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of Debates
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Tuesday 4 June 2013

Mardi 4 juin 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 4 June 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 4 juin 2013

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 3, 2013, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion to apply a timetable to certain business of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. I'll continue.

Let's look at the textbook cases of lack of oversight by this government on numerous files, like the \$2 billion in eHealth and the \$1 billion wasted on Ornge; they continually do what they can to block the people of Ontario from getting to the truth.

The Ornge file is particularly disturbing, as the minister repeatedly ignored warnings from the opposition that did not pass the smell test; warnings that were screaming of misappropriation and corruption. The minister's response: Trust me. I've checked out the concerns, and I'm comfortable with what's going on at the Ornge air ambulance agency.

What a boondoggle, as revealed by the Auditor General. He was able to identify, without the co-operation of Ornge, at least 12 affiliated for-profit corporations created with money from the people of Ontario and beyond his mandate to investigate, with many off the board of directors, including the CAO, on many of them.

It was only after the story broke in the Toronto Star that this minister cared to show any interest in the issue. It begs the question: How deeply did she check out the allegations, if at all, or was it just a ploy to get beyond the pending 2011 election?

Then there were the delay tactics and the refusal to establish the select committee to review the file to get to the bottom of the issue. Everything that could be done to block the opposition from getting the information that they legally and morally and rightfully are entitled to was done and continues to be done on that file today.

The stories continue, as we see once again that the government is desperately pulling out all the stops to see that the people of Ontario do not get to the truth of the now famous billion-dollar gas plant cancellations: the

delay tactics in committee; refusal to release documents ordered by the standing committee of this House, until under threat of contempt and with the minister facing potential incarceration; then to partially release heavily redacted documents whited out, clearly against the Speaker's orders; then more redacted documents and the prorogation; and now, Liberal Party staffers with severe amnesia and destroyed email accounts.

Speaker, the Wynne-McGuinty government has stretched its credibility well beyond believability. Now they are asking us to trust them with \$2 billion in extra taxes to fund Toronto transit. This government, with a huge, huge spending problem, does not consider the possibility of looking for a mere 2% in savings in their budget to fund this very important project that they have ignored for almost 10 years. They have refused our offer of a select committee to review government spending to find this small 2%—truly shameful.

With the government borrowing over \$1 million per hour, one can put in perspective the importance of riding this province of the NDP-Liberal coalition government. In a democratic system, the people decide who governs them. Yes, there is a cost to elections, but it's well worth it. As we look around the world at different systems and the quality of life they afford their residents, I believe the cost of an election is worth well it; a cost that many Canadians have paid for with their lives to ensure that we have the right to elections and to choose our leaders through the election process.

People did not elect this leader. She was not the choice of the members of the current Liberal caucus. The people of my great riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry have told me they can't afford not to have an election. They must get rid of this corrupt Liberal government.

The NDP has always howled about the importance of full debates in the House. Instead, today we have a motion to limit debate before us and the NDP is supporting it wholeheartedly.

We are elected to serve the interests of the people of Ontario and our constituents. If we look at this budget, the government is continuing its spending addiction to the tune of an extra \$3.6 billion this year. The interests of the people of Ontario lie in ensuring that our children can live in a province that is governed by its Legislature, rather than its creditors. We've had three credit downgrades on this government to date, and a warning has been issued in the last few months. Our former finance minister, Dwight Duncan, has recently called the situation "a ticking time bomb." How interesting it is that when somebody leaves the shadows of the Liberal Party, their perspective on life so quickly changes.

Already today, in 2013, each man, woman and child owns \$20,000 of debt that he or she has not chosen to accumulate. Dalton McGuinty spent like a drunken sailor on shore leave to buy the support of the Working Families Coalition, and the current Premier is following in his footsteps—regulations that are put in place without debate that appear solely for the benefit of the Liberal Party and their donators. There's nothing new in this government. It's just the same old spending and tricks. It's time to put the people of Ontario first and change the leadership of this province.

This time allocation motion and the amendment by the member from Simcoe—Grey call upon us to debate the very fundamental principles that drive the members of provincial Parliament. It is a duty of this House to hold the Liberal government to account for its mismanagement. This duty cannot be subordinate to the convenience of a government desperate to survive, or to a third party so desperate to avoid an election that they're willing to set aside their oft-stated principles.

We often hear the \$92-million figure tossed around by the NDP and the Liberals as the cost of an election. The government has cost Ontario \$1 billion at Ornge, \$2 billion at eHealth and close to \$1 billion in the cancellation of the gas plants. For all their holier-than-thou howling, the New Democrats have failed to grasp the essential truth: If you believe the government is corrupt, you must change the government.

Our amendment to the time allocation motion gives the assembly a chance to do for constituents what they have been demanding of me more and more frequently: throw this exhausted, wasteful and unaccountable Liberal government out of office and allow the people of Ontario to pass judgment upon the Liberal failures, the NDP sell-out and the only credible plan to bring Ontario back to its rightful place as an economic engine of Canada: the PC Paths to Prosperity.

There is no real strategy to get Ontario back to work—600,000 people woke up this morning without a job and 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost. Reams of regulations and red tape are blocking our entrepreneurs from doing what they do best: start or extend businesses, hire new people who will make wages—

Mr. Paul Miller: Yeah, eight bucks an hour.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay, member.

Mr. Jim McDonell: —pay taxes and help support the important services our government must provide.

The Wynne government's solution: hire more people to the already bloated public sector with no plan on where we get the money or how we pay their wages and benefits. Times are tough, and I have had a steady stream of people in my constituency office asking for help against the policies of the Wynne-McGuinty government, now with the firm support of their NDP farm team.

0910

Two weeks ago, a retired couple came in asking for help. They showed me their property bills and their hydro bills. They told me how they were tired of time-shifting their activities and how they had done everything they

could to try and reduce their hydro bills, up almost three times since this government came into power. They were getting desperate: fixed incomes, a very modest lifestyle, but they just couldn't make it work anymore. It's hard to tell this hard-working couple, who have lived within their means all their lives, never overextended themselves, looked after their affairs with fiscal responsibility for their children and grandchildren—it's embarrassing to tell them that this very high-priced government did not do the same.

The Green Energy Act was designed for short-term public opinion wins, but was not good for the province—no evaluation of the economic impact on jobs and the economy. Now we waste billions—and I said “billions”—each year to pay many times the market price for power that we don't need, forcing us to spill power over our dams, shut down the nuclear plants—Bruce 10 times last summer, I believe—still surplus power we must get rid of; pay our neighbours, our competitors, to take it off our hands, and it makes no sense, absolutely none.

Our once major competitive advantage is gone in just 10 years of this Liberal government. I listened to one of our suppliers demanding that we intervene. We asked him if he had talked to the government. His answer was, “Of course we have.” We said, “What was their response?” I'll quote; he says, “Nothing. Nothing. They're just paralyzed. They don't know what to do.” But you know, we can no longer do that. We can no longer pass the decisions off to the next government that will come along and have to clean up the mess. This is not responsible government. This is not the government that the people of Ontario deserve.

The government did not make the tough decisions that would have been in the best interests of the people of Ontario. Instead, they took the easy way out. They made decisions that would not stand the test of time, decisions that were good for them and their friends with donations. They used their majority to mask the issues from the people, but they failed to calculate one thing: What happens when you lose your majority. The 2012 fall by-election seems now to be no accident, a failed attempt to win that elusive majority so that they could again push the truth away from the people. As we saw and as they say, the rest is history. Now we see the mess they've created.

Speaker, there is more. Small businesses in my riding are asking for help. They talk of the TSSA and how it discriminates against Ontario businesses. Equipment all over North America is essentially blocked from installation in Ontario. Yes, there is a process, but one so onerous that it's just easier to set up business somewhere else. They are starting to fight back, but they are tired of the intimidation and the unfair labour laws. As one desperate business told me, “We need you to tell the people how bad it is, for if we speak out we get targeted. They would rather see us out of business than to have us tell our story.”

It's time for a change. It's time to put a government in place that will do the right things, and to make the tough

decisions to put Ontario back on track—the economic engine of Canada, what it was when the Dalton McGuinty government took over.

There are many cases of people coming into our offices who just can't do it anymore. We have businesses that come in. We talked about them being afraid to speak out. I had a meeting last summer; we had 10, 15 businesses. They walked out the back door because the press was out front and they didn't want their pictures in the paper. They were afraid to be seen. Under these current laws they get targeted—they get certified without a majority of their employees having a say.

Whoever heard—we had one company in our riding—40 people working for the company, two people on a holiday but working; they certified the company. It took them almost \$1 million to get out of it—because he had 38 employees; they were furious with what happened—and four years. This is the province of Ontario that has lived by democratic principles all our lives. These are regulations put in by this Liberal government that this House has never seen, done through the back door, and now we're seeing the results. But there's one thing for sure: These regulations have garnered huge donations, but unfortunately—with the power we have in committees in a minority government, we're starting to see some of these things and we're starting to act. It's time to act and change the leadership of this province.

Speaker, I think that there are many more stories like that around the Legislature, and I think it's time that we heard some of them as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to speak to the motion and the amendments the Tories have made.

We agree with the Conservative Party on quite a number of issues. The member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry mentioned them, and we have attacked the Liberal Party with the same vigour. When we talk about the scandals—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I beg your pardon?

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to speak to that.

The problems, the scandals around eHealth have been big and have caused much consternation in Ontario. The scandals around Ornge have caused a great deal of anger against the Liberal Party, and the scandals around the gas plants have been worse. When people think about the \$600 million that we are aware of, so far, wasted on the gas plants on the basis of the government saying, "We are going to build those gas plants there no matter what and we will fight NIMBYism no matter what," until they're faced with a possible election and they believe that they're about to lose three or four seats. Then, all of a sudden, those principles around, "We will build those gas plants no matter what, no matter what NIMBYism may exist in those communities," just were thrown out the window. Then the Liberal, who wanted to have it both ways, would say, "Well, you, the Tories, wanted it

eliminated as well, and you, NDP, wanted it gone as well," trying to hide the fact that they were going to build those gas plants no matter what. They knew there were children and families surrounding those gas plants when they decided to put them there. And when they finally decided to change their minds, the ex-Premier and the current government says, "Well, we made a mistake. There were communities there. There were kiddies there," as if they didn't know that in advance.

New Democrats have attacked this government for the mistakes they have made and the blunders and the scandals around all of these things with vigour, and they deserve the criticism and the attacks that many Ontarians have levied against them. How do we deal with—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: You thank them by propping them up—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Ah, Sylvia, Sylvia. I will get to that.

Here are the two possible responses: One is the Tory response: "Let's get them all out; let's get these Liberals out. We've lost confidence in them." I understand; I understand the argument. It's plausible. It's cogent, even. The problem around that is that there are a whole lot of people in Ontario saying, "I'm not sure that's the answer." A whole lot of people are saying, "Make government work." A whole lot of people want opposition parties and governments to work for them. It's not about political parties and their interests; it's about making sure governments work no matter what. In spite of the scandals, still many of them out there want governments to work together to get some results that better their lives, and I happen to be in that camp.

There is a small group of Ontarians out there saying, "Throw the bums out today." The question is, who do you want in their place? Which brings me to the Conservative Party solutions. What are those solutions? Well, they would freeze wages in perpetuity on all civil servants because they deserve for their wages to be cut and frozen forever. That is the solution of the Conservative Party. I understand that, because they're picking up on a lot of sentiment out there that says, "Civil servants are absolutely not good. Civil servants don't work. They provide no service to anyone, and freezing their salaries or even cutting them is a good thing." They pick up on that. They pick up on that populist, anti-civil servant sentiment. And I understand it; I just don't agree with them. I just don't agree with that sentiment.

0920

They are picking up on anti-union rhetoric that's out there, and so they promote anti-union, anti-worker kind of stuff. They promote it. Why? Because within their Conservative base, there's a whole lot of people who hate whatever accomplishments unions have given to working men and women.

It's a beautiful dilemma we face—not dilemma. It's an interesting thing. I've known a great deal of non-unionized workers who love the fact that unionized workers go out and fight it out and get attacked for organizing themselves so that they can get better benefits and wages—

better pensions even, God bless—and those who are non-unionized get the direct benefit of those who go out and fight it out. Those who get the blame for fighting for better benefits are out there being attacked by, mainly, Conservative-type politicians. I remind you that those who are not part of the union get the same benefits, the same wage increases, that unionized staff get without doing a thing. What a beautiful thing it is to allow the unionized workers to go out and fight it out while they get the same benefit of the dirty work that the others guys do. I always found that ironic, always ironic.

You don't see the non-unionized workers going out organizing with union workers, you don't see that, but they love the concurrent consequential benefits they get from those who wage a fight for better wages and better benefits. It's funny how that works.

So do we attack wages? That's what the Conservatives want to do. Do we attack unions? That's what the Conservatives want to do. Do we attack pensions? That's what the Conservatives want to do, because they say we can't afford pensions anymore.

What else do they promote? What else have they promoted for the last 20 years? Cutting corporate taxes as the way to create jobs in this province and in this country. That has been their motto; that has been their modus operandi. That has been their ideological insight into how you make the economy work. What evidence do they have for job creation by cutting corporate taxes? There's absolutely none except that ideological fervor to cut corporate taxes. Under the Tories, we lost—in eight and a half years of their governance—\$13.4 billion, gone forever. If you elect another Conservative government, God forbid, they would cut corporate taxes some more. Governments are broke. Governments have a deficit, and the Tories would cut corporate taxes some more.

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The “hear, hear” party on cutting corporate taxes, and they actually believe it. They smile when they say it. They are true believers in the market and in the corporate sector and in their belief that somehow, magically, if you cut their taxes, the jobs will be created. It's not true. The jobs have not been created in the way that they have envisioned.

I remember Mulroney in the old days saying, “When you have a free trade agreement, prosperity will follow.” Do you remember his voice? He had such a lovely, honeyed voice. “Prosperity will follow, and jobs will follow.” Jobs didn't follow nothing; jobs didn't follow anywhere. I didn't see jobs coming there from that free trade agreement. I didn't see any of that. But the Tories, in their blind pursuit of a North American free trade agreement and globalized trade agreement, they said, “We do this, and the jobs will follow.” Jobs followed nothing. That prosperity never came; the jobs never came.

Do I believe that kind of stuff, that kind of ideology? Absolutely not, but that's what we have in store for you Ontarians should you decide to get rid of the Liberals and put the Conservatives in their place. God bless, indeed.

That, to me, is the scariest thing that one could imagine, having witnessed eight and a half long years of that Mike Harris regime. That's something that I just can't imagine.

But in the same way that Mulroney said with the free trade agreement that prosperity will come and jobs will come, the Liberals said, “If we impose an HST”—remember that? Tories remember that—“600,000 jobs will be created.” That was the Liberal mantra of the HST. So I have to remind them of Mulroney, and I want to remind the Tories of the Liberals' promise of having an HST and the creation of 600,000 jobs.

Do any of the Tories, or those who are here in the Legislature, remember seeing those 600,000 jobs come as a result of the HST imposition on the public? I haven't seen a thing. Maybe Liberals have seen it, but I suspect Tories will say, “We didn't see them.” Is that correct?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: We're talking about Bob Rae over here.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, I know; I know. I'm talking about both of you. I love to talk about Liberals and Tories as well, just because I'm an equal opportunity kind of person.

So you've got to take all this stuff with a grain of salt. The jobs didn't come with the HST.

But you remember Dwight Duncan—somebody mentioned Dwight Duncan in their speech; the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry mentioned him. He's now a fine Liberal-Tory out in some firm, making good pecunia as a result of his consulting abilities.

The Conservatives have it right: Now that he's out there, he's quite happy to attack Liberals in terms of what direction they're going in. But I remember Dwight Duncan at the time saying, “The jobs will follow.”

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: He's allowed to have opinions.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, sure he is. He's allowed to have opinions indeed, just for a second.

Here's the point: The reason why we have supported this government is because we were able to get some changes that make life for Ontarians a whole lot better. We know that the unemployment in Canada is pretty bad. About 1.3 million Canadians don't have jobs. That's a huge number. Another million are underemployed or have given up looking for work, and the unemployment rate for the young is twice the national average. Things are tough; things are bad.

When we think about how governments spend money, we have to worry about how they're doing that. This is why, in addition to—in addition to—making sure that we reduce the auto insurance rates, because they're the highest in the country, in addition to making sure that we protect seniors who are desperately looking for and need home care help, in addition to making sure that the young who are unemployed get the support they need for jobs, which is what we got out of this government—in addition to all these things, we also got a Financial Accountability Office that we believe is going to bring some rigour, some controls on governments that we have not seen in a long time.

So when we talk about the scandals around eHealth and around the gas plants and around Ornge, having a Financial Accountability Office that we have fought for, that Liberals have agreed to, is something that will bring responsibility back to governments, will bring greater accountability of governments to the people and might bring back some respect of the people toward politicians in governments.

This Financial Accountability Office is one of the most important things that we could have brought to this Legislature. It doesn't matter whether it's Liberals in power or Tories or New Democrats; we will all be bound by such an office in a way that will bring credibility, accountability and honesty back to government. This is a good thing. This is important for politicians and important for the people of Ontario.

So when the Tories say that the NDP have lost their principles, I don't know what they're talking about. I don't know what they're talking about. When the Tories say that the NDP have sold out, I don't know what they're talking about. We've got gains for the people of Ontario that are good for the people of Ontario, something we have fought for to get from the Liberals. The Tories have got absolutely nothing. They have absolutely got nothing from Liberals in terms of making sure that this budget is a better one for the people they're defending.

0930

The Conservatives are the new "no" Conservative Party. That is what they are: the new "no" Conservative Party. They fight everyone. They're absolutely negative. All they want to do is bring things down, bring governments down so they could get right back in where they were, because they miss being in government. I understand that. But for New Democrats, it's not about us. It's about making sure we get important changes that make their lives just a little bit better, and if we can do that this is a good thing.

I know that some Tories might say we have an Auditor General. But the Auditor General takes a retrospective look at what might have gone wrong. They do value-for-money audits, which is good, but it's retrospective. Our Financial Accountability Office looks forward. This is important. We have called for bigger powers for the Ombudsman to be able to have oversight over hospitals. The Liberal government has refused.

We support the work he does, he or she—at the moment it's a he, but in the past it was a she in that position as well. We support the work they do because they investigate individual and systemic problems, and he brings forth recommendations that make for better policies. What the Ombudsman does is important. But he responds to issues on the basis of complaints.

Our Financial Accountability Office would not just do value-for-money, would not just investigate, but would make sure that when governments are about to spend something we have an officer there to say, "You are making a mistake," or "You're about to be spending so much money. In spite of what you are saying, you are overspending on this," or underspending, even. He or she

would have the power to say, "Hold on," before you engage in some activity that is about to waste millions of dollars of Ontarians' money.

This is an important office we are establishing here. It's an office that would be independent of political parties, independent of ministers and independent of cabinet. This is an office where, if a member has a complaint or a committee wants something investigated, we have the power to do that. This is good. Unlike what we have at the present, where you ask for information that possibly has been hidden for years and it really is difficult to get at the root of the problem, our Financial Accountability Officer would be able to get that information in a very, very short little while and get to the root of the problem quickly. We want that. We need that.

And it's not just me as a New Democrat; it's me as a citizen. Citizens want the power to be able to hold governments accountable, and that's what this position does. We are absolutely proud of this accomplishment. We believe, as New Democrats, that this is an accomplishment for people. This isn't about political parties. This office would hurt New Democrats as much as it would hurt Liberals as much as it would hurt Conservatives if they do the wrong thing. We should be happy to support a motion that contains within it such an officer, such an ability that makes us all accountable.

Speaker, this motion takes us to a place where we have made gains for people. This is what we really want. This is what people want. Ultimately, the people will be able to hold government accountable when the election is held. If they don't like the party in power, they will throw them out. The opportunity to throw out a party is during an election. That day will come, and it will not take that long. I guarantee the Premier will take us into an election next year; that will bring us in two and a half years to an election and that, in my mind, is plenty of time to hold the government to account and judge them on the basis of what they did or did not do.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Middlesex-Elgin-London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thanks, Speaker. It can go in any order; it works either way.

I'm pleased to stand here and discuss this motion. I have to say, Madam Speaker, that I have some *déjà vu* here. I've only been an MPP for about a year and a half, and I feel like I'm watching a rerun again. We have the Liberal government here trying to stay in power and they're pandering to the NDP for support. Unfortunately, it's driving away what we should be talking about here in the Legislature and in Ontario. Ontario has a spending problem, plain and simple. We spend more than we bring in. What happens when we spend more than we bring in is that you have to borrow the difference to make up for that extra spending, and in any borrowing arrangement we have to pay interest on that debt.

I'll go to Jeffrey Simpson, a columnist for the *Globe and Mail*. He had an interesting quiz for his readers a few weeks ago. He asked, what will be the fastest-rising cost for the Ontario government in the next three years? Is it

health care? No. Is it education? No. Is it post-secondary education? No. Is it justice? No. Is it community services? No. The answer, of course, is plain and simple: It's our interest charges. The third-largest expense in this government's budget is interest charges, at \$10.6 billion. Interest charges are expected to rise by about \$4 billion by 2017.

Talking about the debt and interest charges may not seem like an exciting conversation. However, it has deep implications for the province of Ontario. That \$4 billion represents a 36% increase in interest charges. By 2017-18, Ontarians will see over \$14 billion of their money going to pay foreign bondholders. Just think of all the long-term-care beds we could buy, the schools we could renovate, the roads we could build and repair with \$14 billion. Sadly, that money will go towards foreign nations who hold our bonds, so they can invest in their own health care, their own schools and their own roads.

How did we get to the point where the third-largest expense in Ontario's budget is interest? It's pretty easy to figure out. Every household in this province knows that the more debt you have on your credit card, the more interest you pay. The only simple solution to this is to reduce your spending. Unfortunately, this government seems to have a compulsion to spend taxpayer money. Never once have they demonstrated restraint in the last 10 years. In fact, they have increased spending by \$48 billion since they took power. The McGuinty-Wynne Liberals, with their tax-and-spend ways, are the sole reason Ontario finds itself where it is today. We now have a debt for every man, woman and child equal to \$20,000. That means my nine-year-old daughter is on the hook for \$20,000 of this government's debt. Each and every one of these pages here today is on the hook for \$20,000 of debt because of the spending of this government.

Despite the knowledge that you know how much debt we're in, the government continues spending unabated. What's worse, in their desperation to maintain their power they have added \$1 billion in spending initiatives to get NDP support. This is the danger when you have two tax-and-spend parties trying to exert their influence. The real problem gets swept under the rug in favour of more spending. Mind you, throwing taxpayer money away to hold onto power is not a new theme to this government. We only need to look at the gas plant scandal, where the government threw away over \$585 million to save a few seats in the GTA.

The abuse of the tax dollars needs to stop. We need a new team, one that will actually rein in spending and reduce the debt burden, for the sake of our children and grandchildren. This budget shows me that the Liberals can't, and the third party's demands on spending shows me the NDP won't.

0940

I'd like to turn for a minute to the RBC to see what they had to say about this budget. The expert RBC economists have put together a helpful briefing note evaluating this government's budget. The report relies on some

economist talk, so I'll take the liberty and do some translating.

The first thing our friends at RBC felt the need to point out is that the budget "did not represent a departure from budgets of the past four years in terms of the general fiscal plan." In other words, we're stuck with the McGuinty brand of fiscal management, or lack thereof.

Whatever this government tries to say about how they are different from the tax-and-spend McGuinty team, the devil is in the details. The details are a 3% increase in spending this year, or \$3.6 billion more in total. While we're at it, we should note that spending last year increased by only 0.9%. So not only is this government not decreasing spending, it's not even reducing the rate at which spending grows. When you're speeding towards a cliff in a car, you hit the brakes. Unfortunately, this government has hit the accelerator.

