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of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 15 July 2014

Mardi 15 juillet 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 15 July 2014

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 15 juillet 2014

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that, for the purposes of standing order 6(b), the current meetings of the House shall be considered an extension of the spring sessional period provided for in standing order 6(a).

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity and recognizing me. I will be sharing my time on this motion with the member from Etobicoke Centre, the member from Beaches–East York and the member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Our government believes that midnight sittings are essential to allow the Legislature to strike committees and pass the budget in a timely manner, in keeping with the Premier's commitment to Ontarians. Speaker, as you are aware, the Premier, during the election campaign, spoke very forcefully and strongly about the need to ensure that the progressive plan that we have put forward through the budget be passed in the Legislature as soon as possible. Therefore, the Premier committed to call the Legislature back within 20 days of the election, if elected, so that we could get on with the work of the people. In that regard, that's exactly what she did. After the election, and after being given the opportunity by Ontarians to be their elected government, the Premier called the Legislature that came into place on July 2 with the election of the Speaker, followed by a speech from the throne on July 3 and the budget that was tabled just yesterday.

Speaker, we feel that in order to achieve the legislative agenda, and particularly the passage of the budget, the House would need to sit from 6 p.m. until midnight for a number of weeks to move forward with our progressive plan. I don't take joy in the fact that we may all have to sit here for the next couple of weeks until midnight to get the work done. I am disappointed that we have to take this step, but it is necessary, unfortunately, because the opposition parties have rejected striking the committees in keeping with the long-standing convention in the Legislature, instead advocating for a committee structure that has no precedent in Ontario.

I enjoy a good working relationship with the other House leaders, and we've been in constant conversation to ensure that we can reach some sort of an accommodation. But we also need to make sure on this side of the House that, when it comes to getting things done, when it comes to making sure that the budget that was presented by the Minister of Finance yesterday gets passed—we need to take this important step because this budget is perhaps one of the most important budgets being tabled at this juncture in our economy.

This is a budget which, as you know, was a result of the election. It was first presented on May 1 in the previous Parliament. The opposition parties, as you may recall, decided to vote against the budget; hence the election that took place. At the core of that election, at least for the government, was our plan around the budget, making sure that we are making important investments in our communities across the province, be they urban, suburban or rural communities, small towns or big cities. We're making the necessary investments to grow our economy, to create good-paying jobs, to ensure that we are building public transit and transportation infrastructure across the province, and also protecting hard-working Ontarians who may not have a workplace pension, through the creation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

All those key elements that were so central to the campaign were part of the budget yesterday. Clearly, on June 12, Ontarians spoke. Ontarians spoke by voting in support of a progressive, positive plan that focuses on building Ontario up. They re-elected 58 Liberal members of provincial parliament, elected a majority government, to ensure that that work gets done. It is a very clear mandate that has been given by the people of this great province.

If I can speak about my community of Ottawa Centre, it has been a great honour for me to represent my community for seven years now; I was first elected in 2007. I've had an incredible opportunity to serve my community, from Glebe to Centretown to Carleton Heights to Carlington, the great neighbourhoods of Westboro, Hintonburg and Wellington Village. All those communities have been growing and evolving over the last several years. I have been very fortunate to be part of all that incredible growth and progress, working with my constituents every day on issues that are important.

One of the things, Speaker, that I've doing over the last seven years, something that I took the opportunity to talk to you about, is that, for the last seven years, I have been knocking on doors almost every weekend. I've had the opportunity, before getting into the election, to have

knocked on almost every single door in my riding of Ottawa Centre to be able to engage in conversations with constituents on issues that are important to them. Those conversations resulted in us getting things done for our communities.

When members of my community in the Westboro area told us that our schools in the urban core needed more investment, needed rebuilding, needed renovation, we worked together, and we were able to secure funding to rebuild Broadview school. Broadview school was built in 1926. There are several generations of members of my community who have gone through that school. Clearly that school needs a rebuild. We worked hard together. We were able to secure funding from the provincial government to rebuild the school, not to mention build an addition to another much older school, almost 100 years old, in the Glebe.

0910

Similarly, one of our big focuses has been investments in community health, making sure that we keep seniors at home, making sure that we continue to invest in things that make the lives of our seniors and those who may be vulnerable in the community healthier.

There are three community health centres in my riding: Centretown, Somerset West and Carlington. All three of those community health centres are going through a major expansion. Why? So that we can provide more services to my constituents, making sure that we're not only providing community care but we're also focusing on things like social services.

These, Speaker, all—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would remind the member to address and speak to the main motion at hand, please. Thank you.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for that gentle reminder. I was very much coming to that point.

I want to, first of all, congratulate you also in taking on the role as the Chair. I'm very happy to see you today in your Speaker's attire, which suits you very well. So congratulations on that particular role.

Speaker, I was highlighting some key accomplishments in my community for the fact that they're very much tied to the plan that we have put forward, the plan that we articulated to Ontarians during the election campaign. Those are the kinds of things that I was speaking of to my constituents, day in and day out, to make sure that we are continuing to move forward. That plan has been put forward.

When I was out in my community, knocking on doors every single day, my constituents sent me a very clear message: They wanted to see our budget approved. They wanted to see our budget passed as soon as possible so that we are making those important investments, investments like in the Ottawa River Action Plan, which is part of the budget, so that we prevent the flow of raw sewage into our beautiful Ottawa River, which is the spine of my city. That commitment is within that budget, not to men-

tion the \$29 billion over 10 years for the transit and transportation infrastructure plan.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Jim Watson will be happy.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Mayor Watson is quite excited. In fact, yesterday he spoke about how much he appreciates this budget. He hopes that this budget passes as quickly as possible so that those important investments start to flow, not only in my community of Ottawa but in all our respective communities, so that we are building this critically important infrastructure.

That's why, Speaker, this motion is so important. We need to work hard as much as we can at the outset so that we can debate this budget, so that we can debate the budget motion and we are able to pass this budget before the end of summer. Again, as I mentioned, Speaker, we could have worked together to make sure that the process was expedited, but, if not, we have to resort to evening sittings so there are opportunities for members to be able to speak about the budget, to talk about why the budget is important to their respective communities, and to talk about what they heard from their communities during the campaign as it relates to the critical investments in our hospitals, in our schools, in our community health centres, in roads and bridges and public transit, like the Ottawa light rail transit, phase one of which is under construction.

That's why, Speaker, we have this motion in front of us: so that there is the opportunity for us to be able to debate this budget and pass this budget according to the wishes of Ontarians that they clearly articulated through the outcome of the election, because what we need to focus on, at this juncture, is to build Ontario up. We need to make sure that we are making those critical, important investments in Ontarians, in things that we value, in public services that we rely on.

I am particularly very proud of the fact that we are making investments, through this budget, in our personal support workers. These people work very hard—some of the lowest-paid workers in our community. But these are individuals who look after our loved ones, our parents and grandparents, at their homes. We need to make sure that we pay them based on their skill sets and give them a much-needed pay raise, which is very much part of this budget.

Pay increases for early childhood educators are also very important. I can tell you, I have a two-year-old son, Rafi, who goes to daycare.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Rafi's a great guy.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: He's a great boy. I see the work that his child care provider does. She works extremely hard. We need to make sure that those hard-working early childhood educators get the raise so that they can continue to provide the excellent care they provide and help nourish our children, like my son Rafi—not to mention, of course, the investments we are going to make in the development sector and in that particular community. We need to make sure that our workers who work in that sector, who have a very difficult job on their hands—they look after some of the most vulnerable members of our communities—get the pay raise they deserve so much.

All these things are part of this very important budget that is going to help shape our communities, that is going to help grow our economy, that is going to help create jobs in our respective communities. Ontarians have asked us to implement this plan, and, as the Premier has said, we will deliver on that. That is why it's imperative that we table this motion and allow the Legislature to have midnight sittings to debate and pass the budget.

I hope that we can work together collaboratively to move Ontario in the right direction and begin implementing the plan that Ontarians have entrusted to us. I very much, Speaker, with your indulgence, look forward to the debate that takes place on this very important topic and to seeing the passage of this motion so that we can start working on debating this important budget and get to the passage of this budget so that this plan can be rolled out so that every single Ontarian could benefit from it.

Thank you very much for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

M. Arthur Potts: J'ai l'honneur aujourd'hui de pouvoir remercier les résidents de Beaches–East York de m'avoir donné cette opportunité de les représenter. Et ça, pour commencer le débat sur un budget qui est très important pour eux.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to be here and to have you in the chair. I was initially going to do a maiden speech or an inaugural speech, in which I'm normally afforded great latitude in the course of these debate proceedings. I understand now that the budget debate has shifted and we're now discussing a procedural motion. I would seek latitude from you as a new member of this House that I might have an opportunity, with my family present, to commence and speak to issues that brought me here for an opportunity to speak to this motion to rise and have a debate into the wee hours of the evening.

I will not call this a maiden speech, but the motion that is now before us I believe will very much help us pass the budget that was introduced earlier yesterday by the Minister of Finance. It's a very important document. It's a document that was central to my campaign in running in Beaches–East York. This motion is to help us resolve the issue of the standing committees, which is of course extremely, extremely important. During the course of me speaking to this motion on the committee structure and the budget and the opportunity to speak to midnight sessions, I still would like the members to get to know me a little bit better, and what has brought me here.

But before I do, I just wanted to make note of my friend sitting behind me, from Northumberland–Quinte West—

Hon. Jeff Leal: A great guy.

Mr. Arthur Potts: A great guy, yes: Mr. Rinaldi. Mr. Rinaldi was previously known as the leader of the rump caucus. Mr. Speaker, you will remember the days when there were more members of this House than the seats could accommodate on this side of the floor, and many of the new members in that past election had to be on the

other side of the floor in what was known as the rump. The member from—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's Lou.

0920

Mr. Arthur Potts: Mr. Lou gained some notoriety as a member of the rump caucus. I'm honoured to have him beside me here giving me suggestions and direction as we go forward in this debate.

It had also been my intention to speak a little bit to this concept of the maiden speech. This is what is getting us to an opportunity to speak to this continuation motion for evening debates. But I wonder, as a 56-year-old male, whether it's appropriate for someone like me to be giving a maiden speech, whether it's now or sometime in the future. I don't have any gender identification issues, I want to assure you, but as a male I wonder if "maiden" is the right term to be describing a speech in this very august House. I'm honoured to be here. I have no issues if others want to use that expression; I'm absolutely pro-choice, and if others want to use the expression "maiden" it's up to them, but I caution about—you know, we understand the concept of maiden voyage and how important is that first opportunity to address, even on something as unique as a procedural motion—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: A Trojan Horse.

Mr. Arthur Potts: They talk maybe about a Trojan Horse speech. That's very good.

But it's very important—a maiden voyage is an interesting concept, but you have to understand that the concept of "maiden," the whole etymology of the word, also applies to things like maiden sacrifice. We understand why we had maidens being sacrificed years ago: It was because of their virtue and their chasteness; they were pure. We're not going to question the members' virtues, of course, but chaste? And is that how we want to be understood?

If I were to be giving an inaugural speech at this point, I would like it to be called that—or maybe, to take a sports analogy, my rookie speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would remind the speaker that the motion before us is one with regard to debate continuing beyond 6 o'clock today. I will allow some latitude, but I would ask that he stays somewhat focused on the motion at hand. Thank you.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will do my best to stay focused on the procedural motion that is being debated before us today—understanding, of course, that when the people of Beaches–East York elected me in what was a very tumultuous campaign, I had no idea, 75 days ago, when the budget was first introduced, that I would be in a position today of standing and speaking to a procedural motion. This came somewhat as a complete shock to me. I had seen the introduction of the budget, and as a Liberal observer I was very delighted with how the budget was playing out. I thought that this budget brought us back to our progressive roots as a party. There were tremendous investments in infrastructure, tremendous investments in education, in health care, in transit—the \$29-billion infrastructure transit fund, \$15 billion of

which would be invested in transit in the GTA. These were very, very important considerations. As a Liberal observer, I watched and I thought, “Great. I’m happy to support that.”

But then, the day after, the election was called because members hadn’t supported it, leading us to a position today where we’re now in a procedural motion, trying to move forward. The day after was Saturday, May 3. I was at an event with a friend of mine, Dennis Mills, a great mentor and the federal member for Toronto–Danforth. I know many here would know Mr. Mills—a tremendous mentor and a personal friend. He had a call from someone in the party, in organizing, who said that they didn’t have a candidate for Beaches–East York in the election and the writ was to be dropped imminently. He suggested that I should run. It wasn’t something that was on my list, but he said to me, “Don’t say yes now. If you say yes and you’re elected, you may be speaking to some kind of a procedural motion when you should be doing an inaugural speech.” He said, “Please, don’t say yes now. I want you to go home. I want you to talk to your family and come back and maybe in the morning then you can say yes,” which is what I did.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: And you said yes.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I did say yes. I actually went home and spoke with my mother. I hope to be able to recognize my mother at 10:30. She is in the gallery today with my family: my sister Roberta, my sister Diana and my sister’s fiancé, Steve, who is a good friend of mine. We play tennis together regularly, Steve and I. He’s teaching me the game and I’m hoping I’m being a good learner.

There was a Saturday—or a Sunday now—and I’ve agreed to say yes because my mother said, “Of course you should run.” “You’re genetically engineered for this,” she said, “and your father would be very, very proud.” So when I spoke with my wife, my partner, Lisa Martin, she too said, “Yes, please. You have the support of the family to run and hopefully win in Beaches–East York,” which is what I did.

Now I find myself in a position when I can speak to a procedural motion, because we have some issues here with the House leader trying very hard to work with the House leaders on the other side of the table to develop a committee structure that follows traditions, I understand, of the Parliament, traditions which would allow that the majority government of the day would have a clear majority on all of the committees. That’s a clear majority, Mr. Speaker, that I know you appreciate, in which the Chair of the committee is considered a neutral, which means you absolutely have to have a majority of the other existing members representing the government. This is the objective, and this is what has brought us to this debate today.

I hope we can resolve this issue, and if we need to go to debate from 6 o’clock to 12 o’clock at night, I know our side of the House is prepared to do it, to stand for that, and I will be here every day, as Mr. Bisson—

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Well, let’s stick with the principles that are traditional and not make them up on the fly. You

may have your principles, but the ones that you make up on the fly don’t respect the traditions of this House, I would argue.

It hadn’t been my intention to run at the time, and there it was Sunday. On Monday, we filed nomination papers. On Wednesday, the writ was dropped, and on Thursday, I had my official nomination. On Friday, I moved into a campaign office, had a campaign manager, and there we were in a full-fledged campaign with our first piece of literature.

I can say it was an absolute whirlwind romance to get me into a position where I could stand in this House today and support the government’s motion—a whirlwind romance. It was somewhat reminiscent of how the member from Brant was re-elected as the Speaker of this House, Mr. Speaker. I remember seeing him with the member from Scarborough–Agincourt physically grabbing him, reluctant as he was, with his 6-foot-4 or 6-foot-5 frame, and she, a slight Asian woman, bringing him forward to do his duties. He was very reluctant at first, as I recall, but slowly, as he got closer to the chair, I could see that he was warming to the responsibilities. As my father would say, he responded to the clarion call, and that is what I think I am doing and have done in running for council: responding to the clarion call.

Now, I was proud to serve as the candidate, and it was an easy transition from my consulting work. The timing was good. My kids were in university, I had the time, and I could put my consulting projects on the side.

If you would allow me, at this point I would like to pay some respect to Mr. Prue, who was a member of the House from Beaches–East York, a member of the third party. Mr. Prue was a great guy, and I had no intention when I ran of actually winning. I thought I would be waving the flag for the party, helping them out, getting their message across—because Mr. Prue was a very formidable opponent.

I had always thought that my opportunity to run would be against the member from Toronto–Danforth. The member from Toronto–Danforth and I ran against each other 20 years ago in 1994 for city council. Let me say that it was a tremendous, spirited campaign. He went on and continued on in politics and I went on to be a consultant, but I enjoyed that opportunity, I enjoyed that exercise, immensely. It was a chance to meet all the neighbours of the area where I live in Toronto–Danforth, and it set me up for an opportunity to run this time against Mr. Prue, who, as I say, was a well-liked guy.

He was first elected in 1988 as a city councillor in the old borough of East York and went on to become the last mayor of East York, and then served in Toronto council as the councillor for the megacity after the cities were amalgamated. He had been an MPP here for the last 13 years.

He was a good retail politician. I repeatedly heard people say at the door, “I like Mr. Prue. He’s helped me out. He’s a good guy. I would vote for him.” I had to convince them that I, too, was a good guy, and we had to see what our policies were, because the policy we were

running on, of course, was the budget, and the budget is what we have to debate here, and we have to get it passed. Now we're in a procedural motion in order to get this budget passed, which will keep us here from 6 o'clock until midnight in order to resolve the committee structures.

Having run, I was reminded of Stephen LeDrew the day after the election. Mr. LeDrew—I had the pleasure of running his mayoralty campaign when he ran against Mr. Miller for the mayor of Toronto many years ago. Mr. LeDrew was on TV at CP24. He interviewed me shortly after the election, and he asked me, “Were you shocked and as surprised as all of us at winning?” Frankly, I wasn't shocked and surprised, because on the street we heard very early on that the people of Beaches–East York were looking for change. We had already discovered—we'd had an inkling—that the NDP vote particularly was going to come to our side of the table, because they should have passed that budget. They should have passed the budget that we're debating today. It was a good budget. It was a progressive budget. It invested, as I said earlier, in transit and infrastructure. Now we find ourselves in this position of having to debate a procedural motion in order to bring in the budget that the people of Ontario clearly spoke in favour of adopting.

0930

Notwithstanding that the Leader of the Opposition has said publicly that it wasn't the budget that elected our government but it was the campaign that was run by the opposition parties, well, I tell you, in Beaches–East York that just wasn't the case. It was a two-person race. It was between me and Mr. Prue. There was a Conservative candidate and there was a Green candidate, and the other two candidates were just—well, there were a few others, the Marxist-Leninist Party and some others—but between them, they were simply going to split the vote. It was a two-horse race between Mr. Prue and myself, and who knows to whose benefit those vote splits would have gone?

The budget was the plan. It was a great piece of literature that I was able to go door to door and talk to people about. That is why I'm so confident that it's the budget that the people of Ontario want us to pass. They want us to get through this procedural wrangling. They want us to get past these petty squabbles about committee makeup and recognize the absolutely important principles that have been established in the past about representation on committees.

What allowed me to get elected was in fact a confluence of fairly significant events. There was a tremendous change sentiment in my riding. I had the unique opportunity of running for change in Beaches–East York, change both at the provincial level—because with Ms. Wynne we had a new leader of the party that was taking us in a very progressive direction. The budget signified a significant change from the way the party had established itself in the past. It did take us back to our progressive roots as a party that cared about people, that cared about public support workers, that cared about educators, a

party that cared about trying to fix the crumbling infrastructure that over the years had been falling apart. We needed to invest in this infrastructure. That's what the budget plan was telling us to do and that's what was helping us at the door.

But I also campaigned on change at the local level. As nice a guy as Mr. Prue was, he had been the finance critic for the NDP in the creation of the budget. He had gone across the province, door to door, at pre-budget hearings. He had helped fashion the budget that was ultimately put forward in this House on May 1. It was a surprise and a shock to all of us that his party did not support a budget that he helped craft. It was, as I say, progressive. I know that, door to door, people talked to Mr. Prue about that: “You should not have put the funding of Toronto East General Hospital in jeopardy. You should not have turned down increased wages for support workers, for educational workers, for working with people in homes that have children with autism.” These were important dimensions of the budget. More to the point, we were looking at a poverty reduction strategy based on the recommendations of the Lankin-Sheikh report.

Ms. Lankin also had been the representative for Beaches–East York. She's a tremendous asset to this province and continues to be so in the work she does advocating for the poor, advocating for policies of social justice. Our government had retained her and used her and Mr. Sheikh to develop some policies that we are getting so close to implementing.

With this budget, we can implement those policies, Mr. Speaker, and we very, very much look forward to doing so. We will do everything we need to do as a government. We will come here and we will work from 6 o'clock to midnight every night until we pass the budget that we promised the people of Ontario. That's what this procedural wrangling is all about. We want the members to recognize that the people have spoken.

Now, Ms. Lankin offered up her seat 13 years ago to Mr. Prue in a by-election; she had another opportunity to go to, and he won the seat in a by-election. I was shocked to know that Mr. Prue could not support the budget that implemented the recommendations of the person who gave up her seat so he could run and represent the people of Beaches–East York in this House. He did not support that budget. What I heard at the door repeatedly is that he should have supported the budget, and that had a lot to do with why he wasn't re-elected, notwithstanding that he is a fantastic guy. I've been drinking beer with him for 25 years, since I knew him at city hall. He's a great guy and he did some great things at city hall and in the province.

But Ms. Wynne had been an incredible asset for us going door-to-door in this campaign.

Interjection: Yes.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Absolutely, absolutely, and she continues to be.

I'm so honoured to be in this House, listening to her as she stands up and hears these same old questions coming back and forth, as if members of the parties opposite hadn't been listening during the course of the election.

The “Trojan Horse budget”: What are we talking about? This is not Greek history; this is all about getting a progressive plan moving forward, building the province up. This is very important.

She had been a great asset to my campaign because the messages of both the opposition parties simply didn’t resonate well in Beaches–East York, but we needn’t spend time on that messaging now. We need to focus more time on these procedural matters, and I’m happy to do so.

I also had the pleasure in my campaign of being in the midst of a three-way battle for the Liberal nomination in Beaches–East York for the federal party.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Highly sought-after now.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: He’ll throw you off.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Don’t throw me off. Just give me a chance to have glass of water. Much appreciated.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Sorry about that.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Not at all, not at all.

The federal nomination: We have three individuals who, for the last year and a half, have been working tirelessly to represent our area as Liberals in the federal Parliament, and they were able to bring all their resources—their teams, their volunteers—into our campaign. We had a chance to outreach into neighbourhoods we otherwise probably wouldn’t have got to as early as we did because they were there, so I was honoured to have their support.

More importantly, from a strategic basis, we had the support of Ms. Maria Minna, who was the federal member for 18 years in Beaches–East York, and only three years ago was defeated in the federal election. Ms. Minna is still thought of as the local representative. People in Beaches–East York continue to come to her, and I go to her. I go to her for assistance on procedural issues and how to manage issues like the procedural debate that we’re having today. She’s a great mentor and a great support to me in that process.

But probably one of the greatest assets we had in this campaign was the weather. I know all of you out there knocking on doors and campaigning would appreciate what a wonderful, wonderful late spring it was, with lots of sun and so very little rain. This allowed us to go door to door, to get to so many more doors than otherwise would have been possible. I envision trying to do this election campaign in the dark of winter. It just wouldn’t have been possible.

What was absolutely critical is that we heard from every single resident we could in Beaches–East York about what was important to them. What we did hear was that it was the budget, and I was able to explain the budget to them in a way that they understood. They wanted it passed. They wanted it adopted.

But most important for me was the hard work of our campaign team. They worked hard. Our volunteer numbers grew. There was tremendous energy in our campaign, and I wish to thank all of them for the immense contributions they made to getting me elected.

I think I ran a marathon almost every single day. I climbed the equivalent of the CN Tower probably one and a half or two times a day because Beaches–East York is blessed with a lot of hills. I would find myself rushing up to a door, knocking, leaving a flyer and running down, only to get to the bottom and discover the resident had just opened the door at the top again, and running back up. I had the pleasure during the course of the campaign—I lost weight; I got into great shape. It has improved my hockey game. I think it has improved my tennis game—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It’s a win-win.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It’s a win-win all around.

As I said, I wasn’t expecting to win at first, but I was absolutely delighted. I thank very much the people of Beaches–East York for giving me this opportunity, because it’s important that they have a government spokesperson to speak to important issues like passing the budget motion—like the pleasure I felt in standing up and voting in the affirmative for the throne speech. That was a tremendous opportunity, my first vote. To be in the affirmative on your first vote is a great, great honour. I wish the members opposite would have had the opportunity to speak to the affirmative on that throne speech as well. There will be other opportunities and other good pieces of legislation coming forward, including this motion that’s in front of us today.

