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Wednesday 23 July 2014

Mercredi 23 juillet 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 23 July 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 23 juillet 2014

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Christine Elliott: I'd like to introduce and welcome three representatives from the Canadian Sikh Association who are here with us today for a reception: Manohar Singh Bal, Sukhdev Singh Gill and Abnash Kaur Kang. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to introduce Neville Britto and Sanjey Jegathesan, and also Gazal Amin. These are the interns from my office. Please join me in welcoming these young people.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I have the honour of introducing a couple of young men today. Domenic Bitondo, whom many of you know, is an intern at LCSB—he's from my riding of Etobicoke Centre, an organizer of youth in the riding—and his brother Mathew Bitondo. Welcome.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Good morning. It's my honour to introduce my EA from the Cambridge riding, Cassandra McKenna, who's my executive assistant.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have the honour of welcoming here to Queen's Park my husband, Germinio Pio Politi, and his mother, Ada Politi, who is visiting here from Italy. Benvenuti.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I would like to welcome members of the Canadian Sikh Association to Queen's Park today. We have with us Mr. Pritpal Singh Chatha, Mr. Gurmail Singh Nirman, Mrs. Amrit Kaur Gill and Jenny Gill, who will be joining us later.

The CSA will be hosting a reception in room 230 today from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. and from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. for all MPPs. Everyone is encouraged to drop by and meet the members of this group.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'd like to introduce my new LA—I'm delighted to have her here—Raly Chakarova. She was also my campaign manager for the nomination contest. Welcome, Raly.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm pleased to introduce Evan Walman; I've known his father for many, many years. He's an intern with the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. Welcome, Evan.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to introduce two interns from my office at the Ministry of Labour, Khawla Nakua and Alex McKeen.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to welcome Allison Williams from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance; Alastair Woods, Anna Goldfinch and Kaley Kennedy from CFS-Ontario; Najiba Sardar and Sandy Hudson from U of T student council; Josh Mandryk from Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams; and labour lawyer Andrew Langille, who will be joining us shortly, and who have come to Queen's Park today for my press conference this morning.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Today your budget bill comes up for third reading, but Premier there is a giant loophole, one that you had a chance to close yesterday at committee but chose not to: the Trillium Trust Act, which will put proceeds from government assets sales, first, into general revenues, not directly into the trust. There's no guarantee that any money will ever make it to the trust and not be used just to offset your deficit. Once you sell an asset, only you, without this Legislature ever knowing, gets to decide whether that money is "qualified" to go into the trust, and if so, how much will actually ever make it into the trust.

We brought amendments that would increase the transparency and reporting of asset sales. Premier, why did your government vote against the amendments for openness and transparency?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Finance is going to want to talk about the technicalities of the Trillium Trust, but let me just say this: We are committed, and have been committed from the time that we introduced the plan—and in fact before—to building transportation infrastructure, including transit. We have committed to creating trust funds so that the people of Ontario will know how much money is going into transit and transportation infrastructure building, and how that money is being spent. We've committed \$29 billion: \$15 billion for the greater Toronto and Hamilton area and \$14 billion for outside of the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

I am pleased that the member opposite is showing an interest in building transit. I hope that means that maybe he'll support the budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Sadly, Premier, your handling of the gas plant money gave us one billion reasons not to take your word for it.

Let's run through this again: First, you sell an asset, but only you decide, with criteria unknown to anybody else, whether that asset is qualified to go into the trust. Then, according to the act, you "may" require, not "must" require, a portion of the proceeds, not all of the proceeds, to go into the trust. There is nothing to stop you from simply diverting that money into reducing your deficit, and we'll never know about it. That's why we asked for an amendment that has the Auditor General identify how the money from the sale of assets is distributed. Premier, why did you instruct your committee to vote against our transparency?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's pretty rich to hear a member from the opposition talk about transparency, especially when they sold the 407 for pennies, without any revelation.

In our budget, we have a chapter dedicated to transparency and accountability, and we'll continue to do exactly what's necessary to advise the public of what it is that we're doing. We've already stated that any sale of assets—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Too much noise on all sides.

Please finish.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, come to order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we will continue to provide that openness and transparency in the work that we do. We have made it clear that whatever is being reviewed and assessed will be made public. We've already dedicated—and we've said that we will dedicate—all those to the Trillium Trust to be used specifically for transportation and infrastructure. We'll continue to do what's in the best interests of the public and the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, yesterday your members voted against the open and transparent sale of those very assets. Look, let's be clear: We're not against the sale of assets, but we're against using one-time money to pay for your operating expenses.

Yesterday, the Liberals told the committee that bringing in the Auditor General was "redundant." This is the same Auditor General's office that discovered and revealed to this Legislature the Liberals' abuse of another file: the debt retirement charge. We learned that back in 2004, \$4 billion more was added to the debt without being disclosed until 2012, a full eight years later—and we're still paying for that today. That money went straight into general revenue to artificially lower your deficit. Is that what you're going to do with the Trillium Trust fund? Is that why you voted against transparency?

1040

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the debt retirement charge was a product of that party. They left us a legacy of billions and billions of dollars because of an electricity scheme that went awry, that the public has had to pay for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I've said it a second time now, and that is, the noise is coming from all sides while the answer's being given and the question's being put. I will now move to warnings direct, and then after that it's naming.

Please finish.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, as a result of those mistakes, the very issues the member's speaking about, we have made corrections and we're continuing to do. We have put in place in this budget accountability measures. We're making it more transparent. Each of these situations has different circumstances by each transaction. There are different types of assets that are involved in this type of accounting treatment—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay is warned.

Hon. Charles Sousa: So we will disclose and indicate exactly what we're doing. The member opposite and his party did not do that, Mr. Speaker. We are the ones who imposed those transparency measures. We're the ones who are being held accountable. The C. D. Howe Institute and others have indicated the integrity—

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

New question.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. With troublesome economic indicators on the horizon, such as the negative outlook by credit rating agencies and upcoming labour negotiations under the cloud of a \$12-billion deficit, could the Premier tell us which is her priority: Avoiding labour strikes at all costs or meeting her deficit reduction targets?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reality of governing is that there are complexities that mean that it's not either/or, Mr. Speaker. You don't choose between making sure we have an excellent education system or that we have good working partnerships with the people who are in our schools: the teachers, the support staff, the administrators with the school boards. We don't choose between that and making sure we meet our fiscal targets; we have to do both. Our plan lays out our path to do exactly that, to do both of those things and to do them in a balanced way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I lack the Premier's confidence in her balancing skills. It's clear, with the Metrolinx 8.5% wage hike precedent, that further negotiations with teachers and doctors this fall will be hampered, probably

compromised, similar to a Frito-Lay commercial: “If I give one to you, I have to give one to everyone else.” It’s clear that they can’t meet their spending targets while increasing—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is warned.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod:—compensation. They like to talk about net zeros over there, but I ask the Premier: What does net zero compensation actually mean to her? Is it higher pay with fewer workers? Is it higher pay with fewer benefits? Is it higher pay with less services, or will the Premier just admit that it really is just a higher pay that Ontarians are going to have to pay for because it will need a higher deficit, with no real, clear spending priorities or reductions priorities in place.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, there are some fundamental differences that underlie the question that the leader of the—the leader?—the member of the opposition—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Sorry about that.

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Who knows?—that the member opposite is asking, Mr. Speaker. One of those fundamental differences between us and them is this: We believe in the collective bargaining process. We believe that it should be respected, and we believe that it is the best way for the agreements to be put in place. So that collective bargaining process will be honoured by us.

Having said that, we have been very clear that there is no new money for those settlements. There’s no new money for benefits, salaries or wages. So those collective bargaining processes will take place within the funding that is in place, as they did in the Metrolinx situation.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: What the Premier fails to mention is that there are always consequences to these higher pay increases. If the government, through Metrolinx, can give an 8.5% wage hike to workers while talking about “net zeros,” it means either raising fees on riders or cutting from somewhere else in their budget, possibly from other services, or, finally, that the deficit will increase. Similarly, with teacher contract negotiations due this fall, a 2% increase for elementary teachers will either come with a cut elsewhere in education, bigger class sizes and/or fewer teachers or, again, the deficit will increase.

Given the Liberal priority is waving the white flag on wage freezes, will the Premier admit she is not interested at all in meeting her deficit reduction targets and Ontarians are going to be paying higher taxes as a result of it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, that’s just not true. I am very interested in meeting our deficit targets, Mr. Speaker, and we will do that.

The priority of the party opposite is to enter into conflict with organized labour. That is a starting point for them. That’s a fundamental belief, that that is a good way

to govern. We saw it when they were in office previous to 2003. We saw it during their campaign. They believe that having disruptive, conflicted relationships with the people who deliver health care and education and the services that people need in this province—they believe that that is the way to go.

We don’t believe that, Mr. Speaker. We believe that transforming systems, the work that has been done in health care to provide for better and different delivery of service—that is the focus of our government. Those kind of transformations, as well as continuing to have good working relationships with the people who deliver those essential services in Ontario.

FISCAL REVIEW

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. For weeks, the Premier has refused to answer questions about her asset sales and her cuts to public services. So far, the Premier has also refused to allow an independent review of her fiscal plan, the very same independent review that she supported in 2004 and since, Speaker. She’s choosing to ignore the fact that only in election years can the auditor review the government’s estimates, assumptions and projections, and report to the public on whether the fiscal plan is reasonable or whether it is not. Will the Premier tell us why she believes every election budget needs independent oversight except her own?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I’ve answered every one of the questions that the leader of the third party has put to me, and I will say again that we were on track to have that review of our budget. The NDP in particular decided that they did not support the budget and plunged us into an election, Mr. Speaker. That was the choice of the third party and the opposition. So we went into an election.