The other interesting thing the RBC economists said of the Liberals' approach to this year's budget is that they've "left the back end of the plan—fiscal years 2016-17 and 2017-18—more 'aspirational' in nature." What exactly is meant by "aspirational"? Quite simply, it means the government is putting off the real spending restraint for another three years. That is, of course, if you believe they have the ability to do it at all. The problems in this province are not difficult to figure out, but they are hard to do. The Liberals continue to kick the can down the road and hope for the best, but we have to restrain spending today, not tell people that we'll get to it tomorrow if we feel like it.

In any case, this government can deliver platitudes about challenges Ontarians face and our need to work together to solve problems, but the fact remains that they don't even know what the problem is. Their budget proves it. Despite the fact that we've been telling them for the past year that spending is a problem, they continue to leave the floodgates open to fund inefficient programs and, of course, to cover scandalous blunders like Ornge, eHealth and the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants.

When I talk to my constituents, they are upset, and rightly so. Constituents of mine from all walks of life are making decisions every day to live within their means. They're paying down credit card debt, making mortgage payments and sacrificing nice-to-haves so they can meet their obligations. They don't understand why the government behaves differently. Why should the government continue to live beyond its means, particularly when it's on the taxpayer dime?

In my riding, the situation has been compounded by the exodus of jobs over the last few years: 6,300 in total, with another 300 that occurred at the end of May. Our Timken plant has closed. People are struggling to find work and as a result are tightening their belts, and yet the government continues to drive up our debt and drive business out of this province. That is the second major deficiency of this budget: It has no job plan.

Sure, the government will talk circles as it tries to explain what it has done for the economy and employment.

The bottom line is, our debt continues to go up, hydro rates are skyrocketing, excess bureaucracy hampers business, and our young tradespeople can't find apprenticeships. The budget does not address any one of these things.

I'd like to use an analogy that my colleague from Thornhill said when he talked about the government's role in job creation. It's actually an analogy he modified from Martin Regg Cohn's editorial piece. It goes like this: If you set the table properly, your guests will want to come to dinner. In order to set the table for the dinner that is job growth and economic prosperity, you need to address the issues I've highlighted earlier: balancing the budget and paying down the debt. It'll bolster one crucial factor at the foundation of the economy: confidence. It signals to potential investors that our government's house is in order and can provide all the things a government is expected to, like health care, education and infrastructure. It also increases the capacity of a government to offer tax breaks in the future, which factors largely into a company's decision to invest.

We've all seen in Greece what happens when you lose confidence. There's not an investor or a business who wants to take a risk and put their money there.

Another factor that drives business investment decisions is the cost of hydro. There is no one else responsible for skyrocketing hydro rates than the Liberal Party. Thanks to them, economist Ross McKittrick has calculated, Ontario's hydro rates will soon be the highest in North America. If you want to locate a factory somewhere, why would you do it in a province with prohibitive hydro rates?

The government also needs to realize that every piece of regulation they create is more time a business owner has to spend filling out paperwork than working on his or her business. Bureaucracy adds to the business's direct cost, but it also costs in terms of lost economic activity, a cost equal to \$11 billion, according to the CFIB.

Speaking of bureaucracy, this government refuses to acknowledge what a terrible idea the College of Trades is. The College of Trades has raised fees on small business owners in my riding, all to fund an \$87-million bureaucracy that remains committed to keeping our trades ratios as restrictive as possible.

It is really a shame. I see too many of our young adults leaving Elgin county for Alberta because they can't get apprenticeship jobs here. The great irony is that at the same time we're also experiencing a skilled trade shortage, yet the government refuses to do the sensible thing, which is to reduce the apprenticeship ratios to 1 to 1, where they should be. The bottom line is that this government's budget neglects these issues. Going back to the analogy, they are refusing to set the table at all.

Madam Speaker, if you'll let me, I have a quick fable I'd like to discuss here, and I think it really talks about what's going on in this government.

Interjection: Aesop?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I don't think it's Aesop. I don't have from who it is. I'll get it to the House, though.

One day, a scorpion looked around at the mountain where he lived and he decided that he wanted a change. So he set out on a journey through the forests and hills. He climbed over rocks and vines and kept going until he reached a river.

The river was wide and swift, and the scorpion stopped to reconsider its situation. He couldn't see all the way across. So he ran upriver and then checked downriver, all the while thinking that he might have to turn back.

Suddenly, he saw a frog sitting in the rushes on the bank of the stream on the other side of the river. He decided to ask the frog to help him get across the stream.

"Hello, Mr. Frog," cried the scorpion across the water. "Would you be so kind as to give me a ride on your back across the river?"

"Well, now, Mr. Scorpion. How do I know that if I try to help you, you won't try to kill me?" asked the frog hesitantly.

"Because," the scorpion replied, "if I try to kill you, then I would die too, for you see I cannot swim."

Now, this seemed to make sense to the frog. But he asked, "What about when I get close to the bank? You could still try to kill me and get back to the shore."

"That is true," agreed the scorpion, "but then I wouldn't be able to get to the other side of the river."

"All right, then. How do I know you won't just wait till we get to the other side and then kill me?" said the frog.

"Ah," crooned the scorpion, "because you see, once you've taken me to the other side of this river, I will be so grateful for your help that it would hardly be fair to reward you with death, now would it?"

So the frog agreed to take the scorpion across the river. He swam over to the bank and settled himself near the mud to pick up his passenger. The scorpion crawled onto the frog's back, his sharp claws prickling the frog's soft hide, and the frog slid into the river. The muddy water swirled around them, but the frog stayed near the surface so the scorpion would not drown. He kicked strongly through the first half of the stream, his flippers paddling wildly against the current.

Halfway across the river, the frog suddenly felt a sharp stinging pain in his back, and out of the corner of his eye, he saw the scorpion remove his stinger from the frog's back. A deadening numbness began to creep into his limbs.

"You fool," croaked the frog. "Now we shall both die! Why on earth did you do that?"

The scorpion shrugged, and did a little jig on the drowning frog's back. "I could not help myself. It's in my nature."

They both sank into the muddy waters of the swiftly flowing river.

Madam Speaker, it's in their nature, and I believe this totally tells us what's going on. It's in the nature of this governing party, it's in the nature of the third party: Tax and spend. I don't know who wants to be taxing and who wants to be spending, but they go along. It's in their

nature to spend. It's in their nature not to understand that they're sending Ontario down a path that is going to be tough to get out of. They're sending us down a path of no jobs. They're sending us down a path where we're going to cut services. We're going to end up having to cut health care and education, because they've spent so much money that we are so far in debt. It's in their nature. We can see from examples that have come up in the last few days. We've got the Drive Clean program, which the NDP supports; we've got the idea of bringing red light cameras to ticket people faster, which the NDP supports; we've got photo radar they've talked about, which the NDP supports; they want to add 75 cents on phone bills, which the NDP supports; they want to increase the HST on our bills because the NDP supports that as well.

I'm saying the NDP supports that because whatever this government does from this day forward, with their support on the budget, they support everything that this government is going to be doing and they're taking half the ownership of all the scandals that have occurred in this province over the last 10 years, because to them, if you give them a billion dollars, everything's okay.

I think the Ontario people have had enough of this problem in Ontario. The best way to hold this government to account is to put them to the polls, to the people, and let them decide. But instead, they're saying give them a billion dollars and they will support them from here on out. So anything, these new taxes, this new spending that this government is going to come forward with, the NDP is for that. The continuation of lost jobs in this province, the deterioration of our services, our health care, education: The NDP is fully supportive of anything this government does.

Madam Speaker, I think it's time that the NDP realize what they've done to this province by propping up this government.

0950

I don't understand why the NDP were so high in the polls, and since their leader decided to prop up this government, they've disappeared. They had it; they had the election, I think, where they could have possibly become the official opposition. They lost it. I don't understand why they made that mis-leadership.

Sorry, I digress, Madam Speaker. I'll get back to my speech here.

Interjections.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: That was part of the fable—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Yes, the fable is over. We have over half a million people out of work across this province, and this government doesn't even acknowledge the basic economic fundamentals that drive job creation. No spending restraint, no jobs plan: These are the biggest problems facing our province, and this government refuses to address them.

These problems are not difficult to figure out; they are hard to fix. Perhaps that's why this government does not act. They would have to make tough decisions that not everyone would like, but these decisions are necessary for the future of our province. True leadership involves

making decisions for the betterment of the community, regardless of how unpopular the decisions may be. We have not seen any kind of leadership from this current government. It's time for a change.

There has only been one person showing true vision and true leadership through these trying times in Ontario. There has only been one person who has laid out a vision for Ontario that would return us to our rightful position as the economic leader of Canada. That person is Tim Hudak, and I'm proud to stand with him and the rest of my colleagues in the PC Party to reject this government's spending bill.

The best way to fix this scandalous government is to bring them to the polls, this government propped up by the NDP for a billion dollars and a Financial Accountability Office. The best way to hold this government to account is to defeat this government and this budget and take them down to the polls and let the people of Ontario decide, because the way the province is headed down this path, it's going to be hard to get out. I think we've had this experience back in the 1990s when Bob Rae was the Premier of Ontario. It took a man like Mike Harris to turn this government around, create over a million jobs and return to its prosperity.

What this government has done in the last 10 years to this province is disgraceful. All we need to look at is, in the last three years, what we've dug up, with scandalous government. The gas plant scandal, in order to save four seats, to spend \$585 million plus—just imagine what the Auditor General in August is going to find out, at the end of the summer, about how much more money. When that number comes out, we all know that the NDP is supportive of that government that's spending that half a billion to a billion dollars in order to save members' seats.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to take this forward.

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to hear more about this accountability office. They keep yelling at me. I don't know how someone could predict that this government is going to waste \$2 billion in eHealth. I'm not sure how someone could decide how that could occur in that system. I can see where you're taking this plan forward, and this is how you're going to spend the money, but you can't control what these people do, once they get into power, how they can do that. You can't control that.

I think this budget shows nothing for jobs. My riding needs jobs. There's nothing in this budget that's going to help create an environment so that we can have investment back into this province, so that we can bring jobs back in. I have too many friends who have lost their jobs over the last six years due to this government's inability to govern: 6,300 jobs lost in my province.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Well, there are lots of things to stimulate jobs.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Name them.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Well, first of all, we'd cut regulations. We would ensure that hydro rates are done being skyrocketed. We'd make it affordable; we'd make it—competition in the marketplace.

The main thing that I can't believe people don't agree with: The apprenticeship ratio down to 1 to 1 is the quickest job creator. I talked to the Ontario Electrical League two weeks ago, and they said they'd hire immediately if they had 1-to-1 apprenticeship ratios. That's stifling the job growth, and I can't believe the NDP can't figure that out. I thought they were better than that. But a 1-to-1 ratio is the way—out west, it's 1 to 2. How can you compete with that? I've got people's friends heading down out west to get jobs. My own nephew had to leave this province because he couldn't find a job.

This is Ontario. This is the best province in Canada. We should be much better than we are. Why can't we take simple steps from being the government and get this economy rolling again? Step one: apprenticeship ratios, 1 to 1.

Madam Speaker, we don't support this budget. We don't support the NDP-Liberal budget, and we're going to vote against—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to join in the debate this morning. We've had a lot of debate on the amendment and the motion, so I want to take people back to exactly what we are debating today, and then also do as some of my colleagues have done, and that's put some of their constituents' comments on the record, because I know that when we go back to our ridings—certainly when I was back in my riding on the weekend, I got to attend a lot of events, and I heard loud and clear from the constituents of Leeds-Grenville how disappointed they are in this government's budgetary policy, how disappointed—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: You know what? I'm glad the minister mentioned Senator Runciman because Senator Runciman did a tremendous job last night. Unfortunately, because we are in a minority Parliament, we all can't rush back to our ridings. My riding's about three and a half hours away. But my wife, Deanna, was at an event that the good senator hosted last evening. It was a fundraiser for Community and Primary Health Care in Brockville that is building a new facility with the help of the province. The province kicked in probably—I think it's about \$3.7 million; the federal government, roughly \$3 million, and there is a local fundraising campaign for about \$2.9 million. One of his special guests, I'm sure the minister will be happy, was—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mike Duffy?

Mr. Steve Clark: No—Dr. Wilbert Keon, who is chair of the Champlain LHIN. He was there. As well, Speaker—through you to the minister—Max Keeping, the former CTV anchor—

Interjection: Newscaster.

Mr. Steve Clark: —newscaster at CTV Ottawa, was also there.

It was a wonderful fundraiser for that great organization. Unfortunately, I don't have the amount that was

raised last night, but I know that certainly that centre of excellence will provide exceptional health care, not just for the people of Brockville, but for other clients that they serve within Leeds-Grenville. I believe—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Give him my best—

Mr. Steve Clark: I will. Minister, I'm glad that you asked. I will extend your best wishes to the senator, and I'm glad that the minister brought that up this morning, because it just happened last night. It was perfect timing. Thank you very much.

Today, the amendment that my friend from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington amended the motion with actually was to deal with the fact that the House prorogued. As we all remember, with this terrible gas plant scandal—I believe it's the worst scandal that's happened in the history of Ontario. It was a horrible scandal. The government prorogued Parliament. They ran and they hid for four months on the scandal.

Even yesterday, we had revelations in this House of documents that were part of a—I think it's a fourth or fifth—document dump that the government set forward that they're contemplating more revenue tools, more taxes. It just seems that this government continues its tax-and-spend ways as we continue to spiral out of control. I've said it here in the House many times that we used to be the economic engine of this country, and now we're the caboose under this Liberal government.

So the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington tabled an amendment that, in the event that we do prorogue—and that's always a possibility with this government—Mr. Wilson's want of confidence motion would still stay on the books and be dealt with at a certain point down the road.

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I think, again, if a government has confidence in their governance and their budgetary policy, I don't know why they would be so concerned about a want of confidence. You would think that the government would welcome setting that vote aside and having a vote between the opposition and the New Democrats. Again, they'll have to speak for themselves, whether they agree or not, but I certainly agree with the amendment. I think the member has tabled an exceptional section to be added to this substantive motion, and I hope that members will support it.

The New Democrats—my friend from Trinity-Spadina mentioned this morning the accountability office. On the main motion that the government House leader and the New Democrat House leader dreamt up without my House leader's input—

Interjection: Dreamt up?

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, they did; they concocted it in one of the backrooms at the Legislature; certainly, our House leader wasn't involved.

I'm reading the document about the Financial Accountability Officer. You know, I said to one of their members this morning, I think I'm a member of the Financial Accountability Office; it's called the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. There are 107 members, and we don't need to

start another office or hire more employees or create more bureaucracy. We in this Legislature, the 107 members, to me are the ultimate accountability office. We continue in this House to take away our responsibilities, to take our responsibilities and give them to an appointed position. Again, I'm not sure why we continue to take powers away from elected members of the Legislature, when ultimately it's our responsibility to act in a responsible way in this House. Certainly, constituents believe that in a minority Parliament situation we should be doing that. Speaker, I just wanted to put those comments on the record.

I also want to acknowledge that we have some physiotherapists here today. They had a breakfast this morning. Many of them will be meeting with members of the Legislature throughout the day. Last week, during the budget debate on the budget motion, I had put some comments on the record from Gary Rehan, who is a physiotherapist. He provides services at Rosebridge Manor. Gary is here today; I got to talk to him. Certainly he's very concerned about what's happening on August 1, when the government's proposed changes take place. I put them on the record last week, and I hope that other members, during debate today, will take the chance to put forward some of their ideas.

They're very concerned about the delisting of physiotherapy services. Members who attended the breakfast this morning agreed that they obviously were very concerned. They wanted to get their message out. They wanted us to know about services in not just retirement homes but long-term-care homes, and as well in other settings. I had 20 members from a seniors' exercise group at the Executive Condominium call my office with concern about their twice-a-week programs. When you hear about an exercise program—I asked the physiotherapists this morning, "Just what does that mean?" I was pleased to note that there's also one-on-one physiotherapy being done at that time. Certainly they told me that the work that they do in those home settings helped prevent those residents from ending up in a retirement home. As well, there have been cases that Gary mentioned to me this morning, where he's worked at the long-term-care home, been able to provide his physiotherapy services, and people have then transitioned back into retirement homes, some even back into their own homes.

So I think it's a very important service that they provide. I appreciate the fact that they came to the Legislature today and had the breakfast. I commend them for the information they gave members. I know the minister was here this morning during prayers, and we had a bit of banter back and forth with her. We sort of joked that she should go downstairs and have breakfast with the group. She obviously articulated what her position was, and I appreciate that. But one of the things that rang clear this morning at this breakfast was that these physiotherapists were not consulted. They felt shut out of the process, and I think we all agree that in a minority Parliament that shouldn't happen.

We should be able to take a step back from some of these announcements and have some meaningful dialogue with people who provide physiotherapy services in our communities. We owe it to them. They look after the most vulnerable in our community, and I think we shouldn't move ahead on this without taking a step back and consulting the people who provide this front-line physiotherapy service. I wanted to put that on the record, Speaker.

I also wanted to make sure I spoke about a family in my riding of Leeds-Grenville. One of the areas where I think this government has let down people is in the area of health care. We've heard the minister boast from time to time that, in her opinion, she's doing a wonderful job. But the reality is that individual MPPs like me hear from constituents dealing with the health care system, and they have something entirely different to say.

As I mentioned just a few moments ago, seniors in Leeds-Grenville have been contacting me every day to speak out about the dramatic cuts they see to physiotherapy services. As many members found out this morning, the clock is ticking on that August 1 implementation date, and again, I want to thank them for coming.

What disturbs Ontarians when they read about either these physiotherapy cuts or the lack of inspections at long-term-care facilities is the contrast we have in the stories like eHealth and the gas plant scandal. You've got billions of dollars that are being poured down the drain on the gas plant scandal and eHealth. I think what we need to say is, we need to look after some of our people who are vulnerable.

In Leeds-Grenville, the people I want to talk about today, who are very concerned that there's money for those types of scandals, and there's no money for health care, is a family called the Smith family. Duane and his wife, Christine, have been forced to raise \$200,000 to pay for surgeries for their son, Charlie, and their sister, Jessica, who have had surgeries within—she certainly had surgeries over the past six months. They suffer from Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, or EDS. They require a life-saving treatment that is provided by a leading-edge surgeon in the United States in Maryland.

I can remember going to Charlie's house just close to Athens and seeing him prior to his surgery in December. He was in his bed, which was a place he had basically been in for most of that year. Despite an ailment that left him bedridden, doctors here essentially looked at him and said there was nothing they could do for him. Specialists the family visited earlier that year said that it was either in Charlie's head, or his family should basically put him in a long-term-care home. The doctors didn't really care to learn about the new methods that were provided in the US. In fact, one, when they knew they had contacted their member of provincial Parliament, actually tried to get him to sign a form saying he wouldn't share his file or any of the conversation they had with the doctor. Without that signature from that specialist on that OHIP out-of-country form, there's definitely no coverage for his surgery in Maryland. That was a change the govern-

ment ushered in quietly some time ago without much fanfare.

But I want to tell you, Speaker, that the community did come through for Charlie. He got that first surgery, despite the minister's or this government's policy. After 14 hours of surgery, he was up and walking for the first time in months. I can tell you, it was a pretty emotional time when Charlie walked into my constituency office just after New Year's. I couldn't believe that here was a gentleman who had been bedridden, who surgeons had basically written off and, like I said, said it was in his head or said there was nothing in Canada we could do for him. To have him walk through—first of all, I didn't know he was that tall; he's about six foot four. He really had a smile on his face and was very, very happy.

1010

Now it's his sister, Jessica, who has recently had two EDS-related surgeries in Maryland. She has basically gotten the same response from doctors and specialists here, even though she was able to show them the videos of Charlie and what happened to him before his surgery and what he's like today.

Again, thanks to the minister's policies, there's no specialist sign-off. The Smith family can't even plead their case for out-of-country coverage with OHIP, and it's because of that change and the fact that no specialist will sign that form that they can't even plead to try to get their money.

But I am happy to tell you that Jessica is doing very well. She's on her way back home to Leeds-Grenville, but certainly the family struggles to pay for her treatment. It will go on and on, probably for years.

I can't say it any better than Jessica did. She made a posting on her Facebook page over the weekend and I promised her that I would read the posting into the record this morning.

This is from Jessica:

"I am noticing improvements every day, and I am just so happy and thankful to have been able to come here once again for this doctor to save my life, after being let down so badly by doctors in Canada. I know I wouldn't be here without all of your love, generosity, and support, so thank you from the bottom of my heart. Since I began suffering from EDS almost eight years ago, dealing with doctors here has always been a struggle—I often say that sometimes it is more painful and exhausting than dealing with EDS itself. Every time I have to plead with doctors to believe me, or believe in EDS, it breaks me just a little more inside. These encounters where I have to fight for my dignity with the ones who are responsible for caring for me, is itself one of the biggest barriers to me improving my health. But when I am here in Maryland, where EDS patients are seen just as often as non-EDS patients, there is no more struggle. We are believed, accepted, and treated with dignity and respect by the entire medical profession. The work these doctors are nurses are doing here for people with EDS is healing in every way imaginable ... they aren't just healing my joints, they are truly healing my soul. They treat me like a real person,

they really 'get' my disorder, and sincerely care about my well-being. Someday, Canada will get there too, but right now our system right now is broken in so many ways. What we can do for now is raise awareness, and hope that the people that need to listen, will listen."

As we debate the motion today and consider whether this government has the confidence of Ontarians, I'm thinking about Charlie and Jessica. I'm hoping that the health minister and her staff will listen not to me, but to Jessica's heartfelt words.

I've talked to the minister a number of times. I think the last time we had a substantive conversation about this was back in November on a conference call. I wasn't particularly happy with the response that the minister had given not to me, but to the EDS community, so I'm hoping that if she won't listen to me she'll at least listen to Jessica and Charlie. How many like them could get the treatment they need without having to rely on the kindness of neighbours and strangers if we had a government that put the people's interests ahead of their own?

If someone wants to know why I am debating the motion today, it's because the last thing we need is to speed the budget through. This is our opportunity as members of the Legislative Assembly to hold the government to account and to explain how their reckless mismanagement of Ontario's finances is dealing with the people we represent.

I promised the Smiths that I would make sure their words were on the record. I could have brought them here and put them in the west members' gallery and put a question to the minister during question period. I don't think the family—they've travelled enough, to go to Maryland, and I don't think we need to bring them up here. What we need is we need the government to act. I wanted to make sure that I used the opportunity this morning to represent them, I hope in a respectful way.