On election night, Mr. Speaker, if you’ll allow me just a little latitude here, I had the pleasure of sitting with my mother, my sister, my partner, Lisa, and our kids to watch the results. It was a see-saw battle back and forth. Mom, I remember you looking at me. Mom said to me, “Your father, when he ran in 1963 for the Liberals and again in 1967 for the Liberals”—in the area where we lived, which was south Rosedale, very much similar in many ways to Beaches–East York because it encompassed all the much poorer neighbourhoods south of Danforth, south of Bloor Street, and the more affluent neighbourhoods north of Danforth. My father ran, and it would be of interest to this House to know that in two successive provincial elections my father lost by the smallest margin of any member in the House: 220 and 285 votes, I think it was—two successive elections. There’s my dear mother, 86 years of age—

Interjection: Hello, Mother.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Hello, Mother—looking up at me with those very supportive eyes and saying, “Oh, my heavens. I hope this is not happening again.”

0940

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It didn’t.

Mr. Arthur Potts: And it didn’t.

I wanted to go down to the campaign office. My mother and my sisters and my kids—we were watching it at the house, because my campaign manager wanted to know what speech I was going to read when I went down to see the rest of the people. As you all know—and I know most of you have—you always have two speeches in the bag on election night. But it was a see-saw battle.

I love a good party—particularly one that I know has been thrown somewhat in my honour, but also to honour

the hard work of our campaign team—and I was chomping at the bit, Mr. Speaker, to go down to watch the results with my friends and family and the campaign workers, but they wouldn't let me go. My campaign manager was ruthless.

But, at about 11:30, she finally relented and she said, "Yes, you can come down." We went, and we watched and suffered together as the votes came in. Fortunately—well, unfortunately—at about 1 o'clock, I stood up to make a speech to say, "I'm sorry. It's time to go home. It's too close to call"—we won't know if I will come up and speak to procedural debate motions tonight—"There could be a recount in the morning."

As I was in the middle of making that speech, telling people to go home at 1:15 in the morning, they started to cheer, and they weren't listening to me—unlike members of the House today, who are listening very intently, I appreciate. They weren't listening, because we had just been declared the victors of Beaches–East York, and I was delighted for that opportunity.

Interjection: We're delighted, too.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Post-election, it has been just an absolute honour to be here, to participate in the debates, to introduce yesterday my first motion, the tipping bill, to honour Mr. Prue, who, as I say, is a good guy and was a good member here. I look forward to continuing and assisting the party in every way I can so that Premier Wynne can bring in a very worthy budget, a budget that she's worked hard with the finance minister to produce, a budget that builds Ontario up, a budget that invests in people and in infrastructure—that particularly will invest in infrastructure, I believe, in Beaches–East York, where Main and Danforth is in serious need of a lift. We can put a transit hub there, which can help connect TTC and GO and Via, and help lift up that neighbourhood, along with all of the neighbourhoods in Ontario.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the latitude that I like to think could be afforded, and I hope to do my maiden speech some day very soon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to be standing up in the Legislature, speaking for the first time, at least for a protracted period of time.

I was told this morning that I was going to have the opportunity to deliver my maiden address, and I couldn't have thought, until today, of anything more important than my maiden address. But this is more important. This procedural motion is important, because it's really about whether we're going to continue to sit here and work and do what the people of Ontario sent us here to do, which is to get this budget passed.

Now, I have to say that when I was in my community canvassing throughout the campaign, I heard about a lot of issues. I heard a lot about the need to continue to create jobs, to build on our track record. I can say that, having been out in my community, there's a lot of support for the work that the government has done over the

past 11 years, since 2003, and a lot of progress has been made. We have created over 460,000 new jobs, but, at the same time, there are many people out there in the community who are struggling to find work.

I can tell you, for example, that I met a young woman when I was canvassing, who opened her door to me. I introduced myself, and I said, "I'm the candidate for Etobicoke Centre," and she said, "Well, tell me about your credentials." I told her a little bit about my background, that I'm a management consultant, that I teach at York University, that I have a finance background, that I have an MBA. She said, "You know, I also have an MBA," and she said, "I'm struggling to find work. Can you help?" We talked a lot about some of the things that the government has done to help her find work and some of the many more things that are in this budget that will help her do that. So when I think about some of those things, I think about the investments that we're making in infrastructure; I think about the things that we're doing to make post-secondary education more accessible; I think about the things that we're doing to make sure that we're attracting businesses here to Ontario, by keeping taxes low and regulations down. When I think about this motion, Mr. Speaker, I think about how important it is that we pass this motion so that we can get this budget passed, because when I think about this woman, I think about this budget and how important it is to her and how much she would want us to pass this budget expeditiously.

Some of the other things that I heard in the community were around health care. In my riding of Etobicoke Centre we have one of the largest percentages of seniors of any riding in the country, so we have a lot of folks in our community who rely on the health care system. Again, they appreciate the good work that we've done in a number of ways, in terms of improving access to care, expanding home care, long-term care. The investment that will be made in this budget to help raise pay for personal support workers is one of the things that is particularly important in my riding of Etobicoke Centre, because so many of my constituents rely on those personal support workers every single day. The quality of care and access to care is critical. When I think about this budget, I think about how important it is. Again, I urge the members here to pass this motion.

I heard a lot in my community about education and the quality of education. One of the things that they appreciated about our platform—and that platform was built from the budget—is the work that we're going to do to continue to keep class sizes down, the work that we're going to do to continue to invest in education for special-needs children, the things we're going to do to make sure that we continue to strengthen some of those core skills that young people need so they can get into university and succeed post-graduation.

As someone who teaches at a university, I know a little bit about and understand some of the challenges that young people face, very frankly. Some of those skills that I'm talking about are things like creative thinking, like math skills. Those types of skills are the kinds of things

that young people are going to need to succeed in the new economy.

I can tell you that when I teach at university I often help young students who are searching for work in the private sector. A lot of times they'll come to me or they'll send me an e-mail or they'll give me a call. I'll sit down with them over coffee and we'll talk about some of the challenges that they face in finding a job. I'll give them advice on anything from how to write their resumé to how to network and other things like that, and where they might be able to find employment and the kinds of careers that might be a fit for their skill set. One of the things I sometimes hear from young people is that they've graduated, they've earned a job, but they're not working in their particular field; they're struggling to find work in their particular field. That's one of the areas where I know we have work to do and that's one of the areas where our government is committed to continuing to do work, to make sure that young people have access to that quality education and that we continue to strengthen it.

So the math skills, the creative thinking skills that we're talking about in school are some of the things that are going to allow them to succeed and graduate. I look forward to seeing those students come through as they graduate through high school into university and into my class and are then able to therefore succeed and get those jobs that we're talking about.

Some of the other things that are important in this budget and in our platform were around expanding guidance programs for young people. I think one of the challenges that young people face, and I experience this every day in my work as a teacher, is that young people, in looking for work, sometimes just don't know how to look or where to look. That's an important element of this. So education is critical. There are other aspects to education that are important in this budget, but that's some of it. I would urge the members here to pass the motion so that we can get this budget passed. Because again, those young people, if we don't pass this budget expeditiously, are presumably going to turn to me and they're going to say, "What happened? You got elected on this platform."

Some of the other things that I heard in the community were around transportation and infrastructure. Transportation affects our daily life, whether it be our economy and how it supports growth in our economy or whether it be the quality of life that we enjoy. When I think about this morning, I was able to get on a bus quite quickly and get down here in a reasonable period of time, but there are many mornings where that's not necessarily the case for a lot of folks. Those are the kinds of things—transit and transportation—that we need to invest in, because they touch us every single day. We're doing that in this budget. So there's infrastructure spending that's been allocated, about \$130 billion. Of course, about \$15 billion of that is allocated to transportation within the GTA. That's one of the things that I think is so, so critical, that we show Ontarians—all members of this House, no mat-

ter what side of the aisle you're on—that we heard the people of Ontario. They voted overwhelmingly in support of this budget, overwhelmingly in support of this government's platform. So again, for the sake of my constituents in Etobicoke Centre who rely on transit, who want to continue to see gridlock relieved, that's the kind of thing I hope we take into consideration as we think about this motion.

0950

Another thing I heard at the doors a lot was the need to continue to manage our taxpayers' dollars wisely. I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to be working with Minister Matthews, who's President of the Treasury Board, as her parliamentary assistant. I think this is one of the issues that is so, so important—one of the issues that I heard about at the doors in my community. I've been working with Minister Matthews, and it's a true honour to work with her, but I look forward to working with her more in the weeks and months to come as we make sure that we get maximum value for taxpayers' dollars.

My background is in management consulting so I do this type of work for private sector clients on a regular basis. We'll be asked to come in and identify opportunities to find more value for the dollar. That's one of the things I'm looking forward to working on with Minister Matthews.

Mr. Speaker, as I think about this motion, it's something that would send a strong message to my community, to other communities across the province, that, as legislators who have been recently elected, many of us here for the first time, we're really committed to moving ahead with the agenda that Ontarians endorsed.

One of the things that I think is incredibly important as part of this is the fact that this budget has a 10-year economic plan. One of the things that it does is it helps us compete better for global investments. To help secure these investments, we're going to maintain, as I said earlier, a competitive tax system. We're going to work on reducing energy costs for business, and cutting red tape. We're creating a new Jobs and Prosperity Fund, which is critical. It's a really important strategic tool, I believe, to attract businesses to our province.

I also think that lowering energy costs is something we hear from both sides of the House on a regular basis as an issue that's important in our communities. Again, we're introducing a new five-point energy plan to give small and medium-sized businesses the tools they need to conserve energy, which I think is also critical. I have a lot of people in my community who are business owners; I have a lot of people in my community who are entrepreneurs. These types of things are critical to them, and I heard about them during the election campaign.

One of the things that's also important—and I mentioned this a little bit earlier, but I think one of the things I heard in the community was that they want us to continue with the track record of investment in infrastructure, particularly in transportation. Like I said, since 2003 we've invested about \$100 billion in hospitals, schools and other infrastructure, and I think we need to continue with that.

One of the things that's also important is that we continue to increase support for those who are most vulnerable. There are many people in my community who rely on support, and we need to continue to do that. One of the things in the budget is that we'll be increasing the maximum annual OCB per child to \$1,310. That's going to enhance the incomes of about half a million families. We're also expanding low-income health benefits and developing a new program to reduce electricity bills for low-income Ontarians. We're also going to increase social assistance benefits and expand the student nutrition program so that more children in school have access to a healthy, balanced breakfast to start the day. We continue to make steady increases in the minimum wage, which, again, is a critical element of the budget and critical to supporting those who are more vulnerable.

As I mentioned earlier, one of the things that I heard at the doors—many members of my community are seniors, as I mentioned, but many members of the community in Etobicoke Centre are also part of that so-called sandwich generation. They are middle-aged families who are in a position where they're caring for their elderly parents but they're also caring for their children. One of the things that I'm proud of in this budget is that we're continuing to take the steps to make sure that we try to help these families as much as possible—not just help the seniors by helping them in terms of improving the quality of care and access to care, but by helping the families that are bearing the burden of caring for them.

I can tell you that my mother cared for my grandmother for many, many years, and her ability to do that was unique. She was fortunate enough to have the flexibility and the financial resources to do so, but not all families are able to do that. Continued support, particularly through home care, is critical but other forms of care as well. We've committed to continue to work in that area.

It's interesting. My family was actually supposed to be here as well and, unfortunately, they weren't here, but I know that if they were, my mother would certainly be supportive of the kind of work that we're doing in this budget. She's an example, but there are many people in my community of Etobicoke Centre who are examples of folks who really need that support.

When I think about some of the things we're doing in health care—wait times, for example. Since 2003, we're now best in Canada for surgical wait times. We've invested \$1.7 billion to fund over three million more medical procedures. We used to have the longest wait times in the country. Now we have the shortest, and we're going to continue that good work.

I know one of the priorities that I heard a lot about from seniors, from families, frankly, in Etobicoke Centre, was how important it is to make sure that we're providing access to doctors and faster access to doctors. A lot of folks need specialist care particularly. So one of the things that we've committed to in our platform and, through that, in the budget is to continue to work in that area, to make sure people have access to specialist care.

I can tell you that a lot of my constituents have raised this issue. They appreciate the progress that has been made. Many do appreciate the progress that has been made, but there's so much more work to do. I think we on both sides of this House would all agree to that. That's another issue.

One of the things that I'd like to highlight also is the issue of mental health. Mental health is an issue that we're going to continue to hear more and more about, and rightly so, because the growing challenge for us. Of course, since 2003, we launched a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy focused on children and youth in the first three years. That's helping 50,000 more kids and their families access the supports they need. We've hired more than 770 new mental health workers in schools and community, which has already helped 35,000 kids and their families. We've added 5,000 more doctors. We've hired about 20,000 more nurses since 2003. Again, these are the kinds of accomplishments and this is the kind of track record that I think people in a community, like mine, where health care is an important issue, value, and they'd like to see it continue.

When I think about this budget and what's in this budget for health care, I think about the increasing community services funding by 4% over the next three years, increasing front-line care by increasing the wages of PSWs—we talked about that—and maintaining critical repairs in-hospital to provide better high-quality health care to patients. We're providing funding of almost \$700 million over the next 10 years for that.

These are the kinds of things that are going to impact people on the ground, and these are the kinds of things that, frankly, Ontarians voted for when they elected us to this Legislature. I would urge members on both sides to support this procedural motion and, supporting that, help us debate this budget and move it along.

Now, if I may, I'd like to just briefly talk about education. When we think about the progress that has been made in education, it's the kind of thing we need to continue and we plan to continue through this budget. We've committed to continue these investments in education. Test scores are up. Graduation rates are up. The graduation rate in 2003 in Ontario was in the high 60% range, about 68%. Now we're in the low 80% range, and I think that's something we can celebrate. That's not to say that there isn't more work to be done. There is more work to be done. That's, in fact, why we need to continue that work and why we need to pass this budget.

We brought in full-day kindergarten, which of course gives kids the best start in education. Study after study that I've read has shown the value of early childhood education on outcomes later in life. Earlier in my remarks, I was talking about the importance of math skills and critical thinking skills in high schools. Well, this is another example of the kinds of investments that we're making strategically to strengthen our education system and make sure that young people have the skills they need, so that when they do work their way through the system, and for those who choose to pursue graduate

studies and university studies and those who move on to the trades or other forms of work, that they have the fundamental skills they need to succeed. I think these are critically important. So full-day kindergarten is critical.

We've invested \$4 billion in 23 major post-secondary expansion projects and have added 161,000 student spaces. When I think about student assistance, 370,000 students receive \$1 billion annually, and our post-secondary attainment is the highest in the OECD—almost double the average. Again, as I was referring to earlier, there are individuals, certainly, who face challenges graduating, but the overwhelming majority do have access to higher education and are able to succeed and move on into their careers and prosper as a result.

1000

When I think about some of the other things we've done in education—I'm a management consultant. I used to work for a company called the Boston Consulting Group. There's a company, a competitor, called McKinsey and Company. They had a chance to appraise our education system and they said that we are one of the world's most improved school systems and we keep getting better. That's an endorsement, if I've ever heard one, of the kinds of things we've done in education, and we certainly want that work to continue. Minister Sandals has been doing excellent work and we want that work to continue. So it's important that we move this budget along and get it passed, and I would urge the members to pass this procedural motion.

As someone who has a finance background, a business background, and someone who spends a lot of time thinking about how we can grow our economy and how companies can maximize growth in our economy, I'm particularly proud of our attainment in terms of economic growth. We're third in North America now for foreign direct investment. Forbes named Ontario the top destination for foreign direct investment in North America. Foreign direct investment is a critical measure of success because it means we're outcompeting other jurisdictions for investment, that we're a more attractive jurisdiction to do business in. That's a compliment to the people of Ontario, because they're highly educated, they're hard-working and they have a lot to contribute. I think we want that work to continue, Mr. Speaker.

We have the second-largest financial services industry in North America. I happened to work in financial services for some time. I think this is an area that offers tremendous opportunity, and we need to continue to ensure that that's the case.

We're first in Canada—a major player—in mining. I know that's an issue not just in my community but particularly for our communities to the north. That's a track record we want to build on.

So as I think about this budget and I think about the things we're doing—we're investing in infrastructure, we're investing in education, we're investing in people, we're keeping taxes down, we're keeping regulations low—these are the kinds of things that are going to continue to grow our economy. We're going to continue

to invest in education, and through those investments we're going to be able to ensure we continue to strengthen our education system and prepare our young people for the jobs of tomorrow. The other investments that we're making in many other areas are critical, but we're going to do all this while managing taxpayer dollars wisely. That is so, so important.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge the members to pass the motion before us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. It's a pleasure for me to speak to the government's motion that would consider this sitting an extension of the spring sitting. I think the government House leader has talked about why he felt that he needed to do this and the fact that this sets the table for possible night sittings.

I want at the start, before I make my argument, to say how very proud I was that our interim leader, Jim Wilson, has given me the opportunity to sit in this role as House leader for the official opposition. I had the opportunity to serve as Mr. Wilson's deputy when he was the House leader. I actually find that the House leaders' meetings are quite fascinating. Periodically it's mentioned in the House that, "This matter was referred to the House leaders," or, "This matter is a decision of the three House leaders." It almost makes it like it's this mystical committee that meets every week and makes decisions.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: A good lunch.

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, the member notes publicly that he provides a nice lunch. In fact, the first meeting that I sat on as the opposition House leader, we sat, and I know that the government House leader would have preferred the meetings to be kept confidential and that the contents wouldn't be discussed in the media. I have to admit that I did talk about my frustration when it came to setting committees. But I do want to publicly state a couple of points that I made in that first meeting.

One of the first things—in fact, the first thing—that I said was that it certainly wasn't our intention as an opposition to unduly hold up the budget. I felt, based on the amount of sitting days that we had in July, that we should have been able to come to an agreement to have the budget go through the normal process and not unduly delay the Legislature.

I also brought up a couple of issues from the last session of Parliament. The issue of the Select Committee on Developmental Services, which, as you know, was within a whisker—probably all they needed was to hit "print" to have the committee report printed. This was a committee made up of all the three parties. It was a consensus committee where all of the groups represented from all the parties sat, had hearings and made recommendations. I felt that that report should be tabled in the Legislature without having to be delayed by the establishment of the committees.

I also felt that the report from the public accounts committee, the Ornge report—again, all it needed was for the committee to convene and ultimately the report

would have been received and referred to the House. I didn't feel that that report should be unduly delayed as well.

But what happens in House leaders'—it's a very interesting dynamic when issues come up, because when I bring these issues up, the parties sometimes will say, "Do you know what? That's a very interesting point. We'll think about that. We'll talk about that next week," meaning that there will be a decision next week. But you know what? What happens sometimes is, the other party may say, "We did discuss it. Maybe we should defer that to the following week."

So you have this—I call it an interesting dynamic, for lack of a better word. People think we make these decisions, that we sit and make decisions. I have to tell you—I'm sure you can hear it in my voice—it's a bit frustrating to sit with the other two parties when I do see that, in the minority Parliament, albeit it was a rough ride in some cases for the government, there were some things that we were able to move forward, like the Select Committee on Developmental Services.

I wanted to put those on the record just at the start, as the opposition House leader, because it's not this milk-and-honey committee where we all seem to get together and agree with each other on the rules of the House. In fact, if you read some of the words in the throne speech, you'll realize, I think, what the government intends to do. I'm referring to the justice committee and the fact that there were witnesses that were to appear the week after the House ultimately dissolved for the election. The words in the throne speech were, "Let the justice committee write its report." I think that that was something that struck me.

We're here because—the government mentioned committees this morning. We're at odds, between the opposition and the government, on the composition of the standing committees here at Queen's Park. Again, the government House leader indicates that it's holding up the passing of the budget, a budget that, I had indicated at our first House leaders' meeting, I didn't want to unduly delay.

We believe that the standing orders—and the government House leader is using the standing orders today as the reason for the debate. I think the standing orders are very clear. In fact, the standing order that we're putting on the table regarding committees is standing order 113(a), which says, "No standing or select committee shall consist of more than nine members and the membership of such committees shall be in proportion to the representation of the recognized parties in the House," whereas the government believes that they should have an absolute majority. I think you heard the government House leader this morning, Speaker, talk about the Chair being separate from that. That's certainly not what I read in the standing orders. It was reinforced by the Clerks. I apologize that I somehow dragged the Clerks into it by referencing them in my letter that I brought forward.

1010

It is what it is, and I used the information that I had to make the decision based on the seats that the government

and the opposition parties had at the end of the election. As we all know, the government had 58 seats, we had 28 and the NDP had 21. If you use that in a percentage format, it works out to 54.21%, 26.17% and 19.63%. You apply that to standing order 113(a) about the nine-member committee, and it works out, as I said in question period last week, to five members for the government, two members for the Progressive Conservatives and two members for the NDP.

In every committee I've ever been on, Speaker—and I've been on committees since I was in my 20s—in every nine-person committee I was on, in every single one, without fail, five outvotes four every time. I can't say it any clearer than that. I've never been on a committee where four members have outvoted five members. Maybe I'm wrong; maybe I just haven't run in the same circles as the government House leader, but it seems to me pretty easy and democratic.

The government continues to argue that the impartial Chair cannot be factored into the equation, and they want the committees to be struck as six, two and one. It's going to ensure that they have five voting members, no matter who is in the chair. I disagree, because I again go back to the standing orders. To me, based on the standing orders, if you want six seats on the committee, you're going to need 68 or 71 seats. Maybe between your seats and their seats, that gets you your 68 or 71; I don't know if that's what you're thinking. If you look at 2003 to 2007, the government attained those percentages; they had the six seats. I was elected in a by-election in 2010, and that certainly was the case on the committee I was on, the general government committee. That was a committee that was comprised like that.

Again, there were some times, like 2011, that that didn't happen, when the minority Parliament—in that case, the government had the minority of members, and we—in terms of "we," I'm using "we" as the opposition—had the majority. Again, the dynamic was different, depending on who was in the chair. When we were in the chair, you had that dynamic where the Chair allowed the debate to continue. In fact, if you look at what was able to be accomplished during the minority Parliament, I think there were some great things that happened under that committee structure.

In fact, I still don't understand—I still believe quite firmly that if the government adhered to my suggestions, the Legislature wouldn't grind to a halt. The Legislature would not impede the government legislation to the degree that perhaps some of the members opposite would suggest. I happen to think, using our existing standing order 113(a), that we'd be able to work it out, just like we worked it out in the minority Parliament situation. I've never been told by the government House leader that under that suggestion—

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: They can laugh all they want, but I guess I came from a different place before I was elected here. I happen to believe that we can rise to a different standard in House leaders, that we can have some discus-

sions and make some decisions without having to kick the can down the road every single, solitary—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm going to keep going, Speaker, so if you need to adjourn the House, I can come back this afternoon and finish my few moments of speech. It's not a problem, Speaker.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, we have three interns who are with us today from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to monitor question period: Liam Nichols, Victoria Favret and Alexandra Sherwin.

I just want to make note that today is the 10th anniversary of the great Peterborough flood of July 15, 2004.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I have the honour of introducing the family of page captain Matthew Lynn. We have his mother, Jeannel Lynn, and father, Robert Lynn, and they're both constituents of mine in Etobicoke Centre; aunts Elizabeth and Jennifer Lynn; his great-aunt Betty Lynn; and his cousin Alexandra Lynn. Welcome.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I want to add something to the Lynn family. Although they are in Etobicoke Centre, a large contingent is from Kitchener Centre, so I want the Kitchener people to give us a wave—thank you.

I also mention that Matthew Lynn was very excited to serve when he heard he would be doing this in May, but was very disappointed when the writ was dropped and we were into an election. However, on hearing that we were back at it this summer, although the members may not be too happy to be here, I will tell you that the pages are very excited to be back serving, so thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I am delighted to welcome Michael and Maggie Donolo, who are here watching their sister Annie Donolo, who is my legislative assistant, at work.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce people who are on their way at the present time: Councillor Bruce Williamson of city council in St. Catharines, along with his son Glen Williamson, and a friend, Malcolm Cavanagh, who will be here with us shortly in the members' gallery.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Premier, the direction that you chose to take with this budget is one that obviously the PC Party fundamentally disagrees with. It's obvious in how you ignore Ontario's massive debt, high unemployment and

credit rating warnings that balancing the budget is not a priority for you. The fact that you have no detailed plan to reduce costs is more proof that you're just not serious.