We brought the plan that we had introduced at the beginning of May in our budget. We have reintroduced that budget. The Auditor General, as we speak, is looking at the finances of this province, and her report will be tabled in the fall.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I will make mention of this only once, as a sidebar to my other comment about warning somebody: The debate that goes on at the back between questions will stop. If it doesn’t, you’ll be warned. And you can point your finger all you want; you’ll be included.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I advise the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek to pay attention this way and not to the person invoking you.

Next, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier is remarkably adamant that she will stand in the way of fiscal transparency and actually prevent an independent review of the fiscal plan by the Auditor General. Now that she’s in charge, she sees no need for a public report by the auditor on this year’s election budget.

If the Premier won't allow a public review, Speaker, will she at least tell the House whether the Auditor General has been privately consulted about any of the details in her fiscal plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the third party is remarkably adamant, and was remarkably adamant, that she was going to stand in the way of a budget that would put money into eliminating wait-lists for developmental services, would put more money into the hands of personal support workers, would put more money into the hands of municipalities for housing.

What I'm adamant about is that we do all of those things, that we actually make those investments that are necessary, including in transit and transportation, which the leader of the third party has also been adamant that she will stand in the way of.

Our plan has been laid out for the people of Ontario, Mr. Speaker. We were on schedule to have a pre-election audit. The opposition and the third party decided that we would have an election. The Auditor General is writing her report, and our plan is open and clear for everyone in the province to see.

1050

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, families have a right to know whether their government is making prudent and reasonable assumptions about the province's future state of affairs. That is pretty basic stuff. That's pretty basic when it comes to transparency and accountability. They have a right to know, Speaker, because the services that they rely on are at stake, services like public transit.

Will the Premier confirm that the Ministry of Finance is working with the Auditor General to address concerns surrounding the treatment of gas tax revenues for transit?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, all of our ministries work with the Auditor General as she makes inquiries and asks questions. The Ministry of Finance is absolutely no exception.

The fiscal plan that we put forward is the fiscal plan that the NDP ran on. It was the foundation of their platform. What I believe is happening right now is that the leader of the third party is looking for any reason she can find, she's grasping at any straw to justify why she will not support a budget that will put more money into the hands of the people who are most vulnerable in this province. She is looking for a reason not to vote for the budget that will put money into the hands of personal support workers who are among our lowest-paid workers and our most valued in terms of transformation of the health care system. She's looking for an excuse not to support a budget that will put \$810 million into developmental services—

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

FISCAL REVIEW

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The need for an independent review by the auditor is becoming more and more clear every time the Premier tries to brush off our concerns. If there are any discussions going on between this government and the auditor about the numbers and how those numbers shape up, it is the responsibility of the Premier to be open and frank with the public.

I remember this Premier used to talk about that all the time, Speaker. It seems that she forgot that that was one of her fundamental beliefs in the past.

Will the Premier inform this House whether the Auditor General has contacted or been contacted by the Ministry of Finance concerning the accounting methods being used for transit funding, and if so, when will the public be told about the auditor's concerns?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just to the question on the gas tax, the two cents on the gas tax that is dedicated to transit across the province—it's about \$320 million a year. That is dedicated funding that goes to municipalities according to ridership and population. That formula has been in place for a number of years and it remains in place. Actually, I don't understand the concern on the part of the leader of the third party about this, because we are committed to keeping that gas tax funding in place.

If she is so concerned about our fiscal plan, she maybe should go back and reread page 2 of her own platform. What that said was, "We will balance Ontario's books by 2017-18 with significantly more fiscal space than the Liberal plan." Then, it goes on to say, "Our plan will provide an additional fiscal cushion of over \$700 million annually." Mr. Speaker, they based their plan on our plan and then they went further. They said—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, every time the Premier refuses to answer a straightforward question, she raises even more doubts about the prudence of the assumptions behind her austerity budget. That is the bottom line, because if the actual budget truly reflects the story that the government tells, then the Premier should be welcoming the auditor's oversight with open arms. It begs the question, what reason could possibly be there to explain why the Premier is so determined to avoid public review of the numbers behind her fiscal plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I do welcome the Auditor General's questions. I welcome her scrutiny at any point, in any one of our ministries. I believe that the Auditor General's work is extremely important to the functioning of government and the improvement of government and its delivery of services. So I welcome the scrutiny of the Auditor General.

The fact is that Standard and Poor's just this week has said that "Ontario's financial management is strong, in our view. The level of transparency and disclosure in its financial statements is high: notes and schedules provide detailed information about core government, agencies

and boards, and business enterprises. The independent Auditor General audits the province's financial statements." That's an ongoing process, Mr. Speaker.

The Auditor General's report will be tabled in the fall. As I say, I welcome that scrutiny.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday the Premier said that she actually doesn't think that Dalton McGuinty's transparency and accountability measures are too good for her own government. That's a relief. But it also means that the Premier needs to stop dragging her heels on an independent review. The former Premier ensured his fiscal plans received independent oversight in election years, even in 2011, when the auditor raised serious doubts about the government's assumptions. Will the Premier simply follow her mentor's lead and request an independent review of her fiscal plan by the Auditor General to be made public before the end of this year?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the report of the Auditor General will be tabled in the fall.

The leader of the third party made a comment earlier about what I used to or didn't use to talk about. Here's what the NDP used to talk about. The NDP used to talk about issues like poverty, so increasing the child benefit would have been something that they would have supported in the past. They used to talk about the need for increases in social assistance benefits, so they would have supported a budget, conceivably, that included those increases, as our budget does. They used to talk about the need for a systemic approach to dealing with developmental services, so they would have supported a budget that included \$810 million for developmental services. They used to talk, just as recently as in the election campaign, about the need for expansion of student nutrition programs, so you would have thought they would have supported a budget that included \$20 million for that expansion.

The leader of the third party is looking for any reason not to support our budget—

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

New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, as you know, Ornge air ambulance has been charged with 17 offences under the Canada Labour Code. These charges are as a result of the May 31, 2013, crash that claimed the lives of four dedicated Ornge employees, which occurred under your government's watch after appointing new leadership.

Minister, the documents show that the pilot of the flight was "without adequate training in the operation of that specific aircraft" and that Ornge failed to provide the pilots with "a means to enable them to maintain visual reference while operating at night," even with repeated warnings dating back to September 2012. As a result,

Ornge is now being charged with failure to ensure employee safety.

Minister, there are still clearly systemic problems at Ornge that your government has failed to correct. What are you going to do to make sure that Ornge employees and their patients are travelling safely on Ornge aircraft?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know the member opposite appreciates, because there is a process under way that involves the potential of or the real issue of court action, that it would be inappropriate for me to speak about those details. But I am happy, and in fact I'm very proud, to speak of the progress that's been made by Ornge over the past number of years on a whole set of issues.

I want to give my commitment to the member opposite that we have been and we are and we will continue to work on virtually all of the recommendations that have been put forward by the various entities in terms of continuing to improve the performance of Ornge. We need to remember those hard-working individuals who perform such a vital function every single day.

Whether it's on issues concerning governance of Ornge, we've put steps into place for increasing government oversight; we have a very strong board in place which has made exceptional progress over the last number of years that I'm happy to speak to in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Christine Elliott: I would say to the minister that this is a very serious issue. Four people have died, and now Ornge is facing some very serious charges, so clearly whatever changes you have made haven't worked. We need to make sure that these people are going to be kept safe.

Despite opposition inquiries and a committee investigation into Ornge, the previous Minister of Health insisted to this House on numerous occasions that everything was fine. In fact, on April 19, 2013, less than two months before the crash, the minister stated that "Ornge is a much, much stronger organization now: new leadership, new protocols" and so on. However, these protocols clearly failed to protect Ornge employees and their patients.

1100

Major changes need to be made at Ornge to make sure that no more lives are lost. In fact, even a few weeks ago, there was a potential incident involving a near miss near Ottawa. Minister, can you tell us specifically what you are prepared to do to ensure that Ornge employees and their patients are travelling safely?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I was, as were all members of this Legislature, absolutely devastated to hear of that tragedy just over one year ago, when two pilots and two paramedics regrettably lost their lives in that tragic incident. To this day, our hearts and our thoughts go out to the families, the friends and the colleagues of those four individuals who unfortunately perished.

I again want to indicate to the member opposite, and I know this is an issue which is important to her as well, that we take the recommendations before us very, very seriously. We take these charges very seriously as well, as does Ornge and their leadership.

I have to also point out that before this tragic incident, as well as subsequent to that, we have been working very closely with Transport Canada on a number of measures not just to improve patient safety and the overall performance of Ornge, but particularly, as was demonstrated by this case, to ensure the safety of the workers at Ornge.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Yesterday, I introduced a private member's bill, the Greater Protection for Interns and Vulnerable Workers Act, that was first introduced by my former colleague Jonah Schein.

I want to make it clear that this bill goes significantly beyond the rather weak measures included in your Bill 18. For example, one provision of my bill requires that employers notify the Minister of Labour when they bring in interns, and clearly spell out expectations, such as job description and hours of work.

There is no reason for the continued exploitation of unpaid interns in this province, so I ask the minister, will this government be supporting my bill?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise on this important issue, and I thank the member for her question.