I really would hope that the government would look at what the opposition has been saying. Some of my colleagues have talked about some of the policies that we've developed over the last year. I think we've shown time and time again that we're not just objecting; we're also proposing some ideas. I hope that I've been able to do that this morning. Speaker, I just want to thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It is 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm very pleased to welcome 25 physiotherapists from my riding who are in the House today. I'm not able to name them all individually, but they join us in the gallery in opposition to the government's upcoming cuts physiotherapy services. I support them and the excellent care that they are providing for seniors and families in Halton. I was pleased to read their petition last Thursday.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I am pleased to welcome members from CJPAC, the Canadian Jewish Political Affairs Committee, to Queen's Park today. Hi guys. With us in the House today are Laura Sohinki—the associate director of outreach—Rachel Devon, Michelle Gordon, Alon Sone, Aidan Fishman and Shir Barzilay.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park today the family of page Andréa Franche: her mother, Christine; her father, Gino; sister Alyssa; brother Nicholas; grandmother Eileen; and grandfather William. They'll be in the members' gallery this morning.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would like to welcome all the physiotherapists who are here in great numbers in order to highlight their cause, and hopefully the government is going to mend their ways.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I would like to echo the welcome to page captain Andréa Franche's family, who is with us here today. We have Eileen and William Burke, the very proud grandparents from Windsor, as well as the rest of the family: Nicholas, Alyssa, Christine and Gino. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John O'Toole: Welcome to the physiotherapists, but more specifically, Tony Melles, as well as Meagan Mabady and Patricia Kimmerly, all providing services to seniors in Ontario.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I would like to welcome, in the members' west gallery, my constituency assistant from Essex, Jody Percy, who is here for his first ever live viewing of question period.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome a good friend of mine, and president of Arvan Rehab, Bill Arvanitis, who's joining us in the members' gallery. Enjoy.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'd like to introduce guests who are physiotherapists: Gary Rehan, who's from my riding—Gary, do you want to stand up?—also John Fragis, Judy Wong and Beth Tsai, and all the other physiotherapists who've joined us today.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would like to recognize today our page captain, Jeffrey Lin, a grade 7 student from Laurelwood Public School in Waterloo. As well, Jeffrey's mother is here with us today, Lily Lin. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to introduce Tony Melles, the executive director of the Designated Physiotherapy Clinics Association; Toula Reppas, the president of the Designated Physiotherapy Clinics Association; Tina Bishai; Karen Fisher; and Bill Arvanitis. Fellow physiotherapists, welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I wish to welcome in the members' gallery three individuals, officials from Portugal, from the island of Madeira: Doutor Conceição Almeida Estudante, who's a minister and a regional secretary of Madeira; as well as Mr. Gonçalo Nuno dos Santos, also an advisor to the regional secretary; and the Consul General of Portugal in Toronto, Doutor Júlio Vilela. Welcome to Queen's Park. Bemvindo.

Mr. Frank Klees: I also want to welcome representatives of the physiotherapy profession who are here today.

I want to thank them for the valuable services they provide, especially to seniors across our province. We wish them well in their lobbying of this government today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to take a moment to address the issue of introductions. It was designed by the previous Speaker to introduce individuals who have come to visit us. No other comments were asked to have been made, and I'd appreciate it if members would always stay to that process. You have members' statements and everything else to do that. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'm not seeking any dialogue on that either.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

USER FEES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, I call your attention to your treasury board—Management Board of Cabinet—document called 2013-14 Non-Tax Revenue Proposals. Initially when I raised concerns about the \$270 million in proposed Wynne-Liberal tax grabs, your finance minister said I was making it up. Then he proceeded to say, when I presented him with a copy of the document, that, "Okay, you weren't making it up, but the bureaucrats made this up." I guess the bureaucrats made him do it.

Premier, frankly, I don't think that's probably true. I guess my question for you is, who ordered the government-wide increase in user fees? Was it you or was it your finance minister? Please tell us: Whose bright idea was this from the get-go?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition. I know that the Leader of the Opposition has sat in cabinet, and I know he understands that what responsible government does is look at a range of options in discussing policy development, in discussing a budget. So I know that the Leader of the Opposition understands that the document that was circulated was an early draft. It contains ideas that were actually rejected in the planning process.

But what it demonstrates is that this government looks at a range of options. Civil servants bring forward information; they bring forward possibilities. Then that discussion happens, and the politicians make decisions about how they're going to go forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier, who seems to be following this line of reasoning that the bureaucrats suddenly came up with this: I think what it clearly demonstrates is an insatiable Liberal appetite to increase taxes across the board. If there is a pocketbook out there that has not yet been fleeced, you've got a big target on it.

Let me give you some examples of your more than 50 fee increases across the province. If you use a phone or a

cellphone, you want to make it more expensive. If you drive a car or a truck, you want to make it more expensive. If you're a family who likes to take the kids fishing or camping, the Wynne-McGuinty Liberals want to make it more expensive.

Premier, why is it that you're always lecturing Ontarians that they need to tighten their belts when you've done not one single thing to tighten your own? When is enough enough?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: So, really, what the Leader of the Opposition is talking about is what I believe is a prudent planning process. It is only prudent that government would look at a range of options.

The issues and initiatives that the Leader of the Opposition is raising are things that were not included in our budget, that were not included in our planning process. But to suggest that somehow it would be prudent of government not to look at a full range of options is just not reasonable.

I was not suggesting that the civil service brought forward these suggestions without them being requested. The reality is that our government says, "Let's look at all the possibilities. Let's look at what we should"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's about the level it should be. I'm hearing it from both sides, those giving the answer and those asking the question, so please refrain.

Premier, wrap up, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Officials across government need to plan for numerous scenarios. You cannot do that unless you have all the information. We have worked with all the information.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, respectfully, back to the Premier, she says they're looking at numerous scenarios. It's not true. The only scenario you look at is how to take more money out of the pockets of hard-working Ontario men and women.

Quite frankly, Premier, when we have 600,000 women and men who wake up every morning with no job, they look at themselves in the mirror and try to convince themselves that today they'll get that job. At the end of the day, at the end of the week, they still have no job. Not a single job will be created by this increase in taxes across the board from telephones to driver registrations to the cost of taking your kids camping.

I guess the basic question to the Premier is, if you're truly looking at a range of options, where are your options in terms of reducing spending, cancelling outdated programs and getting spending under control? Why do you always look at taxes? Why don't you actually try to cut spending for a change?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The initiatives the Leader of the Opposition is talking about are things that were not adopted by this government. I don't know how to make it more clear. We did not go with these options. We looked at them. We talked about them. The civil service talked about them. They were options that were brought forward. We did not go forward with them.

What's in our budget are initiatives that are going to create jobs in this province: a youth employment process, youth employment funds that are going to create jobs for young people across the province; investment in health care, in home care, that is going to allow people in their homes to get the care they need; infrastructure investment that is going to create the conditions for the job creation that industry can do. That's what's in our budget. What the member opposite is talking about are initiatives that are not in our plan.

USER FEES

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll try the finance minister on his document, because clearly the Premier hasn't read it yet. Your own document talks about, on page 3, that you've actually approved a number of fee hikes already. It says, "Proposals approved in principle."

The others are things that you say may or may not be on the table; you said they're not adopted. I think what the Premier forgot to say is "yet."

So I'll ask the finance minister: Yesterday, you said you ruled out photo radar but that basically means you're ruling the other 49 in. Let's try this again. The Premier says these things are not happening. Will you today say that you're not going to put a new tax on phones and cellphones in the province? Tell us that.

Hon. Charles Sousa: If the member opposite had bothered to read the budget, he'd very clearly understand that none of those issues were adopted. We were very clear in our budget in 2012 that we would review certain items. The PCs are obviously playing games with documents that we released in good faith to them in the justice committee. We would expect them to have the responsibility—they asked us not to redact anything, so we released everything. And now they're using various documents—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll start—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock a moment, please. Regrettably, I couldn't pinpoint the exact place where that word came from. But if that member knows they said that, I'll allow them to stand and withdraw.

Now, that goes for all members, while I'm standing, that I'm making an attempt to try to bring decorum to the House.

Wrap up please, Finance Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: As a result of the prudent measures we've taken, we've beaten our targets consistently

year over year over the last three or four years; \$21 billion has been reduced from our targets, last year alone \$5 billion. We're controlling our spending. We're taking the measures necessary to renew our economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again, I don't think the minister addressed my question. In fact, Minister, your document says you have approved \$22 million in new fee increases. Again, it's on page 3 of your document that I gave you yesterday, and I'm happy to give you another copy, if needed. The others are on the table.

Now, the Premier says that they weren't in the budget, and if I understand that conclusion, therefore they're not going to be adopted. So if it's that simple, just tell us straight up today. I think you owe it to Ontarians not to have another sneaky tax increase like you did you with the eco tax. Tell us, is there a tax coming on the phone bill or the cellphone bill? It's in your document. The Premier says it's off the table. Yesterday, you said photo radar was off the table, so the next big thing: Please tell us, are you taking the phone tax off the table? Is it on the table? Are you going to try to sneak it in?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Look, that is enough. I will be coming to individual members.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite is taking documents—these are documents of early provisions and early ideas that were not adopted. The officials that have provided these documents have done so—and they've assessed a variety of risks—in the public interest and in an appropriate manner. We, however, will not be playing games with these documents, as the member opposite is trying to do. We've been transparent and we haven't wavered.

More importantly, our budget in 2013 has very clearly outlined some of the challenges ahead, and we recognize that there are difficult choices to make, choices that the opposition is not prepared to make in the end. So we will continue to do what's right in the public interest. We will consult with Ontarians, and we will take the actions necessary for their benefit.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm finding the finance minister's answer, respectfully, a little slippery here. Yesterday, you said I was making this up, and then you said, "Okay, they're in the document, but we're not doing them." Then you say, "Photo radar is off the list, but the other ones are still on the table." You said they're not in the budget; therefore, they're not going to have them. But then you seem to be saying, "Okay, we're maybe going to have them."

Just cut aside all this grey area. Just stand up in your place and tell us yes or no. What's on the table? What's off the table? Minister, are you bringing in a brand new tax on cellphones—crystal clear—yes or no?

Hon. Charles Sousa: If the member opposite wants clarity, read the budget. That is what we're doing.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Health. Three years ago, the Liberal government promised to conduct thorough, proactive inspections of all 600 long-term-care homes in Ontario by December 31, 2011. Can the minister tell us how many of these inspections the ministry actually completed?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell the member opposite is that every long-term-care home in the province of Ontario is visited by an inspector at least once a year. On average, there are 3.7 inspections per year per home.

We have changed how we conduct inspections. I think it is absolutely important—vitally important—that when someone we love goes into a long-term-care home, we have the confidence that they are going to receive nothing but the finest possible care there. If there are things we can do to strengthen inspections, then I am absolutely prepared to look at those options. But I can guarantee you that all of our long-term-care homes receive inspections every year at least.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Out of the 600 homes in this province, the government only proactively inspected 123 homes. Is this minister finally going to admit that she broke her promise to seniors?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, what I can tell you is that we have changed how we inspect long-term-care homes. They are much more resident-focused. They begin with interviewing residents, staff members and family members, so we have a more thorough understanding of the quality of care from the perspective of the residents. That is a philosophy that we have embraced, and it influences all of the inspections.

Interjection.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's important that everyone—and I'm talking now to the public, who need to have confidence in long-term-care homes, that the homes are inspected, the standards are high. There are many initiatives under way to improve the quality of care in long-term-care homes. We have more inspectors inspecting, and the inspections are more thorough.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last week, in her local paper, the Minister of Health insisted that the government had never made such a commitment, saying, "The intent was never to do full inspections in all homes." Is the minister now prepared to admit that that statement that she made to her paper last week was incorrect, that the Liberal government did promise these thorough inspections would take place, and that they have utterly failed to undertake them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I did not have the correct information when I spoke to that particular reporter; I had incorrect information. I now have the correct information, and that is why I've gone back to my officials and said, "We've been conducting inspections this way for about three years. Let's take a good hard look. How is it working? Are there things we can do to improve inspections?" I think that's the responsible thing to do.

As minister, I take that responsibility seriously. We are taking another look at the whole inspection protocol for long-term-care homes.

1050

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister is quoted in her local paper saying, "Now, that I look at the documents and talk to ministry officials, I understand that initially (full inspections) were (expected)."

Yesterday, the minister claimed in this House that homes were being inspected, but that is not true, Speaker, at least according to the guidelines that her ministry set out. How is it that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care doesn't know the proper guidelines for the inspections that she herself promised?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, here we go again. Let's be really clear. Every home is inspected at least once every year. So to suggest that homes are not being inspected is absolutely false. I think it's important to understand that there are three different kinds of inspections. There are inspections that are the result of complaints or critical incidents, and we're working very hard to increase the number of complaints that are reported so we can get into those homes and fix what's going on.

There are other inspections that are performed. When in fact there have been no complaints about a particular home, there is a proactive annual inspection there. In addition, there are RQI inspections, which take a team of three people about 10 days. They're very intensive. Those are the inspections that we have to look and see if there is a way to do more of them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it is a disgrace that this minister refuses to acknowledge publicly that they only inspected 123 of the 600 homes that they were supposed to have had inspected, and she needs to come clean on the facts in this regard. The inspection process promised by the government would mean inspectors would show up unannounced each and every year and could conduct thorough, proactive inspections so that crises could be prevented before they actually happen.

Seniors and their families have seen serious issues emerge in the long-term-care sector, in long-term-care homes, in this province, and the government had promised action on this file. Does the government have any intention whatsoever of keeping that promise to inspect

every single home each and every year so that seniors can be kept safe in their facilities?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, with respect, I think it is a disgrace that the leader of the third party is creating the impression that homes are not inspected, because they are inspected.

Let me just repeat some of the numbers from yesterday. In 2003, there were—

Mr. Paul Miller: You're a disgrace. You should resign.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, second time.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Northumberland, first time.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —inspectors inspecting long-term-care homes. That includes seven new inspectors who were hired last year.

Since July 2010, there have been more than 6,700 inspections of long-term-care homes. Last year, there were 2,347 inspections. That is an average of 3.7 times per year, and every home receives at least one inspection a year.

Once complete, the inspection reports are published to the ministry's website, so we have increasing transparency for the people of Ontario. We are also looking—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this has nothing to do with impressions; it has everything to do with the fact that this ministry broke its promise to inspect these homes in a proactive way. It's got nothing to do with impressions, just the facts.

The government promised to conduct thorough proactive inspections of 600 long-term-care homes each and every year. Three years later, 477 homes in this province still haven't had an inspection. When the minister was confronted with this fact, she denied ever making that promise at all. For seniors and their families, I have to say it is a stinging indictment of a government that seems more concerned with protecting itself yet again than with protecting the needs of the people in these long-term-care—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm finding that some of the heckling that's coming from somewhere else other than the party itself is interfering with my ability to hear the question.

Wrap up, please, quickly.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this minister needs to stand in her place and admit that she broke her promise, that it's a problem and she has to fix it and protect the interests of seniors in long-term-care facilities.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me repeat, Speaker: I have asked our ministry officials to come back with ways to strengthen long-term-care home inspections, because I do think it's important that people have confidence in the quality of care they receive in long-term-care homes.

The member opposite is mixing up the facts. The facts are very, very clear. There were 2,347 inspections last year alone. Every home receives at least one inspection, on average 3.7.

There are a number of other initiatives that are really focusing on improving the quality of care in long-term-care homes, whether it's the Residents First program that is measuring and increasing the quality in various quality care, whether it's the 10,000 more people working in long-term-care homes, whether it's the 500 new behavioural support workers there—

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

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, as you know, hundreds of physiotherapists have come here today to represent seniors and to protest your government's changes to physiotherapy services in Ontario.

After consulting with organizations that currently provide front-line services, we've learned that your ministry developed these changes without consulting the designated physiotherapy clinics, the Ontario Retirement Communities Association or the Ontario Long Term Care Association. There is serious concern among these organizations, and even among your LHINs and CCACs, that the proposed changes will result in significant cuts to services provided to seniors.

Minister, will you delay these changes until you've actually consulted with the physiotherapists and front-line service providers and seniors affected by them?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I find it passing strange that the Conservative Party is standing in the way, protesting change. They seem to call for change to get better value for money, but then when we actually come forward with a way to do that, they resist it. Whether it was our determination to reduce the price of generic drugs or whether it was our determination to control the costs of physician compensation, they talk a good talk but they do not walk the walk.

Let's be very, very clear about this: The changes we are making to improve physiotherapy services will be able to double the number of seniors in this province who will have access to physiotherapy. I think it's also important to acknowledge that the Ontario Physiotherapy Association is fully supportive of this change, as are more than 40 designated physiotherapy clinics who are not part of this particular organization, but have their own organization that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary? The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the Minister of Health again—a little rich, Minister, after the eHealth and Ornge boondoggles.

Like most Liberal policies, this physiotherapy direction has disaster written all over it. This is just another short-sighted policy that will hurt Ontarians. Seniors are afraid your plan to provide physio services through LHINs and CCACs will result in drastic cuts to their treatments. While you're giving us verbal assurances that seniors will not be limited to 12 treatments, the budget for physiotherapy has been set on that basis. We know you spent \$200 million last year on physiotherapy for seniors; this year you plan to spend just \$156 million. That's a \$44-million cut, Minister, projected in spending.

Minister, are you planning on cutting service to our valued seniors, or blowing yet another budget promise?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I don't know about you, but I find it passing strange that we could double access to physiotherapy, falls prevention programs—the fact that we could double access and increase our budget by only \$10 million, I think that even Conservatives would think that that's the right thing to do for the people of—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said, there are many designated physiotherapy clinics—over 40 of them—that are actually working with us to make the appropriate changes. The physiotherapists' association of Ontario is fully behind these changes.

The old system was broken. It was not getting the outcomes that our seniors deserve to get. Many parts of this province do not have a physiotherapy clinic. In fact, I believe the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound does not have a physiotherapy clinic. Seniors will be able to access physiotherapy.

Interjection: No, they won't.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yes, they will.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Nickel-and-diming hard-working Ontarians by imposing a province-wide HST increase and increasing user fees is not our idea of a fair and balanced approach. Why is this government so intent on hitting hard-working Ontarians with a sales tax increase and new user fees while at the same time opening up a new \$1.3-billion corporate tax loophole?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I do have to say that I am astonished by the question from the member for Beaches-East York. It really seems to me that he would understand, having been a mayor of the former East York, that there are people across the GTHA—people who live in his constituency—who need better transit connections around the GTHA. They need to be able to

travel from the 416 area into the 905 area. They need to be able to travel back and forth to work, to be able to get their kids from daycare and to get their kids to school.

He would understand that investing in transit and creating a dedicated revenue stream for transit in the GTHA is an investment in the future that is absolutely critical to the economy and to the quality of life of people who live in this region.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: This New Democrat understands only too well that this transit has to be built, and New Democrats at all levels are prepared to do it, but hitting Ontarians with a sales tax increase, raising driver registration fees and adding another gas tax increase while Ontario families are having a tough time balancing the family budget is anything but fair and balanced.

Why is this government so determined to make life more difficult for hard-pressed Ontarians while it continues at the same time to open up new billion-dollar-plus tax loopholes for our wealthiest corporations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the member opposite knows, the Minister of Finance has written to the federal Minister of Finance. This is not a loophole; this is an arrangement that was put in place when the tax regime changed. We have written to the Minister of Finance federally to say that we would like to continue to receive that revenue, but the fact is that without a dedicated revenue stream, we will not be able to make those investments that, quite frankly, should have been made over the last 40 years.

We are playing catch-up because government after government has not made the investments necessary, and investing in transit and infrastructure has to be done in an ongoing way. That's why we need the dedicated revenue stream. We would love to have the federal government take part in that and put in place a dedicated revenue stream of federal funding for transit.

But I say to the member opposite: We need the support of the people in this region. We need the support of the parties across the floor to make the investments that will improve the quality of life and improve the economy in the GTHA, because that's critical for the economy of the province.

ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. In this modern economic climate, many people, including those in aboriginal communities, are concerned about finding a good-paying job. It's widely known that the unemployment rate for aboriginal people is higher than the unemployment rate for non-aboriginal Ontarians. With that said, our government has put in place a number of initiatives and supports to help Ontarians all across the province during these challenging economic times.

Can the minister please tell everyone in this House what our government is doing to ensure that sufficient

supports and resources are available specifically for Métis individuals and businesses?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for the question. I do understand the importance of sustainable economic development opportunities for the Métis Nation. The Métis Voyageur Development Fund is providing up to \$30 million over 10 years to support Métis businesses. This fund will assist Métis entrepreneurs and Métis businesses and companies in the resource sector to start and expand their business. The goal of the fund is to make strategic investments that will really contribute to the prosperity of the Métis community and Ontario. By supporting Métis economic development, we are supporting economic growth across this province, creating jobs for Métis and creating jobs for all Ontarians.

Our government values and appreciates the strong working relationship we have with the Métis Nation of Ontario, and we will continue to work to improve the well-being of the Métis community, because that helps us to protect everybody's jobs and everybody's economic future in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister. It's good to hear that we're moving forward to help create jobs in the Métis community. Having a positive relationship with aboriginal communities allows us to work together to maximize many of the economic opportunities.

I understand, Minister, that this fund will receive provincial support in the form of \$3 million a year for 10 years. Can the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs please update us on the status of the Métis Voyageur Development Fund that he mentioned, and details on how this program is helping Métis people in Ontario?

Hon. David Zimmer: In August our government met with Gary Lipinski, the president of the Métis Nation of Ontario, and the Honourable Paul DeVillers, who is the chair and CEO of the fund, as well as his CEO, Steven Morse of the fund, to launch the Métis Voyageur Development Fund. It was impressive to see Métis entrepreneurs and business owners work first-hand with us on this project.

In March, at the Toronto Aboriginal Business Association Awards, we met Michelle Germain, a Métis shop owner who grew up in Sudbury. Michelle was honoured as the Aboriginal Businesswoman of the Year. She transformed her love for fashion into a growing business at a boutique called Shopgirls on Queen Street West. When Shopgirls opened in 2007, Michelle had to scout for designers to feature in her store. Now her inbox is full of designers who are coming to her because they want to be a part of her operation.

This is the kind of thing that the Métis development fund is going to work on. It's a bright future for Métis—

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

USER FEES

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Before I ask my question, I want, on behalf of

Ontario families and businesses, to thank our federal finance minister, Jim Flaherty, for standing with us in rejecting this government's \$2-billion tax increase.

But we know that that won't stop the government either, because they're looking to turn every government service into another revenue tool. In their non-tax revenue document, appendix after appendix is filled with creative ideas about how this government can go deeper into Ontarians' pockets. Schedule A: photo radar, red light cameras—and just to show that nothing is off limits, this minister's document proposes a 466% hike in the commercial driver's licence renewal fee for seniors over the age of 65.

I'd like to ask this question: Will anyone in the province be spared from this government's—

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

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll wait.

Minister of Finance.

1110

Hon. Charles Sousa: I have to say, I would have expected the member opposite to take a little bit more care in the way he asked the question. I recognize the politics; I recognize the combative nature and the theatre that is being played in this House, but we have a much greater responsibility to the people of Ontario.

The member made reference to our federal minister. I appreciate the work the federal minister does. I did not, however, appreciate the fact that he came out with a letter when we've asked for nothing. We haven't put forward any such increases. We have not requested any support. We've made clear that we would do it together with the opposition and in consultation with the public. I want to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: If anyone is confused here, it's the minister. The fact of the matter is that we know full well that it's your agency. Everyone knows that you've asked for a 1% increase in the HST. The Minister of Finance is simply saying, "It's not on." He's joining us by saying, "It's not on."

What we are willing to do is to help the government find \$2 billion of dedicated revenue to build our transit. We've offered to form an all-party select committee to help him do that so we don't have to go into the pockets of ordinary, hard-working families and businesses who cannot afford it.

We have a \$127-billion budget. Ten years ago, that budget was \$71 billion. That is an increase of \$56 billion in 10 years. Can we find \$2 billion of waste and efficiency? Yes, and we're willing to help the government, because obviously they can't—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. At the risk of sounding too powerful, you might want to yell as loud as you can, but I have the last word, and I'll use it.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I think what is confusing here is that the member opposite has just said that we're increasing the HST. You're wrong, because that is not what we're doing. New proposals and recommendations are being made by Metrolinx, by the municipalities, by a number of agencies, by the Toronto board of trade, by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, all recognizing that we have to look at revenues, and we are looking at our spending. That's why we've reduced spending by below 1% year over year. That's why we have exceeded our targets—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Test laid down; test passed. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I'll respond to the opposite side, as well.

Finish your answer, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite also referenced our degree of spending, our degree of our budget. More years before, it was only \$27 billion. The fact is, our economy is growing. That also speaks to the growth in our GDP and the strength of our economy.

