transit and so forth. I think this is very, very important, especially in the particular time that we're going through. We can speak on the health care issues and the education portion we've been championing, but I think the minister is quite correct when she applies so many of the comments towards transportation and creating jobs.

For two or three years now we have on the table \$8.4 billion for the five large projects that we have in Toronto and our money is there. We have committed, as the minister said, \$35 billion to help transportation, to help new infrastructure, to revitalize a lot of the older infrastructure and create new ones as well.

We all know that especially Toronto is choking in heavy traffic and people spend a lot of time back and forth, coming down or going home from the city. I think she's quite right to say that we have to pay attention.

She spoke about buses coming from all over the place, and I know York University is now receiving 1,600 or 1,860 buses daily from all over the place. Now the subway is going through. I hope that by 2015 we can eliminate most of this process, but this is an area that we cannot forget. So the minister is quite right in paying attention to this particular area and building economic strength and eliminating some of the problems that we have in transportation.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: We cannot support a government that is corrupt and going in the wrong direction. They do not deserve to continue to govern. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll return to the Minister of Consumer Services for her reply.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to say thank you for the thoughtful comments from the member from Kenora–Rainy River. I hear her. Transportation is what makes us get to work, to school and to friends and families and loved ones, so thank you for your thoughtful remarks.

To the minister responsible for seniors: I think it is good how he made the link between transportation investments and jobs, because it's not just a jobs strategy

itself that's going to create jobs; it is these investments in transportation infrastructure that are going to create jobs.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, I don't think you had anything of substance to say, so I don't have anything to respond, unfortunately, on that.

I think what we're seeing, though, is that we do need to get on with it. I'd like to think that all parties agree with the importance of deficit elimination so we can protect what we have in place for Ontarians, whether it's education, health care, social services, the environment—you name it. At the same time, ensuring that we have a fair society, that we are taking care of our most vulnerable citizens, that we are thinking about people on ODSP, that we are thinking about single parents and that we are looking after everyone who is in a vulnerable situation and needs a helping hand—because it could be any of us, of course, at any time. In fact, I think many of us have family and friends who've been in that situation.

1740

Our budget wants to help Ontarians succeed. I think, when we look at the budget, that it is very much a balanced budget, and we definitely need the co-operation of this minority government to move forward so that we can get on with the business of implementing what's in the budget and doing what is best for Ontarians.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me pleasure to be able to stand in the House today to speak on this budget. I'll be speaking on behalf of many of my residents, folks like Marian, Orietta, Ken and Philip—concerned residents who have contacted my office, amongst many, many, many others. They're really concerned about what this budget means to them, and they're hopeful that, as legislators, we'll be able to pass this budget and that it be a budget that means something to folks.

They want us to speak to the issues that they're facing, and I want to take a moment to assure them that New Democrats are listening to them. That's why we've been proposing priorities. Then, secondly, we were proposing accountability measures to make sure that the budget is actually going to be implemented, that things that we've asked for are really going to be there for them. I want to make sure that they are assured that I have been listening, as well as all New Democrats across this province.

They're in direct response to what we've been hearing—our priorities are what we've been hearing from Ontarians across the province. We're not asking for more; we're asking for it to be done right, and we want to ensure that our precious tax dollars are not being wasted any longer. Ontarians have paid for enough fiascos: eHealth, Ornge, gas plants.

My constituents have told me that they want to see guarantees in this budget, that they're tired of more targets and talking points. They've heard promise after promise. They feel that they're let down by this government, and I've heard it over and over again. Ken, a resident in my riding, wrote to me and he was really quite

blunt. He said, "This Liberal government is corrupt and can no longer be trusted with the public purse."

It isn't only Ken who has contacted me in this manner. Philip writes, "I have heard so many promises from this government. But then they waste so many of our tax dollars that I will never trust their word again." These residents need to know that this government will hold their tax dollars in the highest regard.

It's time to put fairness and accountability into this budget. New Democrats will continue to work hard to ensure real results are delivered for the people and families in this province. We have heard time and time again about the need for better health care, home care, jobs and making life more affordable, but it's time to start seeing action. It's time that we see action on things like job creation, improved health care services and measures to save Ontarians in their pocketbook.

Let's talk about jobs, or maybe we should talk about unemployment. Dave, who's another constituent, wrote to me about the difficulties he's having finding a job. Dave's an older gentleman who just graduated from Mohawk College. He went back as an adult student, and he thought that by going back to college, he would be able to find meaningful work at this point in his life. Four years later after graduating, he's still submitting job applications, and there's little in this budget to be able to help him find that job that he's been struggling so hard for and had high hopes to find. It's really disappointing.