Let me be very, very clear right from the start. It doesn't matter what your job title is, it doesn't matter what your position is: If you perform work for somebody in the province of Ontario, you're covered by the Employment Standards Act and you deserve to be paid. There's a very narrow exemption for those people who are enrolled in educational institutions, co-op students or the self-employed or trainees. But certainly, if you're performing work for somebody in this province, you deserve to be paid.

We have proactive enforcement on this issue. We have been out to a number of employers. We have talked to the post-secondary institutions. We're making sure the people in the province of Ontario understand that we are very, very serious about this issue, that we're going to continue the inspections and that we are going to ensure, as I said from the start, that if you work in Ontario, you get paid in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: In response to the exemptions, I wanted to point out that another measure in my bill would bring in co-op students, interns and other trainees who are currently exempted under the Employment Standards Act so that they would be entitled to some basic workplace protections. Too many workers are exempted from the Employment Standards Act, and this provision takes a small step to close those loopholes.

My bill is supported by students and labour law experts. So I ask again, will this government support my bill and end the exploitation of unpaid interns in Ontario?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, the bill will make its way through the House like every other private member's bill, but let me tell you, in the last term of government, before that party caused the election, Bill 146 was before this House, which would have extended coverage to co-op students. We've reintroduced that now as Bill 18, so it's back on the books again.

I want to tell you, though, that on average the Ministry of Labour receives just over 18,000 employment claims each year. We've got 150 employment standards officers who are carrying out proactive inspections, and they investigate claims on all types of violations, including internships.

I want to also tell the people out there who are watching on TV and the people who are in the chamber that if they have a concern with internships, there is a hotline: 1-800-531-5551. Call that number and we'll investigate.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, the Select Committee on Developmental Services tabled its final report to the House yesterday. This committee's job is to tell us about the developmental services system and the coordination of supports for people in our province with developmental disabilities.

I have met with many of these families in my riding of Kitchener Centre and I can tell you that we were very pleased to learn that this committee was re-struck and that the House has now received its very important recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, there are many people who are very interested in hearing from the minister on her views of the committee and its work. Could she please share that with us?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: To the member for Kitchener Centre, thank you for that question. First of all, I would like to acknowledge the excellent work by the members from all sides of this House on the Select Committee on Developmental Services. I think it's very clear that when we put partisan ideology aside and we work together in the public interest, we can come up with some very, very strong recommendations. That is exactly what this committee has done.

Also, of course, I'd like to thank all the people who made submissions, both in person and written submissions. They were very thoughtful, and clearly there is a sense of urgency in the community that we need to address the concerns.

Many of the issues that were raised in the report were issues of which my ministry was very well aware. In fact, my predecessor, the Honourable Ted McMeekin, did put a lot of pieces in place to address these issues, including, of course, the \$810 million over the next—

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Minister. It's very encouraging to hear that you and your officials welcome this report and that the recommendations are being considered.

In the budget which was tabled last week, you mention this unprecedented infusion of \$810 million for developmental services, and that by 2016-17 these new funds are going to climb to over \$2 billion for developmental services.

Money alone is not enough to deal with the urgent needs and challenges that the developmentally disabled and their families have to deal with every day. Along with the funding, could the minister please inform this House of the actions that she is taking to continue the work of strengthening developmental services in Ontario?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, again, to the member for the question. Of course, as she has explained, certainly the \$810 million over three years is not the whole story. Investments are important, but our government understands that addressing the significant issues facing families is not just about more funding.

That's why I'm very pleased to announce that we will be convening a housing task force in the very near future to recommend innovative housing solutions for a broader set of residential options for people with developmental disabilities. We are also talking with staff at Developmental Services Ontario about some of the practices that they have introduced that are particularly positive.

I think it's worth recognizing that we do have some 18,000 adults receiving residential supports at this point in time here in Ontario and there are more than 15,000 who receive direct funding through the Passport Program. So while we have serious issues, we also need to find our best practices in this regard.

TAXATION

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Minister, Ontario used to be "Yours to Discover," but that won't be the case for much longer with your government's decision to increase the province's aviation fuel tax by 148%.

The National Airlines Council of Canada projects that this tax increase will drive away 400,000 more air travellers and greatly impact hotels, restaurants, travel agents and tour operators, among others who support this industry. Minister, do you have any idea how many jobs that will cost those working in the tourism industry?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I think the member opposite also recognizes that in order to promote tourism, economic growth and the vitality of our province, we must make those investments in infrastructure, investments in things that will make us competitive. They want to make certain that we have an air-rail link from Union Station to the airport. They want to make certain that we eliminate gridlock, which is costing \$6 billion annually. They want

to make certain that when we attract tourists they have the availability and the ability to see the province in all its glory. In so doing, we are raising aviation tax by one penny per litre. That is modest in comparison to the lion's share of taxes and services and fees that are being charged by the federal government. I would recommend the member opposite talk to Lisa Raitt and the federal government to reduce their taxes.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Minister, I guess the shuffle to Buffalo will just increase.

In 2012, British Columbia, as part of its jobs plan, and despite facing budget constraints, actually decided to eliminate its fuel tax on international flights to attract new services and create new jobs. And it has worked. They have 22 airlines adding new flights out of Vancouver while injecting millions into the BC economy. Each new daily international flight creates between 150 and 200 new jobs, and another 400 jobs are created in hotels, restaurants and other businesses. The proof is in the numbers.

Your government's proposed tax increase will threaten at least 3,000 jobs. Will you commit today to stop this needless tax hike until you study the full implication that the job losses will have on the tourism industry? Do that today, Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we have a comparison between Ontario and the Ontario airports—the major one being, of course, Pearson international airport—compared to the other international airports around the world, and Ontario continues to be more competitive than they are. We will continue to do so.

This hasn't changed since 1992, but when you look at the tax that we're talking about—2.7 cents—versus what is being paid in London, at 69 cents, or Paris, at 54 cents, or New York, at—

Interjections.

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

The member from Nepean-Carleton is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Compared against Chicago and even other provinces, like Manitoba. Ontario will still be more competitive than they are.

But, again, the member opposite talks about balancing the budget, making certain that we take the necessary steps to increase our revenue where possible to invest in those things that matter. That is the balanced approach that we are taking.

The member opposite should also—again, talk to your federal cousins, who are saying to increase our revenues and take advantage of those things that we can to improve our bottom line. That's exactly what we are doing. Again, talk to your cousins and get them to—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is taking a tightrope walk.

New question.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Minister of Education: Under the Education Act, the minister is required to “ensure that all exceptional children in Ontario have available to them ... appropriate special education programs and special education services.” But parents of kids who require special education still find themselves fighting every day to get supports their children need. Too often, despite the best efforts of staff, our education system fails to provide appropriate assistance that these children require. Will the minister tell parents why this government is failing to ensure all schools can meet the special education needs of Ontario students?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Of course we are committed to making sure that special-needs students all over the province are receiving special education services. In fact, as the member has noted, boards are actually required to provide special education services for those who are identified.

It might be interesting to note, Speaker, that actually boards go beyond in their provision of special education services, actually go beyond those who have been formally identified and provide special education services for many students who haven't been formally identified, simply because the teacher and the principal have identified a need. In fact, our records show that about a third of the students in the province who are receiving special education supports are doing so without formal identification because the principal recognizes the need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, the ministry has a legal obligation to ensure that special education programs and services are available to students when and where they need them. Parents shouldn't have to fight just to get the services that they're legally entitled to. And, in spite of what the minister says, far too many parents continue to be told that their local school boards just don't have the resources to provide the special education supports their children need. Will the minister tell the House exactly how many schools are currently not able to meet their legal obligations to provide these special services?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm actually very pleased to report to the Legislature that if you look at our special education funding, it has actually increased by \$2.7 billion—it's up to \$2.7 billion this year. That is an increase of \$1 billion over what it was in 2002. Since our government came into office, we've had an increase of 67% in the amount of funding that we provide to school boards for special education.

Obviously, it is up to the local school boards to allocate that money to provide for needs but, as I have noted here, in a time when enrolment is declining, we have increased the funding for special education by 67%, by over \$1 billion.

BLOOD DONATION

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Anybody here who remembers the tainted blood crisis of the 1980s understands the profound importance of maintaining the integrity of Canada's blood system. As a nurse and as a parent, I can really relate to this. I recall the fear of getting a letter advising that our son's already fragile health was at risk because he may have received tainted blood while hospitalized in the 1980s. Fortunately, extensive testing revealed that he did not suffer consequences of that life-saving blood transfusion.

The principle of voluntary donation is one of the pillars of that system, but is being threatened in Ontario by the possibility of plasma collection sites that would pay people for their plasma. Citizens in my riding of Cambridge are also concerned about this. Could the minister, through you, Speaker, inform this House of what steps he's undertaking to protect the integrity of Ontario's blood system?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to thank the member from Cambridge for this timely and important question. I was pleased yesterday to stand up in this House and introduce the Safeguarding Health Care Integrity Act for its first reading. This proposed legislation actually combines two bills that our government brought forward this past spring, one of which directly addresses the member's concerns. These concerns have been echoed for some time by health care professionals and organizations, patient advocates and ordinary Ontarians who are opposed to private, for-profit plasma collection. I agree, and our government agrees. That's why I was proud to introduce this proposed legislation.

I urge all members of this House to stand together against the payment for blood or plasma donations in Ontario. This will build on steps that our government has already taken to protect the integrity of our public blood donation system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you, Minister. As a nurse who has been asked about the safety of our blood supply by former patients, I'm pleased and relieved that the minister has reintroduced this bill, and I hope that all members will support its passage.