What we need is a federal government—if they're writing to us, saying they don't want to support—

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

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question today is to the Minister responsible for seniors. Minister, why is your government cutting seniors' access to physiotherapy?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I appreciate the question from the member. I am sure that the minister responsible for health wants to perhaps deal with the supplementary question.

Let me say that as far as we are concerned, 218,000 more seniors are receiving the benefit of physiotherapy. This is the kind of service that we want to provide to our seniors in Ontario. I'm very thankful that the Premier and the Minister of Health are doing everything possible to increase the services we provide to our seniors.

I hope that we'll get the supplementary, and I will ask the Minister of Health, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Minister, a cut is a cut is a cut. Last week, I visited residents of Clair Hills retirement home in Waterloo. Physiotherapy services are currently provided at Clair Hills, but seniors there have been told that they will no longer have services after August 1. When I asked the seniors, "Who needs physiotherapy in this room?", every hand in the room went up.

Our office received a letter from Else Poulsen, whose 88-year-old father is a resident at Luther Village Assisted Living in Waterloo. Else described the gains her father has made in balance, strength, mobility and emotional well-being from using physiotherapy. These gains are threatened because Luther Village will be losing physiotherapy services too.

Interjection.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: These are needed services—

Interjections.

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

The member from Eglinton–Lawrence kept talking while I was trying to ask him to stop, and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities will stop.

Please finish.

Ms. Catherine Fife: These are needed services that improve the lives of seniors across the province.

Minister, can you explain to these seniors, who have been told that they will be losing their physiotherapy services after August 1, how your government will continue to ensure they receive the physio care that they deserve?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let's be really clear: Some seniors are being told they will lose services, but it is not true. They are being told that by the companies represented here today—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment—stop the clock. The Minister of the Environment is warned.

Finish your answer, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let's be clear: The Ontario Physiotherapy Association strongly supports the changes. There are over 40 designated physiotherapy clinics that are working with us to ensure people get care, but the numbers are important. Because of these changes, because we believe in physiotherapy and we believe in exercise and falls prevention, 68,000 more seniors will have access to exercise and falls prevention programs. All long-term-care residents will receive the one-on-one physiotherapy they need, plus group exercise. In-home physiotherapy will be expanded by 60,000 people and clinic-based physiotherapy will be expanded by 90,000 people.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY

Mr. Steven Del Duca: My question today is for the Minister of Consumer Services. Over the last few weeks, I have heard many news reports about weather mishaps happening all over the province. Ontarians have experienced everything from numerous thunderstorms over a short period of time to large-level flooding to even reports of a tornado touching down in the province. In communities across Ontario, there have also been inci-

dents when powerful thunderstorms have brought down power lines, leaving live wires on neighbourhood roads.

This is a concern with regard to electrical safety, so I'd like to ask the minister to please share with the House how the government ensures that electrical safety is maintained in Ontario.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I am very happy that the member from Vaughan has brought up this very important safety concern, and I'm very happy to inform the House. In fact, there is an independent regulatory authority to protect and educate Ontario about electrical safety. That's called the ESA, the Electrical Safety Authority.

The main focus of the ESA is to enforce Ontario's electrical safety code, raise awareness and educate people on how to keep safe when handling electric products of all types. In fact, in 2012, the ESA received over 5,000 customer service calls, conducted over 450,000 inspections—that's 450,000—carried out over 2,000 investigations, and they recalled over 65 unsafe products.

This is a very important agency that is focused on inspections, supporting investigations and monitoring the marketplace to promote product safety.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I thank the minister for her answer. I'm happy to hear more about the Electrical Safety Authority to understand that they are there to protect and educate the public with regard to electrical safety. But in situations involving stormy and unpredictable weather, like we've seen over the past number of weeks, I am concerned about further emergencies arising from mishaps involving electricity.

While electricity plays an important part in our everyday lives, it can also be dangerous, and is made even more dangerous when mixed with water and topped off with other incidents arising from stormy weather.

Can the minister please share with us how people can best protect themselves from dangerous situations involving electricity?

1120

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm always happy to share with this House information to increase public safety and the issues associated with that. The ESA has a model, in fact. It's called Look Up, Look Out. If there are downed power lines in neighbourhoods, people should take caution, of course, and stay at least 10 metres away. Downed power lines may still be energized and pose danger. Residents should wait for their local electrical utility company to either disconnect or complete repairs before going anywhere near them.

In flooding situations, people should not assume any part of a flooded installation is safe. That includes the main breaker. With regard to appliances that have been wet, you should never attempt to use them until they've been checked or serviced by an electrician or a service agency.

I encourage everyone to visit the ESA's website for more safety tips involving all types of electrical situations.

DRIVE CLEAN

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the environment minister. Recently uncovered treasury board documents reveal that the Liberal government has been plotting to charge an additional \$18.3 million in Drive Clean fees. Minister, as I'm sure you know from talking with former Environment Minister Norm Sterling, this program was supposed to be phased out 10 years after its inception, as technology and fuel standards improved. Well, that time has come and gone, yet you're not planning a phase-out. Instead, you're planning to make the program permanent, and you've even—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Complete, please.

Mr. Michael Harris: You've even been caught devising a scheme to impose nearly \$20 million in new fees.

Minister, will you for once be honest with Ontarians and admit that you're only continuing this program for the money and not for the environment?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Once again I say here we are in clean air week, tomorrow Clean Air Day, and the Conservative Party is launching its war on clean air. The people of this—

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The largest source of smog in the province of Ontario at this time comes from vehicles. This program, which has been endorsed by the Environmental Commissioner, who is appointed by all members of this House, Gordon Miller; by the doctors for the environment, who have said that this is absolutely essential to have—and it's having a profound effect on improving air quality in this province. Here the Conservative Party is, in Environment Week, launching yet another attack on a program that is having a profound effect, positively, on their—

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

I believe somebody on this side has been warned; I'm not sure. Just a reminder.

Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Minister, your responses on this issue prove you'll stop at nothing to continue this temporary program indefinitely.

Last December, the Auditor General reported that the government collects \$30 million a year in fees for Drive Clean, but only spends \$19 million to operate the program. That means there's already an \$11-million surplus. Now, recently uncovered treasury board documents reveal you want to secretly hike Drive Clean fees again to increase the surplus to \$30 million. When asked about this scheme yesterday, the finance minister would not rule out these fee hikes.

Minister, will you do the right thing today and show some leadership to your tax-and-spend caucus for a change by renouncing this blatant attempt to fleece taxpayers?

Hon. James J. Bradley: As the treasurer of the province said in his response, all of these options are put forward to every government that exists out there. The government rejected those options available.

I have the advantage of having been here when a previous Mike Harris was the Premier of this province. There wasn't a day that went by that not only did they look at implementing these increases in fees, but they actually implemented them and brought them into effect.

Interjection: Nine hundred and sixty.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The last figure I saw was 978 fee increases under the Conservative government. There's probably far more; I could not calculate them. I'm trying to get some help from my friend the government House leader—

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: You people increased fees every day. Our government rejected those fee increases.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Today, busloads of Ontarians have joined us at Queen's Park. They come from small, rural and northern communities. They are here to bring attention to the deep cuts their hospitals are facing, in communities like Picton, Prince Edward county, Chatham, Wallaceburg, Perth, Smiths Falls, Iroquois Falls, Quinte West, St. Joseph Island, Manitoulin Island, and the list goes on.

Basic hospital services are being threatened. My question is simple: Does the minister think it is her responsibility to provide hospital services to all Ontarians, or only those living in urban areas?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our commitment to small, rural hospitals is strong, because we know how important those hospitals are to those communities, and we want people to get the same access to care, no matter where they live in the province. That's why we've increased our investment in small rural hospitals by \$90 million since 2003, and we've built four new rural hospitals.

In addition, and I think this is important, our budget—that I hope will be passed—includes a special 1% base increase only for those small rural hospitals, and it builds on something that we did last year, which was a special \$20-million transformation fund for those small rural hospitals. We saw fantastic results from that fund this past year, so we are going to continue to do that, not just this year, but into the future as well. Small rural hospitals are a vitally important part of our health care system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ontarians living in small, rural or northern communities need access to hospital services. After years of cuts to their emergency departments, to their acute care services and to dozens of hospital programs, there is only so much a small hospital can take before it, frankly, ceases to function.

This government has been cutting away at small hospitals' services for so long that most of them are at a breaking point. Is the minister going to listen to the people who are here, who made the trip from rural, northern and small communities, and finally work to protect these unique and vital small, rural and northern hospitals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: If you call “\$90 million more” neglect, then I just simply disagree with that. We do see those small rural hospitals as vital parts of their communities, and patients rely on them. We’re really working hard to bring services closer to home, and many patients can leave—if they need to go to a large urban hospital, they can come home to that small hospital more quickly with the right supports.

We really do see those small rural hospitals as vitally important. That’s why they are getting a 1% base increase; our larger hospitals are not. That’s why they are getting that special transition fund, so they can take advantage of things like telemedicine; they can take advantage of innovation to provide even more care in smaller communities.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I’ve got a question this morning for the Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food. The House recently sent the local food bill, Bill 36, on to committee for further study. There are many constituents within my riding of Oakville who are truly pleased with the bill, and they’re very pleased with the support it received from all three parties in this House. The proposed local food bill is understood to be a part of a broader local food strategy, one that’s going to encourage and support agricultural communities, producers and processes right throughout this province.

There’s one question that I have, however, as to how we gauge the success of this proposed bill and how we are to measure the growth and improvement without creating that standard. Speaker, could the minister and Premier speak to the reasons why specific targets were not included in this bill?

1130

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank the member from Oakville for his question. The local food bill is indeed part of a comprehensive local food strategy and will involve a contribution of \$30 million, which was included in our budget—should the budget pass—to provide for the kind of profiling of local food, the kind of public education, and particularly the creation of a positive framework for collaboration among communities, within communities, and all of the producers and processors across the province who are involved in this \$34-billion industry. This is a huge industry, and it contributes more than 700,000 jobs to the economy of Ontario.

We’re committed to working with municipalities, working with the sector to make sure that we put in place those targets, those aspirational goals to make sure that we do everything we can to advance the cause of local food across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Premier, for that answer. I understand that encouraging and supporting the local food sector is a province-wide responsibility that’s really popular in my riding of Oakville because it’s one that incorporates into the broader strategy of our

local food bill and something that MPPs such as myself and others in this House can go out and promote in our own communities, even if they’re not agricultural communities.

However, there’s always more that we can do in supporting local processors and producers. So would the minister and Premier please update the House on what more we can do to integrate and boost the presence of Ontario-grown food, as well as raise awareness about the importance of local food in all constituencies in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to speak to the point that the member from Oakville raises about his constituents. From my perspective, this issue of local food and the supporting of the agri-food business across the province is not an urban issue, it’s not a rural issue, it’s not a small-town or a large-town issue. It is an issue for all of us across the province. We all have an interest in making sure that the agri-food business in Ontario is as strong as it can be and that we all have access to the great local food that is grown in Ontario.

Following question period last Thursday, I joined a lot of my colleagues from the House on the lawn of Queen’s Park for the annual farmers’ market. I issued an MPP challenge to spread the word, increase the awareness of local food and buying local. So I hope that everyone will visit local farms, food processors, get into the communities and find local, buy local, pick local—

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

USER FEES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. In the treasury board document referenced by my leader in his question to the finance minister, it clearly lists a number of user fees which MNR is considering, such as fish and wildlife licence processing fees, fees for hunter education exams and manuals, and significant increases in commercial fishing licence fees—all of these, of course, designed to help this government pay for its out-of-control spending programs. Would the minister assure the hundreds of thousands of anglers and hunters of Ontario that he will not permit these fees to be implemented?

Hon. David Orazietti: I thank the member opposite for the question, and I’m pleased to respond. Obviously we’ve had some discussion about this this morning. These were proposals; they’re not in the budget. The finance minister has indicated that very, very clearly. The ministry is not proposing to increase these fees.

You’re aware that we’ve had consultation over the last number of years on this issue, and there have been slight increases going forward each and every year. We’ve done that in discussions with the OFAH, with NOTO and the Ministry of Tourism. There was an increase in January. That amount was 50 cents on licence fees. There were and have been over the past number of years small increases, but proposals going forward will be done only with broad consultation from stakeholders.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'll take that as a no, so that's good.

I have another question. The treasury board document also proposed increased fees for the users of provincial parks and a crown land rental fee for private recreation camps of 5%. Considering the challenges which Ontario's tourist industry has faced in recent years, can you please assure this House that you will not support any additional fees which could further hurt Ontario tourism at a time when we could need to do everything we can to support that industry?

Hon. David Orazietti: As part of our ministry's modernization efforts, we are making significant transformation with respect to various approvals and processes as well as fees and permits. But in each instance, there has been broad consultation around this.

With respect to our parks, we certainly value the opportunity to review the parks model. We have 334 parks in the province of Ontario and 107 operating parks. We have had some small increases in park fees, but again, that speaks to the calibre and the quality of parks that we enjoy in the province of Ontario for the millions of visitors that visit our particular parks.

I'd say to the member opposite that we'll continue the dialogue, and only with public discussion will those fees be changed.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Rents are unaffordable for many Ontario families. Almost half of renters pay more than one third of their pre-tax income on rent. We have rent regulations that limit annual rent increases to the rate of inflation, but due to a loophole in the current law, tens of thousands of Ontario renters living in apartments or condos built after 1991 are not protected by rent regulations.

When will the minister close this loophole and ensure that all tenants are protected from double-digit rent hikes?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member for the question. I think we, as a government, have a good record of consistently showing a commitment to protecting tenants across Ontario, because we know that stability in rent prices is so important. It's vital for tenants. That's why we brought through the Residential Tenancies Act back in 2006, because we wanted to provide tenants and landlords with a strong and balanced piece of protection while fostering a robust rental market.

The rental buildings built or first occupied after 1991 in November are exempt from most rent caps. These tenants are not without protection, such as allowing only one increase per year, which requires a 90-day written notice. We also established the Landlord and Tenant Board. This is an independent body with the authority to deal fairly with disputes between landlords and tenants.

We also eliminated automatic evictions, allowing all tenants facing eviction an opportunity to get a fair hearing, because we believe strongly in balancing protection

of tenants with the encouragement of creating new rental opportunities across Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary

Ms. Cindy Forster: Last year the government passed legislation capping annual rent increases at 2.5%. The NDP supported this legislation. But this law does nothing to help the growing number of people renting condominiums built after 1991, particularly here in Toronto and other urban areas. Some of those people are experiencing rent hikes of 10% to 15% or more.

Why won't the minister commit to removing this outdated loophole and ensure that all renters are protected from arbitrary rent hikes?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Thank you again for the question. As I stated earlier, the rent cap exemption was introduced and it was maintained as an incentive for private landlords to build new rental accommodation in communities across Ontario. Changing this incentive would have an adverse effect on the rental housing sector, the economy and job creation, as it helps to create new rental housing stock and encourages the creation of jobs in the construction sector.

Any changes to the Residential Tenancies Act would require that we seek consultation with all affected parties, because it would have a significant impact across the province.

We work really hard to protect renters and anyone interested in rental accommodation across Ontario. Obviously, we'll work with all of our stakeholders, because we want the most robust sector going forward.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Point of order.

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

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Speaker, earlier during question period, the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell asked the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs a question, and quite frankly, the minister's answer would amount to a ministerial announcement or statement. The practice of this Legislature is that such announcements are better to be made during ministerial statements, and I would ask for your ruling and direct as required.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oshawa does have a valid point in his point of order. The appropriate place for ministerial statements is in ministerial statements and not in question period.

That being said, the Speaker is usually not in a position at all times to know what is new policy or what is a statement on a policy. Therefore, I would remind all ministers that the appropriate place to make a statement that is new on policy is in ministerial statements for a response to be provided by the opposition. I would ask the ministers to fulfill that.

Having said that, I would also like to remind the member from Willowdale: If it's not a nervous tic, I would ask him to refrain from whistling.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Premier on a point of order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd beg the indulgence of the House: They are not present but I know they are watching. It is my parents' 61st wedding anniversary today. I just want to wish Mum and Dad a happy anniversary.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION

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

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, in today's clippings there's an article in the Globe that refers to the fact that the Attorney General will announce legislation today at an event at the University of Toronto's law school. Then it goes on to say that the bill will be formally introduced in the Legislature this afternoon.

Once again, my point here is simply this: It would have been much more appropriate for legislation to be introduced here and then the minister makes his announcement wherever he chooses to do so. I think this is really, quite frankly, a disregard and disrespect for this Legislature, and I would ask you to rule on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Hopefully to confirm what I already knew, I'm going to remind the ministers that indeed it is the tradition and the convention of this place that anything new be introduced to the House first. That being said, there have been many occasions over the decades when that has not happened. I would also use it as a reminder—and I thank the member for providing that reminder—to all ministers that this is the place in which we introduce our first policies.

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

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: On behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus, I would like to express our serious concerns with respect to the changes to physiotherapy services in Ontario being brought forward by the Minister of Health. These changes, which will result in a reduction of \$44 million from the physiotherapy budget, are being brought forward without consultation with front-line service providers: the designated physiotherapy clinics, the Long Term Care Association and the Retirement Communities Association. Even the LHINs and the CCACs who have been tasked with the implementation of these changes have not been consulted.

Mr. Speaker, these changes will have a serious detrimental effect on Ontario's seniors. It is a short-sighted attempt to save money without considering longer-term

consequences or the ministry's stated intention to keep seniors as well as possible for as long as possible.

Unintended consequences will include hospitalizations and far higher costs of care as a result of falls and loss of mobility. Seniors living in long-term-care homes will require greater assistance, requiring higher levels of staffing, which, as we all know, probably won't happen.

These changes are scheduled to become effective as of August 1, 2013. We've heard from many organizations, particularly retirement homes, that they simply don't have the time to put in place replacement programs before that time, which will result in an interruption of service to our senior clients.

It's incumbent on this government to stop these changes and to engage in meaningful consultation before moving forward.

MILES NADAL JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTRE

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It is my great pleasure to recognize an important milestone for the Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre.

Sixty years ago, the Jewish Y opened its doors at Bloor and Spadina, and for six decades the JCC has served as a centre for Jewish life in downtown Toronto.

What began as an athletic association has expanded to include a daycare centre, a theatre, classrooms, and programming for everyone, from the youngest to the oldest.

Miles Nadal recently wrote, "We dreamed of a place ... that symbolized the evolution of the Jewish community and was also a community centre for the broader population living in the downtown core—a centre where the walls virtually breathed with sights and sounds and smells, where new memories would be created and old ones rekindled."

I would like to thank Mr. Nadal and all the supporters of the JCC, as well as the JCC staff and directors, for all their hard work and dedication. They have nurtured a place where the community, Jewish and non-Jewish, truly belongs.

Congratulations on 60 wonderful years.

NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND

Mr. Bill Mauro: Last week in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Speaker, I had a wonderful announcement out in the village of Murillo, in one of my rural municipalities called Oliver Paipoonge.

Speaker, for the last 10 years, we've done a wonderful job supporting the small, rural, northern communities in Ontario, including those in my riding: Oliver Paipoonge, Neebing, Conmee, O'Connor, Gillies and Atikokan.

Last week in Murillo, in Oliver Paipoonge, I was very pleased to be there with Mayor Lucy Kloosterhuis and Councillors Jim Byers and Allan Vis. We were in the Murillo town hall for a terrific announcement of \$534,000 from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund—a fund that, as Liberals, we're very proud of. We've taken

that fund from \$60 million up to \$100 million annually. Through that fund, we're able to do great work supporting business growth in northern communities.

Last week's announcement, Speaker, is going to help Oliver Paipoonge expand the Rubin Business Park—they have one phase 1 there that's already jammed up and full. This is going to help them to expand the park to provide 10 or 11 more lots.

In these small rural municipalities, it's very important that we help them to attract businesses to relieve some of the pressure that is foisted onto the back of the residential property tax base only. They have large geographic bases, relatively small populations, and the property tax base has to support most of that. The businesses that can come into those communities will help in that regard. So it's a great announcement on a bunch of different levels.

LYDIA ADAMS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize a Caledon resident who was recently listed as a finalist in the arts category for the 2013 Premier's Awards for Excellence in the Arts.

Lydia Adams has made a career of promoting choral music. As a child of a piano teacher, Lydia grew up in a household surrounded by music, and that foundation has been carried out throughout her life.

She has risen to the rank of conductor and artistic director for both the Amadeus Choir and the Elmer Iseler Singers, two internationally renowned and award-winning Canadian performing groups. With Lydia at the helm, both groups travel extensively, sharing their voices and the gift of the music with audiences both here and abroad.

As an ambassador for the Ontario branch of the Canadian Music Centre, Lydia is celebrated in her field as a leader in the advancement and promotion of Canadian choral music. In an interview earlier this year, Lydia described music as building connections and the importance that music plays in bringing people together. I couldn't agree more, and we are fortunate to have a talented, dedicated individual like Lydia who believes that Canadian music should be celebrated.

On behalf of the residents of Dufferin–Caledon, it is a pleasure for me to congratulate Lydia on being selected as a finalist, and I wish her the best of luck when the Premier's Awards for Excellence in the Arts final selections are revealed on June 27.

Lydia, thank you for sharing your talent and bringing the gift of music alive for audience members now and in the past.

HISTOIRE D'ORLÉANS

Mr. Phil McNeely: Today marks the 400th anniversary of Champlain's first trip up the Ottawa River, past Orléans in Ottawa.

Aujourd'hui représente un moment historique pour les francophones de ma circonscription, Ottawa–Orléans. Il y a 400 ans, le 4 juin 1613, Samuel de Champlain

entreprendait son grand voyage et passait le long des abords de la rivière des Outaouais à la hauteur de l'Île Petrie à Orléans. Les francophones d'Ottawa–Orléans, de l'est d'Ottawa et de la région de la capitale nationale sont présentement réunis à l'Île Petrie pour fêter 400 ans de présence francophone.

J'ai annoncé d'ailleurs, le 31 mai dernier, une aide financière de 25 000 \$ du gouvernement de l'Ontario via la Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario à la Société franco-ontarienne du patrimoine et de l'histoire d'Orléans. Cette subvention permet donc à la société de répondre à son mandat, qui est de promouvoir et de protéger le patrimoine et l'histoire d'Orléans.

J'aimerais remercier la présidente de la société, M^{me} Nicole Fortier, et toute son équipe pour leur initiative et leur dévouement afin de souligner et de célébrer en grand les 400 ans du passage de Champlain à Orléans.

Je profite donc de l'occasion pour vous inviter à aller célébrer cette journée historique à l'Île Petrie aujourd'hui. On vous y attend en très grand nombre.

HFI PYROTECHNICS

Mr. Steve Clark: Ontario's economy has had a rough ride on this government's watch. We know times remain tough, especially in the manufacturing sector. That's why it's a pleasure today to celebrate a business success story in my riding of Leeds–Grenville.

Last week, HFI Pyrotechnics in Edwardsburgh/Cardinal township announced it won a \$12.4-million contract to supply the US Navy with search-and-rescue marine location markers. These pyrotechnic devices—a new product line developed by the company—are used in life-and-death situations involving man-overboard rescues, target identification and anti-submarine warfare. It's a point of great pride to everyone in Leeds–Grenville that a company was selected locally by the US Navy to supply these critical devices.

This contract is a clear signal that HFI Pyrotechnics, a company founded in 1873, remains at the leading edge of this unique industry. In fact, HFI is the last company of its kind in Canada. I'm looking forward to visiting the plant this summer and personally congratulating everyone involved in this remarkable success story.

1510

Securing this contract with the US military was the conclusion of an ambitious four-year strategic process by HFI to position itself to succeed. It's a tremendous accomplishment. I want to commend the leadership team, president and CEO John Witherspoon, and the hard-working staff of 43 skilled employees.