But the day of reckoning is going to come when Ontario's lenders tell you that Ontario's credit card has maxed out. Premier, how high are Ontario's borrowing costs going to get before you tell Ontario's bankers how you're going to balance the budget?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm sure that the Leader of the Opposition just neglected to mention that the Dominion Bond Rating Service today has confirmed our rating and our outlook, and according to—

Applause.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's right. According to DBRS, the trend on all ratings remains stable, supported by five consecutive years of lower-than-expected deficits.

I would suggest to the member opposite that, yes, we do have a fundamental disagreement with them about what the future should hold for the people of the province of Ontario. What we believe the future should hold is a thriving economy, bolstered by and supported by a government that understands that investments are important, community by community, whether they're in the education of the children and the grandchildren of those communities or whether they're in their transportation infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Premier, you often talk about building Ontario up, but the only thing that you're building up is a tremendous debt load for future generations. If you won't tell us where you're going to cut, then will you at least tell Ontarians where you're going to raise their taxes? Because it's being said that you can't have an activist agenda without raising taxes.

So where will those next tax increases be? Premier, are you planning on raising land transfer taxes for homebuyers? Are you planning on raising eco fees or the cost of vehicle registration? Will you raise the gas tax? Which Ontarians are you going to hit the hardest with your inevitable tax increases?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the Leader of the Opposition would read the budget, he would see exactly where those decision points are, Mr. Speaker. It's very clear that we have laid out the investments we are proposing, but we've also addressed the revenue side of the ledger.

We've made it clear that we are going to ask the top 2% of earners in the province to pay a little bit more. We've said that we are going to make sure that the assets that are owned by the people of Ontario are working as hard as they can and that their value is optimized for the people of the province.

We've made those decisions; they're all laid out in the budget. I know that the Leader of the Opposition will take a second look so he can see those measures in place.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Premier, you have not been honest with the people of Ontario. You have no detailed plan to

balance the books within the next three years. Despite what Dominion Bond Rating has said, Moody's and others—Standard and Poor's has you on a watch list. Moody's has you on a negative outlook.

Your borrowing costs are going to go up. You're going to have to touch front-line services. In fact, in an unguarded moment yesterday, you did say, "We will cut where we must." Even Smokey Thomas, head of OPSEU, called you out yesterday when he said, "With what they're promising to spend and how they're promising to control costs, the public service can only shrink."

All we're asking, Premier, is for you to be honest. You've already fired nurses in Windsor. You've fired nurses and teachers in North Bay. You've cut physiotherapy services so that they're a disgrace now for our seniors, particularly seniors in retirement homes. What further front-line services are you going to cut? Just be honest with the people of Ontario.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows that there are 20,000 more nurses in Ontario today than there were in 2003, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to quote from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. Allan O'Dette, who is their CEO, says, "I think the budget strikes a good degree of balance.... We recognize the significance of having the pension funds available for that cohort of Ontarians that are going to need it."

What our budget does is invest in the transit that we know is needed in communities in our urban and suburban centres and also in our rural and northern communities, because roads and bridges and transit are all part of that infrastructure that's necessary, as well as hospitals and schools that we know are necessary for future prosperity.

We're going to invest in the education of our people, of the children and the grandchildren who are going to be the job creators of the future. We're going to set up an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan because we know that people are not able to save enough, and they need that security in their retirement.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm just going to ask everyone to settle down.

New question.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Minister, your ministry recently outlined plans to levy a number of additional fees on hunters and anglers: for instance, your plan—and this is for the first time ever—to require seniors to pay for fishing licences, something they've long been exempted from.

This comes after the ministry reported that the special purpose account, which is funded by licence fees and is required to be used for purposes of managing Ontario's fish and wildlife resources, increased by 31% from 2010 to 2011.

Yet just last year, the MNR announced layoffs and reductions that prompted the Environmental Commissioner to state, "It appears that the Ministry of Natural Resources is walking away from many parts of its job to safeguard wildlife and natural resources."

Minister, how can you justify levying additional fees when your revenues are up and, according to the province's environmental watchdog, you're doing less work?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question. What I would begin by saying is that what's occurring within the ministry today is no different than what has been going on for a very long time.

The member will know that the special purpose account has been around for a very long time. The percentage of money that flows into that account is approximately 66% from users and approximately 33% from the CRF.

On a go-forward basis, there's an acknowledgement that there are challenges with the SPA. They're concerned about the revenue side in terms of the revenue that will flow in there. This is being witnessed right across the country. It makes complete sense to everybody that there should be a review of the account. That's what has occurred. No final decisions have been made. It has been posted on the registry. The results are internal, and at some point in the near future we'll be making a decision. Nothing has been decided at this point.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: Minister, I'd like to ask you more about recent figures for the account, but your ministry has not released the annual report for the special purpose account for the last two years. I have the 2010-11 report sitting on my desk; it's 10 pages long, with little to zero detail. I was told by your office that I have to wait until this fall to get the 2011-12 report and then another year for the 2012-13 report. Minister, you're asking hunters and anglers of this province to pony up more money, but you can't even produce a 10-page report about where the money goes until two years after it's relevant.

Minister, with the Environmental Commissioner observing a decrease in your resource management activities and your lack of transparency when it comes to reporting the state of the special purpose account, how can you expect hunters and anglers in this province just to give you more money?

Hon. Bill Mauro: To repeat, we haven't done that yet. The posting is on the EBR. No final decisions have yet been made.

I would give the member one example of what has been done very recently in the ministry when it comes to the sustainability of the fish and wildlife sector in the province of Ontario. We just committed—I think the number was about \$5 million—for the moose aerial inventory in several wildlife management units in northwestern Ontario. That was key and instrumental in maintaining the sustainability of the moose inventory in the province of Ontario.

What that investment found was that, in fact, moose numbers had significantly declined. There is serious concern about what's going on with moose inventory in Ontario. It was that investment of money, some of which comes from the SPA that the member is speaking to today, that is going to infuse our future decision- and policy-making on a go-forward basis. It's necessary. If we're serious about maintaining fish and wildlife in the province of Ontario, we need to have the means to do that. This is one of the means. No final decisions have been made just yet.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister, if you were serious about being open and transparent, we'd have the details of the SPA fund in our hands today.

In addition to your ministry delivering its SPA report two years after the fact, there is no detail on how the money is spent. I'm concerned that you, like the rest of your government, feel it's okay to continue to ask Ontarians to pay more without being fully accountable. Hunters and anglers are not able to see where their money goes, and yet you want to levy them with additional fees.

Minister, your government has overspent for years and now Ontario faces a \$12.5-billion deficit and a possible credit downgrade. Is levying more fees on hunters, fishers and our seniors your strategy to balance the budget?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Once again, the same question—three times. As I've mentioned to the member already, no final decisions have been made on what will be done with the SPA. Everything is on the table. The process, the consultation, was posted on the EBR, I think sometime in April. It was there for 45 days. All of the responses are now in-house, and in the near future we will be making decisions on what we will do.

I will say to the member again: If we are serious about maintaining, in a sustainable fashion, fish and wildlife populations in the province of Ontario, we need to have the means to do that. I am not giving the member my position on this. I'm simply saying that, as a government, we all know that we need to have the means with which to do this. The SPA is one of the means—66% has traditionally come from the SPA; 33% has traditionally come from the CRF. We will make decisions in the near future. We will communicate those decisions to my critic. Again, today, I thank him for the questions, restating: No final decisions have been made as of yet.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. New Democrats have been calling this a Trojan Horse budget because it looks like one thing, but inside are all kinds of surprises that the Liberals would rather keep hidden.

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs will withdraw.

Hon. David Zimmer: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please ask your question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It looks like one thing, but inside are all sorts of surprises that the Liberals would want to keep hidden.

In fact, the Globe and Mail says, in black and white, that there is a major gap between the "government's rhetoric surrounding the budget and the actual budget." They say: "The actual budget ... is an austerity budget."

The Liberals' plan says that there is going to be \$3.15 billion that's coming from the sale of public assets, but the Premier won't even say those words. Why won't the Premier come clean with her plan to sell off public assets like the LCBO, the OPG and Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That plan that the leader of the third party is talking about doesn't exist. The fact is that we have asked Ed Clark, who is the retiring CEO of the Toronto-Dominion Bank, to look at the assets that are owned by the people of Ontario. We've asked him to make sure that those assets are producing the highest return for the people of Ontario, because we believe that assets that were purchased and created and have worked for a number of years—that the money that we can realize from those should be reinvested, that those dollars should be reinvested in services and in assets for the future.

So, yes, we will sell real estate, Mr. Speaker. We will sell the LCBO headquarters. We've talked about that, and we will do that. But in terms of the other assets, that's an ongoing process—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I don't know how the Liberals plan to find \$3.15 billion. If their budget says they're going to do it by selling off assets and the Premier says they're not, who knows, really, what the Liberals are up to in the province of Ontario?

Another thing that is hidden in the Liberal budget is massive cuts. One editorial in the National Post said that the Liberal Party "is not being straight with citizens when it maps out its plan for the next few years." Page 6 of the budget speech says the Liberals will "continue to cut." Will the Premier come clean with her plan on cuts and tell Ontarians exactly what's on the Liberal chopping block, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let me just frame this answer by saying to the leader of the third party that we recognize that there are challenges that we are confronting as a province. We recognize that there is a fiscal challenge ahead of us, and our budget addresses that and it addresses the need for investments right now to make sure that the economy can thrive. Those two things can exist, and do exist, side by side in our budget.

I understand that the leader of the third party wants a simplistic analysis of the situation in Ontario, because

simplistic is easier for her to talk about. But, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that it is complex. There are competing priorities, and we have to address them both. That's what our budget does, Mr. Speaker, and the investments that we are committed to are a very important part of that future economic growth.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What New Democrats are looking for is the truth. What exactly exists in that budget that is going to get this government the cuts that they want? That's what we're asking.

It's apparent that some of the cuts are going to be coming from public services. Ontarians just voted against firing 100,000 people, but Don Drummond says that the Liberal plan could mean 100,000 job cuts. Bloomberg News said the budget could mean the deepest cuts since Mike Harris, and yesterday the finance minister stubbornly refused to answer questions about how many public service jobs the Liberals will, in fact, cut. So I guess it's one more thing that's hidden in the Trojan Horse budget, Speaker.

Will the Premier give the people of Ontario a straight answer on how many nurses, firefighters, paramedics, early childhood educators and so many other public service workers are going to be fired in the province of Ontario under their plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The remarkable thing about this line of questioning is that the leader of the third party based her—albeit disjointed and disparate—platform on our fiscal plan. She used our fiscal plan as the foundation and then said she would go \$600 million more in terms of reductions, Mr. Speaker.

So here's the thing: Our plan deals with the fiscal reality and lays out a path to balance by 2017-18, which she agreed with when she put together her list of platform items. But our plan also invests in the people of this province, invests in the schools and the hospitals that we know we need, invests in and sets up a made-in-Ontario retirement pension plan, increases the Ontario Child Benefit, increases social assistance benefits. All of those things, Mr. Speaker, are things that I would have thought that the NDP would have supported.

1050

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. One of the things she forgets—like Liberals love to do: tell half the story—is that our plan included significant revenues, which they don't have, which is why they're making cuts and selling assets. Scratch the surface of this Trojan Horse plan and you'll find a plan that leaves Bay Street better off, but it leaves folks on Main Street out of work and out of pocket.

Last month, 34,000 Ontarians lost a job, and this is what the Premier had to say about the manufacturing sector in our province: "Believe it or not, a lot has changed in Ontario since 1976." One thing that clearly

has not changed is Liberal arrogance, and it showed in spades yesterday.

Is the Premier's plan to abandon manufacturing once and for all in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I'm not doing is burying my head in the sand and saying, "I wish it were 1976." We're not doing that. Even though I was way younger in 1976, I do not think that it is responsible for the government to say, "We wish it was like that again."

The fact is, time has moved on. We are in a global economy. We're in a global competition. If we don't work with businesses to help them to upgrade so that they're able to compete, if we don't play to our strengths in the auto sector and in aerospace and in agri-food and help those businesses to be competitive and invest in the new high-tech industries of the future, if we don't do that, we can wish all we want that it was 1976, but it's not going to be, and we will not have the bright future that we want to create—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Mr. Speaker, what I would suggest is that it's not responsible to sit by and watch 300,000 manufacturing jobs—good manufacturing jobs—walk out of this province with no plan whatsoever to stem it.

Yesterday, the Premier insisted she has a jobs plan for 2014, but it's the same jobs plan that put Ontario's unemployment rate above the national average in 2007 and it's the same plan that put Ontario's unemployment rate above the national average in 2008 and in 2009 and 2010 and 2011 and 2012 and 2013. The Premier's plan for jobs in 2014 is more no-strings-attached giveaways. It hasn't worked for years. Why does the Premier think it's going to work now all of a sudden?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The work that we have done over the last number of years—and all of those years that the leader of the third party speaks of are years that are since the economic downturn. The reality is that there are parts of this province, including the parts of the province with a high manufacturing sector, that were hit very hard.

I said on London radio this morning that there are parts of southwestern Ontario that were hit extremely hard because of their reliance on manufacturing. It is our responsibility as a government to make sure that we make the investments and work with those communities so that that manufacturing sector can be competitive with all of the global jurisdictions. It is our responsibility to recognize that we have to have a strategy that acknowledges the realities of 2014. That's how we've managed to create and foster more than 460,000 net new jobs since the economic downturn.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm hopeful about Ontario's future. But the Premier seems to think that good manu-

facturing jobs are a relic of the 1970s. I'm hopeful about jobs as well, Speaker. I am hopeful about jobs, but when 34,000 Ontarians lost a job last month, our manufacturing sector hit nearly a 40-year low in terms of jobs. When our unemployment rate is stubbornly stuck above the national average for years and years on end, can the Premier explain to Ontarians exactly how her plan, which hasn't worked for years, is somehow going to start working today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The recovery that has been in place and the 460,000 net new jobs that have been created in Ontario since the economic downturn, I think, are evidence that, although there is a fragility to that recovery, there is a recovery. We are coming back, Mr. Speaker. But now is not the moment to talk Ontario down; now is the moment to support the communities, to support the businesses in this province, to partner with them, to build the infrastructure that is necessary, that they need in order to be able to move their goods around and that their employees need in order to be able to move around the province. Now is the moment that those investments are important.

That's why our budget is crafted the way it is: with up-front investment in those things that are necessary to help the economy thrive, and a recognition that, at the same time, we need to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18.

There's no either/or there; we have to do both. That's what our budget lays out, Mr. Speaker.

APPLE INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Walker: Speaker, through you to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: Minister, as you're aware, the apple growers in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and across Ontario have faced challenging times in the last few years. However, they are looking forward to moving forward to rejuvenate their \$60-million-strong sector. Specifically, they want your help in facilitating a revitalization plan so they can plant new varieties of apples which produce higher yields.

Implementing Ontario's own apple revitalization plan would ensure we're sustaining and enhancing a key aspect of our agricultural sector across the province, and specifically in the riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and the southern Georgian Bay area, which represent a quarter of the province's apple production.

Minister, my question to you: What are you prepared to do to revitalize and rebuild Ontario's apple industry?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. He did provide me with a detailed letter yesterday on this very important issue. My ministry now has commenced a review of this letter. It would be my commitment to get back to the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound as quickly as possible.

We do know that the apple industry is a crucial part of Ontario's agri-food business. Just a week ago, I had the opportunity to be fielding phone calls; a former colleague, Bill Murdoch, has Rock N Talk with Bill

Murdoch, a phone-in show. I spent an hour on that show, and there were very detailed questions about the apple sector and other sectors of the agri-food economy in that member's riding.

As I said, I make a commitment to that member to get back to him as quickly as possible on this very important issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Again to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: As you're aware, we have a big opportunity to grow Ontario's apple industry so that we're able to produce enough apples to supply the market, to increase our export prospects and to create jobs while strengthening this important agricultural partner. That your budget commits \$40 million to food processing but commits none to food growers is disappointing and a bit perplexing.

Minister, will you commit to utilizing a portion of the \$40 million to facilitate the development of Ontario's own apple revitalization plan and be a champion for Ontario's apple industry?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for his supplementary. He did make a very positive suggestion, and we'll certainly follow up on that.

Mr. Speaker, later this year, the Premier and our minister of trade will be going on a trade mission to China. That will be a perfect opportunity to talk about the great food that's grown in Ontario, to look at new markets for such things as apples that are grown in Ontario; that will be a great opportunity to do that.

I want to thank the member for his question and I want to commend all members of this House to get to your local farmers' market and buy those Ontario apples—second to none.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Here are the facts of your so-called progressive budget: Program spending is flatlined for three years between 2014-15 and 2017-18, but given inflation and the growing population, that's essentially a plan to cut spending by 3% each year. That's a 9% cut in real terms in program spending over three years. You didn't talk about that during the election. Even the Globe and Mail calls this budget for what it is: It is an austerity budget.

Will the Premier finally admit that a budget that cuts real program spending by 9% is anything but progressive? It is an austerity budget, pure and simple.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It was a real pleasure yesterday to reintroduce the budget that is progressive, that is positive, that does balance the books by 2017-18 and looks after the best interests of the people of our province—people of the province who have, in fact, reviewed the budget over the last 60 days and have endorsed exactly the plan that we're putting forward, and it's a 10-year plan.

We recognize the challenges that we face. That is why we have taken all the essential, necessary steps to re-

calibrate our spending where necessary, and we will cut where we can. We will invest where we must, because that is what's going to enable us to succeed in the future for the benefit of our children and our grandchildren, so that we do not pass the burden of debt on to future generations.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: As I was saying, this is an austerity budget. And it gets worse, because that 9% real cut to programs and services is going to cut far deeper in some areas than in others. This budget will hurt the people of this province, and you know it. Everyone in this House actually knows it.

We're talking about a potential 10% cut or more in programs and services that everyday folks depend upon. But this government won't come clean with the public and tell us where the cuts are going to fall.

Will this government finally admit that its so-called progressive budget is truly a Trojan Horse budget, and will it tell us where those 9% cuts are going to happen, where it's going to hurt the people of this province, and how you are actually going to balance this budget?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are making the necessary investments. We are doing what the people of Ontario and their priorities have brought to us, because we took over 600,000 submissions in preparing this budget and this plan. We are continuing to do what is necessary to provide a jobs fund to enable more jobs and more investment in our province. We are the top jurisdiction in North America for foreign direct investment, surpassing California, Texas, New York and every other province in Canada.

But this is what the member opposite has voted against in terms of the progressive nature of this budget. She voted against a made-in-Ontario pension plan. She voted against increasing the Ontario Child Benefit. She voted against increasing social assistance benefits. She voted against increasing employment benefits, and \$810 million for adults with developmental disabilities. She voted against low-income health benefits and much more for our young people and personal support workers.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Premier. Premier, just after the Easter weekend in April, you visited the flood-affected areas in Belleville only to let people there know that you had no immediate assistance to provide either to the municipality or to homeowners. One of the residents on River Road, Derrick Swoffer, actually said that you could visit his property as long as you did something about it. Three months later, here we are, and the homes in Foxboro and Tweed that were hit by the flooding are still awaiting some kind of action.

Premier, why does it seem that only residents in some disaster-affected parts of the province receive immediate help from this government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows full well that when there is an application in terms of disaster relief, that has to go through a process. I think he knows that perfectly well. He also knows that when there is a disaster—and it doesn't matter where it is in the province—there are emergency management personnel who are on the ground. They are at the disposal of those municipalities in every situation, Mr. Speaker.

I spoke with mayors in the region that he's talking about. I've spoken with mayors and councillors in other parts of the province where there have been problems, whether it was with tornadoes or flooding. He knows full well that the emergency management response folks are available immediately. Those are provincial resources that are at the disposal of the municipalities. He knows that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Let me remind the Premier that you could personally deliver gift cards and disaster relief when it was a riding that you wanted to take from the NDP. You were there the next morning knocking on their door with a gift card, with a photo op going.

The problem is that it's not like this kind of a delay is a one-time occurrence. This isn't even the only municipality in Prince Edward–Hastings that is waiting for disaster relief. Prince Edward county has been given the runaround in trying to fill out its disaster relief paperwork for over a half-million-dollars' worth of damage that it sustained during that same ice storm where you were gladly handing out the gift cards here in Toronto. In fact, your government has had to start up a special program just to deal with the issue for Prince Edward county—more red tape.

Premier, you could find immediate relief for other municipalities affected by last winter's ice storm. Why is it that you can't do the right thing for the people of Prince Edward county and Prince Edward–Hastings?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's a question that is well beneath the dignity of any member of this House, because the reality is that it is the responsibility of government to deal with and to work with all of the people of the province, and that is what I do every single day; that is what our government does every single day. To suggest that we would treat one part of the province differently than others is simply not the case.

The Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program, ODRAP, helps municipalities and individuals, but the member opposite knows perfectly well that there is a process. There is a process that requires that there be a distinction between what is the municipal infrastructure that needs support and what is the personal and private property that needs support. It takes time to unravel that, whether it's in Goderich or in Thunder Bay or in Peterborough or whether it is in Prince Edward–Hastings. The reality is that that process is in place, and we will make sure that—

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

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Joe Cimino: The question is to the Minister of Transportation. The people of the north have long called for the widening of northern highways as the lifeline to their communities. In particular, the four-laning or twinning of Highway 69 is a must for the health and safety of those who travel north or south along that corridor, as well as the economic development of the region.

The budget tabled in this House tells us that in the last 10 years only 50 kilometres of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound have been widened. Right now there are 18 kilometres under construction, with another 80 kilometres left to go. Meanwhile, the government has stated that the entire project will be completed by 2017-18. Minister, will the government complete the four-laning of all of Highway 69 by 2017-18?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin, because I believe this is the first question that the newly elected member from Sudbury has had the chance to ask, by congratulating him on his election win.

I also want to say that this government, over the last 10 years, has an extraordinary story to tell with respect to the commitments and the investments that we made in northern Ontario. That is in large part due to the fact that the members who served in this caucus and this government over the last 10 years have worked very, very hard to make sure that we are moving forward in a positive way with the kinds of projects—including the project that the member from Sudbury has just talked about. In fact, since 2003, our government has invested more than \$601 million, and we've spent that on expansion to four-lane and to initiate other safety improvements on Highway 69 between, for example, Port Severn and Sudbury.

We know we have additional work to do. We will continue to work hard. In yesterday's budget, we talked about the \$29 billion that we intend to invest over the next 10 years to make sure that every corner of this province is properly served with the transportation infrastructure that we need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Cimino: Minister, I understand that the last 80-kilometre stretch of Highway 69 to be twinned first involves consultations with First Nations. What guarantees will this minister make that the twinning of Highway 69 will be completed by 2017-18?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member opposite for the supplementary question. As I said in my initial answer, we have worked very hard over the last 10 years to make sure that all corners of this province, including northern Ontario, including the community of Sudbury and areas near Sudbury, have had the investments they need.

As has been mentioned, 50 kilometres of this particular highway have already been completed and an additional 20 kilometres are currently under construction. I know that Ministry of Transportation staff are working very hard to get the needed approvals for the remaining 82 kilometres to complete the corridor.

What I also know is that in yesterday's budget, as I mentioned a second ago, we committed to invest \$29 billion over the next 10 years to make sure that communities right across this province, including Sudbury and across northern Ontario, have the transportation infrastructure they need. We will continue, on this side of the House, to work very hard to make sure that we fulfill these commitments.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Harinder Malhi: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. Small businesses are the cornerstone of our economy. In fact, 99% of businesses in Ontario are small or medium-sized. Our government's plan to create jobs and grow our economy will support small businesses by continuing to cut red tape, invest in infrastructure and make smart strategic investments that create conditions to allow businesses what they need to thrive. The minister recently reintroduced a bill that would legislate some of these objectives.

Entrepreneurs and small business owners in Brampton–Springdale are anxious to hear how this legislation will make running a business in Ontario easier. Could the minister please provide this House with an overview of the legislation and how it supports our government's plan to create jobs and grow our economy?

1110

Hon. Brad Duguid: Congratulations to the member from Brampton–Springdale for her first question in the Legislature, albeit with a little hesitation at first. But she's up on her feet and it's great to see.

Small business is critical to our economy. Their innovation and entrepreneurial spirit create jobs and drive our next-generation economy.

This government is committed to working with small businesses and the CFIB to do everything we can to make it easier to do business in Ontario. We have already removed 80,000 regulatory requirements on business. That's a 70% cut in regulatory burden.