Ontario currently has an unemployment rate of 7.7%, but this budget does little to spur job creation. New Democrats took a responsible approach by putting in a First Start program, one that the government has decided to implement, and we're really happy to see that because we definitely have youth who are falling by the wayside. They're coming out of school, and they have high debt and no jobs. So that's a good plan that we're happy to see the Liberal government implement on behalf of New Democrats.

But what about folks like Dave? What are we supposed to tell him? How is he supposed to find re-employment in Ontario? How do we get him back into the workforce? What training and skills development programs are needed? That's a question that happens here. We've got lots of stuff going in for training and skills development, but after that, then what? They still don't have a job.

I went to an event on the weekend; it was a South Asian Heritage Month event. I was approached by not one, not two, but six people who came up to me saying that they were looking for work and how can I help them find a job. This is at one event—at one event, six people approached me and told me they can't find a job, and do I have a job for them? That's not really the direction we should be looking at, that every unemployed person hopes to get a job in their MPP's office because there's no other work out there for them. Do you know how hard it is for me to tell them, "I'm sorry; I can't hire you. You have to continue to look"? We have to continue to try to

help these folks. It's our duty to stand up for thousands of Ontarians who are struggling to find work, and I'm saddened the concerns are not addressed in this budget.

I was pleased to see the government did take on our rule of the \$200 earnings for OW and ODSP recipients. That will definitely help. It's a recommendation from the Frances Lankin-Munir Sheikh report. That's a good implementation, but that's low-hanging fruit. But again, it was one of our priorities, making sure the government was listening.

We still have so many people who are well below the poverty line. Initiatives like this are just going to continue to keep them in poverty. We need to find solutions to get people out of poverty, not cut and slash like the Conservatives want to do and bring everybody down; we need to raise people up in this province. Everybody has the right to a good wage. We definitely have a lot of work ahead of us for this.

We must look at the minimum wage and the rates of people on social assistance. Again, a 1% increase to social assistance isn't more than \$14 a month. That's not so great when the rent increase was 2%.

People will say, "Well, these were your asks." We're not the government. It wasn't our budget to write; it was their budget to write. This is a Liberal budget to write, and we have to give ideas of some sort, but we do not have to write the entire budget. There should have been lots of other ideas in there to bring people out of poverty, with a few ideas from us.

It would have been nice to have a few ideas from the Conservatives, but they've decided to keep their nose out of this process and just say "no, no, no" to the entire thing. It's really actually quite interesting that the Conservatives have decided not to participate in this debate because last week when we were debating co-op housing, they thought it was absolutely vital that each and every single one of their members speak to the co-op housing people here and held up another process of this House. Good people who need housing in this province were being held up by filibustering, yet when we come to something as important as a budget that needs to be discussed for all Ontarians, they refuse to speak on it. That's another rant that I could go on, Mr. Speaker.

There are some really good things in the budget. There are priorities that were put forward by New Democrats: making sure we have a five-day home care guarantee. The government is talking about targets, but there are no guarantees. They've put six times the amount of money into it that we asked for, and there's still not what we asked for—there are no guarantees.

We need accountability measures to take care of these sorts of things. That's why we've called on the Ombudsman. Again, the Ombudsman would help in other cases: when it came to the shortage of chemotherapy drugs and other scandals that have happened in our health care

system. Accountability measures will go a long way with the people in this province, no matter who's in government.

1750

Lots of things to talk about: a 15% reduction in auto insurance. This is a mandated program. Everybody in this province who drives a car has to have auto insurance. In my riding of Hamilton Mountain, auto insurance went up by 40% in the last year and their intake has gone down. They're getting less and they're expected to pay more, so 15% is barely going to address the increases they've already faced. It is something that will help and I know they're appreciative, but again, accountability—making sure that is in the budget, that that's going to be there with strings attached. Saying they have to do it within a year is absolutely vital, not just mere lip service.

My time has come to an end, Mr. Speaker. Boy, 10 minutes sure does go fast when you're speaking about the budget these days. Thank you very much.

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

Hon. John Milloy: I listened intently to the speech from the member from Hamilton Mountain. Although I have to point out I don't know if I agree 100% with all her characterizations of the budget, I do appreciate the fact that she identified some strengths in the budget and some areas of common concern between the government and the New Democratic Party.

As we approach this budget, we look to both parties and we indeed look to the people across the province to find what are their areas of priority. Certainly, with the New Democratic Party we did identify areas of common ground and we were able to come forward with proposals—not exactly as they had been proposed by the NDP, but ones which I think reflected the concerns they have. I believe all parties in this House are concerned about issues around home care and our seniors, around issues of auto insurance that she spoke about, issues certainly about youth unemployment.