I'm confident this breakthrough into the US market and the continuing innovation at HFI will help them secure more international contracts as its reputation in the military pyrotechnics business grows.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Liberal government of Premier Wynne is making many cuts to our health care

system, so let me tell you what my day was like today as health critic for the NDP.

At 8:30 this morning, I joined 200 physiotherapists for breakfast. They were here to speak out against the cuts to physiotherapy for seniors living in retirement homes. On August 1 this year, tens of thousands of seniors presently receiving physiotherapy in their retirement homes will be discharged to nothing—no follow-up, no more physio.

At 9, I met with Diane from the Dystonia Society, Bev from the Huntington Society and Vanessa from the Parkinson Society. They wanted me to help them stop the funding cuts to the Centre for Movement Disorders located in Markham, which 2,500 people with Dystonia, Huntington's disease and Parkinson's have been using for the last 11 years. This interdisciplinary centre's best practices are being copied elsewhere in Canada, but it is being closed here in Ontario due to funding cuts.

Then, I met with Deborah Simon of the Ontario Community Support Association. They represent community support services such as Meals on Wheels, home support, not-for-profit home care. They are also forced to cut services due to funding cuts.

Then, a busload of people came in to protest the cuts to small rural and northern hospitals that the Liberal government has forced upon their communities.

This is a lot of funding cuts to health care for one day, and this is only one day as the health critic for the NDP.

MALVERN BIKE RACE

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, June 1, I attended the sixth annual Malvern Bike Race hosted by Toronto Police Service, 42 division, along with the Ontario Cycling Association and numerous community volunteers. Ten school teams totalling 120 children from the Scarborough area competed for the George Terry Cup through a series of bicycle races. Each team spent 12 weeks working with their coach, who is a police officer. Together, they trained at an indoor 90,000-square-foot bike facility called Joyride 150 in preparation for the Malvern race.

This event, sponsored by the Canadian Tire Jumpstart program and ProAction Cops and Kids, donated a brand new bicycle and helmet to each participant to use during the race, which they were able to keep.

Youth between the ages of 13 and 17 had the opportunity to experience the speed and thrill of an organized bicycle road race, professionally timed and overseen by the Ontario Cycling Association.

It is also an opportunity for police officers to interact with local youth on a one-to-one level in a fun and informal setting. Chief Blair attended the event and helped cheer the kids on and assisted in the closing ceremonies and award presentation.

Mr. Speaker, this event has such a positive impact on the kids in the community, and I want to thank the sponsors and especially everyone involved in organizing the annual Malvern Bike Race.

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today regarding an issue I've raised many times in this House. It's important to my constituents in Huron-Bruce and people across Ontario.

Last Thursday, the Minister of Energy made an announcement concerning changes to the Green Energy Act in Niagara Falls. A London Free Press article that day quoted the minister as saying, "Communities spoke, mayors spoke, and we listened."

Well, Minister, with all due respect, I don't think you have listened closely enough, and you certainly haven't listened to the municipalities in my riding.

I want to quote to you April Jeffs, the mayor of Wainfleet, in the Welland Tribune:

"We knew it wasn't going to be ideal, but I thought we were going to be able to take away something away from this.

"From what I'm hearing, we'll get nothing....

"For us, I'm hugely disappointed ... absolutely nothing" the minister "said will have any impact...."

I think that says it all.

Were municipalities even consulted by this government before this announcement was made on Thursday? I think not. And what is "more say"? We need that defined. Municipalities deserve to know.

I have to agree with many municipalities, since that announcement, who see this as nothing but a green wash. This does nothing to address the changing protocols or the many concerns that communities living within or facing unwanted industrial wind turbines are facing. Frankly, Minister, this is a huge disappointment for municipal leaders, communities, myself and my colleagues in the Ontario PC Party. I expected and had hoped for more.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norm Miller: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move its adoption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Miller presents the committee's report and moves its adoption. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norm Miller: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to make a statement.

The committee has been hard at work since March of last year. It has dealt with a tremendous volume of information, so I'd like to start by thanking Clerk William Short for all his hard work, and procedural services assistant Jennifer Ashworth for all the hard work they've done, as well as research officer Ray McLellan, Hansard and translation for the great work they've done.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts held hearings on the Auditor General's March 2012 special report. During 2012, there were 17 meetings between March and September, with 61 witnesses. To date in 2013, the committee has held nine meetings and heard from 21 witnesses. It is the committee's intention to table two interim reports: an initial report—which I'm reporting today—for the 2012 hearings and a second report for the 2013 hearings, with committee recommendations to be addressed in the final report.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the permanent membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, and that consists of Toby Barrett, who's the Vice-Chair; Dipika Damerla; France Gélinas; Helena Jaczek; Phil McNeely, Frank Klees, who has been substituting for Jerry Ouellette; Shafiq Qaadri and Jagmeet Singh.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I'm pleased to table interim report number 1 on the Auditor General's 2012 Special Report on Ornge Air Ambulance and Related Services. Committee members from all parties have worked together to prepare this unanimous report.

There were many areas of concern that have been brought out in this report. In fact, there are a total of 14 that have been highlighted. I won't go through all 14, but we grouped them in four thematic areas as follows: the appropriateness of Ornge's business model; the compliance with the performance agreements and legislation; challenges evident in Ornge's management and operation of the not-for-profit and for-profit entities in the Ornge family of companies; and public confidence in the management of provincial and corporate finances.

The committee's fundamental focus throughout these hearings continues to be the extent to which Ornge did or did not conduct its business in a transparent and accountable manner, and whether it provided Ontario patients with value for money in the delivery of medical services.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication of Ornge personnel, who have operated in a challenging environment over the past few years. We would like to express our appreciation to Ornge for its commitment to providing ambulance service to Ontarians.

I would also like to use this opportunity to express condolences on the four people killed in the helicopter crash in Moosonee last week: that is, specifically, Captain Don Filliter, First Officer Jacques Dupuy, paramedic Dustin Dagenais and paramedic Chris Snowball—

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: —Dagenais; thank you for that, Mr. Bisson—and to say that our thoughts are with the families and friends of those people.

I would like to move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

1520

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates on the estimates selected and those not selected by the standing committee for consideration.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Mr. Prue from the Standing Committee on Estimates presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 60, your committee has selected the estimates 2013-14 of the following ministries and offices for consideration: Ministry of Finance, 10 hours; Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, five hours; Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, seven hours, 30 minutes; Ministry of Transportation, seven hours, 30 minutes; Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, 15 hours; Ministry of Energy, seven hours, 30 minutes; Ministry of Education, seven hours, 30 minutes; Ministry of Infrastructure, seven hours, 30 minutes; Ministry of Infrastructure, seven hours, 30 minutes; Ministry of Children and Youth Services, seven hours, 30 minutes; Office of Francophone Affairs, seven hours, 30 minutes; Ministry of Consumer Services—

Interjections: Dispense.

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

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received, and the estimates of the ministries and the offices named therein as not being selected for consideration are deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT ACT (RULES RELATING TO RENT INCREASES), 2013 LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION À USAGE D'HABITATION (RÈGLES RELATIVES AUX AUGMENTATIONS DE LOYER)

Ms. Forster moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 82, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 to extend rules governing rent increases to certain types of rental units / Projet de loi 82, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation afin d'étendre les règles régissant les augmentations de loyer à certains types de logements locatifs.

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.

Ms. Cindy Forster: This bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006. Currently, various categories of properties—rental units that were not occupied for any purposes before June 17, 1998; rental units, no part of which was previously rented since July 29, 1975; and rental units in buildings, mobile home parks and land-lease communities, no part of which was occupied for residential purposes before November 1, 1991—are exempted from rules governing rent increases. This bill removes those exemptions.

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

Mr. Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / Projet de loi 83, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'll wait until ministerial statements, Speaker.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. today, Tuesday, June 4, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 8. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those opposed, say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1525 to 1530.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members take their seats, please.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted
Balkissoon, Bas	Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil
Bartolucci, Rick	Dickson, Joe	Meilleur, Madeleine
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John

Bradley, James J.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Broten, Laurel C.	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Hoskins, Eric	Naqvi, Yasir
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Orazietti, David
Chiarelli, Bob	Jeffrey, Linda	Piruzza, Teresa
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Craitor, Kim	Mangat, Amrit	Wong, Soo
Damerla, Dipika	Matthews, Deborah	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Del Duca, Steven	Mauro, Bill	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed to the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Horwath, Andrea	Nicholls, Rick
Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Jackson, Rod	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Jones, Sylvia	Pettapiece, Randy
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Campbell, Sarah	Leone, Rob	Schein, Jonah
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Mantha, Michael	Singh, Jagmeet
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Smith, Todd
Elliott, Christine	McDonell, Jim	Tabuns, Peter
Fedeli, Victor	McKenna, Jane	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	McNaughton, Monte	Thompson, Lisa M.
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Norm	Vanthof, John
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Milligan, Rob E.	Wilson, Jim
Harris, Michael	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Hillier, Randy	Natyshak, Taras	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 45; the nays are 54.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a report from the Integrity Commissioner entitled Report of the Review of Expense Claims Covering the Period April 1, 2012, to March 31, 2013, Pursuant to the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act, 2002.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Hon. John Gerretsen: Before reading my statement, I'd like to recognize a number of people that are in the gallery who are witnessing the statement today. We have, first of all, Mr. Peter Downard and Mr. Brian MacLeod Rogers. They were both members of the anti-SLAPP advisory panel. We also have Patricia Marshall and her spouse, Tom Marshall. Patricia had started the earlier round table on anti-SLAPP legislation, and Tom used to

be the general counsel of MAG and is also heavily involved with the OBA, the Ontario Bar Association.

With them are Ben Rogers, Anita Moreira and Claire Downard, who's the daughter of Peter Downard. Also, from the justice policy division of the Ministry of the Attorney General, we have Melissa Kim, Janet Chow, Florence Lau and, finally, we have David Donnelly. They're all joining us in the gallery today, Speaker.

I rise in the House today to introduce legislation that would, if passed, defend public expression and encourage open debate on matters of public interest.

I think all members will agree that one of the greatest things about living in a fair and democratic society like Ontario's is that we can speak out on matters that are important to us, sometimes having a difference in opinion and issues that we express from time to time.

Our government is committed to building a fair society, Speaker, where everyone has the opportunity to participate and benefit from Ontario's prosperity and our great quality of life. We know that a democratic society is stronger when citizens are free and empowered to participate in it more fully and when they have access to the services and supports that make these contributions possible.

A citizen's confidence in their justice system and their willingness and ability to participate in a democratic society are inextricably linked. Ontario has a good system of administration of justice and a good court system, but it's not perfect. There's no question that litigation is expensive and matters can take too long to be resolved.

Speaker, strategic lawsuits are relatively new here in Ontario. Three years ago, my predecessor, Chris Bentley, convened an expert panel to study the issue and recommend the most effective way to address it. The advisory panel was chaired by Mayo Moran, dean of the University of Toronto's law school, and included Brian MacLeod Rogers, a media lawyer and adjunct professor at the Ryerson School of Journalism, and Peter Downard, an expert in defamation law and a partner with Fasken Martineau here in Toronto. Again, I would like to welcome both Mr. Rogers and Mr. Downard to the House today.

After extensive consultation, the panel produced a report that is reflected in the bill you see before you, Speaker.

I would also like to recognize the tremendous work on this bill by John Gregory, general counsel of the justice policy branch of the Ministry of the Attorney General, who was ably assisted by Andrea Strom and their entire legal team.

As its name suggests, this bill will help protect the freedom of every Ontarian to voice their opinions in good faith and participate in open debate on matters of public interest. This is truly a made-in-Ontario solution that will balance the protection of public participation and freedom of expression with the protection of reputation and economic interest.

The centerpiece of this proposal is a fast-track review process for lawsuits alleged to be strategic in nature. The

legislation provides that a party that believes it has been sued in a strategic lawsuit can file a motion to have the suit dismissed. Within 60 days, the court would apply a legal test to determine whether or not the suit should be allowed to proceed.

The test would be composed of the following three steps. The defendant in the main lawsuit would have to show that the lawsuit arose because of the defendant's expression on a matter of public interest. If that is so, then the plaintiff would have to show that it has a substantial chance of success and that the defendant did not likely have a good defence. If the plaintiff can show that, then the court would consider whether the harm suffered or potentially suffered by the plaintiff was more important than the continuation of the public discussion of the matter of public interest involved in the case. Where the plaintiff has suffered little harm, the case would be dismissed, but where the harm is more serious, the case would be allowed to continue.

1540

In applying the test, the courts would seek to balance the interests at stake, with an eye not only on the technical merits of the plaintiff's case but the value of free expression on matters of public interest. Where the plaintiff is likely to suffer serious harm, as I mentioned before, the case would continue. If, however, little or no harm is likely, then the technical merits of the case would yield to the value of public democratic debate, and the suit would be dismissed.

The bill would also amend the Libel and Slander Act to add a section which states that any qualified privilege that applies in respect of an oral or written communication on a matter of public interest between two or more persons who have a direct interest in the matter applies regardless of whether or not the communication is witnessed or reported on by a media representative.

The bill would also amend a section of the Statutory Powers Procedure Act to provide that submissions for a costs order in a proceeding must be in writing, unless a tribunal determines that to do so is likely to cause a party to the proceeding significant prejudice. This would primarily apply in administrative tribunals.

This bill truly deserves the support of all sides of the House, because it speaks to one of our most cherished values as citizens of the province, and that is the ability to speak out on any issue without threat of a reprisal. Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues in the House to support this progressive legislation.

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE

Hon. David Zimmer: I wish to recognize First Nation and Métis peoples and Inuit in Ontario and acknowledge the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit; that's the territory in which this Legislature is situated.

I rise in the Legislature today to acknowledge that June is National Aboriginal History Month and that Friday, June 21, is National Aboriginal Day.

The stories of aboriginal peoples in Ontario and in this country are rich with history, contributions and perspectives of the first peoples. During the month of June, we welcome all Ontarians to celebrate and learn these stories and raise the level of awareness and appreciation of aboriginal heritage.

This year will mark the 250th anniversary of the Royal Proclamation of 1763. It was a milestone agreement between the First Nations and the British settlers, an agreement that protected First Nations' possession and use of their hunting grounds, including lands that are today in Ontario. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 remains significant today because it is the foundation of the treaty relationships that make Canada so distinctive.

What many Ontarians may not realize is that they likely live in an area covered by a treaty. We are all treaty people.

It is also important to acknowledge that the relationship between the aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples in this country has had its challenges since those promising beginnings in 1763. Many of these challenges still exist today for the more than 300,000 aboriginal people in Ontario.

There is a significant graduation gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal students. Unemployment rates among aboriginal peoples are twice the Ontario average and can be several times higher in remote communities. The rates of addiction, mental health issues and suicide among aboriginal youth are much higher than the general population.

I have visited numerous First Nation communities and met with aboriginal leaders to better understand these issues, hear their concerns and work together on developing a way forward. Two weeks ago, I visited Pikangikum First Nation and met with Chief Dean Owen. While there are challenges, there is also an unrelenting spirit and an unwavering hope within their community. By working in partnership with aboriginal communities and service providers, our government is making progress to address these issues.

For example, in February we worked with First Nation communities to improve access to care and community supports for those addicted to prescription narcotics. In April, the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Canada and Ontario signed a historic memorandum of understanding to support NAN students in reaching their full potential.

We reinforced our commitment to supporting aboriginal peoples in the 2013 budget. The budget included an additional \$5 million in funding to improve aboriginal student achievement. We have also recently established an urban aboriginal policy engagement table to improve the social conditions and outcomes for aboriginal people in urban communities.

It is our responsibility as a government and, I would suggest, the responsibility of all Ontarians to better understand our relationship with the First Nation, Inuit and Métis peoples. That is why I am thrilled to have the opportunity to talk about National Aboriginal History Month and National Aboriginal Day. I believe a better

understanding of the contributions of aboriginal peoples will build a stronger relationship with non-aboriginal Ontarians.

This month, there are numerous opportunities to celebrate the outstanding achievements of aboriginal peoples. For example, today is Tom Longboat Day, providing an opportunity to learn about one of the world's greatest long-distance runners.

Across Ontario, there are a number of tourism destinations and special events where all Ontarians are welcome to attend and learn more about aboriginal history and culture, and their unique perspectives. For example, on National Aboriginal Day, the Timmins Native Friendship Centre will hold its grand opening. From June 21 to June 23, the Summer Solstice Aboriginal Arts Festival and Competition Pow Wow takes place in Ottawa. On June 26, the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto is holding its celebration of National Aboriginal History Month in Yonge-Dundas Square.

Ontarians can visit the Ontario Travel website or follow my ministry on Twitter to find out more about how we are getting involved in some of the great events happening all over Ontario in recognition of National Aboriginal History Month and National Aboriginal Day.

National Aboriginal History Month and National Aboriginal Day are perfect opportunities for all of us—all Ontarians—to strengthen these relationships through awareness and education of another community's perspective. Only then can we in Ontario be as fair and prosperous as we all have a right to be, aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples.

As Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I encourage all Ontarians to join me in celebrating the unique heritage and diverse cultures and outstanding achievements of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, during the month of June. Thank you. Meegwetch.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries?

It is now time for responses.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise on behalf of the PC caucus to respond to the minister's statement on the newly introduced Protection of Public Participation Act. It's unfortunate that we first learned of this act reading the *Globe and Mail* this morning. While I have not had a chance to yet formally review the legislation, I am eager to read it over and see how closely the legislation matches the proposals made in the advisory panel.

The concept behind SLAPPs—that stands for “strategic litigation against public participation”—is at its very core abnormal. I say that these cases are abnormal because typically when one party sues another, they do so with the intent of winning the lawsuit. Indeed, the very idea of suing someone while simultaneously having no interest in pursuing the lawsuit or in winning the case would seem odd to a great many people.

This does occur, however, and when it does, it is typically for the reason of intimidating others with hefty lawsuits in order to silence their opinions, hence the term SLAPP, because these lawsuits are strategic devices to discourage people from voicing their concerns, often on development projects in communities.

Basically, imagine a new residential tower is proposed. A community meeting is held, and a number of residents attend and voice their concerns. Well, if the hypothetical developer were to pursue a SLAPP, they would then sue each of the community members who spoke up at the meeting against the development for a large sum; it could even be for millions of dollars.

Usually these lawsuits are filed as a claim of defamation. While these cases are usually of little or no merit, they are often a tremendous burden on the defendants, who are now forced to hire lawyers and defend themselves. On the opposing side, however, the developer would have no interest in fighting the case, and the case would most likely be dropped before ever going to court. The intent would be achieved, because the concerned resident would most likely not be attending any more public meetings when the last one got them sued for \$5 million.

1550

Again, this is just a hypothetical example to illustrate my point that these lawsuits can be a real problem. So I'm pleased that the Attorney General has taken some action on this. Public participation is the foundation of a healthy democracy, and the reality is that people should not have to fear the threat of lawsuits to voice their concerns.

I'd be remiss if I didn't point out that the report, which I'm assuming informs the Protection of Public Participation Act, was actually submitted to the ministry three years ago, in 2010, so it has collected some dust. Nonetheless, I'm looking forward to reviewing the legislation introduced today, and discussing it with the minister and the affected stakeholders.

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: National Aboriginal Day allows fellow Canadians to learn more about our Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples, their cultures, and their significant contributions to the growth and development of our country. National Aboriginal Day is held once again on June 21, the day of the summer solstice, a day that holds special significance for many aboriginal groups and cultures. As members on this side of the House, we too applaud and salute the First Nations of our country who have preserved their cultures, traditions, languages and way of life, despite many challenges.

Now another year has come and gone, and what has taken place? That's exactly what all are wondering. Nothing to strengthen that relationship. Nothing to improve circumstances among the First Nations people. In fact, conditions in First Nations communities are not improving. Education for our First Nations children is

falling further behind. This government has actually continued its divisive approach in negotiations and consultations.

As you probably know, Mr. Speaker, the government is currently engaged in the Algonquin land claim, a precedent-setting process that impacts an area of 8.9 million acres in southern Ontario. Last year at this time, I pointed out to the government that the land claim process was being undertaken secretly without any meaningful consultation with local authorities, residents or affected user groups. This does not build, but breaks down, relationships.

Mr. Speaker, I regret to inform you that not only has the process continued without any transparency; it has actually worsened. With the release of the draft agreement in principle last December, those directly influenced are now starting to become aware of the implications, and that they were not privy to any of the details prior to the release of the AIP.

Local residents, cottagers, hunt camp owners, municipalities, the hunting and fishing community, the tourism sector, and the forestry sector were not involved in the consultation process and are outraged at the agreement. Sadly, the government has continued holding closed meetings and negotiations, simply presenting general briefings with limited details to the interested stakeholders and jurisdictions. And this government even had the nerve to host its so-called public information sessions during March break, when nobody was around.

I ask again: What does it say about a government that boasts about its record of dealing with First Nations when we have secret negotiations causing further unrest, resentment and division between First Nations and non-aboriginal people in Ontario?

In order to move forward, we need a change in direction. We need to build trust amongst and between our nations. Only then will we build a better future for all our children. As a province, we must act and quit posturing over whose responsibility is what, but act for all and in the best interests of all Ontarians. Meegwetch.

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: June 21 is National Aboriginal Day across Canada. It is an honour to rise and recognize this important event on behalf of the NDP caucus.

National Aboriginal Day was created to celebrate the vital contributions of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, and the contributions they have made in developing a shared history. It is also a recognition of the partnership our ancestors created when they entered into treaties. Those treaties established a nation-to-nation relationship where both sides agreed to share our wealth, land and prosperity.

The partnership allowed this land we have come to call Canada and, more specifically, Ontario, to grow and thrive. We owe much of our prosperity to First Nations people who agreed to share the knowledge and wisdom that had been passed down to them from generation to

generation. Despite this acceptance and willingness to share the land, the relationship has not always been positive, and First Nations culture, language and identity have at times been threatened.

While we have recognized many of the wrongs in the past and have set out to heal them, there is much work that needs to be done, and can be done, to repair the relationship. It is my sincere hope that by continuing to mark National Aboriginal Day and by promoting First Nations culture, traditions and knowledge, we can continue to make progress.

Last National Aboriginal Day, I was honoured to join residents of Sioux Lookout and those living within the traditional area of Lac Seul First Nation as they signed a friendship accord recognizing their shared history and future, and that the path to success for all communities involves working together in a strong partnership. It was a truly inspiring event. I hope that more communities across the province recognize the crucial importance and the benefits of these partnerships and that they recognize that our mutual success lies in mutual understanding, co-operation and sharing.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Today I take great pride in rising on behalf of the NDP caucus and our leader, Andrea Horwath, in response to and support of the Attorney General's announcement of introducing the Protection of Public Participation Act.

Mr. Speaker, this is a vital, important piece of legislation. Just to put into context, SLAPPs are strategic lawsuits against public participation, and that's exactly what these lawsuits are used to do. Many community advocates, community activists and just members of the community who have a concern, try to voice that concern, try to raise their issue in a public forum, are silenced due to use of strategic lawsuits.

This is an affront to democracy. This is an affront to a free and democratic society. One of the pillars of our society is the right to dissent, the ability to stand up and say, "I do not agree with what's going on in my community." When this pillar of our society is threatened, that is a serious attack on all of our liberties. The fact that strategic lawsuits have been going on for so long is an affront to all of us.

I am very honoured that today I can stand and say that the NDP has been fighting for this for so many years. I can say that members from Davenport and from Parkdale-High Park have advocated for anti-SLAPP legislation. We have met with stakeholders. I, myself, as the critic for the Attorney General, have met with a number of stakeholders. Together, we have advocated for anti-SLAPP legislation for some time now. In fact, our leader—the leader of the NDP—introduced very similar anti-SLAPP legislation in 2008 and 2010.