The gift of blood is the gift of life. I know we are all grateful to the thousands of Ontarians who voluntarily give blood and plasma every single year. Their donations help others to survive accidents and surgeries, as well as life-threatening conditions. I've seen many patients in hospitals, as well as our own son, recover due to the generosity of these selfless citizens.

Ontarians who need blood and plasma products can take comfort in the strength and safety of our blood supply today, but they also need to know that life-giving blood and plasma products will be available when they need them.

Could the minister tell this House whether this legislation, if passed, might negatively impact the availability of blood and plasma products in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thanks again to the member from Cambridge. Our government takes the supply of blood, plasma and plasma-based products very, very seriously. This proposed legislation would not reduce that supply for Ontarians in any way. There's simply no need for a parallel private, for-profit blood system in Canada. The demand for plasma used in transfusions has actually been decreasing in Canada, and we are completely self-sufficient in this area.

For-profit clinics would likely sell the plasma they collect for a profit on the international market to manufacture plasma products for pharmaceutical use. There's no guarantee that this plasma would even come back to Ontario.

1120

For more than 15 years, our blood system has been ably managed by Canadian Blood Services, a public, not-for-profit organization. I remain confident in their ability to manage a national blood system that meets all of Ontarians' needs.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Members from all sides of this House understand the difficulties many families have in accessing support and services for their family members living with a developmental disability.

One family in Dufferin–Caledon recently had a terrible experience with the local developmental services office, or the DSO. This family has been looking after their child with a physical and developmental disability for over 30 years, but because the parents' own health is declining, they called the DSO to update them and ask for assistance. The reaction from the DSO was anything but helpful. They displayed an appalling lack of empathy to my constituent, going so far as to say they were lucky to receive any funding at all. Do you believe this is how DSO staff should be responding to families who have reached out to them for help?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member for the question. In general, obviously, in response to the story that we have just been told, I would be most distressed. My heart goes out to that family, to have received that kind of response to a genuine request for help.

I think we need to remember, however, that DSOs are very new in terms of their establishment by our government. They were established in 2011 for the very purpose of providing one window so that applications by families could be made in a consistent way, so that we could ensure that a single application was made and that there was consistency across the province in that way.

We are aware that there have been some growing pains. We want to renew an emphasis on customer service as we go forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Minister, for your candour. I know you understand the challenges facing the sector and I believe you want to see improvements. But fundamental changes need to be made at the DSOs to improve their service. The Select Committee on Developmental Services made seven recommendations specifically related to improving the work of the DSOs. Not every recommendation involves spending more money, but all of them require leadership from you.

These recommendations can start making a difference immediately. Minister, will you end the wait, adopt the select committee's recommendations and improve customer service at DSO offices across Ontario?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Quite clearly, we put a plan in place, outlined in the budget, to invest some \$810 million over three years. This is going to have a dramatic impact on those needing developmental services. It will provide direct funding for some 21,000 people and support more than 4,200 people as they navigate key life transitions, such as going to post-secondary school or getting a job. It will provide support for approximately 1,400 people with urgent residential needs. It will promote community living partnerships through expanded host family and supported independent living programs.

This is our plan. This was introduced not only on May 1, but reintroduced. There's a chance at redemption for the opposition parties: to stand with us and vote for the budget.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. In late April, the government announced plans for a high-speed rail line that would run from Toronto to London. In Windsor, many of us wondered why we had been left out of the new plans since we had been included in earlier plans.

Well, a couple of weeks later the election was called, and the Liberal candidate in Windsor West, who was also a cabinet minister, suddenly promised that the province would expand high-speed rail to Windsor after all. Now, with the election over, the government seems to have forgotten its promise to the people of Windsor. Once again, the government talks only of a line from Toronto to London, not to Windsor. Mr. Speaker, I would like a yes or no answer. When the government says it will open a high-speed rail line within 10 years, does this line include Windsor?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member from Windsor for this question. I don't recall if this is the first opportunity I've had to respond to a question from this new member, but I do appreciate hearing about this issue that I know is very, very important to not only her community but also communities like London, Kitchener and Toronto, of course.

It's important to recognize that in order for us to accomplish achieving this kind of ambitious plan that we have for transit and transportation, we can only accomplish that if we have support for the budget that is before the House this week. The \$29 billion that are included for transportation and transit infrastructure are crucial to making sure that not only do we deal with high-speed rail for communities like Kitchener and London, and potentially for Windsor as well, but it's also important to make sure that we keep the province moving forward.

Part of that \$29 billion is roughly \$14 billion for communities that fall outside the GTHA. The ministry is in the process of working to complete the business case and launch the EA. I look forward to talking to this member and others about how we can move forward with our plan to benefit her community and all other communities across southwestern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Windsor voters were promised high-speed rail by this government, not another study. It was right there in big letters on their candidates' billboards. But clearly the government has no intention of including Windsor in its 10-year high-speed rail plan. In fact, it's hard to believe the government is serious about high-speed rail at all. It is mentioned nowhere in the government's budget, and the government refuses to release the study that supposedly shows that it can open this line in less than 10 years from now at an unbelievable net cost of just \$500 million. Will the government finally admit that high-speed rail is nothing more than an empty election promise?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member from Windsor for that supplementary question. I don't want to be presumptuous, Speaker, and from my particular vantage point talk about what the people of Windsor may or may not have voted for, but my guess is that the people of Windsor, like people in London and Kitchener and Toronto and my riding of Vaughan—I'm pretty sure those people voted for the very thoughtful and ambitious plan that we have as a government, that is laid out in our platform and our budget, the \$29 billion for transit and transportation infrastructure.

It's also really important to recognize that the high-speed rail project—and this is a project that the Ministry of Transportation is working hard to finalize the business case for and then launch the EA and get on with that work. That project, over the next 10 years, will create tens of thousands of jobs and has the potential, especially if we have the co-operation and the hard work and the opportunity to work with members on all sides of the House, to help re-energize the entire southwestern Ontario economy. I call on that member to support our budget so we can get on with these very important projects.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question s'adresse à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, l'honorable Madeleine Meilleur.

Le 10 juillet dernier, le commissaire aux services en français a déposé son septième rapport annuel. Ce rapport est, en fait, historique puisque c'est le premier rapport du commissaire en tant qu'officier indépendant de l'Assemblée législative.

La ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones peut-elle partager la réponse du gouvernement à ce rapport?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais remercier le député d'Etobicoke-Nord pour sa question. Notre gouvernement est fier d'avoir introduit le projet de loi pour l'indépendance du commissaire en septembre dernier, et je veux remercier les deux partis de l'opposition qui l'ont soutenu, spécifiquement la députée de Nepean-Carleton et la députée de Nickel Belt.

Ce dernier rapport du commissaire contient quatre recommandations. Cette année encore, le commissaire soulève des enjeux importants pour les Franco-Ontariens, tels que l'immigration et l'accès à la justice. Nous allons examiner en détail chacune de ces recommandations, évaluer leur faisabilité et aller de l'avant pour améliorer la prestation des services pour notre communauté francophone.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci. Supplementary?

M. Shafiq Qadri: Merci à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones pour sa réponse et aussi pour son dévouement à la communauté francophone et francophile, comme moi-même, depuis plus de 10 ans déjà.

La ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones mentionne l'accès à la justice en français. Monsieur le Président, ma question est pour la procureure générale. Le commissaire aux services en français félicite le gouvernement pour les progrès accomplis dans plusieurs domaines, incluant celui de la justice. La procureure générale peut-elle nous donner un aperçu des progrès accomplis dans le domaine de la justice?

1130

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci encore une fois pour la question. Comme vous le savez, notre gouvernement est très engagé à améliorer l'accès à la justice en français en Ontario. Le procureur qui m'a précédée a établi un comité consultatif de la magistrature et du barreau qui a émis des recommandations. Ces recommandations sont revues par le comité directeur pour étudier leurs applications. Le ministère a mis en place un Plan stratégique pour le développement des services en français. Chaque année, des intervenants et cadres supérieurs du ministère se réunissent pour établir les priorités pour les services en français.

Alors, notre plan stratégique a d'ailleurs reçu une mention honorable dans le rapport du commissaire Boileau.

Quant à la recommandation du commissaire, mon ministère étudie la faisabilité d'un projet pilote pour améliorer l'accès à la justice en français.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. The village of Burk's Falls in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka is facing a serious challenge. Since your government ended the Connecting Link Program in 2013, they've had to take on the cost of repairs to the Armstrong Bridge that serves as a main artery through the village. The work needs to be done soon and it's estimated to cost well over a million dollars.

Area and seasonal residents rely on the route to access provincial Highway 520 that connects to the village of Magnetawan, Cecebe Lake, Ahmic Lake and provincial Highway 124. The Armstrong Bridge is a connecting link in every sense of the term. Minister, what is being done by your government to support small municipalities like Burk's Falls which now face massive infrastructure costs with the ending of the connecting links program?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for that question. This is the first opportunity that I've had to hear specifically about this, let's call it, unique thing that's taking place in his riding in that particular community. I'm happy to offer the opportunity for the member opposite to have a longer conversation with me about the particular issues that are affecting this community.

I think it is also interesting to note that, as we've heard repeatedly from the party opposite since coming back to this Legislature post election, they feel very compelled that the most important thing for this government to do is to cut, to slash and to do everything we can to tear Ontario down; and yet from time to time, including today, we hear members like this member opposite stand up and ask a question on behalf of their community that calls on us to actually make investments. I think it's interesting to see there's a bit of a discordant note on that side of the Legislature about what the most important thing is.