The Better Business Climate Act, if passed, will commit the Ontario government to measuring and reporting annually on progress made in reducing regulatory burden. It also requires ministries to undertake to measure the impacts of one burden reduction project every year. By 2016-17, that will save Ontario businesses about \$100 million.

We're proud of this piece of legislation. I encourage the members opposite to support us in moving forward on behalf of small businesses in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Thank you, Minister, for the update. It's great to hear how small businesses are being supported across Ontario, and I am glad to see that this government recognizes the contribution that small businesses make to our economy.

In my riding of Brampton–Springdale, my constituents are looking to understand how our strategic investments

and our partnerships with businesses are creating jobs and growing our economy across Ontario.

Our government is committed to partnering with industry in a fiscally responsible way through initiatives like the Southwestern and Eastern Ontario Development Funds and the Rural Economic Development Fund. These investments help them compete and expand operations. Most importantly, these funds create jobs and grow our economy.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure: Could the minister please elaborate on how this legislation will help Ontario build strong clusters to sustain our thriving economic sectors across the province?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're passionately committed to building a more competitive business environment in Ontario. By building regional clusters and reducing regulatory burden, this legislation, if passed, will create jobs and grow our economy in all areas of the province. It will require government, in consultation with business, academia, labour and non-profit organizations, to develop plans for regional economic clusters.

We know that strong regional hubs spur innovation and collaboration, and when sectors thrive, our province is better positioned to attract new global investments. Cisco and OpenText are just two examples of global companies that chose to invest in Ontario because of our thriving tech sector.

This legislation would require government to publicly release cluster development plans with a mandate to review every five years. Combined with the measures proposed in our budget, these measures would build a stronger, more competitive Ontario economy and create jobs for our province.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Natural Resources: I raised the question of Asian carp devastation with your predecessor, and he told me to go lobby my federal cousins. So I did talk to my federal counterpart, and I'm pleased to announce that they have tackled the problem. Haldimand-Norfolk Cabinet Minister Diane Finley and Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound MP Larry Miller announced the opening of a state-of-the-art research facility in Burlington that will allow the analysis of samples in Canada, rather than waiting on American facilities to do the work. The federal government also committed to more monitoring at detection sites and collaborative research with the United States.

So the ball is in your court, Minister. My question: When is your ministry going to go a step beyond the ban on live Asian carp and require that any fish imported for food be gutted?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question. He absolutely raises an issue that is of serious concern to those of us on this side of the House and, I think, all parties, including both opposition parties. I want to thank him for the question.

I would say the obvious response for me, as the new Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, would be to congratulate the former minister on the introduction in the Legislature of the Invasive Species Act, which in fact was introduced into the Legislature not that long ago. As a result of the opposition parties making a decision that an election was necessary, that particular piece of legislation did not have an opportunity to come forward. Obviously, it's our intention to reintroduce that legislation at the very earliest opportunity. Obviously, that speaks very clearly to how importantly we take this issue as well as the issue around all invasive species in the province of Ontario. We look forward to the opportunity to reintroduce this legislation at the earliest opportunity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Certainly you know that if Asian carp do become established in the Great Lakes it will devastate our commercial fishery, our recreational fishery and our boating industry.

Minister, I travelled on my own dime to testify before the US Army Corps of Engineers on alternatives for the Chicago-area waterways. When I read the final transcripts of agencies and individuals who testified, there was no representation from the Ontario government.

Why does your government still not take this seriously enough to even provide comments, let alone redirect necessary funding? We know MNR has finally been allowed by this government to table legislation, not that the carp are going to obey it. When will government resources be reallocated to your ministry, to MNR, to help steer off this clear and present danger?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Again, I thank the member for his question. I will recommend and commend and thank the federal government for their investment. I did receive a note on this last week or two weeks ago. Their investment—I think the lab is in Burlington—is welcomed. It's proactive. We thank them for their investment speaking very clearly to an issue that is of great concern to us.

But I would say to the member that, as is often the case, Ontario was proactive on the issue and in fact moved on this issue far before this announcement last week about the lab in Burlington. Again, I think it was one or two years ago, a very short time ago, when, through our government, we made an investment of \$15 million or so in an invasive species research centre in Sault Ste. Marie in the former minister's riding.

In fact, I would say to the member that the legislation was there. We've invested in our own lab and research centre in Sault Ste. Marie on this issue. It speaks very clearly to obviously how seriously we're taking the issue. As I've said, we look forward to the earliest opportunity to reintroduce the legislation, the Invasive Species—

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

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Liberal Trojan Horse budget contains a lot of surprises but it's missing a lot of things, too. For years now, families in Kingston have been fighting to save their local schools and preserve their downtown, but Liberals refuse to listen. This budget does nothing to stop the closure of Kingston Collegiate and Queen Elizabeth Collegiate. In fact, it leaves even more schools at risk of closing right across the province.

Will the Premier explain why her Trojan Horse budget leaves Kingston schools on the chopping block?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I actually want to talk about some of the things that are in the budget for education. For example, over the next 10 years, we actually have an \$11-billion investment in new infrastructure for schools. In particular, over the next few years we've got a huge investment of billions of dollars in funding to renew schools, because we know that many of the schools in Ontario were built for the baby boomer generation, and that in many schools in Ontario we actually do need to have some retrofitting and some renewal going on. We have a significant budget that is specifically targeted at renewing schools throughout Ontario that need some upgrading.

I am very proud of the fact that we have invested more in renewing schools and building new schools than any other government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this budget sends a pretty clear message to families. The government plans to do nothing to save local schools like the ones in Kingston. In fact, this Trojan Horse budget lays out a plan for even more school closures and consolidations in small towns and urban neighbourhoods across our province. Even more parents will be forced to fight just to keep their local neighbourhood school open.

The Liberals might call it a plan "to reduce surplus space," but communities and families call it, plain and simple, school closures.

Why won't the Premier listen to families right across Ontario and, instead of closing local schools, do the right thing and keep them open, including the ones in Kingston?

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Hon. Liz Sandals: You know, one of the things that I found really fascinating when I was looking at their platform was that they thought it would be amazing if they spent \$60 million on school infrastructure. Has anybody listened to this? Some \$60 million versus billions, and they're complaining that we're not spending money on schools? Please, Speaker. This makes absolutely no sense.

But one of the things I was also delighted to see this year was that we've actually started to talk to boards about how they can make use of school space together, because there are a number of small rural communities

where there are a number of schools, all of which are half empty. In fact, part of that capital funding is available to communities where the boards get together to use school spaces together and make sure they have a good learning place for children from a variety of boards.

LEGAL AID

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Ma question est pour la procureure générale.

Since 2003, our government has consistently demonstrated its commitment to ensuring equal access to justice for the people of Ontario. I know that the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Aid Ontario have worked together over the years to provide legal aid services in Ontario that are effective and sustainable and support our most vulnerable.

I also understand that Legal Aid Ontario, an arm's-length and publicly funded agency, has introduced two new programs to further support community legal clinics and front-line client services. These clinics include valued agencies such as Parkdale Community Legal Services, West Toronto Community Legal Services, and Unison Health and Community Services, which together serve the riding of Davenport.

Mr. Speaker, could the Attorney General please tell us more about these programs introduced by Legal Aid Ontario?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais remercier la députée de Davenport et la féliciter pour son élection. Merci beaucoup.

Last week, Legal Aid Ontario introduced two new programs. Depending on an individual's eligibility, the first program funds 10 hours with a family lawyer to engage in settlement discussions and finalize separation agreements. The other provides six hours of legal advice for those who have chosen mediation services to settle disputes.

Innovative legal service programs such as these two programs are made possible by commitments from our government, including the \$30-million increase which we committed to in our 2013 budget. This funding is meant specifically for family law services and demonstrates our government's belief that community and legal clinics play an integral role in Ontario's justice system.

This is part of our poverty reduction strategy, and I was very pleased to see the announcement by Legal Aid Ontario last week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I thank the Attorney General for that answer. I am pleased to hear of our government's continued commitment to providing legal services to all Ontarians, regardless of their circumstances.

As the Attorney General just mentioned, in the 2013 budget, we committed to investing \$30 million over the next three years in additional funding to Legal Aid Ontario. This funding will go directly to the improvement of front-line client services through family law service centres and community and legal aid, not only in Davenport but across the whole province.

Mr. Speaker, could the Attorney General please tell us how the 2014 budget, if passed, will continue to show our commitment to the delivery of front-line legal services?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm so impressed with this member, because she really cares about constituents who are less fortunate in her community.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to announce that, if passed, the 2014 budget includes a strategy to expand access to legal aid by raising the income eligibility threshold to qualify for legal aid assistance. Currently, Legal Aid Ontario's income eligibility threshold is at \$10,800 for an individual. The budget proposes an incremental increase of 6% per year over the next seven years.

Ontario's legal aid system helps ensure Ontarians have access to the legal services they need. Again, this is part of our poverty reduction strategy. Thankfully we were re-elected because there is someone—a party—who is speaking on behalf of the less fortunate in our community.

RONDEAU PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, over the past two and three-quarter years I've established a very positive working relationship with former MNR ministers Gravelle and Orazietti.

Rondeau park is home to 283 cottages, and these cottages belong in Rondeau. This park was first chartered as a cottage park back in 1894—that's 120 years ago. Throughout the decades, cottagers have lived in harmony with the park's nature.

Minister, in the past I've presented a win-win solution that would keep the cottagers in the park while being sensitive to the revenue challenges, its ecology and endangered species. Minister, will you commit today to working with me so that together we can come up with a plan to keep the cottagers in Rondeau well beyond their "get-out-of-town" deadline of December 31, 2017?

Hon. Bill Mauro: The member puts the pressure on me greatly by beginning his question by reminding everybody that I'm following in the footsteps of Ministers Gravelle and Orazietti, but I'll do my best to meet his concern and his challenge.

The issue regarding Rondeau and the leases that exist, obviously, have garnered a great deal of attention over the last number of years. When I was not a minister, I followed the debate closely; I listened to it closely. As the member has said in his question, the leases do not expire until the end of December 2017. There is no decision imminent. I have been briefed on the issue. We are discussing it on a regular basis.

I will tell the member that I'm more than happy to work with him on an ongoing basis. I'm not apprised of his suggestions in relation to what he sees as the solution for Rondeau park. He has just suggested to me that he has some. I'm interested in hearing those, and I look

forward to working with the member on this particular issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Minister, in order to preserve these heritage cottages, action needs to be taken now. Cottages are in need of repair. Decades of family memories are at risk of being destroyed unless we come up with equitable solutions to their dilemma. Environmental reports are in, but unfortunately, an economic assessment is not.

Minister, I do have a plan to restore Rondeau to its glory days where there was a buzz within the community and a beehive of activity drawing families to the park. My fond memories include hiking, archery, biking, swimming, fishing, boating and family picnics. Minister, you're from the great Ontario northland. I know that you can relate and would not want to see these activities evaporate from the Rondeau landscape. Cottagers need the park, but more importantly, the park needs the cottagers.

Minister, will you commit today to ensuring that cottagers remain in Rondeau park?

Hon. Bill Mauro: One of the things—for lack of a better word—that the ministry went forward with, in terms of policy related to the leases at Rondeau, was the commissioning of two additional studies on both the environmental and economic impact. I believe that the member said in his question that one is in and one is not. It's my understanding that both of the studies are completed, that both of them are in and that the results of both of those studies are being reviewed for the potential impacts and the data that they yield in terms of the decision-making around Rondeau.

I would add for the member as well: It's my understanding that a third party review is being undertaken on both of the studies—both the environmental study and the economic activity study—so that we can very reliably count on the data that is yielded from both of those studies, and that will infuse our policy- and decision-making process on a go-forward basis.

Once we've had an opportunity to review the details from those studies, we'll be in a better position to advise the member of a decision, going forward.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of Finance. The Power Dam Special Payment Program was implemented in 2001 to replace the property taxation revenue associated with the hydroelectric plants when they were deemed exempt. In the case of the community of Wawa, 47% of their property assessment base was declared exempt. If this Liberal government proceeds with the cancellation of this program, Wawa and 110 other small communities will be unable to meet their financial obligations.

Will this government stop the cuts to the Power Dam Special Payment Program before many of these communities are forced into financial crisis?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I thank the member opposite for the question, as well as for his advocacy. I know that he has been concerned about the effects that this will have on the communities in the north, particularly Wawa. We're having ongoing discussions, as we said we would. I appreciate the correspondence that you've had with me.

We are taking this up with the municipality, recognizing the adverse effects that that would have on one particular community versus the overall policy that we're putting forward. We're sensitive to that, and I congratulate you for bringing it forward as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the Minister of Finance: The Power Dam Special Payment Program is a very small program, but the impact of the clawback is large for many small communities. The payments from this program are significant contributions to their revenue base.

Since 2001, the payments have not kept pace with either inflation or property taxation rates in any community, resulting in an unfair shift to the remaining assessment base. The only way for communities to recapture the lost revenue is through a property taxation increase or by cutting services.

Minister, please tell the good people of Wawa how progressive your budget is again. Will this government do the right thing and assist Wawa and 110 other communities affected by the significant loss of revenue due to the cuts that your budget is implementing?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, as I mentioned, we'll be working closely with the mayor of Wawa to ensure that the effects of this to the municipality are properly managed. We recognize the importance it has in that municipality to receive an appropriate level of support.

But keep in mind that, combined with OMPF, the province's uploads have increased by more than \$1.3 million since 2004—more than 85%. In 2014, this support includes nearly \$2.1 million through the OMPF—which is equivalent to \$1,222 per household, nearly 12 times the provincial average—and over \$850,000 through the provincial upload to social assistance benefits.

We recognize the importance of our municipalities. We are partnering with them, including Wawa, and our ministry will reach out to municipality representatives to seek input as part of our consultation process so that no one is adversely affected. We recognize the exceptional circumstances in Wawa and again thank you for bringing it to our attention.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I'm incredibly proud of our government's aspirational priorities that were laid out in the throne speech. International businesses are coming to Ontario, and local businesses grow here, because of the talent and dedication of our workforce. That is why in our government's throne speech we committed to building a stronger business climate. It is this govern-

ment's ambitious goal for Ontario to become North America's leading jurisdiction for talent, skills and training.

To achieve this goal, our government must have a pan-Ontario vision that understands regional considerations and needs. Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please inform the House of how his ministry's vision on skills and training development will build a stronger northern economy?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much for the question. I thank the member from Scarborough—Agin-court. I'm not going to get a supplementary, so I do want to make sure I get to the regional component, but certainly we are very, very proud of our government's determined and focused approach to skills development.

The 30% Off Ontario Tuition grant has made a huge difference in northern Ontario for students in university and college in terms of getting their first degree, and the youth employment fund is having a real impact already on 2,100 students in northern Ontario, but the northern component that is so important is really the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation's co-op and intern program. We've invested over \$63 million, which leveraged close to another \$36 million from community partners. We've been able to create almost 4,000 co-op placements and internships since 2005, so they are now getting the work experience they need to succeed.

These are great examples of programs that work to develop the skills that are needed to move our diversified economy forward in northern Ontario. I thank you for the time, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1134 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I would like to introduce my son who is visiting us today, Andrew Matlock—if you can stand up; he's in the members' gallery. I have no idea how this happened, Mr. Speaker, but somehow I managed to produce a child who is six foot four and a half. We're very proud of him and delighted to have him here today in the House.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PURPLE TURTLE ART FESTIVAL

Mrs. Julia Munro: This past Saturday and Sunday, the Purple Turtle Art Festival took place in my riding at the Briars Resort in Jackson's Point. Thirteen years ago, local artists got together to create the festival as a way to support local art and exhibit their talent to the community. This marked the 13th year for the festival, and I've had the honour of attending for the last few years; I should also add, spending some money there as well.

Everyone in Sutton and Jackson's Point looks forward to seeing the purple turtles pop up around the town prior to the festival to remind everyone about the upcoming event. The festival features the work of over 30 artists, including painters, potters, jewellers, sculptors, glass artists, native artists and woodworkers.

I am pleased to have attended the Purple Turtle Art Festival this weekend, and I congratulate the organizers, who include Malcolm Madsen, Penny Gyokeres and Cheryl Fulcher, on a successful 13th festival. These types of events are important for the community to come together and appreciate the talent of local Ontario artists.

BLUESFEST WINDSOR

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I am pleased to rise today to speak to you about a long-standing event that took place in my riding this past weekend. Bluesfest Windsor is a blues and roots festival that is enjoyed annually by not only the residents of Windsor and Essex county but by visitors from all over Ontario, as well as our neighbours across the border in the United States. Bluesfest Windsor draws an estimated audience of over 25,000 people over the course of the three-day festival, which takes place outdoors at the Riverfront Festival Plaza.

It is no surprise that with performances by leading artists such as Edgar and Johnny Winter, Robin Trower, Buddy Guy, Tim Robbins, the Yardbirds, Ten Years After, Jeff Healey, Gord Downie and so many more that Bluesfest Windsor is North America's ninth-largest blues festival and one of the top 12 blues venues in North America. In our region, this festival has been the place to be for seeing live performances by the who's who of local, regional and international blues artists.

Providing financial assistance to a number of non-profit and charitable beneficiaries annually, Bluesfest Windsor relies on the generous support of labour, community and corporate sponsors.

I offer my congratulations to the organizers as, this year, they celebrated 20 years of bringing Windsor and Essex county a heart full of soul.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Ten Years After—I saw them at Woodstock. That's how old I am.

ISLAMIC CENTRE OF CAMBRIDGE

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Last Friday, the Islamic Centre of Cambridge again warmly invited the community to share in their annual multi-faith dinner celebrating Ramadan.

Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, is a period of holy fasting, introspection and communal prayer for the Islamic community. During the month, Muslims focus on doing good deeds, quality family time and fasting from dawn till sundown. Fasting teaches self-discipline, self-restraint and generosity.

The daily fast is broken at dusk with a celebration called iftar, a gathering of friends, family and, ideally, the

community. The folks at the Islamic Centre certainly do this very well. They always generously open their doors to share a delicious dinner with local politicians and community leaders.

To begin, six young children filed onstage, stating which of the six different faiths they represented. The expression "out of the mouths of babes" had new meaning after hearing them speak of tolerance, acceptance and respect between cultures. The invited community policing officers said that these children are the most effective ambassadors to bring their message to the Cambridge community. This was much more a gathering of dear friends and family rather than a formal occasion.

Many thanks to Mr. Malik, Mr. Mohammed and Mr. Khokar and their volunteers. I sure look forward to their next community event on August 2.

GET IN TOUCH FOR HUTCH

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Today I would like to recognize the second annual Get in Touch for Hutch race. On June 28, in Arthur, around 600 participants joined together to raise \$50,000 for mental health initiatives and to end the stigma that surrounds mental illness. The walk and run honours the memory of Steven Hutchison.

Steven was a great student and talented athlete and had a strong presence in his community. Tragically, in 2013, he took his own life. Steven's family, friends and community have rallied together to raise awareness about mental health issues and end the stigma that so many people face. That stigma is what prevented Steven from reaching out for help.

His family is dedicated to ensuring that youth have ways to talk about their struggles. They have partnered with charities that provide youth the assistance they need when they need it.

To Kevin, Myrna and Stu, your drive and tireless work to remove the stigma that is attached to mental illness is inspirational. To all those who were a part of this year's Get in Touch for Hutch race, thank you for your generous contributions and your involvement in this important cause.

RALPH MAYVILLE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, let me tell you about an amazing individual by the name of Ralph Mayville.

His father died just weeks before the outbreak of the Second World War. He was just 17 years old when he signed up with the Essex Scottish. He was sent from Windsor to London and ended up in the RCR, the Royal Canadian Regiment. He was paid \$1.10 a day; half of that was sent home to his mother for food. He got shipped to Italy and ended up in an elite combined American and Canadian commando unit known as the First Special Service Force.

He was trained on the ground as a paratrooper but never actually jumped out of an airplane. One time, Ralph spent 99 straight days in combat on the front lines.

During night patrols, these commandos blackened their faces with boot polish and slipped behind the enemy lines armed with V-42 combat knives to take out enemy sentries and patrols. They would leave behind calling cards which read, "The worst is yet to come." They became known as the Devil's Brigade or the Black Devils. Hollywood made a movie about them.

Because he never jumped, Ralph refused to wear his paratrooper wings—until a couple of months ago, when, at the age of 92, Ralph Mayville jumped with a skydiving instructor from 14,000 feet. He says it was so beautiful he never wanted it to end.

I know Ralph as a gentleman, a man of honour, a man who never wore his wings until he felt he deserved them. I attended his pinning ceremony at the Canadian Historical Aircraft Association hangar on the Sunday before the recent election, Speaker, and I have to tell you: What a day. What a man. What a life.

Ralph Mayville: a well-deserved salute, sir, from the Ontario Legislature.

EASTERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT FUND

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I rise to talk about the many ways in which this government has already contributed enormously to our local economy. I'm speaking of the positive effects of the Eastern Ontario Development Fund, a perfect example of a program that promotes our well-educated, highly skilled workforce, that supports innovation, creates jobs and attracts further investment from the private sector.

Here are just a few of the many high-tech success stories in Kingston and the Islands that have been assisted by the EODF since 2011:

MetalCraft Marine, a world leader in the manufacture of high-speed aluminum boats, received \$417,000 for a \$4-million project and created 20 new full-time jobs and doubled the production capacity.

1510

Transformix Engineering, specialists in automation machinery: \$180,000, has 80 highly skilled positions and created 20 new full-time jobs.

Eikon Device, precision instruments: \$110,000 helped build a 20,000-square-foot facility and 10 new jobs.

Sensient Colors Canada, manufacturer of colourings: \$150,000 towards a \$3-million project.

ESG Solutions, a world leader in micro-seismic monitoring equipment: \$581,000, a \$5-million project and 10 new jobs.

These Kingston success stories are evidence that advanced manufacturing is a key part of this government's Building Ontario Up plan.

LAKE NIPISSING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, over recent weeks, several abandoned gillnets filled with dead fish have been discovered in Lake Nipissing, in my riding. There is great concern among all stakeholders about the impact

this will have on the walleye fishery, which is under great pressure.

This situation has prompted unprecedented co-operation by Lake Nipissing stakeholders and partners, in an effort to put a halt to this. The North Bay and District Chamber of Commerce has been very vocal and has been a leader in bringing stakeholders together to find a solution.

Partners such as our own Ministry of Natural Resources; the Lake Nipissing Stakeholders Association; Nipissing First Nation; Bob Goulais, who is offering a \$1,000 reward; mayor Al McDonald from North Bay; Callander mayor Hec Lavigne; and Baysar, the search-and-rescue who are offering aerial surveillance to look for abandoned gillnets, are all working together in a real spirit of co-operation. In fact, Nipissing First Nation just hosted and funded their third annual Lake Nipissing Summit, engaging the community and all partners.

I support the proactive approach by our MNR to find a solution to this problem, and encourage the ministry to continue working in this manner with the stakeholders, as many of their livelihoods are dependent on a viable, sustainable fishery.

OTTAWA LEBANESE FESTIVAL

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to highlight a very important event that's happening in my riding of Ottawa South. The 24th annual Ottawa Lebanese Festival will get under way tomorrow with the raising of the Lebanese flag at Ottawa city hall, where the flag will fly until the end of the festival.

The festival is held on the grounds of the beautiful St. Elias cathedral, which you can tour each evening while the festival is on.

The Ottawa Lebanese Festival is a celebration of the rich Lebanese culture and the contributions the Lebanese community has made to both Canada and the world in literature, the arts, sciences, trade and commerce.

The festival is also a showcase for Lebanese cuisine, from fresh hummus and tabbouleh to traditional saj bread made right in front of your eyes. Just the food alone makes the festival a must-do for thousands of Ottawans and visitors to the capital who attend each year.

The festival partners to support local charities. This year, they continue their support for the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation.

To the many individuals and families who volunteer their time to host the festival, prepare the food and welcome the thousands of visitors, thank you for making the Ottawa Lebanese Festival such a meaningful and wonderful part of summer in Ottawa South.

Although I will not be able to attend the opening ceremonies, I very much look forward to joining all of you on the weekend when I get home.

BRIGHTON RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, it's a pleasure to talk about the Brighton Relay for Life. About a year ago, I

was asked if I would be the honorary chair of this auspicious and worthwhile event. These Relay for Lifes happen in many communities right across the province.

The event happened on June 6, right in the middle of our election campaign, but I was very happy to be able to take part and spend a night to do the opening ceremonies and then do the official closing ceremonies.