This is an issue that has been on our radar. We've known about this issue and we've been pleading with this government to do something about it. We're very happy

that, though it has been three years since the 2010 anti-SLAPP advisory panel's recommendations, we are still very encouraged by the fact that the Attorney General has brought this forward now.

I hope that this legislation—I was unable to review it in its totality—includes three key ingredients. These three key ingredients are:

To protect the right to public participation, the anti-SLAPP legislation should include statutory provisions to explicitly guarantee this right. From my cursory perusing of the law, it does include this. This is one of the essential elements.

In addition, what the Attorney General spoke of, the early dismissal mechanism—that's essentially at the core of this legislation to provide a mechanism to dismiss these lawsuits out of hand in an expedient manner. That is clearly the most important part of this legislation.

Thirdly, SLAPP disincentives: There has to be a strong disincentive so that companies and organizations that discourage public discourse are met with some serious and strong repercussions and disincentives.

We must keep our voices loud. We must support public discourse and public dissent to protect our society.

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

PETITIONS

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Knowing that yesterday I made the member from Durham feel real good, and knowing that he will only read the petition, the member from Durham will start us on petitions today.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario"—on my best behaviour:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning on eliminating OHIP-funded physiotherapy services currently provided to seniors in retirement homes and changing the current provider of the service as of August 1st, 2013; and

"Whereas the Minister of Health has announced a total of \$33 million in physiotherapy funding, or \$550 per senior for 60,000 seniors, including those in retirement homes; and

"Whereas, instead of the 100 to 150 visits per year a senior may receive now from their dedicated on-site OHIP physiotherapy staff, the change would mean a CCAC therapist would provide 5 to 10 visits on-site only to seniors who are bedridden or have an acute injury. All other ambulatory seniors would have to attend other community locations/clinics for physiotherapy and exercise off-site; and

"Whereas this change not only reduces the amount of money available, but also moves funds from the lowest-

cost provider (OHIP physiotherapy providers—\$12.20 per treatment) to the highest-cost provider (CCAC—\$120 per treatment); and

“Whereas current OHIP physiotherapy providers, who have been providing seniors with individualized treatments for over 48 years, will be delisted from OHIP by the government; and

“Whereas these services have been proven to help seniors improve in their activities of daily living, mobility, pain and fall risks;

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

“To review and reverse the decision to eliminate OHIP physiotherapy services to seniors in retirement homes, our most vulnerable population and most at risk for falls; and continue with the provision of at least 100 treatments per year with a mechanism to access an additional 50 treatments, if medically necessary, with the current low-cost OHIP physiotherapy providers.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this and present it to Hannah, one of the pages.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I’m in agreement and will send it down with page Christine.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor: I’m pleased to introduce the following petition, signed by many of the seniors from the Fort Erie seniors’ home, such as Lynda Smith or Ron Ferguson. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the people of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their grandparents as requested in Bill 48 put forward by” the MPP from Niagara Falls; and

“Whereas currently, subsection 21(1) of the act provides that a parent of a child or any other person may apply to a court for certain orders respecting custody of or access to the child. An amendment to that subsection specifies that a grandparent may apply for such an order; and

“Whereas currently subclause 24(2)(a)(i) of the act provides that where a court makes a determination relating to certain applications in respect of custody of or access to a child, the court shall consider, among other things, the love, affection and emotional ties between the child and each person entitled to or claiming custody of or access to the child. An amendment to that subclause specifies that this includes grandparents; and

“Whereas relationships between children and grandparents are a special bond that should be maintained;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their grandparents.”

It has been eight years. Let’s pass the bill.

FISHING REGULATIONS

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

“Whereas the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary is printed each year by the Ministry of Natural Resources and distributed to recreational fishermen throughout the province to inform them of all the relevant seasons, limits, licence requirements and other regulations; and

“Whereas this valuable document is readily available for anglers to keep in their residence, cottage, truck, boat, trailer or on their person to be fully informed of the current fishing regulations; and

“Whereas MNR recently and abruptly drastically reduced the distribution of the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary such that even major licence issuers and large fishing retailers are limited to one case of regulations per outlet; and

“Whereas anglers do not always have access to the Internet to view online regulations while travelling or in remote areas;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately return the production of the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary to previous years’ quantities such that all anglers have access to a copy and to distribute them accordingly.”

I affix my signature in full support.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning on eliminating physiotherapy services currently provided to seniors in retirement homes—and changing the current provider of the service as of August 1st, 2013; and

“Whereas the Minister of Health has announced a total of \$33 million in physiotherapy funding, or \$550 per senior, for 60,000 seniors, including those in retirement homes; and

“Whereas instead of the 100 to 150 visits per year a senior may receive now from their dedicated on-site OHIP physiotherapy staff, the change would mean a CCAC therapist would provide 5 to 10 visits on-site only to seniors who are bedridden or have an acute injury. All other ambulatory seniors would have to attend other community locations/clinics for physiotherapy and exercise off-site; and

“Whereas this change not only reduces the amount of money available, but also moves funds from the lowest-cost provider (OHIP physiotherapy providers—\$12.20 per treatment) to the highest-cost provider (CCAC—\$120 per treatment); and

“Whereas current OHIP physiotherapy providers, who have been providing seniors with individualized treatments for over 48 years, will be delisted from OHIP by the government; and

“Whereas these services have been proven to help seniors improve in their activities of daily living, mobility, pain and falls risk;

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

“To review and reverse the decision to eliminate OHIP physiotherapy services to seniors in retirement homes, our most vulnerable population and most at risk for falls; and continue with the provision of at least 100 treatments per year with the current low-cost OHIP physiotherapy providers.”

I sign this petition and I deliver it to a page.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Jim Wilson: These petitions—signed by thousands of people, to do with physiotherapy.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning on eliminating physiotherapy services currently provided to seniors in retirement homes—and changing the current provider of the service as of August 1st, 2013; and

“Whereas the Minister of Health has announced a total of \$33 million in physiotherapy funding, or \$550 per senior, for 60,000 seniors, including those in retirement homes; and

“Whereas instead of the 100 to 150 visits per year a senior may receive now from their dedicated on-site OHIP physiotherapy staff, the change would mean a CCAC therapist would provide 5 to 10 visits on-site only to seniors who are bedridden or have an acute injury. All other ambulatory seniors would have to attend other community locations/clinics for physiotherapy and exercise off-site; and

“Whereas this change not only reduces the amount of money available, but also moves funds from the lowest-cost provider (OHIP physiotherapy providers—\$12.20

per treatment) to the highest-cost provider (CCAC—\$120 per treatment); and

“Whereas current OHIP physiotherapy providers, who have been providing seniors with individualized treatments for over 48 years, will be delisted from OHIP by the government; and

“Whereas these services have been proven to help seniors improve in their activities of daily living, mobility, pain and falls risk;

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

“To review and reverse the decision to eliminate OHIP physiotherapy services to seniors in retirement homes, our most vulnerable population and most at risk for falls; and continue with the provision of at least 100 treatments per year with the current low-cost OHIP physiotherapy providers.”

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the good friends at Riverwood Retirement Home in Alliston, where I was last Friday, visiting with seniors and discussing this issue.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition from residents across this province.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning to delist OHIP physiotherapy clinics as of August 1st, 2013, which represents cuts in physiotherapy services to seniors, children and people with disabilities who currently receive care at designated OHIP physiotherapy clinics; and

“Whereas people who are currently eligible for OHIP physiotherapy treatments can receive 100 treatments per year plus an additional 50 treatments annually if medically necessary. The proposed change will reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year; while enhancing geographical access is positive, the actual physiotherapy that any individual receives will be greatly reduced; and

“Whereas the current OHIP physiotherapy providers have been providing seniors, children and people with disabilities with individualized treatments for over 48 years, and these services have been proven to help improve function, mobility, activities of daily living, pain, and falls risk;

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

“To review and reverse the decision to drastically cut OHIP physiotherapy services to our most vulnerable population—seniors, children and people with disabilities; and to maintain the policy that seniors, children and people with disabilities continue to receive up to 100 treatments per year at eligible clinics, with a mechanism to access an additional 50 treatments when medically necessary.”

I agree with this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Michael to bring to the Clerk.

1610

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to read a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test no longer assess tailpipe emissions, but instead scans the on-board diagnostics systems of vehicles, which already perform a series of continuous and periodic emissions checks; and

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails', which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

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

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, will sign it and send it down to the table.

SERVICES DE PHYSIOTHÉRAPIE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai une pétition qui nous vient de partout en Ontario :

« Attendu que le ministère de la Santé envisage de diminuer les services de physiothérapie offerts aux personnes âgées qui demeurent dans des foyers de soins de longue durée—d'un montant approximatif de 110 millions de dollars à 58,5 millions de dollars; et

« Attendu qu'avec ce changement, les personnes âgées ne recevront pas les soins dont ils ont actuellement droit et qui sont administrés par leurs fournisseurs de physiothérapie de l'assurance-santé que le gouvernement envisage de radier de l'assurance-santé le 1^{er} août 2013; et

« Attendu que le gouvernement a annoncé que le niveau de financement, le nombre de traitements qu'un résidant pourrait recevoir, n'a pas été précisé, et sera réduit d'un maximum de 150 visites par année à un niveau inconnu, ce qui signifie que les heures de soins et le nombre de personnes qui fournissent les soins de physiothérapie aux personnes âgées seront également considérablement réduits à compter du 1^{er} août 2013; et

« Attendu que les fournisseurs de physiothérapie de l'assurance-santé ont fourni des traitements individualisés aux personnes âgées pendant plus de 48 ans et que ces services ont été prouvés bénéfiques pour aider les personnes âgées à améliorer les activités de leur vie quotidienne, la mobilité, la douleur et les risques de chutes; »

Ils adressent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« D'examiner et d'inverser cette réduction drastique aux services de physiothérapie de l'assurance-santé pour les personnes âgées, notre population la plus vulnérable, et de poursuivre le financement de 110 millions de dollars pour la physiothérapie pour les personnes âgées dans les foyers de soins de longue durée. »

J'appuie cette pétition et je vais demander à notre page Vanessa de l'amener aux greffiers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 4, 2013, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion to apply a timetable to certain business of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Rainy River—Kenora—Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker.

Interjection: Way up north.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Yes, way up north.

I'm very pleased to rise and speak on this programming motion which allows us to move forward with sending the budget bill to committee while establishing firm time frames for the establishment of a Financial Accountability Office for the province of Ontario.

The motion before us is a very important one, and I'm very pleased to offer my support for it because, years from now, when we look back at our time at Queen's Park, there's a very obvious question that we will ask ourselves what did we accomplish? I think it's fair to say that much of the frustration of the first session of this Parliament was that there was perception that we just sat for about a year and had very little to show for it. It's true that we passed a handful of bills, some of them very positive, but I don't think that there was anything that will stand out years or decades from now as establishing a firm vision. In many ways, the first session of this Parliament was a caretaker session.

The motion before us ensures that the same label cannot be applied to this session, and I am proud of what we have accomplished. What's important isn't what this motion is about—it's roughly 1,800 words on paper—but it's about the wheels that it sets in motion. It's about seeing a problem and taking a real and meaningful action to address the issue.

For too long, we've heard about government scandals and poor spending decisions after they've happened. In fact, much of the first session and the current session of this Parliament have been focused on past decisions. It's true that things like Ornge, eHealth and even the gas plants were very poor decisions to make, but the point is that up until this office is established, we're going to be constantly dealing with a post-mortem situation where the damage is already done and it can't be reversed. The money is gone, and it's wasted.

Well, I used a health care analogy a minute ago because it's fitting. As health care professionals will tell you, you can deal with the symptoms that arise after an issue happens at a much higher cost to the system, the individual and society, or you can take preventive steps, many of them as easy as educating yourself and others to prevent those problems from occurring in the first place—preventive medicine.

That's what the Financial Accountability Office is; it's preventive medicine for our province's bottom line, an impartial office that will review the government's spending plans before the cheque is written. Instead of learning about bad spending decisions months or even years after they have been made, when there's no chance to recoup that money, we have someone who can do it before to prevent expensive mistakes from happening. Like it or not, whether you want to admit it or not, every government has made poor decisions, some inadvertent, while others leave you shaking your head, wondering what they were thinking in the first place. Often, it takes years for us to realize the full impact of the decisions that were made.

Take, for instance, hydro prices, which is a very important issue in my riding because we're looking at a series of bad decisions. It would be very interesting to see what changes could have been made if an impartial arm of the government stood up and said, "Wait a minute. Are you sure that this is a good idea?" Because when it comes to electricity prices, we have a lot of people who want to lay blame with the Green Energy Act. Certainly it is an act that deserves a lot of blame, but it wasn't the first mistake that was made either.

If you look at it, a big reason why our electricity system is in disarray is because, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the government of the day attempted to privatize the system. This created a chain reaction of events that we should be regretting; for instance, the creation of five companies and agencies that now oversee the system. This creates a great deal of overlap and additional bureaucracy that adds tens of millions of dollars of cost each and every year.

Part of that same process was forcing many municipalities to sell their utilities to the province. Some did; some

didn't. Many of those communities did, though, including some in my riding that are now deeply regretting that decision because it probably cost them jobs as well. On top of that, we have the debt retirement charge that was created to, in theory, pay off a huge amount of debt in a short amount of time so we could right the ship for private investors. That, of course, is a sore spot for many.

Then the government was booted out, and we saw the current government come in, and they had their own plans. Many of those plans made the problem worse, such as the Green Energy Act, for instance, which in theory could be a very good piece of legislation. But the government was too eager, and it started paying rates that were simply not sustainable, which, in turn, drove up prices again.

The point is, what kind of a situation would we be in currently if we had something like a Financial Accountability Office, an office that could have impartially reviewed the numbers and said, "Wait a minute. Disbanding Ontario Hydro into five other agencies is going to drive prices up," or "Forcing municipalities to sell off their utilities is going to add unneeded debt to the system and take vital decision-making powers out of their hands"? Maybe some of those communities could have combatted the downturn in the forest industry, where many of the problems we faced were the result of high hydro prices, and kept jobs in the community, but we'll never know.

1620

The point is to not rehash the poor decisions that have been made, but to look at why the Financial Accountability Office is so important. Often, governments get so focused on a single goal, such as promoting green energy or privatization, that they fail to look at the eventual repercussions, and this office provides with us that extra check, one that is independent and impartial. Because we're facing serious challenges in Ontario today, we need to ensure that the decisions that we're making work not only in the short term but in the long term as well.

For instance, there are proposals out there today about privatizing certain revenue-generating arms of the government such as the LCBO and Ontario lotteries. I believe that the people bringing forward these issues are focused far too much on the short-term benefit: a huge influx of cash that will help in the short term. But what about the long term, when billions of dollars of dividends that these organizations pay are no longer coming into the provincial coffers? What will we do then? Would we have to reduce services and raise taxes, maybe privatize other portions of the government? We can speculate or we can have an independent office of this Legislature review those plans and give us a pretty effective preview. It has worked federally, particularly when it came to the cost overruns of the F-35 program, and I believe very strongly that it will work provincially and it will help ensure that we are being responsible to the taxpayers who sent us here.

Sometimes the well-intentioned people in charge of making these costly decisions forget that it isn't the

government's money they're spending; it's the taxpayers' money. We have an obligation to ensure that that money is spent well and it's spent wisely. We could go even as far as the gas plant scandal, which has dominated our agenda since we returned in February. What would have happened if, before the decisions were made and the i's were dotted and the t's were crossed, the Financial Accountability Officer had performed projections and had come out and said that the actual cost of cancelling the plants in Mississauga or Oakville would be \$500 million or more? There were calls to cancel the plant before the election. Would that have changed the way that the campaign played out? Would that have maybe prevented the cancellation from happening? We can't say for certain now because it's already done; the money has been spent. But instead of it being a hot-button issue in one community, I'm pretty sure that there would have been province-wide attention and province-wide repercussions if someone said, "Well, it's going to cost this amount of money but we're going to do it anyway." We didn't hear about the gas plants in the north during the campaign, and I'm sure it's fair to say that many of the 107 ridings didn't hear about them during the 2011 election. I have a feeling that if we had known what the cost would be, maybe we'd be looking at a completely different result, or money that would not have been spent.

That's why we should be very proud of what we're about to accomplish with the creation of the Financial Accountability Office. While the office has been effective federally, we can make it even better in Ontario because we're aware of some of the shortcomings of the federal version. I'd like, if I could, to look at some of the roles and responsibilities that this Financial Accountability Office will have in Ontario.

As I've said, the Financial Accountability Office will operate independently and impartially and have powers similar to the Information and Privacy Commissioner to order the release of documents, which will help ensure that the office has the information it needs to put together future realistic projections.

Like the Ombudsman's office, the Financial Accountability Office will report directly to the Legislature, and MPPs can request assessments from the office if they're concerned with a particular department, agency or spending program. The office will be able to monitor spending and revenue at government departments, crown corporations and agencies, meaning that they would be able to provide us with a very good assessment of the long-term implications of privatizing an agency like the LCBO, OLG, or even ServiceOntario.

The office will also be able to examine the costs and the outcomes of proposed legislation, even private members' bills, which should provide us with some very valuable insight as we enter into these discussions.

In other words, this office will have some pretty broad and significant powers to examine government spending, and that is what we need in Ontario, and right across Canada, for that matter, because it's no secret that people have become cynical. It seems like every time they turn

around, one level of government or another is involved in a spending scandal. I understand that frustration, because I hear about it from my constituents.

But rather than repeat the cycle of replacing one scandal-plagued government with another government that will end up being plagued with scandals of its own, isn't it better to do something that will actually get to the root of the problem? Rather than sit and point fingers—and we see this all the time in question period, where a member of the opposition will ask a question and a minister of the government will respond with, "Well, your government did this and the government before it did that"—if there was a system that could be put in place that would prevent money from being misspent, shouldn't we do that? We're not talking about Mickey Mouse agencies; we're talking about departments and organizations that are well respected and will be listened to. For instance, if the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario says something, people take notice. If he points out how policy is failing to achieve desired results, then there's a good chance that something will change. Similarly, if the Auditor General speaks up, all of the legislators in this House, the media and the people of the province listen. If the Ombudsman of this province singles out a problem, the government listens, as do the people of Ontario, the opposition, the media and anybody else who might be affected.

The reason for this is because all of these offices are impartial and they have been created to act as a watchdog for issues that we believe need to be respected. I believe we need to respect our taxpayers, our hard-working families, and that we need to raise the bar of accountability. Really, we have to do that. If we ever want voter turnout and voter participation to increase, this is something that we have to do. The creation of a Financial Accountability Office will do that and it will help to ensure that we do not continue to make the same mistakes over and over again. It ensures that government proposals and even MPP private members' bills are properly costed out before they are adopted, to prevent waste.

The worst thing that we can do in the face of scandals like eHealth, Ornge and the gas plants is to do nothing. That is the most irresponsible thing that we could do. Instead of pointing fingers and trying to score political points, I think we really need to take a step back and ask ourselves what we can do to ensure that scandals like this do not happen again, because governments of all stripes have a long track record that suggests that if all we do is replace one party with another party, we're not actually going to get the results that we need.

Speaker, I'm very proud to say that the office of the Financial Accountability Officer is what we need to do to achieve the results that we need. It's very easy to talk the talk about accountability and respect for taxpayers, but now it is time to walk the walk. That's why I'm very proud to stand here today and to say to the people of my riding and everyone else across Ontario that we are hearing your concerns about government waste and improper spending, and we're going to do something meaningful about it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: As always, it's a great privilege and honour to stand here in the chamber and debate in a democratic fashion the concerns we have as opposition toward this government and the programming motion.

I'd first like to look back at what this government has done since the throne speech, and here's the issue: The Premier has increased the size of her cabinet by 25%. That's an additional \$3 million that the Premier is paying her Liberal cabinet in salaries. That's \$3 million that comes out of public coffers, that could be going towards other, more important initiatives and programs that could actually do something, whether it's in health care, education or the issue of infrastructure that we've hardly debated here in the chamber.

1630

So right from the get-go, what we saw from this Liberal government is not the positioning of taking austerity measures or making the hard decisions that have to be made to get this province back on track. What we've seen is a Premier who actually has increased spending already with the throne speech and now with the motion on the budget. She's allowed the public sector wages to unsustainably continue to rise, although this is something we have come to expect of the Liberal government. All we need to do is take a look at the sunshine list, which increased by 11% to 88,412 workers in 2012: an 11% increase, and that's just in the number of individuals on the list. That doesn't address exactly the increases financially that the members already on the sunshine list were receiving.

There's an example, Madam Speaker, of one individual in 2011 who was making \$135,000; in 2012, when the sunshine list came out, that same individual was making \$185,000. That's a \$50,000 wage increase in a matter of one year. This is the kind of thing that we have to address. This is why the province of Ontario is in the financial ruins that we are today.

We need to actually come up with a plan, and I think, all partisanship aside, Tim Hudak and the PC caucus have come out with a plan, a strategy, that's going to actually address these concerns. The government hasn't been listening; they've been saying, "We want to have real conversation, respectful conversation about the issues facing this province." But yet, every time we try to reach out to this government with ideas on how we can work together collaboratively, what do we get? We get stonewalled at every turn.

I do agree with what the member from Kenora–Rainy River said about Ontarians wanting their governments to work and work possibly together. But this environment here, with this current Liberal government and this current Premier, they're unwilling to do so. It's unfortunate that the Liberal government has gone out and completely ignored our PC plan to institute an across-the-board wage freeze, which would save the province \$2 billion a year—\$2 billion. But that's just the starting point.

When I was doing some training on first aid—and I'll use the province of Ontario as the patient or victim, if you will, who has succumbed to injuries. The first thing you are taught is to check for breathing. Well, the province is barely breathing, but they're breathing nonetheless. The next thing you look for is bleeding, to stop any bleeding that is occurring. Well, this province, financially, is hemorrhaging. So this wage freeze would actually stop the bleeding so that the victim can sort of be retained. Then you tend to the broken bones. Once you've stopped the hemorrhaging, the bleeding, you check for broken bones, and you put a splint or a makeshift cast on there to make sure the bones are set properly, to get that patient—well, you can use the analogy of the bones or the skeletal system, financially, for the manufacturing and the jobs sector here in the province of Ontario.

We have to do this to get the province back on track. The public sector wage freeze was a great start to get that rolling. Of course, then we have to get the patient to hospital for medical care. In this case, it would be the change of government to a PC Tim Hudak-led government.

These are the types of initiatives that we need to take to get the province back on track, and Tim Hudak and the PC caucus are the only ones standing up for Ontarians when it comes to this.

Also, they've ignored their own hand-selected economist, Don Drummond, whom they paid to write a report with recommendations on how we can get out of this fiscal crisis. There are approximately 362 recommendations, and this government has said they have implemented most of those recommendations. However, that's a little misleading. Mr. Drummond himself, actually, has said they've only reached or obtained approximately 14% of those recommendations, and of those recommendations, the easy decisions have been made.

We need to do much better. We need a leader who is actually going to make those tough decisions during tough times, and Tim Hudak is that leader. We're not seeing that from this Premier. This Premier would rather have real conversations and work with the coalition with the NDP, and here's the proof of the pudding. We have a scandal-plagued government that has spent upwards of a billion dollars to save four Liberal seats. Maybe NDP seats aren't worth as much, because the Premier cut a deal with the NDP: about a billion dollars for 18 NDP seats. I don't know. Obviously, Liberal seats are worth more than NDP seats. Nonetheless, here again we have a government that is buying seats.

The process is broken. Instead, the Liberal government continues to grow the size of government, and they continue to create expensive, new, unnecessary government programs, like the Green Energy Act, that this province cannot afford. Let me just talk a little bit about the Green Energy Act, because it ties into those broken bones—the manufacturing sector here in the province of Ontario.