I am happy to talk to the member offline about what's taking place in this community, but this is why, fundamentally, it's so important for us to support the investments we want to make to build all of Ontario up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Minister of Transportation: The municipality has done their due diligence. Over the past year, they've met with regional MTO officials and have been seeking alternate avenues for funding. Burk's Falls's annual tax levy is under \$1 million, and they're already undertaking major upgrades in the municipal water system. They have to rebuild another bridge, the Yonge Street Bridge, and they have to rebuild their water tower in 2016.

Councillors are worried that the unexpected cost of looking after the Armstrong Bridge will bankrupt the village. My question, Minister: Will you work with Burk's Falls council to help them with the challenge of maintaining the Armstrong Bridge?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member opposite for the supplementary. As I said in my opening answer,

I'd be happy to work with that member and people in his community to do what we can. But most importantly, it's important to recognize that the budget we've introduced in this Legislature, the budget that we campaigned on which formed the basis of our election platform, makes permanent an infrastructure fund that will help alleviate the burden that many municipalities are facing.

I know that colleagues on this side of the House like the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs—and I probably messed up a little bit of that name—and also the minister responsible for infrastructure will work very hard to make sure that we can make investments in communities across the province.

Of course, I'd be happy to talk to this member about what's taking place in his community. But again, I want to say, Speaker, this is why it's important for us to have a plan moving forward that invests in communities across this province, and they should support our budget for that reason.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Health. I have a constituent, Mr. Richard Gauthier, who lives in Timmins, who suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, but the only drug that he is able to take in order to give him quality of life and keep him outside of the hospital is Xolair. The problem is that, at the time that he was prescribed this drug, it could only be applied and given in a clinic, and it happens to be that it's in the city of Toronto. He has been refused his travel grants. My question to you is, are you prepared to review this case in order to approve the travel grants for the treatment he was not able to get in the city of Timmins?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I'd be happy to sit down with you, and also to review the case with my ministry officials to see what is the best approach to take in this particular case. I won't speak any more in terms of the details, but I certainly commit to working with you to see if we can find a resolution to it.

It is important to emphasize that cases such as these emphasize the importance of us having a drug program which is fair and equitable to all Ontarians, and that we continue to invest as we do. I think over \$4 billion annually is invested in our drug programs.

There are particular incidents that come up from time to time. I'm happy, as the minister responsible, to look into this case personally and just ensure that, in fact, it is meeting the criteria and being handled in a fair and equitable way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Saved by a second.

Listen, I appreciate that the minister is willing to look into it, but I just want to be clear: Xolair is covered by the Trillium Drug Program. He in fact had to go after them in order to get it approved.

The issue is that it can only be given in these particular clinics that are not actually approved clinics by the province of Ontario. There is no such clinic available in Timmins; it's only in Toronto.

I appreciate that you're prepared to look at it, and I look forward to a resolution to this so that he can actually have his travel grants paid, because otherwise we would have to pay to keep this gentleman in a hospital at a much higher cost than the actual treatment would cost.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the additional details. We'll follow up directly.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Scarborough–Rouge River on a point of order.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Mr. Speaker, I hope you would allow my indulgence. I would like to recognize two of my guests who are in the west gallery. They are long-time residents of my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River, and very close friends. Mr. Joseph Sheon and his wife, Ying Sheon, are here to observe the proceedings of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton on a point of order.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for your indulgence. I ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming dear friends of mine from the riding: Surjit Singh, as well as Jaswinder Singh Badesha, who forms one brother of three brothers who are very influential businesspeople in the community and great supporters of mine—Harjit Singh Badesha and Harpal Singh Badesha—as well as members of the Canadian Sikh Association. Thank you so much for welcoming them all today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities on a point of order.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, please join me in welcoming my fourth intern, Tanvir Janmohamed, sitting in the member's gallery over there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: On a point of order, I'd ask all members to help me welcome my legislative assistant, Ms. Tanya Kuzman, and Mr. Nik Bulatovich, who is an exemplary young activist in Etobicoke–Lakeshore and a great volunteer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure all of you will appreciate that absolutely none of those was a point of order, but we do welcome our guests all the time.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm delighted to introduce some special guests from my riding of Newmarket–Aurora and

leaders in the creative community. We have Renee Hay, chairman of Arts Music Festivals York Region; from the Newmarket Jazz Festival, Deb Thompson, a board member, Sher St. Kitts, general manager, and George St. Kitts, the festival artistic director; and Erika Kerwin, Newmarket Arts Council board member. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I suspect that's going to be the new uniform of the Legislature.

Further introduction of guests?

It's time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

YORK REGION HOLSTEIN CLUB

Mrs. Julia Munro: Last week, I had the honour of attending the Twilight Dinner hosted by York Region Holstein Club, a club that has played an important role advocating for the dairy industry for the last 101 years and that acts as an ambassador. Over 300 people attended the Twilight Dinner to support the 30 dairy farms in York region, a testament to the vitality and economic significance of the industry in York region.

I would like to acknowledge the people who played a role in the success of the dinner. Bart Johnson and his son Greg hosted the dinner on their farm, Belridge Holsteins, a farm that has been in their family for three generations. I would also like to acknowledge the president of York Region Holstein Club, Dan O'Hara, for his hard work with the club. Lastly, I would like to congratulate the winner of the cattle judging contest, Brooke Thompson, who most accurately critiqued the cattle and scored closest to the professional judges' scores.

I would like to thank the York Region Holstein Club for their hard work in advocating for dairy farmers in Ontario, and I look forward to attending next year's and future Twilight Dinners.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Paul Miller: Once again, I've tabled my "protecting child performers" private member's bill. It's now Bill 17 and is substantially the same as Bill 71, to which all parties agreed—that is, until the former House leaders decided to play silly, harmful political games with my efforts to expedite protection for child performers.

Child performers work legally in Ontario but have no legal protection. The government leaves their workplace protection to contract negotiations. Child safety at any level and in any form should never be the subject of negotiations. Our employment standards laws need to be updated immediately to enhance protection for this very vulnerable group of workers.

My bill comes before the House for second reading debate quite soon after the Legislature returns from the summer recess. I encourage all MPPs to act with their hearts, their minds and their basic humanity and concern for these vulnerable, very young workers. Let's stand to-

gether and expedite passage of Bill 17 to finally provide legal protection to all child performers.

CANADIAN SIKH ASSOCIATION

Ms. Harinder Malhi: It is commonly said that Sikh values are the same as Canadian values. The Sikh community has a long history here in Canada, including building a vibrant and recognizable community right here in Ontario.

Sikh Canadians share the same aspirations of success, the same hopes for happiness and the same ambition to build a better province that serves as a model of tolerance and multiculturalism.

One organization that embodies and actively promotes this within the Sikh community is the Canadian Sikh Association. Since 2009, the CSA has advocated for the rights of Sikhs right here in Ontario and in Canada while promoting civic engagement and championing issues of human rights and social justice. This organization has been a strong advocate for equality and multiculturalism, the promotion of gender equality, religious freedom and cross-cultural friendship.

As a newly elected member at Queen's Park, I am proud to work with them in ensuring equality for all people.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the CSA for their efforts that have paved the way for equality for all people, and for placing the ideals of religious freedom at the forefront of political dialogue here in Ontario.

Today, members of the Canadian Sikh Association are visiting Queen's Park. I encourage all MPPs to visit their reception this afternoon at 5 p.m. in room 230.

ONTERA

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Residents across northeastern Ontario and in my riding of Nipissing are speaking in one voice in opposition to the government's planned sale of Ontera, which will result in 67 workers losing their jobs, many in my home riding of Nipissing.

There is growing concern that this sale may, in fact, contravene federal competition rules. North Bay city council passed a motion last Monday directing the mayor's office to file a complaint with the federal Competition Bureau, as well as the CRTC, requesting an investigation. Their motion stated that the sale "will create a monopoly of telecommunications services in portions of northeastern Ontario," and "a lack of competition will have a long-term impact" on the level and cost of telecom services as well as on the development of northeastern Ontario. Nipissing-Timiskaming MP Jay Aspin has now also filed a formal complaint with the federal Competition Bureau.

The Auditor General has told you, and I have said repeatedly in this Legislature, that this sale won't save Ontario taxpayers any money, which was the impetus to put them for sale. In fact, according to the auditor, it will cost you and the taxpayers between \$50 million and \$70

million. So you're cutting jobs and driving up the deficit at the same time.

We're asking you, please do the right thing and halt this sale.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Yesterday I listened with great interest to the exchange made by two Liberal MPPs in question period about winter highway maintenance and what is being done by this government to improve winter highway safety.

This is a very important issue to people in my riding of Kenora-Rainy River, where last winter the conditions were so bad that we had a number of motor vehicle collisions, including a 14-transport pileup; treacherous roads; what seemed to be a record number of highway closures; and some highways that were virtually impassable until the snow melted. On many occasions, the region came to a standstill.

Living in the North, we aren't strangers to winter weather. We expect snow to fall and to have to exercise caution when driving during the winter months. That is reasonable. But what isn't reasonable are the conditions we were confronted with last winter. People in Kenora-Rainy River told me they have never seen a winter like that before and they're already worried about this upcoming winter. They're looking to this government to make changes now, in advance of next winter, so they can rest easy knowing they can safely travel our roads. They don't want to hear the compliments and accolades exchanged in question period yesterday or a regurgitation of the ineffective assurances they heard last winter.

I'm calling on this government to uphold the will of this Legislature and immediately strike an all-party committee to evaluate the root causes of the poor maintenance we received and to develop a comprehensive solution so that we never have to endure another treacherous winter like the one we just did.