The one area I would want to spend a little bit of time on—I realize I'm limited to two minutes—is the whole issue of poverty. I do want to expand, I think, a little bit more on what she said. She said that we missed some opportunities in the budget. I would commend her to review all that's in there. She mentioned the \$200 when it comes to individuals on social assistance who want to work not experiencing a clawback. I would also talk about the 1% increase overall, but a targeted increase for those in Ontario Works, who will be receiving an extra \$20 a month, which is in line with the spirit of what Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh spoke about when they talked about increasing that bottom level for someone on Ontario Works. Within that, there's a whole new approach. We foreshadow a lot of transformation in the system, one that's aimed at better supporting people on

social assistance, particularly as they move into the workforce—so a lot of foreshadowing of some future moves in that area.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: People in my riding have told me time and time again that this government can't be trusted. They've got us into a mess, and we can't support this government.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just want to say, I think the member from Hamilton Mountain has rightly pointed out that on the poverty portfolio—unfortunately, we have a portfolio on poverty in the province of Ontario. The reduction strategy that has been proposed by the Liberals has actually failed on several accounts. I could go through each and every one of those, but I think that you also have to be very considerate of the fact that the Frances Lankin-Sheikh report is not perfect. This is something also that we're going to have to find some consensus on going forward, because one of the main criticisms of that report has been that there would be no distinction between disability support recipients and general welfare recipients.

Our leader, Andrea Horwath, has said that this report is not perfect. It needs some work. We have some concerns about it. Just to send it out there into the universe saying that this is going to be the answer—I mean, it's just not. I think the member from Hamilton Mountain has actually rightly put—she's hearing from the real, lived experience of people who live in poverty, and that should actually be informing a strategy going forward.

One of the big things that we're missed out is generating revenue to actually fund progressive programs, and one of those key factors has to do with corporate taxes and a fair taxation model. We've called for a reduction—not a reduction, but a closing of that corporate tax loophole. If the people in this province are hurting, why are corporations getting a break on HST for food and entertainment? I mean, where are the priorities here in this House?

This discourse on poverty is going to go back and forth. I've been reading the white papers of the PC Party, and, quite honestly, I'm very concerned about some of those discussions and some of those ideas, and for good reason. Actually, the rest of the province is equally concerned, because that has been worked out in the whole election conversation too.

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

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm glad to rise again to speak to the budget and respond to the comments from the member from Hamilton Mountain. I know she's passionate about some things that are very important to

her and to all of us, whether it's poverty reduction or children and youth in our province. We, on the government side, share in her passion on those things. We also share in our passion to make sure we can continue to pay for those things and pay for what's committed, not just in this budget but beyond.

As I've said before, my own view is that the biggest threat to those programs, whether it's health care, social services, investments in the environment, whichever—the biggest threat to that is our deficit. That is why we are very committed to reducing the deficit by 2017-18.

Our projection is better than ever. We have marked the fourth year in a row that the province has reported a deficit lower than what we originally projected. This is key; this is very key to job creation. It's key to protecting those services that I think we all agree are very important. We need to continue beating those fiscal targets so that we can continue to invest in things that matter most to the people of Ontario. At the end, it's about the balance, the balance between protecting those gains and reducing the deficit by 2017-18, and the net-to-debt GDP ratio to the pre-recession level of 27%.

I don't think there's a lot of disagreement with what the member from Hamilton Mountain is saying. However, I just want to make sure we can continue to afford those programs that I think are very important to all of us.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I really wish that I would have been able to be allotted one of the 20-minute slots for this budget, because there is so much more to talk about.

To the government House leader: You're talking about our proposals and our good ideas—no, no, no, hold on. I don't have a lot of time, so I'll flip to this one really quickly. You're talking about Ontario Works and social services, and that I didn't read it. I did read it. But if you add up what has actually been given, compared to what's been taken away with our CSUMB and our start-up allowance, there's no comparison. We're going to have more people falling into poverty every single day.

The member for Kitchener-Waterloo had it absolutely correct about closing the corporate tax loopholes. We'd rather give money to big corporations to wine and dine their friends than take care of our people in poverty in this province.

The Minister of Consumer Services talks about my passion, and how do we pay for it all. Well, let me tell you: When we have the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation talking today, about how wonderful it is that the province of Ontario spends less money on services than any other province, we obviously have a problem going on.

This is our money here; it is the taxpayers' money. That money is for services. Those services are what people count on in this province, whether it's for their health care, whether it's for child protection. No matter what it is, that's what that money is put here to do. It's not to be given to entertainment; it's not to be given to corporations. It is to be put into the services that people count on to survive in this province.

So when you say I have passion, you're absolutely right. My residents sent me here to stand up, to be passionate in this House, and that's exactly what I'll do every time I get the opportunity.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Millroy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	London West / London-Ouest	
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**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
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

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**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 Przewdziecki

**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

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

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

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
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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
Margaret 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, Margaret R. Best
Ted Chudleigh, Cheri DiNovo
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Jane McKenna
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