I held a round table discussion in my riding of Northumberland–Quinte West—I encourage everyone at

home and people here today in the galleries to come down and visit Northumberland–Quinte West, a fantastic destination. We have great festivals and great products—farm-fresh produce to buy. But I digress.

When I had this round table, our energy critic, the member from Nipissing, Mr. Fedeli, came down and did a fantastic job of pointing out to the Northumberland Manufacturers' Association and the Quinte Manufacturers Association that one of the issues and challenges these manufacturers are having is directly related to the Green Energy Act.

The Green Energy Act is not only creating divisiveness between neighbours and small communities in rural Ontario, but it's also an economic failure. The fact is that the contract signed by this government for industrial wind turbines is a bad deal. Anywhere between 11.5 and 13 cents per kilowatt hour is what they're paying these contractors, but what's even more important is that in the agreement they actually have to take that production first, before nuclear, before hydro.

What we have is an environment where 10 years ago, when the Liberals came to power and wanted to brand themselves as the green energy government, hydro-electricity met approximately 25% of our electricity needs in the province. Today, only 22% is generated by hydro—clean, green; you couldn't get much cleaner than that. It's on demand when you need it. But here we go. Wind and solar make up another approximately 3%. So we're still at 25%—22% hydro, 3% wind and solar. So we're still no greener 10 years later than we were a decade ago when this government decided that this would be in the best interests of Ontarians.

1640

But what we are for manufacturers—those broken bones I've spoken of here—we need to set them. We have those contracts, when the wind does blow—usually at night. The pinnacle of wind turbine production is in the off-peak hours. So what did that actually cost Ontarians last year? Well, you have to look at the Auditor General's report. This isn't partisan facts. This is an independent body that looks at these things. We noticed that we had to pay \$300 million last year for wind production when the wind did blow during the day, but during off-peak hours when we were producing electricity but we don't have the demand because we have no manufacturing jobs left here in the province of Ontario, we actually had to pay other jurisdictions to take our surplus energy. And what did that cost the taxpayers of Ontario? Well, approximately \$400 million. Already, we're at \$700 million that it cost taxpayers last year, but who takes the brunt of this? It's the manufacturing sector in their global adjustment that they get monthly.

One of the issues and concerns that I had when I went to ESCO, the foundry in the great town of Port Hope, was the fact that every month their global adjustment could fluctuate anywhere from \$16,000 to \$24,000, and you're like, "Wow, that's significant." But that's not the be-all and end-all. What's even worse is that this is a branch plant from the United States, so they have to

report their quarterly profits and their productivity to their headquarters, and when headquarters looks at the statistics, the energy costs, production levels and so on, when they see that the cost of their branch in Port Hope—doing business is so much substantially higher than it is in other jurisdictions which have affordable energy, that's a major concern. If that company has to restructure itself, well, which plant do you think is going to be on the chopping block first? The plant in Port Hope, Ontario, and that's not fair.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Sad.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It is very sad.

Also, other levels of unnecessary government and programs—well, let's talk about the College of Trades, the forced program that is being thrust upon the tradespeople of this great province. Plumbers used to pay \$60 every three years to renew their licence. Now they're being charged \$120 a year—right?—to prop up and create another layer of bureaucracy that does absolutely nothing—absolutely nothing. I am inundated with tradespeople in my riding who are outraged at this. They see it as another unfair tax grab by—sorry—tax revenue tool by this Liberal government. It's not sustainable.

Also in the budget, there are other tax grabs on the citizens of Ontario to pay for their way-out-of-control spending. This is one of the problems that we're looking at now. The Premier said, "We're looking at revenue tools," just like it's not a tax; it's a revenue tool. It's not a tax; it's a premium. It's not a tax; it's a fee. A rose by any other name is still a rose, and this rose stinks.

This Premier is asking for a 1%—

Interjections.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I must be obviously hitting some really good points here, Madam Speaker, because I'm being heckled by the opposition. Obviously, they're a little tender about this.

This Premier has asked for another 1% increase in the HST, another five cents per litre at the gas pumps. Right? Also, the member from Newmarket–Aurora, Mr. Klees, makes it very clear the last few days we've been sitting here—he actually makes sense—there is approximately so much waste here that we could actually save the \$2 billion a year in revenue that this government is looking for to address the infrastructure issues in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas. We can find that waste. If this government didn't waste so much money on eHealth—we're out over \$2 billion now on eHealth, and where have we gotten? Are all the records online? Are they accessible? It's going to save so much money, but this government is wasting money. What about Ornge, the waste there at Ornge? It's a shame. This government should be ashamed of the waste that it has incurred, the scandals it has incurred, off the hard-working families here in the province of Ontario.

This Premier has claimed that she is making the tough decisions to restrain or rein in their overspending, but that's simply not true. If you read their own budget, you'll see that their increase in spending is actually about \$3.6 billion—\$3.6 billion more this year than last year.

Mr. Duncan, the former finance minister—the honourable member Mr. Duncan—actually didn’t spend as much as this finance minister and this Premier.

At the same time, they’ve done nothing to close the deficit of the province. We’re sitting at approximately \$11 billion a year in interest payments alone. If there was another ministry that just handled provincial debt, it would be the third-largest ministry, next to health care and education. That’s how large this ministry would be—\$11 billion in interest at a time when we’re at historic low records for interest rates.

Interjection.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Mr. Gerretsen probably hasn’t even seen interest rates—sorry, the Attorney General hasn’t seen interest rates that low in his lifetime.

What happens, though, when interest rates start to climb up, which they inevitably will do? For every 1% that the interest rate goes up, that’s an additional \$500 million in interest alone that actually has to come out of services in health care, services in education, rebuilding the infrastructure that this province needs to get back on track. We cannot allow this to happen.

This government has done very little to address these concerns, and as an elected official—my constituents recognize this. That’s why they sent me here, to make sure that this government is held to account, to make the right decisions. I’m here to do that today on behalf of those fine people back in Northumberland–Quinte West, and I will continue to do that, because it’s important to my children, my former students and my constituents.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I’m pleased to rise this afternoon to respond and to debate the programming motion. I, like many other people, am upset that this government has fallen short of fulfilling their duty as a government and seem to have fallen, again, into the trap of playing politics rather than serving the people of this province.

A government should always strive to create the best environment for the people in this province to succeed. Unfortunately, the Liberal government has failed at its attempt to draft any legislation that does just this. This motion and budget falls short because it lacks the necessary fundamentals to create jobs and grow Ontario’s economy. Without a strong foundation, without the right fundamentals, Ontario’s economy will not grow, and in fact, will decline.

1650

One essential element of a strong foundation is a government that represents its people. This is done through detailed consultations with stakeholders and constituents alike. I disagree with the Liberal government’s approach of implementing legislation without consultation. The people know the challenges Ontario is facing, because they live with them each and every day and therefore must be considered in government legislation.

There are so many examples of the Liberals’ lack of consultation that I cannot list them all in the 20 minutes that I have, but I will list a few current ones that I would

like to bring to the attention of this House. An example of this government’s lack of consultation can be found on page 262 of the recent Wynne-Horwath budget, which announces the elimination of the Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit for only contact call centres. This change could result in the loss of over 25,000 jobs across Ontario with this single decision.

Now, it’s important to note that under this government jobs in Ontario are hard to come by. There are 600,000 men and women who are unemployed in this province, and now there could be an additional 25,000 people out of work with the implementation of this single initiative. Of course, the majority of these contact call centres are located in places like Vaughan, North Bay, Toronto, Chatham, Brantford and Windsor.

At 10% unemployment, London currently has the highest big-city unemployment rate in the country and, sadly, there is an 11.3% unemployment rate in North Bay, and 9.3% in the city of Windsor. Ironically, contact call centres, which are located in all of these regions, are one of the few industries that are managing to succeed. It makes no sense that this government would put so many jobs at risk when the industry creates so many jobs and is located in regions where jobs are scarce.

The programming motion here today does nothing to help these people and nothing to help create jobs. In fact, for residents who are employed in the contact calling industry, the news only gets worse. I am saddened, but not surprised, that the Wynne government is taking the same approach as the McGuinty government. It is evident that nothing has changed here at Queen’s Park. We are seeing policies that impact thousands of people being implemented without consultation. We are seeing this government do what is best for their political party and not what is best for the people of Ontario.

In my great riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, I have met with dozens of organizations and groups that represented a variety of social and economic interests. I have met with hundreds of stakeholder groups and constituents who have told me that Ontario needs a new direction, a new path. They want things to change, and the people of this province have to be involved in that change.

Another example of the lack of consultation that we have seen from the McGuinty-Wynne government is their attempt to expand their massive empire in the gaming business at the OLG. This expansion proposed 29 new casinos across the province and pulled the rug out from under Ontario’s successful horse racing industry. It is only now that things are not going smoothly that we are seeing the Wynne government—confused, at best, would be a polite way to put it. But they are potentially backtracking on their plan to increase Ontario’s tax revenue in a desperate attempt to try to foot the bill for this government’s spending problem.

The government has failed to involve local communities in the process of siting these new casinos. Instead, they are planning on dictating where casinos will go, without local involvement. This is something that is

totally unacceptable. Governments cannot go around dictating from Toronto, from Queen's Park, where casinos will go and what communities will have to host the gaming sites.

Similarly, in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex my constituents are forced to accept wind turbines in their local communities without local input or third party health studies. This is not how governments should operate. In fact, this is a sign of a tired government, an arrogant government, running the show from inside Queen's Park.

A government's job is to serve the people, not to force them to take on unwanted infrastructure like industrial wind turbines. We have an obligation as legislators to listen to local voices and heed their input. The people in the communities across Ontario know what is best for the communities they live in. They know what will work and what will not.

During the last session of Parliament, I introduced a private member's bill to help ensure local voices in new casino developments. My bill passed second reading, went through the committee process and was up for third reading when Dalton McGuinty decided to resign and lock up the Ontario Legislature until the Liberal Party got their affairs in order and coronated a new leader. Once again, we saw this government doing what was best for themselves, what was best for their own party, the Liberal Party, and not what was best for the people of Ontario.

Since the McGuinty-Wynne government has been in office, we have seen no change in how the government handles itself. We are still seeing an iron fist approach to ruling, a lack of consultation and political games being played day in and day out here in the Legislature. Again, this programming motion does nothing to end these games.

Now some might say that Kathleen Wynne is going about—or our Premier is going about—trying to remedy all of the errors of Dalton McGuinty. She seems to have made some recent changes to Ontario's failed Green Energy Act. I have to say that Kathleen Wynne's attempt to remedy the green energy disaster—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): [Inaudible] the individual about whom you are speaking.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Sorry, Speaker.

I have to say that the Premier's attempt to remedy the green energy disaster is too little, too late. What about the communities who have been contracted? There are going to be roughly 600 industrial wind turbines constructed across my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. The damage has been done. Property values have been impacted, and the men and women in my riding have health concerns from these turbines because this government cannot be bothered to conduct the correct third party health studies prior to pushing ahead with the development of wind turbines.

The Green Energy Act has been a disaster since the beginning, and only now, about four years after it was first implemented, do we get any form of recognition that

the turbine siting process is badly flawed and completely unfair to our communities. But again, from my riding and the people from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, 600 wind turbines are going to be constructed, many over the next 18 months.

This lack of consultation also speaks to the lack of transparency of this Liberal government. I know it's been mentioned many, many times, but we have seen eHealth, Ornge, diluted cancer treatment drugs and last, but certainly not least, a billion-dollar gas plant scandal. I'm not even going back more than a couple of years. There are many, many more tales of scandal and waste, but if I were to go back into detail about the failures of this government, we would be here all day.

Further to my point, the Premier's time in office is a clear indication of her unwillingness to make the necessary and urgent decisions needed to fix the Liberals' made-in-Ontario jobs and debt crisis. When the new Premier says she wants to build on Dalton McGuinty's legacy, I question how she could fail to recognize the amount of scandal that the McGuinty legacy is built on. Indeed, the McGuinty-Wynne legacy is a tale of injustice and mismanagement that has cost Ontario taxpayers billions and billions of dollars. While the scandals pile up, the taxpayers are being left with the bill.

The NDP have called for the establishment of a Financial Accountability Office. This seems good in theory, but the real issue here is the government in power. The Liberal government is plagued with scandals and has shown no interest in changing their ways. We need to get to the root of the problem. The proposed Financial Accountability Office will not solve the real issues at play here; replacing the current Liberal government will. Let's be honest: Ontario has a scandalous government. The NDP has such a strong opposition to their ways, when they are supporting this budget—it just makes no sense to me. In order to deal with this government, they must be replaced. Creating a Financial Accountability Office will not get the job done.

Ontario families know that they cannot trust the Liberal government to stand up for their local communities and they most certainly cannot trust their Premier to get to the bottom of her own scandals, and this programming motion here today does nothing to resolve these concerns. Instead of standing up to the grave injustices of the McGuinty-Wynne government, we are seeing the leader of the third party, the leader of the NDP, support the government's budget and support the current government's leadership. It is totally unacceptable that this government is being supported, despite all the scandals, blunders and mistakes.

1700

The priorities of the McGuinty-Wynne-Horwath government are not for the people of Ontario. Instead, it is about playing politics and staying in power. The Premier's priorities are to increase her government, and we see this in her budget and now in this programming motion as well.

Ironically, one of the first orders of business for this new Premier was to increase cabinet by 22%, adding at

least \$3 million more to Ontario's debt. That follows deliberate choices to hand the chequebook over to union bosses at the expense of students and parents in our education system and park the Drummond commission's 362 recommendations permanently on the shelf. In fact, I would dare to say that this Premier may not even have read the Drummond report.

I would like to just refer to the pre-budget consultation 2013, the report to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, just to talk a bit about the seriousness of the debt crisis in the province of Ontario: "Net provincial debt (the difference between liabilities and financial assets) was \$235.6 billion in 2011-12 and is forecast to increase to \$255.1 billion in 2012-13" growing to "\$275 billion in 2013-14, \$290.8 billion in 2014-15, \$301.2 billion in 2015-16 and \$308.1 billion in" fiscal year "2016-17. Net debt per capita was \$17,625 in 2011-12 and similarly is expected to increase to \$19,075 in 2012-13."

Another report says that, in fiscal year 2019-20, the debt in the province of Ontario is going to hit \$550 billion. That's coming in at approximately \$40,000 per capita. When this government was elected, it was \$11,000 per capita. So the debt crisis is very real, and the Liberal government continually ignores that. That's why we're seeing the increase in spending.

From this government we see no initiatives to reduce the size and cost of government. Instead of restraint, we continue to have a government spending more, doubling our debt, as I mentioned, over the past nine years and growing that debt to \$550 billion by 2019-20.

Over the past decade as well on the jobs front, Ontario has lost 300,000 good jobs in the manufacturing sector but, at the same time, we saw 300,000 more added to an already bloated government payroll. Soon the only industry in Ontario will be government. If you look at the StatsCan data from the last year, the government sector has grown by 48,000 jobs—that's over 12 months, Speaker. The government sector has grown by 48,000 jobs, and we haven't seen a single net new job added in the private sector. Fewer people are working outside the government, paying for more people working inside the government with higher wages, benefits and pensions than those who are paying the taxes.

We see reports from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business indicating that public sector workers earn 27% more in wages, pensions and benefits than their counterparts in the private sector.

Ignoring the issues Ontario is facing is not solving the problem. Throwing money at the province's problems are not long-term solutions, and certainly this programming motion here does nothing to resolve any of these concerns.

We are facing the biggest jobs and debt crisis of our lifetimes. Anyone who has ever been faced with a crisis will tell you that spending more money and ignoring the core issues will not save you. The only way forward is to move confidently and boldly in the direction you know is right.

Ontario needs a new approach, one that will create jobs and stop reckless overspending. It's clear that the current government is not up to the challenge of doing this. The Ontario PC Party, and our leader, Tim Hudak, are the only party with a comprehensive plan to end overspending and grow Ontario's economy. I am proud to say that our Ontario PC team has put forward a plan to rein in overspending, get our economic fundamentals right and grow the economy through our Paths to Prosperity white papers: bold ideas to create a leaner public service that delivers more value for less money; lower taxes on businesses so that they can invest and create jobs right here in the province of Ontario; reduce the heavy hand of the 300,000 regulations that stand between businesses and success; fix outdated labour laws that have made us uncompetitive and are costing us jobs every day; and create more affordable energy for Ontario families by treating energy as an economic fundamental rather than a social experiment.

We can no longer be content by being first in debt and last in job creation. Ontario will rise again and reach its true potential, but only if we change the team that leads the province of Ontario. I would encourage our Premier to adopt the policies we have proposed and take a read-through of the Paths to Prosperity series, now a dozen individual white papers, all featuring bold and innovative policy discussions and commentary. Our party is committed to working hard for Ontario families and Ontario businesses, and that is why we are offering real solutions for the disaster that this Liberal government has gotten us into. Sadly, we have seen no change and no renewal from the recycled Liberal caucus and Premier.

While the politically easy thing to do may have been to let the budget pass, as those in the third party have chosen to do, we have a responsibility to demand a plan that brings about a major change in the direction of this province. It is unfortunate that Premier Wynne has decided to ignore our recommendations and has included none of them in her budget or her government's legislation. This Premier had an opportunity to change course and move Ontario down a different path, but regrettably for Ontario, the Premier and the leader of the third party, the NDP, have chosen to further entrench the Liberals' spending and scandal-plagued legacy.

We need a new approach in Ontario, and it starts with having only as much government as we can afford. For this reason, my colleagues and I will be opposing the programming motion. I encourage everyone in this House, especially the members of the third party, to really reconsider their decision because, as I said, in 2003 when this government came to office the debt was around \$135 billion and by 2019-20 it's going to be \$550 billion. That's just unacceptable, and really defines the legacy of Dalton McGuinty and now Premier Wynne.

Maybe that's why we're seeing this government looking at hiking fees and hiking taxes, whether it's a 1% HST hike or a five-cent-a-litre gas tax. We're seeing in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*—I know the *Toronto Sun* has an article about these massive fee hikes,

whether it's photo radar or paying more for Drive Clean. They're even considering that when people go to a ServiceOntario centre, they're going to have to pay a fee to have service from the government. It's completely unacceptable.

For this reason, I'm proud to stand on behalf of the people who sent me here to do a job for them and to be their voice. I'm proud to oppose this Liberal government. It's full of scandal, it's full of waste and it has to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise this afternoon on behalf of the residents of Dufferin–Caledon and discuss the matter before us. I'm actually quite surprised that no one from the NDP or the Liberal Party believes that Ontario's finances or, in fact, the debate that is occurring in this chamber today, are worthy of debate. But we in the Progressive Conservative caucus certainly believe it is, and therefore I'm happy to join.

We have over half a million people out of work in Ontario today, we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs and the party opposite has doubled our debt. Yet instead of focusing on these crucial issues, the Liberals put their own party's interests ahead of Ontarians. Confidence is one thing, but a callous disregard for hard-working taxpayers is quite another. That's what the continually unfolding gas plants scandal is all about: hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars spent to win an election in a few seats. That crosses the line.

1710

A want of confidence motion is important, because the PC caucus believes, unlike the budding NDP-Liberal coalition, that the government has lost the confidence of the people. Ontarians deserve better. The Liberal government's total disregard for taxpayers, and efforts to keep the truth from Ontarians about the Oakville and Mississauga gas plant cancellations, cross the line.

We learned from the Auditor General how deep this scandal goes, and that is why we were clear from the beginning that the matter had to be voted on, and in this chamber, as a matter of confidence.

We knew the Liberals would do anything to protect their political interests. The unfortunate thing is that the NDP have now decided to side with the Liberal government instead of with Ontario taxpayers.

What a difference a few short weeks can make. It was only a short time ago that the NDP caucus was rising in this chamber, and pounding their table at committee, claiming that the Liberal government had misled Ontarians about the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants. And yet, here we are. Today, we see the NDP not only fully supporting the Liberal government but actually assisting them in suppressing debate and speeding the NDP-Liberal budget through the chamber.

If we don't hold the Liberals to account now for their dishonesty and how taxpayer dollars were spent in this gas plant fiasco, we will surely see more of it from them. Ontario cannot afford for the Liberals to continue to put the interests of the Liberal Party ahead of solving our jobs and debt crisis.

The NDP may have decided they have no problem propping up the government that they themselves have chastised for misleading Ontarians, but the PC caucus most certainly disagrees.

Now, I can understand why the NDP's strategists and friends may believe it's in their political interests to keep the Liberals in charge, but I can't see how that is in the best interests of taxpayers or the half a million people looking for a job in Ontario. We owe it to them to hold this government to account and put Ontario back on the right track.

The NDP-Liberal budget, or the Prosperous and Fair Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2013, as they like to call it, was introduced in this Legislature on May 2. Now, just a few weeks later, they want to pass a programming motion.

Well, since the budget was introduced, I've had time to take in some Dufferin–Caledon residents' comments and concerns, and do you know what I'm hearing? I'm hearing concerns about the deficit. I'm hearing concerns about jobs. I'm hearing concerns about leadership, or the lack thereof.

It is this last point, the utter lack of leadership by this government, that I'd like to focus on for a moment, because I really feel like the party opposite's budgetary policy crystallizes just how misguided this government is.

To illustrate my point, consider the context within which we presently find ourselves. Just about three months ago, a new Premier moved into the corner office on this very floor, just down the hall—a new Premier, but clearly the same tired, old Liberal government. So we now had a new Premier in Ontario, one selected by Liberal Party brass and activists, but a new Premier nonetheless.

Now, don't get me wrong, Speaker. I know that is the process, and I know that's how our democratic system works. But what I can't understand is, sure, that may be the system, but upon becoming Premier, upon receiving that honour, there's no reason why Premier Wynne couldn't have presented a bold new direction for Ontario. Premier Wynne could have swept into office on the winds of change, could have proposed that any number of failed Liberal policies be scrapped in favour of those she felt were better for Ontario.

In short, the Premier could have presented a vision for a brighter future, a vision for a stronger, a healthier and, frankly, a more prosperous Ontario. But alas, no such vision ever came.

Instead, what Dufferin–Caledon families saw was the Premier clinging to the same old flawed Dalton McGuinty policies that got our province into the mess it is in today. Instead, what we see is a three-month-old Premier introduce a budget that is not reflective of her vision for Ontario but, rather, of the NDP's vision for Ontario.

So what does that say about our rookie Premier? It says that, just like her mentor, her predecessor, Dalton McGuinty, the Premier is concerned about one thing and one thing only: clinging to power at all costs. Her pre-

decessor spent an estimated \$585 million that we know of on a seat-saver program cancelling gas plants, and now the Premier proposes to spend \$1 billion on a government-saver program buying off the NDP. What else could possibly explain the Liberal government's budget, containing so much spending directed precisely by the NDP? All it's doing is trying to save their seats and avoid an election. It is astonishing.

For example, we've heard the Premier talk about the transit investment for what seems like weeks and weeks on end. Yet when it comes to the budget, we see \$1 billion dedicated to running from an election and next to nothing on transit. So I caution all the Ontarians watching the debate today and following the discussion surrounding the Metrolinx report: When the Premier talks about things like revenue tools, when the Premier talks about the need for transit funding and the lack of funds available, remember that she found \$1 billion to save her government by buying NDP support.

This brings me back to what I was talking about earlier, which was having a vision. Real leadership would have been acting on what we have been saying. Real leadership is not the catalogue of broken promises we see from the Liberals; real leadership is doing what you say that you're going to do. If the Premier truly believes in the transit plan she speaks of, then I ask: Why didn't she commit the \$1-billion NDP bounty to, say, transit instead? The answer is simple, Speaker: Because the leader of the third party never told the Premier to do so, and so the Premier ignored it.