NEWMARKET JAZZ FESTIVAL

Mr. Chris Ballard: The August long weekend will soon be upon us and with it the desire of many families and music lovers to find something unique to do. With that in mind, I invite everyone to this year's Newmarket Jazz+ Festival to enjoy great music, fantastic family events and the ambience, shopping and dining experience of Newmarket's quaint, heritage downtown.

The Newmarket Jazz Festival runs August 1 to 4. Featured musicians include Newmarket's Justin Hines, Aurora's Stacey Kaniuk, Jackie and Kim Richardson, George Olliver, the Sultans of String, Juice, Rob Tardik, and George and Alex St. Kitts, to name just a few.

Enjoy the long weekend at our Riverwalk Commons, with music of all styles, visual artists, thespians, circus entertainers, the creative kids' zone, film screenings, music workshops and much more.

Speaker, this is just a small taste of what will be happening August 1 to 4 in Newmarket. All of this for \$5; children under 12 are free.

Interjection: Five bucks?

Mr. Chris Ballard: Five bucks, exactly.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to highlight a volunteer-led organization in my riding of Newmarket that gives back so magnificently to the community.

I'm proud to live in a province where so many volunteers in all areas give freely of their time and talent to make our towns and cities great places to live.

On the long weekend, the Newmarket Jazz Festival awaits with something for everyone.

1510

PROVINCIAL ELECTION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to share some serious concerns residents in Dufferin–Caledon have regarding their ability to vote in last month's provincial election. As many of you know, Elections Ontario set up a website called Where Do I Vote?, which was designed to direct voters to their respective polling locations on June 12. The problem is that, in the case of voters in Dufferin–Caledon, the website was sending people to the wrong polling locations, and even in some cases to the wrong riding.

Indeed, a reporter at one of our local papers used the site to find the voting location nearest to the newspaper's office in Caledon and was directed to vote in Simcoe–Grey. In addition, my campaign received numerous complaints from voters who were frustrated because they had been directed by Elections Ontario's website to the wrong areas and were unsure where they were supposed to vote.

This was obviously a serious problem. It appears that the problem was due to the fact that Canada Post changed a number of postal codes in rural Dufferin–Caledon. However, this change started to take place almost two years ago, and even earlier in Caledon.

Voters expect and deserve to have upfront and clear information from Elections Ontario. Mistakes like this are totally unacceptable when it comes to something as sacred as a citizen's right to vote.

I will be writing the Chief Electoral Officer on the matter, and I'm eager to hear the explanation behind the error, as well as what is being done to make sure that it doesn't happen again. I know many Dufferin–Caledon voters are looking for answers, and I am hopeful that we will receive them.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Recently in my unique riding of Cambridge, the city held a public meeting to unveil its plans to adaptively reuse a historically significant building. Originally the Galt post office, the beautiful two-and-a-half-storey stone building was designed by Thomas Fuller and constructed in 1885.

As chief Dominion architect, Fuller helped in the design of every major federal building from 1881 to 1896. The post office was designated under the Ontario Heritage Act and was named as a national historic site in 1982.

Empty for several years, its future was in jeopardy until the city bought it to repurpose it into a modern community library and resource centre, including a teen-managed space, a reading area, an outdoor terrace overlooking the Grand River, a restaurant, a family discovery centre, digital learning labs and a workshop. Architects proposed a conceptual design featuring glassed additions with panoramic views of the city and a glass addition that would cantilever over the Grand River.

The greenest building is the one that's already standing. Almost 30% of our landfill sites are made up of demolished building materials. The city of Cambridge has shown leadership in protecting our valuable heritage assets in Ontario by its plans for adaptive reuse of a building that is very valued by the residents in my riding of Cambridge.

AGINCOURT JUNIOR PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise today in the House to recognize a great institution in my riding of Scarborough–Agin-court. Located on Lockie Avenue, near Midland and Sheppard Avenues, Agincourt Junior Public School is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

When the school first opened in 1914, it consisted of four classrooms from grade 1 to grade 12 and was the first public school built in Scarborough. This was followed by Agincourt Collegiate Institute in 1915.

Today, Agincourt Junior Public School is an architectural landmark. With additions over the years, this school now has eight classrooms for junior kindergarten to grade 6 and a library resource centre. As a historical building, Agincourt Junior Public School has a unique authenticity, while still serving the needs of over 200 students and families in Scarborough–Agin-court.

On Saturday, September 20, at 10 a.m., students, alumni, teachers, parents and residents of Scarborough–Agin-court will be celebrating Agincourt Junior Public School's 100th anniversary. I look forward to joining them in celebrating the past 100 years, and I am confident that Agincourt Junior Public School will continue to provide quality public education in the next 100 years.

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

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Ms. Soo Wong: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 14, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 14, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MAGNA CARTA DAY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE JOUR DE LA GRANDE CHARTE

Mrs. Munro moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to proclaim Magna Carta Day / Projet de loi 23, Loi proclamant le Jour de la Grande Charte.

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.

Mrs. Julia Munro: The Magna Carta is a revolutionary document that influenced the English system of common law and was a precursor in the development of England's and, later, Canada's constitutional monarchies.

Some 800 years ago, King John affixed his seal to the Magna Carta, which placed limits on the monarch's power to overrule the law and protected the rights of ordinary people.

The document introduced key principles that hold true in democratic societies today, including equal justice for everyone, freedom from unlawful detention, the right to a trial by jury and rights for women.

It is important for the Magna Carta to be honoured and remembered as a document that changed the course of history. The fundamental traditions of equality and freedom that characterize our democratic society, particularly that nobody—not even the crown—is above the law, originated in this important document.

PROHIBITING DRIVING WITH UNLAWFUL HANDGUNS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'INTERDICTION DE LA CONDUITE AVEC DES ARMES DE POING ILLÉGALES DANS LE VÉHICULE

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 24, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Civil Remedies Act, 2001 to promote public safety by prohibiting driving in a motor vehicle with an unlawfully possessed handgun / Projet de loi 24, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi de 2001 sur les recours civils afin de promouvoir la sécurité publique et d'interdire la conduite sur la voie publique d'un véhicule automobile avec une arme de poing dont la possession est illégale.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: As it's now constituted, it is almost impossible for the police to charge anyone who is found to have an unlawful handgun in their possession, because of the complexity and the weakness of the federal Criminal Code. Therefore, this would empower the police to impound the motor vehicle and suspend the driver's licence of an individual who has an unlawful handgun in their possession, in their car. Therefore, that car would be taken off the road, as we have done with the Civil Remedies Act, which allowed for police officers to take stunt drivers off the road. They get their car impounded. They get their driver's licence taken away.

I think anybody driving with a loaded unlawful handgun in this province should be off the road. That's what this bill is about, Mr. Speaker.

AUDITOR GENERAL AMENDMENT ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL

Mr. Norm Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 25, An Act to amend the Auditor General Act / Projet de loi 25, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le vérificateur général.

1520

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 from Parry Sound–Muskoka for a short statement?

Mr. Norm Miller: This bill amends the Auditor General Act to permit the Auditor General to conduct special audits of public contractors. A public contractor includes any body or entity that delivers programs or services on behalf of the crown and that receives payment or finan-

cial assistance from the crown or another entity, or is empowered by the crown to collect fees for its services.

And, Mr. Speaker, I believe this will allow the auditor to more fully do her job.

PETITIONS

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Laurie Scott: Youth mental health in our schools and communities:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas youth mental health in the province of Ontario is rising at an alarming rate. According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 70% of mental health problems and illnesses have their onset during childhood or adolescence. Research shows that early identification leads to improved outcomes;

“Whereas, pursuant to the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, studies suggest 15% to 21% of children and youth, approximately 467,000 to 654,000 children and youth in Ontario, have at least one mental health disorder. The consequences can affect children and youth now and into adulthood, their families/caregivers, schools, communities, employers and the province as a whole;

“Whereas the 2010 Ontario report by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, entitled *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*, made specific recommendations that would address the growing mental health and addiction crisis among youth in the province, but no further concrete steps have been taken;

“Whereas waiting lists for help are at a crisis level and our schools do not have the resources to deal with the growing incidents of bullying, addiction, anxiety, depression and suicide. Education and awareness is critical to remove the stigma;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to prioritize funding and resources for our schools and communities to help our youth with mental health and addiction illnesses and the resulting consequences.”

It’s signed by many people from my riding.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from Mrs. Theresa Nicholas from Naughton, in my riding. 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 support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask David to bring it to the Clerk.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly which reads as follows:

“Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

“Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

“Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

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

“That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of allocated funds in the” Ontario “budget, and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner.”

I am pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Nardien, who is from the proud community of Mississauga–Streetsville, to carry it for me on this, probably her last week with us in the Legislative Assembly—and it’s been good to have her.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “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.”

Speaker, I sign my name to this and hand it to page Ayesha.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition from the people across Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

“Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

“Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

“Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

“Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and is only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

“Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

“Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

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

“To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research.”

Speaker, I affix my name to this petition and send it with Matthew to the Clerk.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of the Credit Unions of Ontario and my good friends at the Motor City Community Credit Union. It reads as follows:

“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 ...

“—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.”

Speaker, I agree with this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to page Lavanya to bring up to the Clerk.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

1530

“Whereas the province of Ontario is the only province in Canada that does not allow the provincial Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities; and

“Whereas the people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to address their issues;

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

“To grant the Ombudsman of Ontario the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities.”

I'll sign my name and give this to page Josée.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from the people of Peterborough, and 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;

“We, the undersigned, 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 fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Matthew to bring it to the Clerk.