I must give credit to Karen White, the chair of the Relay for Life for Brighton. She really held all of the pieces together and made it happen.

I was delighted when all the tallies were done at the end of the day. What we had hoped to raise was some \$40,000 for this event, but we were all very, very surprised and happy to know that at the end of the day we raised \$63,810. I was delighted to be a part of such a role and I look forward to taking part in the Relay for Life in Trent Hills in Campbellford in September. It's a great activity to raise awareness for cancer and raise some money.

PASCAL GOULET

Mr. Michael Mantha: Point of order, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Algoma–Manitoulin on a point of order.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent for a moment of silence. Je demande le consentement unanime pour un moment de silence.

Thirty-eight-year-old Pascal Goulet died in Lac Des Iles mine recently, leaving behind his wife and two daughters. He was a proud USW member and a North American Palladium employee. Pour M. Pascal Goulet, qui laisse derrière lui son épouse et ses deux jeunes filles, je demande un moment de silence, s'il vous plaît.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Algoma–Manitoulin is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence to pay homage to the miner. Do we agree? Agreed. I would ask all members in the House to rise, to join us in a moment of silence, of respect.

The House observed a moment's silence.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FIGHTING FRAUD AND REDUCING AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE RATES ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 DE LUTTE CONTRE LA FRAUDE ET DE RÉDUCTION DES TAUX D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE

Mr. Sousa moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to amend various statutes in the interest of reducing insurance fraud, enhancing tow and storage service and providing for other matters regarding vehicles and highways / Projet de loi 15, Loi visant à modifier diverses lois dans le but de réduire la fraude à l'assurance, d'améliorer les services de remorquage et

d'entreposage et de traiter d'autres questions touchant aux véhicules et aux voies publiques.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I will be giving the bill to Ashley, our page.

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. Charles Sousa: If passed, the measures being introduced in this bill would help protect Ontario drivers, tackle fraud, and reduce costs and uncertainty in the auto insurance system.

There are more than nine million drivers in Ontario. Our government has made a commitment to keeping the auto insurance system fair and more affordable.

In August of last year, we announced our cost and rate reduction strategy, which is targeting an industry-wide average of a 15% reduction in authorized auto insurance rates within two years. The measures proposed in this bill would move forward on our strategy by helping to reduce costs in the system and continuing to fight fraud. Auto insurance rates are directly linked to claim costs. Reducing cost and uncertainty in the system would help reduce rates for Ontario drivers.

One of the cornerstones of this legislation is a proposal to transform Ontario's auto insurance dispute resolution system to help ensure that injured Ontario drivers settle their disputes faster. This legislation would create a new framework for disputes by moving the administrative responsibility and its adjudicative process from FSCO, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, to the Ministry of the Attorney General. The move would help resolve disputes faster by making the process more effective and efficient while ensuring it remains accessible for accident victims.

1520

If passed, the changes we're proposing would expedite the resolution of disputes as well as reduce financial administrative pressures which can increase costs and cause rates to go up. Transforming dispute resolutions would help reduce uncertainty, create long-term stability in claim costs, and provide claimants with faster access to the statutory accident benefits that they require.

In addition to streamlining dispute resolutions, this bill also proposes measures to protect Ontario consumers and continue cracking down on auto insurance fraud. We're proposing to establish consumer protection specific to towing and vehicle storage, and also give the government stronger enforcement powers. The proposed changes would provide authority to require towing and storage providers to publish their rates, provide an itemized invoice of their listings of services, accept payments by credit card, tell the driver that their vehicle is being towed for repair or storage, and give the consumer access to his or her towed vehicle to remove personal property.

Lastly, we're also proposing to amend the traffic act to remove the exemption for tow trucks under MTO's commercial vehicle operator's registration system.

The new legislation would allow us to set qualifications and standards governing the operation of tow trucks, including driver certification, training requirements and prescribed penalties to violators.

As well, we're also helping to protect drivers by authorizing vehicle storage to protect consumers as to when their vehicle can be stored after an accident, accruing charges, and doing so without notice to the owner. This will, again, enable them to save without having abusive storage practices to remove associated costs from the auto insurance system.

We're modernizing licensing and disciplinary hearings for insurance agents and adjusters as well. If passed, this means FSCO would have the authority to revoke or immediately suspend the licences of agents and adjusters who act improperly and put the public at risk. This is just another much-needed measure to help reduce rates and help protect Ontario consumers.

Lastly, the bill would implement measures to reform the prejudgement interest rates for general damages and again reduce costs by protecting and expediting matters more quickly for claimants. This rate, actually, hasn't been updated since 1990. Linking the rate to current market conditions would help reduce the cost to bodily injury claims and auto insurance systems while still ensuring fairness for consumers.

As mentioned, higher costs in the system translate to higher insurance premiums, and we're fighting fraud by lowering those costs.

We had introduced this back in February. Unfortunately, it was delayed, so we recognize that by expediting it quickly today we'll be able to act on the very things that consumers require, and that's to reduce the rates as quickly as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am going to take a moment to explain circumstances behind my leniency, if there was any needed. It is traditional that you read from the explanatory notes when you introduce a bill. In some circumstances, the explanatory notes can be very lengthy. Ministers or anyone introducing bills can help us by reducing and giving us a synopsis of those explanatory notes, which I'm assuming has happened here today. If that's the case, that's very permissible in normal procedures.

If there is a speech written for this, then that is not an appropriate place to do it; it would be in ministerial statements.

I'm just making sure that everyone is aware of the procedures that are normally followed in the House, and I'm sure it just got followed.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plant scandal, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020;

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, particularly in rural Ontario, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential for families in rural Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers, and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I agree with this and will send it to the table with Daniel.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Mrs. Lawrie Smith from my riding, in Lively—Naughton, actually. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to "mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page David to bring it to the Clerk.

CHILDHOOD APRAXIA OF SPEECH

Mr. Mike Colle: I have many petitions here from Lisa and David Brennan from Mississauga. They did this for their son, Matthew. It's a petition to designate May 14 as Apraxia Awareness Day in Ontario.

"Whereas childhood apraxia of speech is a rare neurological speech disorder that affects oral motor planning;

“Whereas an estimated 3% to 5% of the world’s childhood population are diagnosed with childhood apraxia of speech;

“Whereas Ontario has excellent speech-language centres and programs that currently provide treatment for childhood apraxia of speech;

“Whereas children diagnosed in Canada with childhood apraxia of speech are eligible to receive the children’s disability tax credit to assist with therapy costs;

“Whereas greater public awareness of speech disorders,” especially in Hamilton, “and the benefits of early intervention speech-language therapy are needed” all over Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to join the United States of America in declaring May 14 as Apraxia Awareness Day” in this great province.

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

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Jeff Yurek: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Health Canada approved Esbriet in October 2012 for individuals with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF);

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has declined to list Esbriet on the Ontario drug benefit formulary or reimburse patients through the Exceptional Access Program;

“Whereas Esbriet is the first of its kind to be approved in Canada for the treatment of IPF and will slow the progression of this fatal disease;

“Whereas the high cost of Esbriet is creating financial hardships for many individuals and their families. Only those patients who have access to a private drug plan can afford the cost of this medication, forcing some patients to go without treatment;

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

“To review and reconsider the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care’s decision to decline any assistance with Esbriet and consider some form of assistance with the cost of this medication in order to improve the lives of Ontarians with IPF and decrease the cost on the health care system associated with this disease.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition and affix my signature to it.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mr. Paul Miller: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers’ resources;

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

“Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario’s economy and create jobs in three ways:

“—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

“—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

“—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries.”

I agree with this, Mr. Speaker, and will sign it, and it will be Ashley bringing it.

1530

CREDIT UNIONS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, you may have heard this petition before, but it is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and signed by a great number of people in my riding.

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers’ resources;

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

“Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario’s economy and create jobs in three ways:

“—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

“—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

“—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries.”

Thank you very much for allowing me to present this petition on behalf of my constituents.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads:

“Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Esbriet for patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), a rare, progressive and fatal disease characterized by scarring of the lungs; and

“Whereas Esbriet, the first and only approved medication in Canada for the treatment of IPF, has been shown to slow disease progression and to decrease the decline in lung function; and

“Whereas the lack of public funding for Esbriet is especially devastating for seniors with IPF who rely exclusively on the provincial drug program for access to medications;

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

“Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding.”

I agree with the petition, will affix my name and give it to page David to send to the Clerks’ table.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further petitions? I recognize the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your new position.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: It’s my pleasure to present this petition that comes from all over Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas many Ontarians need health care services at home and 6,100 people are currently on wait-lists for care;

“Whereas waiting for over 200 days for home care is unacceptable;

“Whereas eliminating the wait-lists won’t require any new funding if the government caps hospital CEO salaries, finds administrative efficiencies in the local health integration networks (LHINs) and community care access centres (CCACs), standardizes procurement policies and streamlines administration costs;

They “petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“That a five-day home care guarantee is established and existing wait-lists eliminated so that Ontarians receive the care they need within a reasonable time frame.”

I really support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask our very busy page David to bring it to the Clerk.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further petitions? I recognize the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations on your appointment as the deputy speaker.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the University of Guelph’s Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario’s outstanding post-secondary agricultural schools; and

“Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario and the future success of the region’s agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

“Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector;

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

“That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph’s short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses.”

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Daniel.

SERVICES DIAGNOSTIQUES

M. Taras Natyshak : J’ai une pétition ici à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario qui dit :

« Alors que l’Ontario a fait la tomographie par émission de positons (TEP) un service de santé assuré par le régime public pour les patients atteints du cancer et de maladies cardiaques lorsque les données cliniques indiquent que cette technique est efficace dans leur cas; et

« Alors que depuis octobre 2009, des TEP assurées sont effectuées à Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton, ainsi qu’à Thunder Bay; et

« Considérant que la ville du Grand Sudbury est une plaque tournante pour la santé dans le Nord-Est, qui compte Horizon Santé-Nord et son programme régional de cancer, de même que l’École de médecine du Nord de l’Ontario;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario d’offrir la TEP par le biais

d'Horizon Santé-Nord, donnant ainsi un accès équitable aux résidents du Nord-Est ontarien. »

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais la donner à David.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

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

“Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services' Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

“Whereas the community of Markdale rallied to raise \$13 million on the promise they would get a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner.”

I support this and will give it to page Nardien to take to the Clerks' table.

BREASTFEEDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from families in Brantford, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Health Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society and the World Health Organization recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life with continued breastfeeding along with other food sources for up to two years and beyond for optimal health;

“Whereas breastfeeding is normal and natural but like childbirth it can be complicated requiring specialized support for a family's success;

“Whereas lactation consultants are trained, internationally certified breastfeeding specialists who can assist women having breastfeeding problems, and be resources of breastfeeding expertise in the community;

“Whereas Brantford, until 2005 when the service was cut, had a breastfeeding clinic run by lactation consultants at Brantford General Hospital which was highly utilized;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to facilitate the reinstatement of a lactation consultant-led breastfeeding clinic in Brantford General Hospital.”

I fully support this petition, Speaker, will affix my name to it and ask my good page David to bring it to the Clerk.

LYME DISEASE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further petitions? I recognize the member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, and congratulations, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment. I've never seen such a dignified Speaker.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease in Ontario and to have everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

I strongly agree with this and will send it to the table with page Daniel.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

2014 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on July 14, 2014, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's a pleasure to take a few moments to respond to the government's budget. I'll be sharing my time with my colleagues the members for Nipissing, Haldimand-Norfolk and Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Last month, we lost another 33,900 jobs. It was the 90th consecutive month that our province's unemployment rate has been higher than the national average. That's seven and a half years—unbelievable. Liberal policies have made our energy rates the highest in North America. Liberal policies are driving business and invest-

ment out of Ontario and putting the squeeze on hard-working families, especially seniors on fixed incomes. Our debt rating outlook has already changed from stable to negative, and soon the government will be underfunding more vital services, like they already are with home care and physiotherapy services for seniors, to pay for higher interest costs on their irresponsible debt.

The government is clearly living far beyond its means, and instead of taking the time to present a responsible budget with solutions, the Liberals reissued rash and irresponsible promises without a plan to pay for them.

At the same time that the Liberal government is being absolutely unrealistic and irresponsible in how they spend our money, they had the nerve to tell Ontarians that the government doesn't trust them to plan their own finances, especially finances in the future. It's just arrogant and hypocritical for the government to scold Ontarians for not saving enough for their retirement when the Liberals are responsible for increasing the cost of day-to-day living in Ontario: HST on everything they buy, rising government fees, eco taxes, spending more on gas because commutes are longer, a health premium that doesn't exclusively go to health care and skyrocketing energy bills. If Ontarians aren't saving for their retirement, it's because there is no money at the end of the month after they've paid for all the essentials. Docking more money from people's paycheques for the government's pension scheme will just further squeeze hard-pressed families and lose even more jobs, as the government's own finance officials have warned.

This budget is political instead of practical. The government originally presented it last May for the partisan purposes of forcing the NDP to either support a budget that could have been written by former NDP Premier Bob Rae, or create a rift within the NDP by voting against it. The budget is no more credible than this government's previous claims that the gas plant scandal would cost only \$40 million when the real cost, we found out, was at least \$1.1 billion. How much more pain will yesterday's budget inflict on all of us?

Again, the Liberals achieved their partisan goal of piling on the NDP with the May budget. But now, after an election, they could have taken the time to craft a budget that addressed the needs of Ontario families and businesses instead of Liberal self-interest.

We asked them to take their time. We told them we would not hold them to their rash political promise to rush this budget through. Instead of thoughtful policy, Premier Wynne decided it's more important to continue her vendetta against Andrea Horwath, the leader of the NDP, and her party, and everyone has to shoulder the consequences. Higher taxes, cuts to front-line services and more job losses are coming down the road because the Liberals will increase debt by spending \$12.5 billion more than taxpayers have already given the government.

We've already seen front-line cuts: 40 nursing positions cut in North Bay; 90 nurses put out of work in Ottawa; cuts to nurses, 34 of them, in Windsor; and cuts to teachers in Windsor.

Norman Levine, the managing director of Portfolio Management, said this budget makes both debt and unemployment worse. He warned, "What's going to happen is once the budget comes out, rating agencies are going to downgrade them, and there will be more than one downgrade because they're showing no plans to address it, so they're going to be downgraded multiple times."

That leads me to the response to a question in question period about future downgrades on our debt and skyrocketing costs to service that debt. The Premier was quite selective in choosing to only put forth in the response that the Dominion Bond Rating Service had reaffirmed our rating. But if you actually read their press release—and I've asked the library to send me the entire report—it's really quite negative. I'll just read it to be fair to the government: "DBRS acknowledges that the medium-term outlook has somewhat weakened since last year, owing to a combination of slightly lower revenues and higher program spending projections, raising doubts that the government will have the fortitude to make difficult decisions required to adhere to its original targets...."

"Overall, while the recent erosion in fiscal outlook is manageable, the province remains vulnerable given the extent of fiscal effort needed amidst below-potential economic conditions. This remains a concern for DBRS and highlights the risk of stretching the return to balance over an extended period of time and relying on improving economic conditions to restore fiscal soundness."

I just know from my experience running rather large bureaucracies in the past that when the bond rating agencies say they have concern, it's a code word for "watch out."

And it goes on. It's actually a very negative comment on the government. They don't believe, as I said, that you have the fortitude within the next three years to actually stop your wild spending and give us all a break and balance the books.

I just want to reiterate, Mr. Speaker, and then wind up. A credit downgrade has tangible consequences since a 1% increase in the interest Ontario pays on its debt will cost as much as \$3 billion more annually—\$3 billion that we will be borrowing, by the way. All Ontarians will pay the price for higher borrowing costs that will take billions out of priority services or billions out of everyone's wallet in new taxes.

To this day, the finance minister and Premier keep telling us to trust them. Somehow they will find a way to balance the budget within three years even though they're spending more money. Somehow they will introduce new programs and operational spending while paying billions more in debt interest. Somehow the additional billions in debt servicing costs won't have an impact on front-line services. No wonder media have dubbed this budget a "fiscal fairy tale."

As I've said, it's immoral to give people false hope with a budget that media have rightly dubbed a "fiscal fairy tale" only to have to take away services and programs when the lenders put a gun to the Liberals' heads and say their line of credit has dried up. It happened to Bob Rae, and it will happen again.

How can the finance minister and Premier keep a straight face as they preach the impossible? While they blame taxpayers and the economy for not delivering as much revenue as they expected, they refuse to admit that it is their own bad policy decisions that have made a mess of our economy. Other governments, both provincial and federal, in this country are well on their way to balancing their budgets. What's the difference? Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm looking at it across the aisle.

You should be ashamed, for having driven Ontario's economy into the ground, for destroying our manufacturing sector, for devastating the horse racing community, for forcing seniors to decide between food and hydro. You should be ashamed, for causing a generation of eager college and university graduates to lose hope of finding a good job in Ontario and move westward.

We'll be voting against this budget, in support of the people and businesses and jobs across Ontario—the businesses that can't afford to have their future mortgaged by bad policy decisions and the 33,900 people who lost their jobs last month alone. We will hold the Liberals to account, on their behalf, for their unrealistic and unaffordable budget. We will do that each and every day of the week.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to echo a number of the comments from our interim leader. I think he hit it off very well and made the people out here listening aware of the situation that we find ourselves in with this budget.

I'm going to break my comments into two pieces, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to talk a little bit about my local riding and the things that I don't see for my riding, and I'm going to talk about the big picture for Ontario.

We know this government is going to spend—if there is one thing that they do well, spending is probably it—so we know there's going to be money. But part of our job as the official opposition is to ensure, on behalf of the taxpayers—the people paying the freight—that every dollar is spent wisely and effectively and, most importantly, for the benefit of the people who are actually paying.

So I was pleased to see, particularly with my recent critic portfolio, that there's money earmarked for social services and long-term care and wellness. However, Mr. Speaker, in reviewing the budget a little bit last night, I noted the actual interest payment that is made on our debt is more than the whole social services sector. There are people out there who need programs; there are people out there who need services. We're spending more on interest payments than we are on those most fragile, those most needy, those who need a hand up. There are 21,000 people currently on developmental services wait-lists across our province. That's horrible in the great province of Ontario.

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We are hoping, but this government does not have a great track record of producing when they say they will

do something. What they do promise, and break, are things like, "I will not raise your taxes." We all remember the health tax a number of years ago, so I'm fearful that, again, we're going to find those same situations.

This government is spending \$3 billion more than it brings in in revenues. Your home budget can't take it. The people watching and listening at home, their home budget can't take that and continue to go down without losing the home. We were hoping to see some fiscal restraint. We were hoping to see that they would have actually learned the lesson. Sadly, that's not the case.

The interim leader, the great member from Simcoe–Grey, has been here for 24 years, I believe, and served this province marvellously over those years as health minister and as energy minister in past PC governments. He expressed that we are now a province that is in a debt situation, and this government is doing nothing to pull us back out of that. And yet, miraculously, even though they're going to spend \$3 billion more this year than they bring in in revenue, they've committed to balancing the budget in 2017-18. I'm not certain, without voodoo economics, how they're going to be able to do that. You can't continue to overspend and deliver all the services and not make cuts along the way somewhere.

When I was out on the election campaign trail, people were asking me that very question: "How will the Liberals do this? They're promising. They have made commitments to us."

That brings me to my local area. This is supposed to be the infrastructure budget, one of the biggest infrastructure spending budgets in recent history in our great province. Yet in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, we have a number of long-term-care and aging nursing homes that need help—not one word in there, not one dollar allotted to those. Again, those seniors who have built this great province and to whom we owe what we have today—nothing in there to address their needs.

Hospitals were supposedly in this budget. I've referenced in this House, at every opportunity, the Markdale hospital. Twelve years ago, the government of the day, the Liberals, promised and committed, and challenged the people of Markdale and area to raise money for their hospital: \$12 million. In fact, it's now \$13 million with interest, because it has been sitting in the bank for a dozen years, doing nothing to help the people it was intended to help. Not one thing is in there about that, Mr. Speaker, not one commitment.

Now, in fairness to the minister, I did raise the question last week, and he has agreed to a meeting, but that meeting means nothing if there's not action behind that.

There was talk in the budget of schools. Again, I went through the list looking for John Diefenbaker Secondary School in Hanover—a commitment the government made to that great community, to our Bluewater District School Board—but nothing was in there, Mr. Speaker.

So you can understand, I hope, and I hope even the people across the aisle can understand, why I have a slight degree of concern. I wonder if I can trust them, because they've made these promises to the people of my

riding, and they have not come through. They have not delivered.

What they have delivered is the highest debt and the highest deficit in the history of our great province. We carry more debt today than the rest of the provinces combined. Ontario should be the economic engine of this great Confederation. It's now accepting handouts. It's actually embarrassing, I think, for most of us to even admit that this government of 10 years, this Liberal government, has run us into the ground. They're borrowing from those young pages in front of you, from the young kids out there. That's who I care about, Mr. Speaker: the next generation. What are they going to do if this government doesn't soon turn things around?

I'm concerned that there's going to be more waste and more scandals. In my two and a half years, I've watched things like the gas plant billion-dollar boondoggle; I've watched eHealth; I've watched and learned of Ornge and the money that has been wasted in all of those projects and programs. Again, every single dollar that is spent on those boondoggles, on those scandals, is not going to the front line, to the people most needy: those seniors out there who have seen their hydro bills double and triple in the last three years. We're being told already by this Liberal government that you can expect those rates to increase again and double in the next three to four years. People are coming to my office every day saying, "I can't afford my hydro bills"—nothing in there to address that.

Now, they did talk about taking the debt retirement charge off, I think in 2017 or 2018—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: In 2016? Mr. Speaker, that debt was done four or five years ago. That's like you paying your Visa two years ago and still getting a bill and paying it. It doesn't make sense, and I can't understand why they need yet again two more years to get that under control. The people of Ontario deserve better.

I was reading, this morning, some of the clippings in the *Globe and Mail*. One of the things that they reported—I'm just using this; it's not a prop. I'm going to quote from here: "If the Liberal government sticks to this budget, there will be pain. There will be hard choices. And there will be disappointed supporters."

They go on to say, "But with four more years of majority government ahead ... Premier Wynne is going to have to face some of the hard choices she studiously avoided talking about during the election."

I believe our interim leader talked about her and the finance minister being disingenuous, suggesting that this budget is just wonderful for our economy and for the people of Ontario, and I think this article alludes to that as well.

Over the past few months, the Liberal Party has been a bit like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. One wrote the budget; the other won the election. And we do wonder who will govern.

At the end of the day, we were hoping for a budget from a PC perspective, from the people whom I represent and I saw at the doorsteps, a budget that would give

hope, that would show people who have actually understood that they've taken us down the wrong track. They've made some very poor decisions. They've made decisions that are hurtful and painful to the people of this great province, and we were hoping to see that they would acknowledge that and step back and say, "You know what? Even with a majority we understand that we have to make a change of direction. We have to do that."

It's not a practical budget. Yes, there's going to be some spending and yes, that hopefully will ensure that there are some jobs created out there, but you can't continue to spend more than you bring in and not raise taxes somewhere down the road. That's probably going to come at us, and we just need to make sure that the people of Ontario understand that.

The other thing I heard loud and clear at the door—from small businesses, medium businesses and large businesses, as well as the employees—was the pension plan. At first blush, it sounds like a wonderful thing, and I'll give the Liberals credit—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask that the members respectfully tone it down just a little bit. I'm having difficulty hearing the speaker, and he does deserve the right to have the floor for the debate. Thank you very much.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure they're hanging on every word, really. Hopefully they're at least listening to a few of those words.

This pension plan, while it sounds admirable—what's the word?—"aspirational," as I think we've heard in here for a number of weeks before the budget. It's great to think that you're going to get a pension, but at some point people have to pay for this pension. It's not right to tell people that you're going to take 1.9% of their existing paycheque to do something that they may wish not to do. At the end of the day, a lot of the people were telling me, "I don't have money at the end of my budget, with the increased hydro costs, with the increased cost of consumer goods because of this government, because of the gasoline prices. I don't have any money, or I would be putting it into an RRSP." If they don't have it and they didn't have it, how are they going to have it today, miraculously? Now you're taking 1.9% of their disposable income, which they're now not going to be spending in the economy. They're not going to be buying consumables that again create jobs and allow our economy to expand.