Let's call it as it is. This government's budgetary policy is less about governance and more about survival. That's why all the Liberal speakers continue to stand up and boast about their NDP budget. The only thing that is Liberal about this budget is the fact that their finance minister introduced it. No leadership, no recognition of the terrible spending crisis in Ontario; just plain old simple political maneuvering to desperately hang on to power.

That's why the PC caucus has been very consistent in our approach to this flawed NDP-Liberal approach. In fact, it mirrors our response to this government as a whole. We've said from the beginning that unless we saw real, meaningful change on a number of specific issues, we simply could not and would not support this government.

It's really quite simple. The province of Ontario needs a government that has a plan to reduce spending and create jobs. This government does not have a clue how to do either, and so we cannot in good faith support them.

Today, there are over half a million people in Ontario who want to work but can't find a job in their home province. Those are the folks the Liberal government should be thinking of when writing a budget, not the NDP.

The sad news is that this government just doesn't get it. If they did, they would realize that the first step to getting spending under control is to stop spending. Yet all one must do is consult page 208 of the provincial

budget to see that spending has actually increased by \$3.6 billion next year alone.

The sad truth is that the Liberal government has no real plan at all to balance the budget. That's the reality of their budgetary policy: no plan and no commitment to responsible fiscal management.

Does the government have the intention to balance the budget? Perhaps. But the reality is that with no plan, their good intentions, no matter how well placed, are just the foundations of yet more broken Liberal promises. We've been down this road already, Speaker, and if we continue on the current path, the dire predictions of Don Drummond will come true. By 2017-18, our provincial debt will eclipse \$400 billion and our deficit will soar to \$30 billion.

The Liberal government and the Premier tell us that this budget is about making minority Parliament work. The line has been used repeatedly: "Ontarians don't want an election." But I have an unfortunate suspicion that this mentality has the Premier, her government, and their NDP backers wrongly thinking that people endorse the Liberal government. When I talk to residents in Dufferin-Caledon, nothing could be further from the truth.

1720

What people don't want is to see their money wasted and their children's future mortgaged with unsustainable debt. Today in Ontario, every single man, woman and child owes \$20,000 as their portion of the provincial debt, and yet here in this budget we see that the Liberal government plans to spend over \$30 million a day more than it takes in in taxes. We see spending increasing in two thirds of the government ministries, despite the fact that Ontario's provincial debt has already soared to \$273 billion, double what it was when the Liberals formed government.

Under this Liberal administration, government revenues have increased by \$42 billion since 2003. This represents an unbelievable 56% increase in government revenues since the Liberals formed government, and yet, still, Ontario's deficit is larger than all of the other provincial deficits in Canada combined. In fact, under the Liberal government, spending has become so out of control that today a Dufferin-Caledon resident owes \$20,000 as their share of the provincial debt compared to approximately \$17,000 as their share of the national debt. That is all the proof you need of the spending crisis here in the province of Ontario.

Despite all of these alarming numbers, however, the Liberal budgetary policy is centred on one thing, and one thing alone: staying in power. And they're willing to spend any amount of money to do it. That is why it is abundantly clear that the only way to help Ontario become strong again and to finally get our finances back on stable footing is to set a new course with a new team. Unfortunately, and it pains me to say, the NDP does not share this view. Evidently, the NDP is of the opinion that the best party to govern Ontario is the Liberal Party, which is more than passing strange when you consider

some of the comments made by the third party members at justice committee or here in the Legislature during question period over the last few months.

In a nutshell, the NDP supports the Liberal government—that they’re right. But you know what? Dufferin–Caledon does not believe that. Dufferin–Caledon residents are consistently disappointed by the long line of scandals that start with this Liberal government. They cannot believe that after seeing record government revenues, the budget is still far from balanced. They cannot believe that after all the controversy surrounding this cancellation of two gas plants at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars to the taxpayers, the NDP would still support this government.

In case you want to argue that an election is too expensive, I want to reference a report that the Chief Electoral Officer issues when by-elections are held. A general election in Ontario costs approximately \$92 million. But keep in mind that we already have two vacant seats today, and those by-elections must be held before September, so the Chief Electoral Officer and the government will already be spending over \$1 million on two by-elections this summer—and that’s two. If anyone else resigns, if anything else happens, those by-elections still happen, and come September, there are lots of rumours that in fact we go from by-election right into general election. So this is not about saving money for a general election. Only in the strange world of Liberal–NDP accounting would someone possibly venture the notion that we should spend \$1 billion appeasing a political party to avoid spending \$92 million seeking a mandate from Ontarians in a general election. What a shame.

With their budget, the Liberal government has displayed a startling lack of awareness about the most pressing issues of our time, issues like the totally out-of-control spending in our province, issues like the utter lack of accountability that happened at the gas plants, Ornge and eHealth, just to name a few, and issues like the job crisis in our province, where we have seen 300,000 manufacturing jobs disappear under the Liberal government. These changes have been neglected by this government, which has instead tabled a budget with the sole intention of clinging to power at any cost. That is why I believe the government has lost the moral authority to govern, and that is why I do not support this motion.

I want to come back, for a moment, to the 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost under the Liberal government, because I think it’s quite relevant to this discussion. This point is relevant because it speaks very strongly to priorities.

Ontario’s manufacturing sector has always been an integral part of our economy. They are our job creators. So when you see the industry hit particularly hard over the last number of years, you’d think it would be a priority of the government. Sadly, it is not.

Over the course of the last few months, I have regularly been meeting with local manufacturers, touring their facilities and hearing first-hand the uphill battle they

fight every day to keep up with the mountain of taxes and red tape. It’s an eye-opener. Time and time again I hear the same message: “The government isn’t listening to us.” Considering this Premier’s preoccupation with “conversations,” I joined Dufferin–Caledon manufacturers in concluding that these are one-way conversations.

About two weeks ago I toured a manufacturing facility in Caledon. I don’t want to name names here, but I will say that this particular business is an industry leader in their sector. The company is owned by two partners who bought it together over 20 years ago. At that time, they were doing well in their jobs, but they wanted something more. They had an entrepreneurial spirit and they took a big risk. Twenty-one years and a whole lot of hard work later, they are an industry leader and a strong employer in Dufferin–Caledon.

Both partners’ sons actually work in the company, which was a dream of both men when they bought the business all those years ago. Well, you can imagine my surprise and disappointment when this gentleman then relayed to me that he has now, much to his own dismay, felt a responsibility as a father to advise his son that perhaps their field isn’t his best bet for a prosperous future. He’s moved from a job creator to: “Just find a job away from the red tape.” When I asked why, he said very simply, “Because there are increasingly more costs than there are opportunities.”

Now, think about that for a moment. Here is a man who has worked day and night for 20 years to build a company, and yet he’s looking ahead and doesn’t see opportunity on the horizon, but rather more hardship, more red tape, more frustration. That is very dangerous, and it is something that is apparently totally lost on this government.

Ontario manufacturers are competitive, not due to their labour costs or cheap products; they are competitive due to the entrepreneurial drive and ingenuity. The more you tax away opportunities, the more you restrict ingenuity with needless red tape, the more you hurt Ontario manufacturers. After 20 successful but undoubtedly challenging years, this man’s spirit is being smothered by excessive government bureaucracy.

His company employs approximately 200 people in Dufferin–Caledon. Is he a multinational corporation? No. Can he afford a division of lobbyists to let the government know what he needs? No. Can he afford an army of lawyers and accountants to sort through the endless and needless red tape that hurts his business? No. But does he represent an absolutely essential part of our economy? Absolutely.

I can tell you that he was waiting to see the direction this government would take with this budget, and you know what? He’s also disappointed, he’s let down and he’s dismayed. He can’t understand why the Liberal government expects him to pay more and more taxes and still balance his budget, and yet they can’t balance their own. He can’t understand why this government seems to have no idea how to restrain spending when he has to do it every single day.

These are the job creators. These are the people that we need to encourage and keep in Ontario if we are going to have good-quality jobs and families happy to be here.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: When this Liberal government came to office they promised to balance the budget year after year—in fact, every year. These promises continued, year after year, all the way to today, 2013, and now with the introduction of this year's budget we have a document that calls for another \$9.8-billion deficit to add to our already astounding \$280-billion debt, a debt that has more than doubled since the Liberals have been in power.

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Again, similar to the promises the Liberals have made in the past, we have a Liberal finance minister proudly touting a plan that makes another vague commitment to balancing the budget by 2017. Give me a break, Madam Speaker. When you look at the budget documents themselves, there are a few graphs missing, a few gaps in the graphs that don't show us how they are getting from, for example, 2015 through to 2017. Where they're reining in the size and cost of government, we have no idea.

The sad reality is that there is no financial plan in this province that can be relied upon. There has never been, and the proof is in the pudding: billion-dollar deficits and compounding debts. In fact, this year, congratulations to the Liberal government, we will hit \$10 billion in interest payments alone, mostly to foreigners and overseas. People are owed money on their government bonds. Sadly, that now constitutes the third-largest ministry after health care and education—unbelievable.

In the last year alone, the Liberals have snuffed off countless blunders of mismanagement and waste, including investigations into Ornge, eHealth and the politically motivated cancellation of two gas plants.

Since January, they've introduced a whole slew of new taxes: the tire tax, the trades tax, more eco fees, increased WSIB premiums, hydro increases, and the latest proposals, which came from Metrolinx and seem to be embraced by the government: a 1% hike in the HST, five-cent-per-litre increase in gasoline tax, parking levies, more development charges. I mean, the list goes on and on.

To top it off, the latest budget calls for more spending, which can only mean more taxes. In fact, they spent a billion dollars more than planned to buy the NDP support for this Liberal budget.

Saying the so-called Premier—and I say “so-called” Premier because she was never elected Premier, has never been elected Premier—is out of touch with reality is an understatement. The Liberals’ blatant and continued disregard for taxpayers’ money is unacceptable and costing us bigtime.

The gas plant scandals alone cost Ontarians at least \$585 million and growing to a billion; we'll find out what the total cost is probably in late August when the Auditor General comes back with his report. This is money the Liberals diverted from health care and education for purely political reasons, to save the Liberal

Party seats in the last election. The cost of this scandal is equivalent to 2,925 million weeks of groceries for the average family at \$200 per week.

The Ornge scandal cost Ontarians at least \$700 million. With this scandal, the Auditor General revealed that the Liberal government ignored multiple red-flag warnings as early as 2008 over the “deceitful” business practices and its plans to use public funds for their for-profit business ventures at Ornge. The cost of the Ornge scandal is equivalent to tuition for—listen for it—97,493 university students.

The eHealth scandal costs have doubled over the last three years to over \$2 billion, and we don't have electronic health records to show for it. This is despite the Auditor General's scathing 2009 report that revealed the government failed to properly oversee the eHealth initiative. We still have little to nothing, as I said, to show for the spending, as the eHealth projects are either behind schedule, over budget, or non-existent. The cost of this scandal is equivalent to the construction of new hospitals in my riding, in both Collingwood and Alliston, and six others that could have been built throughout Ontario. That's just the eHealth scandal alone. It's a lot of waste that could have been spent in much better ways.

Instead of their being prudent stewards of the province's finances, Premier Kathleen Wynne's Liberal solution, propped up by NDP leader Andrea Horwath and her gang, continues to be more debt and increased fees and taxes. They might not call it a tax—the Liberals are masters at spinning the truth—but a tax is a tax is a tax.

The trades tax was implemented by this Liberal government and came into effect on April 8 of this year. It's expected to cost tradespersons millions in what the Liberals term a “membership fee” to pay for yet another wasteful layer of bureaucracy called the College of Trades. Due to the new fees, local tradespersons, tradespersons all across Ontario and employers are required to pay six times more for the same membership that they may now hold. The College of Trades is proposing to raise tradespersons' fees from approximately \$20 per year to as high as \$200 per year per tradesperson, a 1,000% increase. This of course will have a similar negative implication for consumers who will experience the passed-on costs. The new tax is going to drive up costs, feed the underground economy and discourage jobs and skilled trades, and if it were up to the Ontario PC Party, Tim Hudak and our caucus, the new fees and the College of Trades would be scrapped.

Just ask a constituent of mine, Krista Walcroft, owner of Collingwood Toyota, what she thinks about the new tax. She said, “As an employer of licensed automotive technicians and apprentices, I am not clear on the benefits of this new college. It is becoming more expensive to be a skilled tradesperson, [but] there is no clear explanation why the increases in fees and no indication of what they will receive in return for paying a lot more financially and frequently.”

Or ask Katherine VanLeeuwen, vice-president of the Barrie Construction Association. She said, “We've seen

little or no evidence that this trades tax will have any benefit. It will drive up construction costs in Barrie, feed the underground economy and drive people away from the skilled trades. We joined the campaign” to stop the trades tax “because we can’t afford to let that happen.”

Or ask James, another constituent of mine from Rosemount. In an email, he put it best, I think, Mr. Speaker. He said, “If I graduated from a university and was awarded with a degree, I could carry on and get a job in whatever discipline I wanted relative to the confines of my study. The degree is mine. I never have to pay for renewing it or fees towards some draconian membership, unless I choose to be part of an institute, club or society. So if I am a truck or car mechanic, I serve five years learning the trade, countless hours in school and tireless hours of working until I gradually make the trade. Then I sit exams, get awarded my credentials and I am there. But that trade qualification piece of paper is not yours. It will belong to the College of Trades. Unless you pay an annual fee for that piece of paper, they will deem it to be worthless and can revoke it. In effect you are not a mechanic at all unless you pay your dues to the College of Trades. This is a complete infringement of the rights and privileges of an individual and can deprive you of having a job.” I suggest James is also an excellent writer, if he wanted to go into that field.

Then there is the tire tax that came into effect on April 1. Farmers, along with those in the mining and construction industry, have been hard hit by this increase as it has driven up fees by as much as 2,000%, and it came out of the blue, Mr. Speaker. I was in complete shock when this came in as there was no consultation at all with farmers. It will not only lead to increases in the cost of food for everyone, but creates an uneven playing field with other provinces and the States that don’t have this extra expense.

My constituent, Wayne from Singhampton, recently shared his concerns when he said, “This drastic rate increase will unfairly penalize farm businesses by costing them thousands of additional dollars in extra fees each year.... This decision contributes further to the uneven playing field for Ontario farmers who already struggle to compete with farmers in other provinces and the US who do not face similar fees.... This decision will negatively impact farm businesses and farm supply businesses, further suppressing local rural communities by hurting sales and cash flow to small businesses.”

You would think this issue would be very important to the Premier, who is also the Minister of Agriculture and Food—or, should I say, the part-time Minister of Agriculture and Food—but apparently not so, Mr. Speaker. The Premier was not only completely unaware of the increase when my colleague Mr. Bill Walker, the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, raised the issue in this Legislature, but she has done nothing to address the mounting concerns from rural constituents.

Next, we have WSIB rates that are also increasing—the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. John from Collingwood wrote, “As a small masonry contractor, this

amounts to the government sticking its hand in my pocket to the tune of 15% of my income”—15%; all for what? “I have carried private insurance for about 40 years and never used it, but always felt secure that if the day were to come, it would be there for me.... From experience [as an employer], I have seen that WSIB’s main focus is to assign blame and harass injured employees and not provide coverage.”

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On May 1, hydro rates went up again. Smart meter pricing increased by between 3% and 7%. The list goes on and on, and while Ontarians are paying a lot more money, they are receiving a lot less service. When you think about how many hospitals could have been built with this money that has been wasted on scandals and waste, or how many services could have been funded, it makes you furious.

The Collingwood General and Marine Hospital has had a capital expansion application in to the government since 2004. The planned expansion—badly needed—includes a new wing for ambulatory care and dialysis—our dialysis is jammed to the walls; we cannot put any more dialysis stations in the hospital. The ambulatory care and dialysis units would be renovated and expanded, which would make more room for an emergency department expansion, which is also badly needed. The hospital is projecting a \$500,000 deficit in 2013-14 due to wage increases for unionized staff and a 0% funding increase to cover those wage increases from the government.

Stevenson Memorial Hospital in Alliston has an application in to the Central LHIN for a new emergency department. They are one of only two hospitals in our LHIN that don’t have a multi-million dollar capital project approved or in the planning stages.

I’ve also received a call recently from Orillia’s Soldiers’ Memorial Hospital, where some of my Collingwood residents go. I know that some of our ALC residents—alternate-level-of-care patients in Collingwood—are basically stuck in Soldiers’ Memorial Hospital. Although they do get good care there, they would be more appropriately cared for in a nursing home or at home.

The call from Soldiers’ Memorial Hospital was about funding cuts that will lead to the closure of 20-plus beds and 50-plus staff layoffs, which, they explained, will impact the number of alternate-level-of-care patients in my riding, who often seek residency in the hospital as they wait for a nursing-home bed in a care facility.

The Liberals haven’t built any nursing homes or long-term-care beds. We built 20,000 new beds, and I can remember criticism during our time in office, criticism from the Liberal opposition at that time, saying that we had overbuilt. We also renovated an additional 16,000 nursing-home or long-term-care beds.

I’m told that, as of today, some 24,000 people—mostly seniors, of course—are waiting for a long-term-care bed at a home. It’s one of the longest waiting lists we’ve ever had in the province. Up to 35% of hospital

beds in my area, as I said, are full of ALC patients, who would get, frankly—they get good care, but they would get more appropriate care in a nursing home or long-term-care facility, and the waiting list is years.

That's one of the biggest issues that I know, Mr. Speaker, you face in your riding and we face right across the province, and yet the government cuts physiotherapy services and expects seniors to stay in their homes and the families to be able to care for them when the lineups for CCAC services are unprecedented also. It's totally contrary; if they don't build some more long-term-care beds, people will die at home without the appropriate care. That's not the way we should be heading in a prosperous place like Ontario, where we spend \$127 billion a year, up \$56 billion since 10 years ago, when this government came to office. They've got enough money; they just have to set their priorities over there.

I recently heard, as we all have, from countless constituents concerned about the physiotherapy cuts. According to the Designated Physiotherapy Clinics Association, the cuts are estimated at about a \$44-million reduction in funding; again, without consultation with seniors and without consultation with a number of the associations that provide physiotherapy services or represent physiotherapists.

The fact of the matter is that this is a drastic cut in services, and it doesn't make a lot of sense. Again, it goes contrary to keeping people in their homes, and that may include the long-term-care-home or the retirement home that they're in, or the home that they've lived in prior to, perhaps, going to a retirement home or long-term-care home.

The association indicates that the cuts will reduce services for seniors in long-term-care homes alone by 47% and the number of physiotherapy visits for seniors in retirement homes by 94%. They also note that most seniors will no longer qualify for treatment in their homes, as the new guidelines will force seniors to attend external community clinics. These cuts are shocking, and I'm concerned that this will lead to more falls, more fractures, more respiratory conditions causing hospitalizations and additional costs to the health care system as a whole.

The Liberals are moving physiotherapy service from a low-cost provider in designated physiotherapy clinics to high-cost providers in LHINs and community care access centres. This creates an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy that patients will have to go through to receive the same care from the same provider and will increase the cost per visit, it's estimated, from \$12.20 per visit to \$120 when that care is provided through a community care access centre rather than how it's provided now. Remember, it's well known that community care access centres spend about 35% of the dollars given to them for health care on administration and overhead.

I was at Riverwood Retirement Home in Alliston in my riding last Friday to talk about these issues with residents and local physiotherapists. The residents were irritated that the changes were made by the Liberals

without any stakeholder consultation and that they're still going ahead despite the vast opposition we've seen across the province. According to my local physiotherapist and those who visited Queen's Park today—we had several hundred visit today, and several of us did petitions today on behalf of physiotherapists and their patients—these changes will move treatment from a preventive model that stops falls and keeps people active to a reactive model that treats people after an injury has occurred.

Let me read one letter I received from a local physiotherapist from my riding. He said, "As a health care professional working with seniors over the past five years I have a few issues [with the changes].

His first concern: "The proposed five treatments"—remember, they're going from 100 to 150 treatments per year down to five to 11 treatments per year per senior—"is not an effective treatment model with this type of population. No one will recover in five treatments following a hip fracture or replacement. Even a 20-year-old cannot recover this quickly. The older we get the longer we take to heal. The stamina of an elderly individual is also reduced, and implementing an hour of therapy each session is not practical. Seniors need shorter more frequent doses to get better not five power-hour treatments."

Concern number two that this physiotherapist expressed—he says, "These proposed cuts are based on assumptions and lack of proper research. If we need to reduce spending we should have a discussion with all the stakeholders involved not a single doctor who has made multiple claims without proper research. Our current Liberal government seems to make huge decisions with very little information."

The third concern expressed: "Our seniors are also unaware of the situation and how it will affect them coming August 1. The initial announcement was framed as an increase in spending? Why are" the Liberals "misleading our seniors?"

Number four: "The cuts will be more severe for retirement homes, and this population stands to gain"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I hesitate to interrupt, but I would ask the member—I caution him on his language, to ensure that it's parliamentary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be sure to get back to my constituent and tell him he is restricted from expressing himself because he has to stick to parliamentary language so that I can read his letter out in this House. But I do appreciate your ruling and I believe it is correct.

I'll just wind up, Mr. Speaker. It was a very interesting meeting. Again, the government is saying that they're expanding services. They're not expanding services. Some of these people have a hard time getting from their room down to the dining room for a meal, and now they're expected to go, in my case, several tens of miles outside of Alliston, to either Newmarket or Barrie, to a designated clinic. I don't know who's going to drive them. Who's going to pay for the taxi? You should have been in the room. There were like 50 seniors who were in

the common room at Riverwood Retirement Home last Friday, and they were stunned. They got the message, because CTV from Barrie came and interviewed a number of them, and they talked about how important these services were and how angry they were at this Liberal government, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: My point of order is this: I want to compliment the member on his calm presentation this afternoon. It's as calm a presentation as I've seen from the member for Simcoe-Grey in all my years in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm quite sure that's not a point of order, but it's a point of compliment.

Further debate?

The question is on the amendment to the motion. Mr. Wilson has moved that the motion be amended by adding the following:

“Adding a new section, entitled ‘Section D: Want of Confidence’”—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize. The question is on the amendment to the amendment. Mr. Hillier has moved that the amendment be amended by adding the following:

“That, in the event of prorogation before the want of confidence motion standing in the name of the member from Simcoe-Grey is called, the motion shall be placed on the Orders and Notices paper on the second day of the subsequent session and shall be called on the fifth sessional day of the new session.”

Is it the pleasure of the House that the amendment to the amendment carry?

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

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This is a 30-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a notice requesting a deferral, which is signed by the chief government whip. Pursuant to standing order 28(h), this vote will be deferred until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day. I recognize the Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Attorney General, Mr. Gerretsen, has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1752.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF 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
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Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Margarett R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
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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
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre délégué 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 délégué aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister 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 Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB) Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC) O'Toole, John (PC)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre Essex Chatham-Kent-Essex Durham	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie Oshawa Perth-Wellington	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB) Prue, Michael (NDP) Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest Beaches-East York Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB) Schein, Jonah (NDP) Scott, Laurie (PC)	Guelph Davenport Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB) Shurman, Peter (PC) Singh, Jagmeet (NDP) Smith, Todd (PC)	York West / York-Ouest Thornhill Bramalea-Gore-Malton Prince Edward-Hastings	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Toronto-Danforth Mississauga-Erindale	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB) Yakabuski, John (PC) Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Hamilton Mountain Huron-Bruce Timiskaming-Cochrane Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound Simcoe-Grey Scarborough-Agincourt Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) Vacant Vacant	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke Elgin-Middlesex-London Willowdale London West / London-Ouest Windsor-Tecumseh	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

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Grant Crack, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Bill Mauro
Taras Natyshak, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
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France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qaadri
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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Joe Dickson, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
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Ernie Hardeman, Helena Jaczek
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
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