CREDIT UNIONS

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed 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 support the petition, and I give my petition to page Nardien.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Minister of Energy Bob Chiarelli have publicly stated that there will be no time extensions for large-scale FIT contracts in Ontario, and the Ontario Power Authority CEO, Colin Andersen, has stated the authority is expecting developers to meet contract commitments; and

“Whereas the Premier, minister and the power authority must recognize that damage to our rural area from being under continuing threat by industrial wind turbine developers for three years is serious and unacceptable; and

“Whereas the FIT contracts for the Sumac Ridge, Snowy Ridge, Settlers Landing and Stoneboat projects—all on or near the Oak Ridges Moraine and in the former Manvers township in the city of Kawartha Lakes—have already been extended for one year or longer;

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

“That the government of Ontario, the Minister of Energy the Honourable Bob Chiarelli, and the Ontario

Power Authority not issue any further time extensions for FIT contracts and, in particular, for the Sumac Ridge, Snowy Ridge, Settlers Landing and Stoneboat projects—before or after expiry of such contracts. We are advised, and we believe, that the ‘force majeure’ clause in the FIT contracts is completely inapplicable to these projects; accordingly, we respectfully further request the Legislature to instruct the Minister of Energy to adhere to his assurance that extensions will no longer be granted to wind project proponents who have no contractual right to such an extension and who fail to meet their contractual commitments.”

It’s signed by people from Kawartha Lakes and Cavan, and I’ll hand it to page Stephanie.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, a petition signed by people right across this great province:

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

“Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

“Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and is only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

“Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

“Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

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

“To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to Brendan to bring up to the Clerk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for petitions is over.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING OPPORTUNITY AND SECURING OUR FUTURE ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2014

LOI DE 2014 OUVRANT DES PERSPECTIVES ET ASSURANT NOTRE AVENIR (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Naqvi, on behalf of Mr. Sousa, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 14, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I'm not going to talk for too long. I just want to say that I will be sharing my time with the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, the member from York South–Weston.

I'm very happy and excited to see that we are starting third reading on the budget bill. As I and many members from the government side had the opportunity to say, this is a very important piece of legislation, implementing our government's budget, in making sure that we are investing in our communities, investing in our people; ensuring that we're investing in much-needed transit and transportation infrastructure across the province, in all our communities, so that people and goods can move from one place to another; and also focusing on retirement income security for those Ontarians who do not have workplace pensions, something that I've heard in my community of Ottawa Centre quite often.

I'm very happy to see that this bill is up for third reading debate. I really hope that all members of this House will be voting in support of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from York South–Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am very pleased to rise today for the third reading of Bill 14, the Building Opportunity and Securing Our Future Act. The bill was thoroughly reviewed, clause by clause, by the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs yesterday, and I want to thank my fellow committee members for the detailed attention to the proposed amendments. I would also like to thank the many organizations that took part in the discussion and shared their valuable input.

Mr. Speaker, I will use this time to again highlight how this bill would support a brighter, stronger future for the people of this province. The Building Opportunity and Securing Our Future Act is our government's plan to build on the strengths of Ontarians to help everyone achieve their best so that together we can help grow our economy. We would do this by investing in people, building modern infrastructure, and supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate.

Our plan would invest in transportation infrastructure so that goods and people can get where they need to go.

Our plan would help give people greater security in retirement, especially the middle class; because we know that we must do more to ensure that people have adequate savings in their retirement years.

1540

Our plan would continue to focus on managing responsibly, because we know that making every dollar count will create a more efficient government. We remain firmly committed to balancing the budget by 2017-18.

Mr. Speaker, I will take a moment to remind the House of some of the important initiatives included in this bill. A notable change from the previous budget bill includes amendments to the Gasoline Tax Act which would increase the tax rate on aviation fuel by one cent per litre each year for four years, beginning on September 1, 2014. The revenue generated by this change would be dedicated to public transit, transportation infrastructure and other priority infrastructure projects across the province.

This bill also includes amendments to the Legislative Assembly Act which would continue the MPP pay freeze from April 1, 2014, until the budget is balanced.

Mr. Speaker, this bill proposes legislative changes to foster a fair society. This includes amendments to create the administrative child support calculation service that would help parents determine child support through a new online service without going to court.

Our 10-year plan will help create a stronger Ontario. It will build opportunities by investing in Ontario's strength, and that is its people. Our new vision for education would continue investments in early learning. Through additional funding of \$33.6 million over the next three years, we would support the ongoing operation and modernization of the child care system. Our plan would see the implementation of full-day kindergarten by September of this year, which means that full-day kindergarten would be available to approximately 265,000 children across the province, saving families up to \$6,500 a year per child on child care costs, and most importantly, giving Ontario's youngest learners the best start to their education.

Mr. Speaker, I've said this before: Ontario remains among the top jurisdictions in North America for talent, training and skills development. We plan on making sure that every eligible student can pursue their education regardless of their financial circumstance. That is why the 30% Off Ontario Tuition grant would continue to support up to 260,000 students through their studies.

And we won't stop there. We will invest in our youth who have shouldered the brunt of job losses in the last recession. We plan to continue to help young people gain work experience and find jobs by extending the youth jobs strategy. We will focus on the services that are important to the people of Ontario by keeping education and health care strong. Our plan would see more than \$750 million in additional funding by 2016-17 in more home and community care services, making sure that our health

care system puts patients first and responds to their needs.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is a great place to live, to work and to do business, in part, because of our investments in hospitals, schools and transportation infrastructure, and we plan to continue building Ontario up to help stimulate the economy, create jobs, and increase prosperity and fairness for Ontarians.

Our planned infrastructure investments would support more than 110,000 jobs, on average, each year in construction and related industries. By making strategic investments in roads, bridges and public transit, we will help manage congestion and travel times for commuters. We will move Ontario forward through new funding for investment in transportation infrastructure. Our plan would make nearly \$29 billion available for investment over the next 10 years for public transit, transportation infrastructure and other priority infrastructure across the province.

The greater Toronto and Hamilton area, Mr. Speaker, would receive \$15 billion, and other regions of Ontario would receive nearly \$14 billion. In the GTHA, proceeds from the fund would be invested in public transit priorities to address congestion, and outside the GTHA, the dedicated fund would be used for important infrastructure projects. This includes supporting local and regional transit, roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure.

Our plan would invest \$2.5 billion over the course of this year for highway rehabilitation and expansion projects across the province. This will create jobs and help move goods to market faster. We also plan to support municipal roads and bridges through a new, permanent \$100-million fund.

We are committed to investing up to \$1 billion towards infrastructure development in the Ring of Fire, creating thousands of jobs in northern Ontario and providing more opportunities for aboriginal communities.

We will continue to build strong public services. Through an investment of \$700 million over the next decade, we will support critical repairs in hospitals so that patients can receive high-quality health care.

We plan to continue to fund repairs in the post-secondary sector with additional funding of approximately \$500 million over the next 10 years. Our plan would improve school conditions, support safe and healthy learning, and modernize classrooms.

Ontario is an international hub for business and has been ranked as Canada's most competitive province, but we have to build Ontario even stronger. We know that productivity is a key driver of economic growth and prosperity, and we know that a key challenge for Ontario and for countries around the world will be raising productivity growth in the future. That is why our plan is focused on creating business investments, developing a culture of innovation and bringing high-quality jobs to Ontario.

We are going global. Ontario's trade offices around the world are facilitating investments, and we will expand our growing global trade strategy to promote On-

tario companies' quality goods and services. This will help exporters find new markets that connect foreign buyers with potential Ontario exporters. It will help small and medium-sized businesses grow and create jobs.

The new 10-year, \$2.5-billion Jobs and Prosperity Fund would help secure business investments to support growth and create good jobs at home.

A dedicated food-processing stream under the Jobs and Prosperity Fund would help Ontario's farmers, through an investment of \$40 million annually, to enhance productivity and competitiveness and expand market reach throughout Ontario and abroad.

We are committed to helping Ontario's innovators and entrepreneurs bring their discoveries to market. Through the Ontario Research Fund, we plan on dedicating \$250 million over the next three years to invest in leading-edge research infrastructure. These investments will help sustain Ontario's long-term prosperity by supporting research that will create the technologies and well-paid jobs of the future.

We are also providing \$25 million in funding over the next five years to support the Institute for Quantum Computing at the University of Waterloo, which will position Ontario at the forefront of the emerging field of quantum computing.

We are proud to invest in the people of this province, in modern infrastructure, and to develop a competitive business climate. We want to make sure that our economy draws on everyone's capabilities.

After raising the minimum wage to \$11 as of June 1, 2014, we plan on tying it to inflation to provide fairness to low-income workers and predictability for businesses.

Mr. Speaker, we increased the annual Ontario Child Benefit per child to \$1,310, and our plan is to index it to inflation to safeguard the purchasing power—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's pretty loud, when your member is speaking, if there are four sidebars going on. I'd like to pay attention to what she's saying; maybe you would too. Thank you.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, our plan is to index the Ontario Child Benefit to inflation to safeguard the purchasing power for people. By investing in the Ontario Child Benefit, we will improve the quality of life of low-to-moderate income families and enhance the incomes of half a million families.

1550

Mr. Speaker, we believe in a society where everyone has the opportunity to reach their potential. That is why we are proposing a new investment of \$485 million over the next three years to support adults with developmental disabilities. This would mean more funding to help individuals in their communities and expanded planning to help individuals transition to adulthood, find employment and achieve greater independence. We would support workers who serve Ontario's most vulnerable by investing \$200 million over three years for front-line workers in the developmental services sector, supporting

salaries and wages as well as the overall transformation and modernization of the sector.