The employers are saying, "This is an additional tax. You can name it whatever you want, but this is an additional tax." And I've already had some saying, "It's going to be the final nail in my coffin. You're going to run me out of town, like the other 300,000 manufacturing jobs that we have lost in this great province under this Liberal reign of terror." We need to ensure—

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: At the end of the day, I can only say what's true. I have to be able to use terms that the general public shares with me. All I was doing was repeating, and those were their exact words. It has been a reign of

terror under this government. They're decimating our province. They're going to bankrupt us. We're not that far off from Detroit. People say, "That will never happen." Yes, it will happen. In fact, it has happened. Talk to the people there.

The people whom I am most concerned about—because I truly, truly care about people. That's the reason I got into this job, as did most of my colleagues on all sides of the House: to make this province a better place. When I stand here, I'm not being critical for any specific nature other than I do think there have been some bad decisions made. I want to be helpful.

This morning I offered, I think, a good thought process to the Minister of Agriculture, and I'm hopeful—I'm really hopeful—that he'll step up and show some action on that file. It's a good way to show that we can work together. I'm glad to see that he has actually taken on full-time responsibility, because before we had a part-time ag minister. So that's a step in the right direction. I think that the minister is sincere in what he's saying as he's prepared to work on that file, as is the Minister of Health for my Markdale hospital. But at the end of the day, words don't help people. What we need to see is action. We need to see a budget that is actually going to deliver. They're going to spend, as I've said at the very outset, more than any other province in our Confederation. We want effective use of dollars, we want to make sure that they're accountable, and we want a government that, when they say, "I'm going to do this," at the end of the day have done it. In many cases, that isn't the case.

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A number of years ago in their budget, they had \$40 million earmarked for nurses. A couple of years after, 1% of that had been spent on actual hiring of nurses and providing front-line care. So again, I'm a little bit reticent to believe there has been a massive change in their thought process. I have concern that they're going to deliver on those types of things and they're not going to create more administration, more bureaucracies like the LHINs, like the OPAs that we've been talking about here for two and a half years. The OPA went from six to 12 people to 300 people. I'm not certain what they really do for the benefit of Ontarians, but I certainly know what happened to the energy budget and the cost at the door to the people who are paying the freight.

We needed a budget that gave hope and ensured that we live within our means. I think we all understand the concept of not spending more than you bring in, particularly if you're borrowing against the children and grandchildren; the age of the pages sitting in front of you, Speaker, are who we need to be thinking about. We need to be thinking about those special-needs folks out in all of our communities. Social services, as I say, is my critic portfolio now. Those people have not received increases since the 1990s. There are more people needing the services and yet we're not doing much to help those most needy. We're not lowering prices for the people who are out there struggling from day to day and paycheque to paycheque, while yet we are imposing things on them like this RPP.

We need to ensure with every single budget, every single dollar and every single line item of this budget that there are people at the very forefront of every thought process we have, and if it's not helping people and providing better and more services, then it shouldn't be there. We need to ensure that we live within our means. We need to ensure that a budget is going to be for the benefit, in the long term, of our province. We need to ensure that in the short term it's going to do some things for our province. I'm just not certain—although all the platitudes we heard yesterday were that we're going to give, we're going to spend, we're going to spend, we're going to respond, we need to make sure we have a budget that is actually truly going to put us on the right track.

We need to turn around the province now that is currently going downwards. We're losing, again, between 300,000 and 600,000 jobs in our province. For 90 months now, I think, we've had the highest unemployment in the country. That's deplorable, Mr. Speaker. You've had huge hits in your great riding. We need to be turning this around and creating the environment so that businesses want to remain in Ontario, first and foremost. We certainly want those in Ontario to expand. We want them to hire more workers. And we want to look attractive to other companies that would locate to our great province of Ontario. As our interim leader alluded to, the concern of the bond rating agencies could actually trigger higher interest rates. If that happens, why are you going to come here as opposed to another province?

I spoke on this at length on the campaign trail with people. We're spending half a billion dollars a year with 0.5% interest. Some say it will go to \$3 billion if we go up one percentage point. That's \$3 billion that would not be going to seniors, to home care, to special-needs children, to people for their drugs. We've heard in here over and over of people with need of special drugs for their ailments, and yet the government typically says no, no, no, and they find some bureaucratic, administrative reason why they won't do that, as opposed to trying to find a way to move forward.

And yet this budget, again, was a bit of pixie dust, saying, "We'll be all things to all people. We'll ensure that everyone gets more." That's admirable from the perspective of the person who wants more, but at the end of the day, you have to be able to pay your bills. I teach my two boys, Zachary and Benjamin—Zach's going to be 20 shortly and Ben just turned 17—that there is no free lunch in this world. You've got to go out and earn your living. You've got to live within your means. You have to spend within practical realities. They all want, as we all do, nice, new, shiny, glossy things. My son keeps telling me he wants new golf clubs, and I say, "I want a golf course, but that doesn't mean I get one tomorrow unless I'm going to go out and work hard and find a way to buy that." So, similar to him: Go out and work hard. Live within your means. Pay your brother back before you go out and buy that new golf club. It's the same thing—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Yes. “Careful with golf clubs,” Mr. Yakabuski says.

We need to ensure that we are setting that culture for the generations that are following. If we’re setting the bar here with our spending, which the Liberals have done over their 10-year reign of terror, then what do we expect of the next generation? They just keep ratcheting up and just think this money grows on trees. It’s not reality. It saddens me when I see how much money—the third-largest expenditure of this Liberal government, and they didn’t change it in this budget, is paying interest on the debt, the money they are borrowing against our children and grandchildren. It’s deplorable that we would say that. It’s larger than the whole sector of social services. Community Living folks, children’s aid societies. All of the groups that I meet with on a very regular basis in my riding and across the province in my critic roles are telling me that there are more and more people needing more and more services. And yet we’re not taking any of that money away from the debt that could be applied back to the front lines, that could be giving these people a hand up, that could be doing some retraining, that could be giving them that extra couple of hours of service in their homes. A lot of seniors—and I applaud the new direction of going to home care as opposed to everyone having to go to the hospital that would have happened 30, 40, 50 years ago, but there also have to be the dollars there to provide those supports if we’re going to leave those people at home and not give them the care in something like a hospital or a clinic that they have become accustomed to.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day I want a budget that is actually practical and realistic. I was really hoping that they would come out this year and say, “You know what? We’ve run this structural deficit.” They’ve been talking about the recession. Come on. At some point, step up to the plate. You’ve been in power now for 10 years, and you’re going to have another four-year reign. You need to be making decisions, strategic decisions, decisions with compassion, absolutely, but decisions that get this province back on the rails to success, that ensure that we’re creating jobs and we’re creating the business climate in which companies want to create jobs so we actually have more people coming to Ontario than leaving.

Right now probably the biggest industry out there is the Liberal moving vans, moving people out of this province. There’s a mass exodus of people heading west into other provinces. We have to turn that around. The only way to do that is to either lower your spending or increase your revenues. They’ve said, although I’m not certain again we can trust them, there will be no new tax increases. Well, then, the only other alternative, if you’re not going to do that, is to lower spending, and we didn’t see that in this budget.

So, yes, I do have misgivings about the budget. I hope to see some benefit from some of the spending that they’re going to do, because no doubt they will spend. At the end of the day we need to make sure we stop that, we turn this train around and we become, again, the leader of Confederation.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I’ll finish and turn it over to my colleague, the duke—Haldimand–Norfolk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Further to this budget motion debate, a few days ago I had an opportunity to rise in question period, with a question to the Premier. In three years this government is predicting a zero deficit. However, the hand-picked economist hired by this government, Don Drummond, is projecting a \$30.2-billion deficit in three years. Again, my question to the Premier: How do you square a \$30.2-billion discrepancy? To me, that’s the essence of this July budget debate: a \$12.5-billion shortfall today and three years down the road a \$30.2-billion shortfall.

So Drummond says \$30.2 billion in the red three years down the road; Ms. Wynne says it will be zero. Speaker, I find that really quite a spread.

To date, the Premier, her finance minister and the Treasury Board president have really presented nothing by way of a plan, yet alone any specific measures to halt the deficit spending that we’ve been seeing of late using borrowed money, the deficit spending we’ve been seeing for close to 11 years now. Now we hear talk of asset sales—nothing too concrete on that as well. I don’t object entirely to that kind of a notion. It’s something you do when you have to pay down, for example, a very large debt. You don’t sell assets just because you can’t meet your operating expenses, or you don’t sell assets to try and lower your deficit. We’ve seen asset sales in my riding. Both Haldimand county and Norfolk county have sold their power authorities to Hydro One. We see a situation now where the province may sell part, or some of the assets anyway, of Hydro One.

There are some assets that have been built over many, many decades courtesy of people’s electricity bills. You’ve got to pay those bills. I don’t think people were paying their bills on the understanding that the Ontario government, once it gets in trouble with its operating expenses, at minimum, let alone the debt, would be selling off what has been built up over many, many years. That’s certainly not the way we prefer to see people run their family finances.

However, we do recognize that governments, like families, have to pay interest on the money they borrow. That’s something you have to do. At the end of the year, this debt, we know, is going to come in at something like \$289 billion. The interest on that debt: \$11 billion this year alone. Again, as we’ve heard during this debate, that’s \$11 billion that’s not going to health, to education, not being allocated to the most vulnerable in our society. I might point out the debt was half that amount when this government took power back in 2003. Hence that oft-quoted phrase “Dalton the Debt-Doubler” comes to mind. That’s the legacy of Mr. McGuinty.

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Now, Speaker, time will tell what interest rates, or what the debt servicing charges are going to be on the debt three years hence, when we hear the projection of a

zero deficit, when we hear a projection of a \$30.2-billion deficit. The projection for the debt in fiscal year 2017-18 is \$411.4 billion. That's the debt we'll be looking at. That's the debt that coming generations will be looking at as well.

Back to my question to the Premier. The President of Treasury Board responded, acknowledging that the deficit in three years will be \$30.2 billion if nothing is done. I'm mindful, and I would be quoting King Lear, as I recall, "Nothing will come of nothing: speak again."

We need more information. We, in the opposition, continue to ask for that information. We'd like to know—this just came up from the last speaker—will it be asset sales? Will it be jacking up taxes on the middle class? Will it be cutting spending? That means cutting government programs. That means cutting government jobs.

Either way, in that final year—and three years is not very far away—you have to take a \$30.2-billion deficit down to zero. I don't think you're able to do that, personally.

Moody's Investors Service have downgraded the outlook for the province of Ontario's debt from stable to negative. They gave a reason: "After several years of weak to moderate economic growth, and higher than previously" indicated "deficits projected for the next two years, the province is facing a greater challenge to return to balanced outcomes than previously" indicated.

According to the 2014-15 budget, Ontario's net long-term debt will increase—just over the course of this year—from \$269 billion to the \$289-billion deficit I mentioned earlier. The budget indicates the government will be paying \$11.271 billion in interest on that debt. But when you hear about a credit rating downgrade—I gave the example of Moody's—that would suggest to the lenders that higher interest rates could be in order, and indicating that higher interest rates on, for example, \$250 billion in provincial debt securities.

So if the interest rate increased to 4.9%—that would be a 1% increase—the province would need to pay roughly not \$11 billion and change, but \$14 billion and change on interest payments on the debt, an increase estimated at \$2.89 billion. That's just in one year, Speaker.

I mentioned earlier today that interest on the debt is already the third-largest expenditure of the Ontario budget after health and education, just before all the money we spend on social services. Secondly, these interest payments on the debt are the fastest-growing expense of this provincial government, growing by 8% a year.

During question period, MPP Ted Arnott, the member for Wellington-Halton Hills, pointed out that over the next three years, debt interest costs will go up 8% each and every year. Again, the average citizen in Ontario does not accrue that money, that \$11 billion a year that is being paid out.

So here we are. We're on the heels of a credit rating downgrade. The speech from the throne touted 10 years of \$130 billion in public infrastructure spending. They

had a quote to justify this, a quote from the former Bank of Canada governor, David Dodge, that "with low interest rates, it is the right time for governments and the private sector to invest in infrastructure."

David Dodge left the Bank of Canada, I think, in 2008. There are people predicting, certainly in the United States, that the low interest rate bubble may well burst. Here's an opposing opinion, another opinion, from economist Jack Mintz—that "if interest rates which have been at a 20-year low, rise, that" debt "burden would become significantly heavier.... [I]f interest rates rise to historical norms, each point increase in interest could add a minimum of \$3 billion in annual interest payments." Jack Mintz goes on to say, "That would severely cripple Ontario's ability to deliver services."

With respect to today's economic status, the fiscal status of this government is reflected in the budget we just received, and without attempting to be melodramatic, I do suggest that many of us lie awake at night wondering, is this province approaching the edge of an economic apocalypse? We saw this before; we saw this in the Bob Rae days.

I kind of summarize this as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse—in this case, debt, taxation, energy, of course, and red tape. They're all galloping in tandem. They're under a four-horse hitch, if you will, of wasteful spending and scandal. Now, we traditionally think of famine, war, pestilence and death as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. These have occurred, obviously, over the past 9,000 years of recorded history. I feel people in the province of Ontario have little concern with these issues right now, but I do particularly consider the province's debt—again, in my view, caused by wasteful spending—as the first horseman, looming over several generations of people in Ontario.

This is debt not caused by lack of government revenue. We do not have a revenue problem in the province of Ontario; we have a spending problem—a wasteful and irresponsible spending problem. We now know this government plans to add \$12.5 billion to this government debt in this fiscal year alone. At this rate, we'll probably surpass Don Drummond's prediction of a \$411.4-billion debt in fiscal year 2017-18. At some point—and I think many have done this—you've got to sit down with your kids and explain some of this stuff to them, because they're going to inherit these kinds of problems.

The second horseman is big taxes. Big taxes fund big government. Big taxes fund big government public sector unions. This year's budget is projected to hike taxes by \$3 billion. Again, high taxation rates inevitably are correlated with high spending rates, much of it in that wasteful spending category. Over the past 11 years I have witnessed, first of all, the largest income tax increase in the history of Ontario; secondly, the largest consumption tax increase in the history of Ontario—all of these from a gentleman, the Liberal leader of the day and then the Premier of the day, who came on our television screens, looked us square in the eye and indicated to us, "I will not raise your taxes."

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, it's unfortunate. I remember watching that on television. He lied to us. It was blatant, in that sense. I don't know why we let that go by.

The tax horseman is out of control. Energy prices, in particular electricity, have brought Ontario's consumers and industry to their knees. Electricity-intensive industries are closing up shop. Homeowners who heat with electricity, many of them down in my riding, are burning an awful lot of wood in the winter, and they're not using their air conditioning in the summer. For this reason, I consider, in this case, the highest energy bills, the highest electricity bills in North America as the third horseman of our economic apocalypse—again, no help in sight. This budget did not seem to dwell on the price of electricity.

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As with debt and high taxes, much of the reason for the high electricity bills is overspending by government agencies—we think of OPG; we think of Hydro One. Large electricity consumers in this city, Toronto, pay twice what people pay in Montreal, Winnipeg and Chicago. In the United States, energy prices are falling because of shale gas. Yet, in Ontario, the government says that prices will rise yet another 46%. So there's something wrong here as well, Speaker.

The fourth and final horseman of Ontario's approaching economic apocalypse, in my view, comprises the myriad rules and regulations, the forms that one has to fill out, forms and red tape—bureaucratic red tape, unnecessary red tape—that suffocates farmers and suffocates business and consumers alike. There are so many regulations, I think many have lost count. There's, again, quite a range in the figures. The government estimates something like 365,000 separate regulations. I know the Toronto Star, several years ago, ran a story indicating 500,000 rules in the province of Ontario. Again, unnecessary bureaucratic red tape is, by an accounting definition, wasteful spending. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business tallies the cost, again, at something like \$11 billion a year just for the private sector.

Obviously, it's time to pull in the reins on wasteful spending and on the four horsemen, as represented in my view, by debt, taxes, high energy costs and red tape. The alternative for Ontario and our coming generations will not be pretty. Again, we need look no further than jurisdictions like Greece; Sacramento, California; or Detroit to see where our future may lie.

I'd like to close with talk about deficit and the debt. It's something I feel we do need to repeat almost endlessly. Deficit, as we know, is a net addition to the debt in one year. The debt is how much we've borrowed over the total of many, many years. Essentially, the debt is nothing more than accumulated deficits. I wanted to mention that because people lose sight of that on occasion. Just a bit of history: It took 23 Premiers and 136 years to accumulate a debt of \$139 billion. It took Dalton McGuinty, along with his successor Kathleen Wynne, only 10 years to double the debt to \$289 billion by the end of this year. Simply put, we continue to see

budgets, as with the one we heard yesterday, that spend far more money than they take in. I'll wrap up by saying—and I think every family and every business in Ontario knows this—that that situation is not sustainable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm sure there is going to be a debate here—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I know there's going to be a debate, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to get—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, as we are—there we go. I know that I want to get up on a point of order to point out that this white-coloured paper over here has got writing on it.

Oh, excuse me. I noticed somebody is here. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the indulgence. I want to thank my House leader for his creativity, if I can.

I am pleased to rise this afternoon, on behalf of New Democrats, to lead off our debate on the 2014 budget motion.

Speaker, I think it's clear that the people of Ontario have heard quite a bit about the budget in the last number of days. They've heard quite a lot about the budget. A lot of things have been said by many people over the last couple of days about this budget—in fact, probably over the last couple of weeks and maybe even over the last couple of months we could say that the people of Ontario have heard about this budget or at least bits and pieces of this budget, depending on who's talking about it, Speaker, of course. They've heard the Premier read her list of promises, as we like to call them, and they've heard the Liberals come up with all kinds of ways to describe their various plans. They have told us that of course their budget is a progressive budget. Ontarians have been told by the Liberals that this is the most progressive budget that has ever been tabled in this Legislature ever on earth, and it's something Liberals crow about constantly. They been told that this is as good as it gets, that this is the only kind of budget you can have in Ontario. It's as good as families could ever hope for. It's the best thing since sliced bread, and it's sliced bread with the word “progressive” all over it.

A budget is about more than just spin, and what we've heard over the last number of months—since May, probably—is really good spin by the Liberals about their budgets. Budgets are more than spin, however, and they're more than just a first glance. They're more than just a surface kind of picture. They're actually much more important than that, and it's more than just the story that the Liberals choose to tell. It's more than just the tale that Liberals choose to weave for the people of Ontario.

The budget is as much about the fine print, Speaker, as it is about the headlines. In fact, I would submit to you, the members of this chamber and the people of Ontario that the budget is in fact far more than just the headlines. In fact, the budget isn't even the headlines. The budget is definitely about the details, and we all know what's in the details. The devil is in the details, and likewise with this budget.

This budget is definitely in fact, not this budget but any budget is about setting out priorities and choosing amongst priorities. It's about presenting a plan that either addresses the biggest challenges of our province and our families or fails to address those challenges. When you look at this particular budget, and when you take a real hard look at this budget, you see that there's a big difference between the Liberal spin or the Liberal weave and the fine print.

As the *Globe and Mail* wrote just today, and I quote, there is "a very wide gap" between the Premier's rhetoric "and the actual budget itself." This isn't a surprise to New Democrats. We've known this for some time, but it's good to see that there's finally some clarity around what this budget means for Ontario families. This is not a budget that puts families first or makes life more affordable and more fair for the people of this province. Not at all, Speaker. To quote today's editorial in the *Globe*, despite all the hot air about this being a progressive plan, again the quote, this "is an austerity budget." Scratch below the surface and this budget doesn't look progressive after all. Scratch below the surface and you find some pretty concerning plans at the heart of this government's roadblock.

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I hear the murmurs coming from the other side. I would advise the Liberal members to read their budget and actually acknowledge for the good people of Ontario that in fact the job of opposition is to actually shed light on the plans of government, and that's what we are doing: We're shedding light on the plans of this government that are contained in that budget. In fact, when you open that drape or unshroud the budget from the rhetoric that Liberals have painted it in—that red paint, I guess you would call it—you'll see a budget that is not in fact progressive at all, and that's something that is quite worrisome for New Democrats.

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This is a budget that includes plans for a complete fire sale of public assets, and it aims to fork over new giveaways to the biggest corporations in our province. It's a budget that delivers on a private pension plan, a Harper-style private pension plan, this year. So this year, Ms. Wynne found her way to buddy up with Mr. Harper when it comes to making sure that banks and insurance companies are happy about retirement income of Ontarians that they can get their fingers on. They've said, "Yeah, sure, we'll open the doors in Ontario to that kind of pension plan, and guess what? It's so important, it's the first thing we're going to do when it comes to retirement savings for Ontarians. We're going to make

sure that the banks and the insurance companies get first crack because we're going to buddy up with Stephen Harper and we're going to make sure PRPPs, private pension plans, come to Ontario sooner rather than later." Those wishes of Stephen Harper and the big banks are being fulfilled by the Premier and her progressive team of Liberals over there. But what it also does is it leaves people waiting for a public pension plan and wondering if they'll ever even see that public pension plan in their lifetime.

Let's just get an idea here of what we're talking about. Banks and insurance companies that want Stephen Harper pensions are getting them this year. People who can't make ends meet now and who have no hope of making ends meet when they're in their retirement years are going to have to wait to some point in the future for a public pension plan that actually respects their savings and doesn't gouge them with all kinds of administrative fees and costs. That's something that's going to have to wait to maybe 2017; I suspect much later than that, seeing the track record of Liberal promise-breaking that we've seen over a decade in office that this government has shown the people of Ontario. But we will wait and see.

I think the important thing, though, is to acknowledge that today the priority for Liberals in their budget is PRPPs, Stephen Harper-style pensions, as opposed to public pension plans, which are kicked down the field to 2017.

What else? This budget forecasts cuts that are cuts we have not seen in the province since the days of Mike Harris. I have watched many times the Liberals across the way stand up in their space and rue the days of Mike Harris and talk about how terrible those days were and talk about how they're doing everything they can to take us to a place where those cuts are no longer felt here in Ontario, to kind of make up for that time when that party was in office under that leadership.

In this very budget, Speaker, this Liberal government is primed to bring forward cuts that we have not seen in this province since the ones we saw when the Harris government was in office, cuts that put front-line public services and good jobs at risk. It's a budget that promises to make it back to balance at some point but refuses to tell us what will be sold off and which services will be contracted out and how many jobs are going to be cut and lost to actually make that balance happen. It's kind of like a magic act, I guess: "Oh, yes, we're going to reach balance, and just you watch; we're going to wave our magic wand and that balance is going to occur." Well, everybody knows that's not the case. The government itself—both the Premier and the finance minister—has said straight out that cuts are going to happen, that pain is going to happen. They're just not being honest with the public about what that pain is going to look like. They're just not detailing that particular list of what the cuts and the layoffs or firings are going to look like in this province.

It's a budget that is silent, absolutely silent, when it comes to any real action to address some of the very

serious challenges that are facing our families here in Ontario, whether it's soaring hydro bills—and I know other members have talked about this already—or the loss of good-paying jobs for Ontarians to be able to make ends meet. This budget provides no relief to families that are struggling to make ends meet, families that desire a better future and a better job. None of that is in that budget, Speaker. In fact, I think what I've said in the last few minutes overall is that this budget is not at all what it appears to be—not at all.

Today, I'm really glad to have another opportunity to talk about this Liberal government's plans because they aren't plans that put the people of Ontario first and because our job as New Democrats is very important and very clear. We are going to spend some time explaining our concerns and our problems with this budget. The people of Ontario deserve to know what the Liberals have in store for them over the next little while.

New Democrats know that, over the next little while, we have some important work to do. The people have sent us here to do a very, very important job. The people of Ontario know exactly what it is that New Democrats are very good at doing. We're very good at holding governments to account, and we're very good at wading through the Liberal tall tales to get to the facts of the matter. What we are going to do is make sure that we are reassuring Ontarians that New Democrats are here to stand up for them in the Legislature. We are standing up for them, we are going to be putting them first, because that's what we always stand for as New Democrats. We have not moved from that place, and we certainly won't move from that place with our new role here in the Legislature. We stand up for what is right, Speaker, and we stand up for what is fair.

Ontarians have given us that very important job to do: the important job of taking a hard look at the numbers, reading the fine print and holding this government to account. We will do our job each and every day: looking out for families, advocating for families, defending the public interest and making sure that the tall tales told by the government across the way are translated—let's say it that way—into a real picture for the people of Ontario. We'll stand up for front-line services, as New Democrats do time and time again. We will stand up for front-line services for the people of this province, and we will stand up for accountable public spending that puts the priorities of the families of this province first.

That's why New Democrats are speaking out about this Trojan Horse budget, Speaker, where things are not actually what they first appear to be. Why is this a Trojan Horse plan for Ontario? As I said, it looks like one thing on the one hand. It puts on a real good show on the one hand and it comes across as something that it is not. But inside this Trojan Horse budget are all sorts of surprises that the Liberals want to keep hidden, that the Liberals would rather us not talk about and, furthermore, that the Liberals would rather not have the public, Ontarians, know are in that budget. They're tucked away in the backrooms of this building, in the backrooms of Bay Street. That's where they want that information kept.

You scratch below the surface of this Trojan Horse budget and you find regressive plans—regressive plans—that will not work for the people of Ontario. Start asking some direct questions, and the government tries to change the subject and refuses to give a straight answer. I know that my NDP caucus colleagues have been with me in question period for the last couple of days. I cannot get a straight answer from the Premier and we cannot get a straight answer from the finance minister. In fact, when we leave this chamber and we walk out those doors, we go to the media scrums, and I watch as the media tries to get the answers from the Premier, or at least from the finance minister. Again, Liberals refuse to come clean. They refuse to be upfront with the opposition and with New Democrats, and they refuse to be upfront with the media, about what is in this Trojan Horse budget.

The Premier refuses to even repeat what it is that she put in her platform. She refuses to tell us how much she is counting on getting for selling off assets that belong to Ontarians and refuses to tell us what all the items are that are on that chopping block.

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In fact, they tag a number in the budget but refuse to say where that number comes from—\$3.15 billion. Apparently, it's what the Liberals are going to get from selling off assets. But have they told us which assets are going to be sold off? No. When I asked, straight out here in the Legislature to the Premier, which assets were going to add up to that very precise number of \$3.15 billion—it wasn't \$3 billion; it wasn't \$3.5 billion; it wasn't \$4 billion; it wasn't \$2.5 billion. It was \$3.15 billion. It sounds like a pretty precise number to me, and yet we have no idea because they refuse to answer our questions and they refuse to tell Ontarians. They refuse to be upfront and honest about where that \$3.15 billion is coming from when it comes to asset sales. That's not right. It seems to me that that's not right. It seems to me that the right thing to do is to be upfront with the people when you're selling a plan to them called a budget. That's something that's quite disconcerting for New Democrats, because we believe that people do have the right to know and should have the right to know what their government has in store for them when it comes to selling off some of the most important assets that we have.

I think it's sad that we have a Liberal government that actually believes that burning the furniture to heat the house is the right thing to do. Even the Harris government that they moan about so much—that I moaned about so much, frankly, because I thought they did some pretty bad things. But even the Harris government wasn't prepared to do the sell-offs that the Liberals are talking about in their budget.

The last time I looked under “progressive” in the dictionary, the fire sale of assets to heat the house wasn't in there. I think that that's not a progressive thing and I know that's not something that progressives actually believe in. I think the Liberals are having a bit of an identity crisis over there because they like to talk about

progressive things but they certainly don't put progressive things in their budget.

It's a budget that's built on hidden costs and hidden cuts. They're basically putting forward a budget that's got all kinds of hidden nasties inside of it.

New Democrats oppose these hidden costs and these hidden cuts. New Democrats oppose the mass sell-off of public assets owned by the people of this province. The deep cuts that are coming to front-line public services, New Democrats oppose. The new corporate giveaways that aren't guaranteed to create any jobs at all, or at least not here at home, necessarily, here in the province of Ontario—New Democrats oppose that. We oppose the cuts to public health care that we've seen as hospital budgets have been frozen, year over year, the elimination of hundreds of child care spaces in communities across the province. The last time I looked, having a healthy child care system that people can afford, that's licensed, that's available, that's appropriate for the people of this province and the families of this province is a pretty progressive goal.

Liberals instead are shutting down child care centres in at least 18 communities around this province. That is not a progressive thing, not a progressive thing at all. In fact, it was the Liberal government, through its ill-thought-out implementation of their full-day learning program, of their all-day kindergarten program, that created the crisis in the child care sector in the first place. The Liberals have plugged their ears and closed their eyes to the mess that they made in the child care sector, and now the chickens are coming home to roost.

We're being told by the President of the Treasury Board that small communities and rural communities and communities in small-town Ontario are just going to have to buck up. They're not going to have a hospital anymore and they're not going to have child care anymore. They're not going to have most public services anymore because Liberals don't think it's progressive to have those kinds of things available to Ontarians all across the province. New Democrats actually disagree with that in a big way. We think that's the wrong way to go. We think it's shameful that the Liberals have gone in that direction.

Another thing that we oppose: the willingness of this government to put private pension plans and the profits of big banks ahead of real retirement security for Ontarians. I spoke about that already. It's something we're opposed to. We do not think that PRPPs are the right way to go. We don't think that Harper-style pensions are the right way to go. Apparently, the Liberals do. The last time I looked, no progressives across this country think that PRPPs are the right way to go with pensions, but somehow Liberals think that this is progressive. I think they need to do some research as to what is and isn't progressive when it comes to retirement income.

There are hidden costs and hidden cuts, and I've just talked about some of them in this Trojan Horse budget, Speaker. There are costs and cuts that do not serve the people of this province and that New Democrats, frankly, cannot support.

Take the Premier's plan to sell off a wide range of public assets. Yesterday, her Minister of Finance talked about unlocking the value of OPG, Hydro One and the LCBO. These are very profitable assets that help to pay the bills in this province, year over year over year. They're assets that work for the people of our province and that help to fund our health care system, our education system and the public services that all of us rely on time and time again.

But once in a while the Liberals forget that they should be serving the people of this province first. They seem to forget Mike Harris, for example. I'll use Mike again as an example. I hope Mike's not watching. He's going to be mad at me for this, but that's okay. We've never been friends, and so it wouldn't make a difference. They forget Mike Harris and the disastrous sell-off of the 407. You know what? I'm an MPP, like all of the MPPs in this chamber, and to this very day I get calls in my office in Hamilton complaining about the debacle of the 407. This government, this Liberal government, is about to head down that road—excuse the pun—again with this very budget.

Dalton McGuinty got that very same urge, that very same Liberal urge to burn the furniture to heat the house. He proposed a super corporation—do you remember that? Do you remember the super corporation that they proposed, him and Dwight Duncan?—that could be sold in bits and pieces to the highest bidder. So throw everything into the pile and then sell it off in bits and pieces, almost like an auction. Well, the problem is, of course, that once you sell everything off, it's no longer providing the benefit to the people of Ontario. But that's what they thought they could do: Sell it off to the highest bidder, piece by piece, and literally tear apart the fundamental fiscal foundations of this province in terms of revenue generation.

He wanted to raid the best public assets that we own together—the assets that we own together—the assets that all of Ontario owns, that the people of this province own collectively. He wanted to take those assets, raid them and sell them off, auction them off to the highest bidder. And lo and behold, he's back in town and he thinks things are looking pretty darn good these days. But New Democrats didn't let Dalton McGuinty get away with that fire sale of assets and we are not going to let this Premier get away with her own plan to sell assets off from underneath Ontarians. It is the wrong direction for this province and will not happen under our watch.

Now, we know this is her plan, regardless of what she calls it. The fine print in the budget tells us very clearly that this fire sale of public assets is one of the cornerstones of the Premier's plan. We've asked her day in and day out in question period. We've asked her over and over again to be frank about that. We've asked her to tell us how much the Liberals have already cashed in and slotted into the fiscal framework for these assets, because their own platform showed that this government is planning to raise money from asset sales—more money from asset sales than Mike Harris was able to earn with

the sell-off of the 407. It was a bad plan then, Speaker. It was a very, very bad plan, and it is a bad plan now. Whether it's a Conservative plan or whether it's a red-washed Liberal plan, it is still a bad plan to sell off Ontario assets, and New Democrats are opposed to that 100%.

But we're going to keep asking the Premier, regardless of her refusal to answer, about this issue, because it's one more hidden cost in their budget that the government refuses to talk about, because they know that it's not progressive. The real underlying pieces that make up this budget are anything but progressive, because a fire sale of public assets does not serve Ontarians. And it's not the only hidden cost in this particular budget.

The Premier likes to talk about front-line services. She likes to talk about them a lot. But while she's talking about them over here, she's doing the old bait and switch. She's talking about those great public services over here, but her budget is preparing for the biggest public services cuts since Mike Harris. That is a fact, Speaker. That's the old bait and switch, that's the old Trojan Horse. "We'll talk a good game over here, and while you're not looking, we're going to cut all kinds of services out from your communities and the ability of Ontarians to get the public services that they need."

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According to Bloomberg News, this budget foretells "the deepest freeze in two decades"—the deepest freeze in two decades. According to Bloomberg, "the Liberal government would drop spending by the most per person since former Premier Mike Harris won election on deficit elimination in 1995." Now, that's interesting—would drop spending by the most per person since Mike Harris.

This government talks a lot about how much on the cheap they're already doing things. Isn't it this government that always talks about the fact that they have the lowest per capita program spending in the world? They talk about that all the time. A government that brags so much about already having the lowest per capita program spending in Canada is now talking about making it even worse. This budget is going to be like limbo—how low can you go when it comes to program funding for the people of Ontario? I don't think Ontarians voted for an austerity plan, but they sure as heck got one with this Trojan Horse budget—cuts that will rival Mike Harris's cuts. Behind the spin, that's exactly what this budget has in store for Ontarians. And I have to say it again: That is not progressive, Speaker. That is nowhere near progressive, but that is exactly what is below the surface in this particular plan. Even though Ontarians voted against one plan to cut 100,000 educational assistants and teachers and firefighters and personal support workers and others who serve in this province, throughout all the communities; even though Ontarians said no to 100,000 jobs being cut; even though Ontarians said no to austerity, this Liberal plan has exactly that in it.

According to the Liberals' own hand-picked economist, Don Drummond—the very same Don Drummond who was tasked to independently verify this budget's

revenue assumptions—the Liberals will likely slash the very same jobs that the PCs planned to cut. That's what Don Drummond said. He's the guy who verified independently the numbers in this budget, and in the process of that verification, he let it slip that, "Oh, by the way, I wouldn't be surprised if a couple of years down the road, we see 100,000 fewer public servants' jobs in the province of Ontario."

It seems to me that that's exactly what the people of this province rejected, but that's what's inside this Trojan Horse budget. You don't have to take it from me; you can take it from the Liberals' own buddy, Don Drummond, their favourite economist whom they like to task with all these little jobs. Now, they've actually shown themselves for who they are, which is quite interesting. By 2017, Don Drummond wouldn't be surprised, as I said, if over 100,000 front-line public service workers in ServiceOntario, in our schools and in our hospitals are gone.

Yesterday, the finance minister said, "We will continue to cut where we can." When he was asked over and over and over by the media how many job cuts were coming, he wouldn't answer the question. He refused to be up front with the people of this province. But cutting the public service is no way forward for Ontario. It is not how we build this province up; it's in fact how we tear it down, which is why Ontarians voted against that and why New Democrats are opposed to this budget, which is not progressive.

It's about time this government actually came up with a real jobs plan for the people of Ontario. It's shocking that this budget does nothing different when it comes to a jobs plan. It's not in this budget at all. There is no plan whatsoever for a jobs strategy. You can't build this province up if people don't have a job to put a roof over their head. It doesn't make any sense. There is no jobs plan whatsoever in this budget. You can look and look, but all you'll see are more corporate giveaways and the handouts that the Liberals love to give to their friends, even though they should have learned their lessons by now. No-strings-attached corporate giveaways simply do not work. They haven't worked up until now, and they're not going to work in the time frames of this budget that is before us.

Last month, 34,000 people in Ontario lost a job. We've lost 300,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs in this province, Speaker. Employment in our manufacturing sector hit its lowest point since 1976. I was shocked that the Premier joked about that the other day in question period. But what does that mean in real terms? That means that we had the worst performance for manufacturing in nearly 40 years in this province because the Liberals, over the last decade, have done nothing to maintain our manufacturing jobs, to keep them here or, in fact, to attract more manufacturing to Ontario.

They like to say fancy words about advanced manufacturing, but we know that 300,000 manufacturing jobs are gone. They are gone, and that includes the couple of thousand advanced manufacturing jobs that we may have

actually gotten. The fact of the matter is, Speaker, they don't have a plan, and it's by sheer luck that we have any investment whatsoever that comes into this province.

When I pointed it out to the Premier, that crisis in manufacturing and that it's at the lowest point since 1976, here's what she had to say. She actually had the audacity to say, "Believe it or not, a lot has changed in Ontario since 1976." What's that supposed to mean? Do you know what has changed since 1976? In 1976, my father had a manufacturing job. We had a great living. We had a roof over our head. We had a good standard of living. We could go on vacation with our family from time to time. We had to count our pennies, yes, but we had a decent quality of life.

Go to Windsor, Speaker. Go to southwestern Ontario. Go hang out in London for a while. Take a little bit of time in Chatham-Kent. Go down to Sarnia. Go to some northern communities and some eastern Ontario communities. Ask them. Ask them whether they have good-paying jobs. I was shocked during the election campaign, when I was in Peterborough, to find out that their unemployment rate was sitting at 14%—14%, Speaker. I nearly fell off the bus—unbelievable. The government is proud of that record? They think that's a way to build Ontario up, by allowing the good jobs to leave and having no plan to bring new, good jobs to this province? That doesn't build Ontario up, Speaker; that actually makes people very, very worried about the future. That's what I heard when I was talking to families across this province.

But in this budget, the government does nothing to change their ways. They've done nothing at all except to show their arrogance, frankly, with those kinds of comments that the Premier made when I brought her attention to this issue recently. For sure, I believe that good jobs don't have to be a relic of the 1970s. Liberals might think good jobs have to be a relic of the 1970s. They have certainly done nothing to ensure they are not a relic from the 1970s.

As much as ever, all Ontarians deserve and expect the dignity of putting in a hard day's work in exchange for a decent living. That's what Ontarians deserve, that's what they expect, and that's what we should be trying to deliver for them. All Ontarians deserve and expect to be able to work hard, to pay the bills, to help their kids and to get ahead. That is not too much for people to expect in a province like Ontario. It's not too much to ask of the government, and it's not something that a Premier, frankly, should be mocking, Speaker.

Today, there are 300,000 fewer manufacturing jobs than there were in 2003, when the Liberals first came to office. That's their track record in 11 years: 300,000 fewer manufacturing jobs. The sector has shrunk by over 30%. In communities across Ontario, the unemployment rate remains stubbornly high. In Peterborough, Niagara, Windsor and across northern Ontario, unemployment is stuck at or near double digits, depending on which community you're in. Hundreds of thousands of families have lost good-paying jobs, and they can't find any work.

They can't find any job, any single job, that will allow them to support their kids and pay the bills and start rebuilding their lives after the downturn.

1700

That's not the whole story, Speaker. Young people are a whole other story. They are a whole other story, and they're having a pretty darn rough time, too. It's harder and harder to get into a new career or to get that first lucky break and start climbing the ladder. But somehow, some way, this government seems to think that the status quo is just good enough for the people of Ontario.

The government's job record is nothing to be proud of at all, Speaker. In fact, it's a record that tells you that something needs to give, that something needs to change, that something needs to be done differently. It's a record that tells us very clearly that the Liberals' policy of corporate giveaways that they have had in place for years now has simply not done the trick. This is what the Liberal policies of no-strings-attached corporate giveaways have left us with: an Ontario where people are more likely to be out of work. But does this budget contain in it a real jobs plan? Does it contain in it a different direction, a way to actually say to the people of Ontario, "We have found a way forward that will help us to get good jobs back in this province"? Nope. No plan to create new jobs; no plan to turn the ship around; no plan to do things differently; just the same old, same old—corporate handouts, giveaways to their friends.

A real jobs plan would start by recognizing that the handouts have not worked, and they're not even prepared to do that. They're stubbornly sticking behind a plan that has devastated Ontario, that has failed Ontario, year over year over year. A real plan would turn the page on corporate giveaways and corporate tax cuts that were never fair and that haven't worked. That's the big theory, right? You just keep cutting corporate taxes, and the jobs are going to come. We've seen that that doesn't work, Speaker. We've seen time and time again that that doesn't work. Yet the Liberals—I don't even think that's progressive? Do you guys think that's progressive?

Interjections: No.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't think that's progressive either, but I guess the Liberals think that's progressive. It certainly doesn't work. It doesn't work. A real jobs plan would target job creation by rewarding job creators. That's what would work. It would reward investment, reward productivity gains, and partner with businesses to help deliver the infrastructure that they need.

Another fund for new giveaways and new handouts is not a real jobs plan, Speaker. In fact, it's one more thing that Don Drummond found to criticize in this government's plans. When he led the Liberal commission on the reform of Ontario's public services, he said that this government's business supports aren't working. Don Drummond said that.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: No.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: He actually said that. You should read his report. I read it. I actually got a briefing

before it was released. He said that the government should start over because business supports need to be focused on driving productivity, and they need much better transparency and accountability. In fact, he wanted a four-year sunset rule on all future business support programs to ensure that they demonstrate their worth, not a new 10-year fund to do the exact same thing that hasn't worked for the last 10 years.

So, he, Don Drummond, finds it "ironic" that this government is adding another new plan to a "hodge-podge"—his words, not mine—of business supports that he didn't find to be working well at all in the first place. At the very moment when families and communities need targeted job creation, this government is offering more of the same and somehow hoping for a different result. We all know what that means, Speaker. When you actually do the same thing over and over, and actually just hope for a different result, it means you're not quite with it when it comes to paying attention to what you're doing.

It's the same jobs plan that put Ontario's unemployment rate above the national average in 2007 and, as I said in question period today, left it above the national average in 2008 and left it above the national average in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. Now here we are in 2014, and we still have an unemployment rate above the national average here in the province of Ontario, and it is because of the shameful unwillingness of this Liberal government to do anything different on the jobs file and simply allow Ontarians to continue to be underemployed and unemployed and unable to make ends meet. New Democrats oppose a budget that does nothing to create jobs and opportunity for the people of Ontario.

Another hidden cost in this government's budget is health care austerity. The last time I checked—and I seem to get this feedback pretty much every day when I talk to people about the election that took place about a month ago—people didn't vote for austerity. In fact, people voted against austerity. But this government has frozen hospital operating budgets for three years in a row now.

Every day our team comes into question period, and every day there's a bit of a competition about what questions are going to be asked of the government, because people want to get their questions in. They want to speak to the issues in their communities. They want to speak to the issues in their critic portfolios. They want to let Ontarians know about the good work that they're doing on their behalf here in the Legislature. I can't tell you that a day has gone by where someone in our caucus is not making a pitch for a question about health care cuts, particularly the mess in our hospital system. Pretty much every day something comes up where there's a real concern, a real problem, with our hospital system being identified by our MPPs here.

If our MPPs here are getting that from their communities, then I've got to tell you, the other MPPs across this province must be getting the same kind of feedback. What does that feedback look like? Ambulances lined up

a dozen deep that can't offload the patients because the ERs are full and people who can't get through the hospital because there are no beds available because, on the other end, there are people who probably should be in long-term care or at home with home care supports. But those things aren't in place either, so the hospital becomes unable to meet the needs of the patients coming in.

How long have we heard that story? Man, we've heard that story year after year after year after year, and the Liberals still haven't fixed it. But instead of dealing with it, we're seeing the same kind of situation in this budget. The Liberals are going to keep an austerity plan in place for the hospitals. So what are the hospitals doing? We see beds closing. We see them try to get patients out sooner than they need to. I don't know how many communities I've been in where people tell me about the revolving-door syndrome, where a patient has had surgery, or they've been in the hospital for something quite serious, the hospital needs that bed, and so they get that patient out. The supports are not properly arranged or don't exist in the community, and within a couple of weeks, that patient is back in the hospital sicker than they were when they left the week or two before. That's no way to run a health care system in the province of Ontario.

They lay off nurses. They give new nurses a six-month contract and then, guess what? We train the nurses, and they're heading to other provinces and other countries to provide their good nursing skills to people elsewhere because they can't get a decent full-time job here in the province of Ontario. That's the health care system that the Liberals have given us. They're saying, "We're going to do more of the same."

When we say, "Get the home care system up and running; get it fixed so that we can actually have a decent home care system for people," they throw a whole bunch of money in the home care system, and it goes—guess where?—to the administrators. It goes to the executive directors of the CCACs.

How does that make sense? When you put money in a system, it should go to front-line services. It shouldn't necessarily go to the salaries and bonuses of the top administrators. How is that going to help the person who is waiting for home care, who has been on the waiting list for three or four months? It's not. That's the answer: It's not going to help them. But that's the Liberal way. That's how they prioritize the squeezed money in the health care system.

Three years of flatlined spending has meant cuts to nurses, higher user fees—oh, there you go. That's another one, another big one. As hospitals are trying to figure out how the heck they're going to make their budget, they're doing all kinds of things. I talked about closing beds and laying off nurses and laying off all kinds of other folks. They're also jacking up parking fees so that patients or visitors of patients in the hospital are actually being gouged when they park their cars so that the hospitals can make their budget bottom lines. It's ridiculous, Speaker. It's kind of like health fees through the back door. Right? It's health fees through the back

door. We're charging people for health care, but instead of actually paying it directly to the hospital, you pay it to the parking meter outside the hospital; that's your health care fee. That's what we have here in the province of Ontario: more fees to park your car, fewer and fewer services that are actually being provided in public hospitals, and more and more moving out to private clinics—many of those private, for-profit clinics. Speaker, that's not progressive and it's not something that New Democrats can support.

1710

That's another one of the reasons why we do not support this budget. New Democrats stand up for health care. We stand up for a health care system that actually meets the needs of the people of this province. Whether it's home care, whether it's emergency room wait times, whether it's proper access to mental health supports, you can't provide better access to services by starving the system and carving out a bigger chunk of that system to private clinics, which is exactly the wrong-headed direction that the Liberals are taking the province of Ontario in. New Democrats will not support a budget that erodes our public health care system, and we will not support a plan that does not address cuts to child care spaces in communities across the province.

New Democrats fought to increase child care spending because we know how hard parents have to struggle to find a safe place for their kids. I don't want to list off the tragedies we've seen in this province where people didn't have safe child care for their kids. We know what that looked like, and we sat here in this place horrified by the examples of what happens when a government does not ensure that there is adequate, affordable, licensed child care in this province. And yet this government has gone backwards on that file. They have made it even harder for families to get that kind of child care.

It does nothing to stop the cuts in those 18 communities that I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks—18 communities that are losing their child care centres. Where are those hundreds of families going to go? What kinds of solutions are they going to have to turn to when their child care centres are closed? How many more of those tragedies are we going to have to learn about in this House because the government does not support child care in the province of Ontario? That's a question that I have, Speaker.

This is an austerity budget. Beneath the surface and the spin, it is not progressive—it is not progressive at all. It is an austerity budget, through and through and through. But beyond all of these regressive plans that New Democrats oppose, beyond the fire-sale of public assets and beyond the worst cuts to public services that we've seen since Mike Harris, this is a budget that fundamentally fails to address the real needs of families in this province. It's a budget that fails to put families first—because you can't address the challenges facing our province by ignoring the realities that our families face day in and day out.

It's not just the hidden costs that we oppose in this budget; we also oppose the government's failure to act on

the issues that matter the most. Every month, folks are seeing their costs go higher and higher. Every month, when their auto insurance bill arrives and when they open their hydro bill, families are floored by how fast costs are going up. Across this province, people are finding it hard to keep up, never mind get ahead. The bills pile up, and lots of families breathe a deep sigh of relief if they manage to even balance the books at the end of one month. It's a real struggle for folks out there, and too many families just cannot make ends meet anymore.

At a time when too many older workers are losing their jobs, when younger workers are finding it harder than ever to enter the workforce, and when costs are climbing up and up and up, a government has to take those families seriously. Even while life is getting more expensive for people, the government is making perks on Bay Street more affordable. People are being told, "We've got nothing in the cupboard for you. The cupboard is bare. Your costs are going to go up. You're going to pay more in auto insurance. You're going to pay more in electricity costs. Your bills are going to continue to skyrocket. We have other priorities, and those priorities are making sure that new tax loopholes for CEOs and big corporations on Bay Street"—well, they're going to get what they want. They're going to get what they need, Speaker, because of course they're more important than everyday families.

Lots of families wish they could afford to take their kids to a hockey game or a baseball game, but for some reason, the Premier thinks that the priority should be letting CEOs and wealthy corporations write off the HST when they go to a corporate box. Gee, I don't think that's fair, Speaker.

It's our job to actually listen and respond to the real needs of Ontarians, and what Ontarians are telling us is that their concerns should be addressed. Their concerns should be at the top of the list. That's why New Democrats stand up for families who are being squeezed out of the middle class, and that's why we cannot support a budget that does not tackle the very high cost and rising cost of everyday life. It does not take strong steps to get hydro bills and auto insurance rates under control, and it leaves families on their own, literally treading water, month in and month out. It leaves hydro bills going up, killing jobs and hitting families very, very hard. Hydro rates have climbed 300% in this province since 2003 when this government first came to office, and they're set to rise another 42% within the next five years. But the government takes a back seat, content to leave families struggling.

No matter how often the Liberals insist that this is a progressive plan, no matter how red in the face they get trying to spin their story, anyone can see right through this budget. And if you aren't listening to families and you're not addressing the actual challenges they're facing, then you aren't nearly as progressive as you insist you are.

I have to say that putting a priority on opening new corporate tax loopholes when it comes to the HST that help these big corporations on Bay Street write off things

like box seats at sports games, chauffeured limos and those kinds of things, losing close to \$1 billion in revenue annualized, just for that—I've got to tell you, that close to \$1 billion in revenue annualized would provide a hell of a lot of health care in this province and it would certainly save those 18 child care centres from closing in Ontario. I think a progressive person would actually spend the money on the child care and make sure families have safe, decent, affordable child care for their kids, rather than give another CEO another opportunity to write off his HST or her HST on their corporate box seats in a stadium or at a sports field. That's what New Democrats believe.

But let's talk about transit for a minute if we want to talk about progressive versus not progressive. Congestion is costing families and businesses more than \$6 billion a year here in the GTA. We hear this all the time. Businesses are racking up extra costs, and families are losing precious time together because mom or dad is stuck on the road. Transit improvements are needed and they're needed now, and I think everybody agrees.

The planners, in fact, at Metrolinx and at the TTC and at the city of Toronto and in the government's own Transit Investment Strategy Advisory Panel have set out what the priorities should be for that transit investment. Beyond the quick wins and the immediate improvements that are needed, it's time to prioritize the downtown relief line here in Toronto.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's being progressive.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's not only progressive; it's logical. It makes sense. It's the right thing to do. It's what all of these experts say should be the priority. You have to address the capacity challenges on the Yonge line first before you start bringing more people down on the subway from Thornhill. It doesn't make any sense to build more subway lines up north and have more people coming down to a system that's already bursting at the seams and unable to take the capacity that it has now. It makes no sense whatsoever. Maybe it's a political salvo that the government is trying to do for some political reason, but the bottom line is: Let's deal with the congestion before adding to it.

We need to deliver all-day, two-way GO to and from Kitchener-Waterloo. That investment would support over 33,000 jobs. It's an amazing opportunity. It's a fantastic opportunity. This government that crows about jobs and is proud of their failing jobs plan—well, here's a jobs opportunity that's golden, and yet they used weasel words when they made announcements around the Kitchener-Waterloo all-way, two-way GO, because guess what? It's not all-day, two-way—not at all. And that's shameful, because there is real opportunity in that community for some real job creation and, more importantly or equally important, some real investment. That's certainly one of the things Ontario needs desperately.

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We need not only all-day, two-way GO in Kitchener-Waterloo, but we want to see year-round GO service in St. Catharines and Niagara Falls as well, Speaker. That's something that needs to happen. We need to see the

transit system improved in Hamilton with the LRT. All of these things will create jobs throughout the numerous regions of Ontario, which is what we need to see.

Every time I'm in the Niagara region, it's depressing, frankly, to see the amount of job loss that those communities have suffered. They are resilient, wonderful people in the Golden Horseshoe. I come from Hamilton; it's technically part of the Golden Horseshoe. I know that families in Niagara Falls, in Welland, in Thorold, in Fort Erie, in Niagara-on-the-Lake and in St. Catharines—people in those communities have suffered a great deal from job loss. For some reason, the Liberals aren't listening to them when it comes to the importance of having year-round GO service to their communities.

I know that the minister of—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He's Minister without Portfolio.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Minister without Portfolio, the MPP from St. Catharines, has made the promise, during the campaign apparently, and it was reiterated by the Premier, apparently. Let's make sure that that promise is kept. Certainly it would be the progressive thing to do, to make sure those investments are made.

We need clean trains in downtown urban neighbourhoods, Speaker. Holy smokes! It's something I just can't fathom. How is it that, in this day and age, in 2014, the Liberals are building a dirty diesel train to take people from the airport to downtown? It's a disgrace. It's an embarrassment. They should be ashamed. Guess what? Dirty diesel is not progressive. New Democrats don't support this budget. We don't support dirty diesel trains. We think it's shameful that Liberals think that it's okay to pollute the neighbourhoods along the route of the air-rail link with disgusting diesel fumes. It's shameful, Speaker. We need real timelines and real deadlines for the electrification of that line to make sure that that diesel does not poison the families and the children in those neighbourhoods.

We need accountability, first and foremost, for the dollars spent. But instead what do we see in this budget? It doesn't set out any of these transit priorities. Yes, it makes a new pool of cash by taking gas tax money from health and education and adding over \$3.15 billion from the fire sale of public assets, but it doesn't make any commitment whatsoever to fund or deliver a downtown relief line. All it says about Scarborough transit, Speaker, is that an environmental assessment will begin soon. All it says about regional express rail is that the idea will be studied. It says nothing about the Premier's promise to deliver bullet trains within 10 years not only to Kitchener-Waterloo, not only to London but apparently all the way to Windsor, which we think Windsor deserves. But I think it's a bit of an interesting target that they've set up. Not one word and not one dollar to back up all of that chatter about the bullet train. That's another example of a promise that is not backed up by this budget, a budget that is filled with hidden costs, hidden cuts; in fact, a Trojan Horse budget, Speaker.

I'm going to wrap up my remarks here, Speaker. A Trojan Horse budget is not what this province needs. It is

not going to create the new jobs that our province needs. It is not going to help families get costs under control. It is not going to restore fairness to our corporate tax system, but it is going to do tremendous damage by selling off public assets, by cutting services and by slashing jobs. That's the really story behind this budget. This is a plan that leaves Bay Street better off but leaves folks on Main Street out of work and out of pocket.

Beneath the surface of spin, this is not a progressive plan at all. In fact, it is another Liberal budget that promises the world but delivers something very different. The Liberals have chosen it as their Trojan Horse plan, but New Democrats will not support it, and each and every day we will do our job, the job that Ontarians sent us here to do. New Democrats will stand up and hold this government to account for the costs and the cuts that are hidden inside this Trojan budget plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Further debate?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations on your appointment as Speaker and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Sorry. I was a little slow at the draw. I recognize the Minister without Portfolio, the Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to congratulate you on your appointment as Speaker. I'd also like to take this opportunity to congratulate all members on their election to this House.

I'm very proud to rise today to speak to the budget motion, Mr. Speaker. This is our plan for building Ontario up for today, and it is our plan to ensure that Ontario's future is bright and strong.

Our plan takes immediate action to create jobs by investing in a highly skilled workforce, by building much-needed infrastructure and transportation networks, and by supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate.

Our plan would take steps to build the retirement security that Ontario's workers deserve, an initiative that would support long-term economic growth in this province.

Importantly, our plan includes measures to continue managing responsibly to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18.

Our plan includes strategic investments that build on the tremendous competitive advantage of Ontario's people and businesses.

Our plan will create more opportunity and more security for people in every region of our province. As our Premier and Minister of Finance have shown, we are moving forward with our comprehensive and balanced approach to build more opportunity and more security for Ontarians in the global economy. Ontario continues to attract investments that are creating jobs, growing the economy and expanding opportunities for workers, and the people of Ontario are the strength of our province. Their skills, talent, diversity and competitiveness attract investments to Ontario. That is why we are planning to build on the strength of Ontario's people. We will move

ahead to build the potential of every Ontarian: of every child, of every student and of every worker in this great province, and certainly in my great riding of Scarborough-Guildwood. That is what the people expect of us, and that is what we intend to do.

We know that quality education is one of the most important investments we can make in a child's life. In fact, during the campaign, I had an opportunity to meet hundreds of students—thousands, even—and that is what they expect of us. They are our hope, they are our future, and we must continue to invest in their education.

Our plan would see the implementation of full-day kindergarten by September 2014. This would modernize and strengthen our child care system, because every child in Ontario deserves the best possible start in life.

We would invest in classroom technology. I know from visiting the students at St. Malachy school in my riding that this is an investment that they welcome: giving Ontario's youngest learners the tools they need to succeed and making sure that they are prepared to lead in the 21st-century economy.

Ontario remains among the best jurisdictions in North America for talent, training and skills development. With more Ontarians pursuing post-secondary education, the province is helping students achieve their goals. We will be working to make post-secondary education more accessible to more students. This is something that we have to do.

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The 30% Off Ontario Tuition grant will make sure that up to 260,000 young people can afford to get a degree or a diploma in this province. This will lead to more opportunity, and I know that the young people in my communities like Kingston-Galloway, Orton Park, Scarborough Village and all of those communities—those young people rely on that support, and they need those opportunities as well.

There's a program in my riding that is being done by the East Scarborough Storefront and the University of Toronto Scarborough campus. It is bringing the institution closer to the community so that more young people can get involved in post-secondary opportunities.

We will continue to help young people gain skills and experience to obtain stable employment.

Ontario's youth shouldered the brunt of job losses during the recent recession. In fact, this is a problem that persists today, and we need to fix this problem. I know the young people in Scarborough-Guildwood need this support. I meet with them all the time. They continue to face an unacceptably high unemployment rate. Our plan proposes to extend Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy by giving more young people the chance to find jobs, to start their own businesses, to gain valuable experiences and skills and to build on their working life.

By building on people's talents and skills, we are investing in a brighter future for Ontarians. By bringing together young people with small businesses in my community just last fall, 20 young people found jobs connecting them to the youth employment fund.

Mr. Speaker, our investments in schools, hospitals, transportation and infrastructure have made Ontario a great place to work and to live, but we have to move forward in Ontario to reduce congestion, to invest in roads, in bridges and in transit, to invest in all parts of this province—in our northern communities, in our rural communities as well as in our growing cities. The Building Opportunity and Securing Our Future Act would invest more than \$130 billion in infrastructure over the next 10 years. This is in fact closing an infrastructure deficit that was left by previous governments.

This fund would create employment. It would improve Ontario's productivity and support the jobs and growth of tomorrow. Mr. Speaker, we plan to move Ontario forward by dedicating new funding that would make nearly \$29 billion available over the next decade to build a province-wide transportation network to reduce commute times and to move goods faster to more places. The two funds would be divided fairly across the province, and they would be transparent to the population so that the greater Toronto and Hamilton region would receive \$15 billion for its transportation and transit priorities, and the other regions of Ontario would receive \$14 billion to support their priorities.

We plan to move Ontario forward by investing in strategic infrastructure across the province so that every region and every community in Ontario can benefit from better roads, to better bridges, to better public transit and infrastructure—

Mr. Mike Colle: Sewers: Don't forget the sewers.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Absolutely—and the sewers that run underground.

We are committed to investing \$1 billion to develop strategic transportation in the Ring of Fire to unleash the true economic potential and growth of our northern Ontario region and to extend opportunities for people in the north to reap the benefits of development in an area that for so long has been neglected.

We will keep health care and education strong because we know that our investments in people's quality of life will also continue to strengthen and sustain our economy. This bill would help support major hospital expansion and redevelopment projects with more than \$11.4 billion over the next 10 years. By 2025, Ontario will benefit from state-of-the-art hospital facilities that offer quality services and treatments.

We will invest in our schools to build on Ontario's potential for leadership in the 21st century. We are moving Ontario's education system from great to excellent. Mr. Speaker, we will invest more than \$11 billion over the next decade to continue to build places to learn and to modernize elementary and secondary schools. I know this is very important. I have 45 schools in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, and I know that these investments are badly needed. We will expand post-secondary campuses to ensure that we have enough college and university spaces for our young people. Ontario's talented and ambitious young people depend on that.

Mr. Speaker, another part of our plan is to build opportunity and secure our future and investing in strategic

partnerships—strategic partnerships that will produce economic benefits for businesses, for communities and for people. Ontario has built a strong reputation as a hub for global business. Our province is ranked third in North America for foreign direct investment and we have been ranked as Canada's most competitive province and one of the best places for investment and business development. Our focus is to leverage business investment, to foster a climate of innovation and entrepreneurship, and to create high-quality jobs for Ontario's talented workforce—like the aerospace sector. In my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood I have Centennial College. They have partnered with IBM, Bombardier and others to invest in our competitive aerospace sector at their Downsview campus.

Mr. Speaker, this bill includes initiatives that focus on local as well as international partnerships, like expanding trade missions, to increase the number of companies that our companies are exporting to, to help exporters find new and growing markets, and to attract new investment.

Our plan also includes a 10-year \$2.5-billion Jobs and Prosperity Fund that would improve Ontario's ability to attract business investments. With the new fund, the province would have the flexibility to offer strategic incentives to ensure investments, help support growth and create well-paying jobs in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I've talked about what our government is doing to build on the strengths of our people in Ontario. I've highlighted our plan to move Ontario forward with strategic investments in infrastructure and transportation networks. I've also talked about key initiatives to build a supportive and dynamic business environment.

I will now take a minute to explain how our plan will support a strong and secure retirement income system here in Ontario to help ensure that Ontarians are better able to enjoy their retirement years so that this province continues to be the place where people can live, can work, can raise their families and can retire securely.

As we know, the Canada Pension Plan is fundamental to the retirement income security for all Canadians, but its benefits alone are too low to meet the needs of middle-income earners. Several studies have shown that, unless action is taken, many of today's workers may not be saving enough to maintain their current lifestyle in retirement. This is a problem that will grow worse over time as our population continues to age. This is why we plan to introduce the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan to build on the strengths of the CPP. We will combine the CPP payments with the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan so that people will have a more secure and comfortable retirement in Ontario.

The ORPP would provide a predictable stream of income indexed to inflation and paid for a lifetime in retirement, providing comfort and security when people need it the most. It would be mandatory for the more than three million Ontarians without a comparable workplace pension plan, and it would be required to be fair and equal in terms of its contributions from both employers as well as employees, to a maximum of 1.9% each. The

ORPP would be publicly administered at arm's length from government, with implementation led by esteemed former CEO of OMERS Mr. Michael Nobrega.

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We will be consulting with pension experts across the province, with businesses, as well as with labour—

Mr. Mike Colle: And with seniors themselves.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter:—and with seniors themselves, as our member from York West often reminds me, in order to ensure that every perspective is heard as we build the framework for a made-in-Ontario pension plan solution.

We know that voluntary options such as PRPPs and RRSPs are still important as people save towards their retirement goals, and those options are complimentary to the ORPP that we are proposing. As our population continues to age, ensuring that we protect retirement security for Ontarians is really the smart thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, we understand that our province's success depends on the success of all Ontarians, and we know that when people have the opportunity to achieve their full potential, they strive to achieve that potential. When we promote a fair society, together we will contribute to the prosperity of the province. That is why our plan includes measures to build opportunities and a more fair society.

We are continuing to reform the social assistance system to improve incomes and support and to reduce barriers to entering the workforce. We are proposing legislation to index the minimum wage to inflation to help ensure that workers receive a decent wage. This is after having raised the minimum wage to \$11 per hour as of June 1, 2014.

We're also proposing to remove the debt retirement charge from residential users in our electricity bills after December 31, 2015. This would save a typical residential ratepayer about \$70 per year.

Our plan includes enhancing supports for adults with developmental disabilities and front-line workers in the community services sector. Our plan also includes providing support for wage increases for home care workers in the publicly funded home care and community care sectors. This is so important to Ontario's seniors and those most in need of this service. I want to thank the minister responsible for seniors for continuing to keep us focused on the needs of seniors in Ontario.

We are also investing in front-line child care workers. I've already talked about the importance of our earliest learners and our young people. Our plan includes increasing the Ontario child benefit by proposing to index it to inflation to help children reach their full potential. I know how essential this is for families who need it, even in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. These measures would help build more opportunities for Ontarians and to promote a fairer province for all people.

So much has been said about our fiscal health. Mr. Speaker, we are committed to eliminating the deficit by 2017-18. Our budget lays out the path to balance by responsibly managing spending and investing strategic-

ally in new growth. We are committed to transparency, efficiency and accountability across government to help us move towards our pre-recession debt-to-GDP levels. Our plan includes measures to build towards fiscal balance, such as extracting more value from the province's assets.

With the help of an advisory council led by retiring group president and CEO of the TD Bank Mr. Ed Clark, we are going to continue to take on those challenges of ensuring that we leverage those assets.

We are the leanest program spending government in this country, and our efforts have resulted in lower-than-forecasted program spending expenses for the last five years in a row.

Our plan includes strategically investing in people, in infrastructure, and in business partnerships to create growth for today and for tomorrow while still providing high-quality public services that support the well-being of Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, I've reviewed all of the areas that have been highlighted in our budget. What is important to us is that we continue to ensure that not only do we have a province that is championing to build Ontario up, but we also have a federal government that is playing its part in ensuring that there is fairness for Ontarians.

We know that when we are working together as one Ontario, we are supporting people in every part of this province, this great province—

Mr. Mike Colle: Especially Scarborough.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Especially Scarborough–Guildwood.

I want to thank you, Speaker, for this opportunity. I look forward to all members supporting our budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a pleasure to get up to respond to the talk opposite.

I hear the budget, and I heard people during the election in my riding, businesses, talking about trying to hold on. In our province, we see the cost of doing business is no longer competitive. We talk about, for instance, the car industry. Just 10 years ago, we had the number one car-producing industry in North America. Now we're number three. We hear warnings every day about the cost of doing business here just getting out of sight.

The Ontario pension plan—their own ministry estimates talk about a loss of 150,000 jobs that that has brought in. The warning signs are there. We have to make it so that we can compete.

It's fine to have the minimum wage jobs, and it's fine to have them indexed, but here on the PC side we aspire to better jobs for people in Ontario. The manufacturing jobs are very good jobs. They were high-paying jobs, people working with their hands. We've seen a loss of 300,000 of these jobs and growing. Just last week, again, in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, we lost another company, another 50 jobs. It was another 200 jobs just as the election started—Philips Canlyte. All

these companies are not closing their doors; they are moving south, and they are moving because they have greater capacity down there. Why do they have greater capacity? Because it's cheaper to do business. They don't have the high taxes.

We have a seniors population in this province that is ranked, as far as poverty, one of the tops in the world as being able to save money.

At this time in our fragile economy, we hear the experts telling us that it's just not the time to bring this in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? I recognize the member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker, and I want to congratulate you on your position as deputy speaker in the House. This is the first time I've had an opportunity to stand up in the House and speak, so welcome back to everyone that's here.

I'm glad to stand here today to talk about the budget, because it's really something that's extremely important. The Liberal government found the forethought that they have called us back here to talk about this budget, and that's what New Democrats are here to do, Speaker. But we actually want to point out that this budget is not a progressive budget, as the Liberals are claiming. It's definitely an austerity budget.

We've talked about the fact that there is no jobs creation plan in this budget that makes sense, because I can tell you, in my riding of London–Fanshawe we had layoffs before the House rose, or before the election was called. Kellogg's, a cereal manufacturer in London, is closing its industrial building. When I was on the election trail, I met people. This one gentleman was going to be losing his job. His brother had a job there, his sister-in-law had a job there, he had a job there. Basically, his whole family was going to be devastated by the closure of Kellogg's.

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This government doesn't listen about a jobs plan. It keeps rewarding corporations with tax loopholes, and they should be rewarding corporations when they actually create a job so that people can stay in their own city, have a livelihood and continue to save for their retirement. They were talking about retirement packages; if you don't have a job, you can't save for retirement. If you don't have a job, you can't put that money back into your community.

I really have an issue with the fact that this is not a progressive budget. It's a budget of austerity with no jobs plan that's going to help people in London.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? I recognize the member from Durham.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to commend you on your appointment as Acting Speaker.

It's a pleasure for me as a Liberal member to stand up and support this budget. It's a budget that I ran on and

it's a budget that my government ran on. It's a budget that the people of Durham embraced. They embraced this budget because it attends to the needs of the people and it's a budget that builds Ontario up. It's a budget that affects our young people. It provides opportunity for them and helps them in areas of skill development. It also is a budget that makes one of the greatest education systems in the English-speaking world even better. So it's a progressive budget in that sense. Our young people realize that and they voted for that.

It's a budget, also, that helps infrastructure grow. It's a budget that will create jobs because of the infrastructure—\$29 billion. That's going to create jobs. It's going to bring transit to regions such as Durham. It's going to improve transit and help the gridlock in the GTA.

By and large, this is a budget that is going to help all Ontarians. It's going to help our elderly by providing the services that they will require. Nurses will be there for them; they'll have PSWs.

There are provisions in this budget that help to increase the salaries of our PSWs. I didn't realize that they were paid so little, and our elderly rely so much on them for services. I am shocked that the NDP did not support that, even—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

I recognize the speaker from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to comment on the speech given by the Associate Minister of Finance. I'll just relay a few points that she sugar-coated, basically.

The first part is to remove the debt retirement charge, and of course they're saying it about residential homes. However, this government continues to neglect the farmers in our area, who will continue to pay this debt retirement charge, with their higher energy rates already costing their businesses much more. They will, in fact, be adding to their costs by paying down the debt retirement charge, which this government has slowly frittered away into other accounts. This debt retirement charge should have been paid off years ago. However, this government is unaccountable and has done away with billions of dollars.

I'd also like to make a comment on the pension plan that the associate minister has brought forward. I believe her brother works in St. Thomas—and I think that he's at Presstran, is he? Or is he at Formet?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Yes.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Presstran, yes, and I'm glad he's part of my community.

However, he works for Magna, and Magna has said, without any argument at all, that they will stop investing in Ontario if this government goes forward with their pension plan and with their high energy rates. Well, we can't stop the energy rates; a 42% increase is coming our way, whether we like it or not. This is the plan of the government. However, they do have an opportunity to postpone this Ontario pension plan and let the people of Ontario, the people who work for Magna, who work for Formet and work for Presstran, have some hope that their

businesses will still be here, that their jobs will still be here in the long run—because once a company stops investing in their factories, it's only a matter of time, when the retooling comes forward, until they are unable to continue, and that's when they shut down plants and move elsewhere.

St. Thomas, Ontario, since 2007, under this government, has lost over 6,000 jobs, out of a population of 37,000. I would hate to see our Magna and Presstran companies, which probably have over 2,000 more employees, have to leave St. Thomas because this government is going forward with the Ontario pension plan, which itself has said will lose over 150,000 jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member for her response.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you so much, Speaker. I want to thank the members for their comments: the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, the member from London–Fanshawe, the member from Durham and the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

So many of the comments were centred around jobs and the auto sector. You mentioned my younger brother, who works in the subsidiary of Magna. Our two older brothers also work in the auto sector, so my family is very much connected to that.

But I also know that the investments we're making in the skills and in the talents of our young people are preparing them for the jobs of the future, and that includes advanced manufacturing and it is ensuring that

Ontario's economy remains competitive and can provide those good, well-paying jobs well into the future. We know that when we are working together as one Ontario, when we support people in every region of this province, we will have a brighter and stronger future.

The 2014 budget is our plan to build on people's talents and their skills—like our investments in hard-working PSWs, who really deserved that pay raise—and to build modern infrastructure and transportation networks and a dynamic business environment. It's a plan to help families build a more secure retirement. If we do nothing, people will still grow old and they will require those supports. So we have to take action and we need to build a more fair society. We also need to be balanced and eliminate the deficit by 2017-18, as our plan requires.

I urge all members of this House to support our plan and support our budget so that we can work together to build a stronger Ontario and a stronger Canada. I look forward to their support of this budget.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since it is almost 6 o'clock, this House is recessed until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

Interjection: It's adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Oh, adjourned; sorry. We're adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. 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	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
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	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
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 Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
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
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

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