We are committed to managing responsibly. We know that across-the-board cuts hurt public services like health care and education. Through a careful review of spending, we will be able to transform public services to increase efficiencies and improve outcomes. The 2013-14 deficit is estimated to be \$11.3 billion, an improvement of \$0.4 billion compared to the 2013 budget forecast. We will continue to make important decisions to root out waste, to focus on priorities and make every dollar count.

We have a plan to move forward with maximizing and unlocking the full value of provincial assets, while maintaining provincial ownership of core government assets remains a priority. Some assets are no longer critical or necessary for delivering public services and our plan is to explore opportunities to maximize and unlock the value from real estate, as well as improve efficiencies and enhance performance and revenue of crown corporations, like the Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. We will do this in a responsible manner. We owe it to Ontarians to extract more value for them as taxpayers.

Each and every year, the share of federal revenue raised in Ontario is higher than the share of federal spending in Ontario. This results in an \$11-billion gap, according to most recently available figures. This money could be used in Ontario to fund more hospitals, more nurses, or public transit, but instead, it is redistributed to other regions of Canada to subsidize programs and services that Ontarians themselves may not enjoy. In fact, since 2006, the federal government has taken more than 110 unilateral actions that have hurt people and businesses across Ontario and undermined the province's fiscal plan. That's why our 2014 budget calls on the federal government to be a fair and collaborative partner.

Our plan includes investments in retirement income security, and we plan to invest more than \$130 billion in public infrastructure over the next 10 years. This is nearly five times more per capita than the federal government plans to invest over the same time period. As I mentioned before, we have also committed \$1 billion for infrastructure in the Ring of Fire. That's why we are calling on the federal government to work with us in these areas so that together we can build a more prosperous Ontario in a more prosperous Canada.

Our plan also includes a strategy to enhance retirement savings because we know that most people don't have a workplace pension plan. In many cases, voluntary savings are inadequate, and people are living longer, fortunately. That's why we are moving forward with our proposed mandatory pension plan. The Ontario Retirement Pension Plan would be the first of its kind in Canada and would build on the strengths of the CPP. It would target those most at risk of under-saving, particularly middle-income earners without a workplace pension plan, to help working Ontario families build a more secure retirement future. It would provide a predictable stream of income in retirement by pooling longevity and

investment risk and indexing benefits to inflation. It would require equal contributions to be shared between employers and employees, and it would aim to provide a replacement rate of 15% of an individual's earnings, up to a maximum annual earnings threshold of \$90,000. We would introduce the ORPP in 2017, to coincide with the expected reductions in employment insurance premiums.

Our 2014 budget is our plan for building opportunity and securing our future. It is our plan for a strong Ontario, with more jobs and more opportunity across the province. Our plan, as I've mentioned, includes investing in people, building modern infrastructure, and supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate.

We know that at times it will not be easy. We know that our plan is ambitious and forward-looking. But we are determined to work together with all Ontarians to make the right investments in our future and to remain on our path to balance the budget by 2017-18. I call on all members of this House to support our plan so we can work together to build a stronger future for all Ontarians.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to comment on the member from York South-Weston's comments, which are on Bill 14, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts, for those just tuning in at home.

There's a fair bit in the budget. There were some highlights made. I think the biggest thing overall that you want to bring people back to is the fact of our record debt and deficit and that the third-largest budget item is just servicing the interest payments on that. That's over \$11 billion, I think, close to \$12 billion, a year. It's the third-largest budget item: health care, education, and then paying the interest on the money that the Liberal government has borrowed on behalf of the people of Ontario.

That is the biggest threat to our front-line health care, education and social programs that we all agree need to be invested in. We hear from our communities all the time. CUPE was protesting yesterday in front of Frost Manor, a long-term-care home in Lindsay, about the cut-backs that they are going to have to caregivers to provide care to our elderly and frail population. That's not a competent government. When you are that deep in debt and deficit, that threatens the province's success. That doesn't encourage businesses to come and set up, to expand and to create the jobs that we all desperately need in the province of Ontario.

I will have time to speak a little bit more later on the pension plan, because I do want to touch on that and what I heard in my riding during the election.

I spoke earlier today about the aviation tax. That's a huge issue that the member from York South-Weston brought up in her comments. We heard from the committee this week, and I just want to quickly say that it is the worst thing that can happen for the aviation industry. Again, I'll go further into that when I have more time.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's truly an honour to be able to once again stand in this House and speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane, and to respond particularly to the member from York South–Weston regarding this budget.

I'd like to focus on a couple of her comments regarding the potential sale of assets, that these assets would no longer be core or necessary. She also said that this will be done in a responsible manner. That's where we have a problem, because it's nice to say those words, but they don't have much of a track record when it actually comes to disposing of assets—

Interjection: Or responsibility.

Mr. John Vanthof: Or responsibility. And it's happening as we speak with the sale of Ontera, or should I say the giveaway, the fire sale, of Ontera? With the whole ONTC divestment, there was no plan there; there was no overall plan. They didn't even look at the numbers before they announced it, and we're still going down the same road.

A lot of people don't understand. We say "Ontera" and they say, "What's that?" But what's happening with the sale of Ontera is that we're losing jobs. Not only that; we're losing competition in northern Ontario. We're going to be down to one provider. They really don't care. If service isn't really up to standard, you can't really switch to somebody else because there is nobody else to switch to. That's something that isn't being talked about.

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When they talk about, "We're going to take a responsible look at disposing of assets," as we stand here and as we speak right now, it's not happening.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to support Bill 14, the government bill with respect to the 2014-15 budget.

Mr. Speaker, I'm really pleased that my colleague from York South–Weston, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, spoke about the infrastructure funding and the whole issue about investing in transportation.

As the member from Scarborough–Agincourt, I know of the importance of reducing the congestion here in the city of Toronto. Our government has committed over \$100 billion since 2003, investing in hospitals, schools and transportation infrastructure. This proposed budget for 2014-15 will continue to invest in infrastructure that means so much to Ontarians.

In my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, right now, as we speak, we're improving the Highway 401 exchange with Victoria Park exit—and this second funding that we are investing in roads and bridges and other critical infrastructure across Ontario.

I dare say that no one here in the chamber would say that they don't want this kind of infrastructure. Every day, when we're sitting in the chamber, I hear every member of this House ask for some kind of infrastructure

capital project. So to say that they're not interested—they say they're concerned about the deficit. All of us should be concerned about the deficit, but at the same time, Ontarians spoke on June 12. They expect our government as well as all members of this chamber to be working together to ensure that infrastructure projects are maintained and improved. At the end of the day, they expect us to deliver what was spoken during the election, but more importantly, what we have committed to.

I'm very pleased to see my colleague the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance talk about this.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak for two minutes on this. I want to pick up from where the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane left off.

Today, I read a member's statement a little earlier that talked about the city of North Bay and the city council lobbying hard to save Ontera from being part of the fire sale. I also talked about our federal member of Parliament, Jay Aspin, who has written to the Competition Bureau to try to stop this on the technical merits.

Look, the whole concept of this originally was a budget item. It was to save \$265 million. That's how this whole Ontario Northland sale started. Very quickly, we all lined up to say, "No, you won't have any savings. You won't find a savings of \$265 million."

I don't think the government fully understood the divestiture of Ontario Northland and what it meant in terms of severances. Actually, in the Auditor General's report, she acknowledged that the government truly had absolutely no idea—they did not understand the severance criteria—and as a result, they would not save \$265 million. It would, in fact, cost \$820 million to sell all of Ontario Northland. That's from the Auditor General's report that we, the PCs and the NDP—have successfully fought to bring the Auditor General. She brought that number out, and now that it's known, Speaker, you would think that they would pull back entirely from the fire sale of Ontario Northland. Instead, they're bent on selling this one division, even though according to the Auditor General's numbers, if we leaf through her report, it's going to cost the taxpayers between \$50 million and \$70 million to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from York South–Weston has two minutes.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I want to thank my colleagues, the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, the member from Scarborough–Agincourt and the member from Nipissing, for their comments.

I think it is important to manage responsibly, and that's exactly what we intend to do. We want to maintain, I said, provincial ownership of all core government assets. That remains a priority.

It is also important to explore opportunities that may or may not be there, but we owe it to Ontarians, the people who we have the honour to represent, to make

sure that we are reviewing these investments that we are making as a province and managing every dollar responsibly. We have to learn from our mistakes; there's always a way to do things better, and we intend to be very responsible going forward.

I think it's very important that we also speak about the investments that this government plans to make in infrastructure. The member for Scarborough–Agincourt was talking about the investments in her riding. I know that even in my riding of York South–Weston right now, the building of the Eglinton Crosstown is going full speed. That's very important not only to the residents of my riding, but across the city of Toronto it's important to many people. It means getting to work faster. It means more productivity for even small businesses.

Then the other big infrastructure project in my riding is the GO Georgetown–Kitchener line and the UP Express to the airport. All-day, two-way GO is very important to many people in this province, and electrification is important to the ridings in Toronto.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's always exciting to stand, look at the clock and see that I have an entire hour. Settle in, everybody, and enjoy the next hour-long speech. I know how excited you are.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm thrilled with that. It always is an honour.

It truly is an honour to rise in this Legislature to speak, Speaker. Today, I am going to talk about components of the budget. I'm going to walk us all through many of the components. I'd like to start with one of the Liberals' own consultants, who was hired more than two years ago. I'm going to read some exact quotes from Don Drummond to kick this all off.

Don Drummond outlined some big-ticket reforms that he said would be “an important turning point in the province's history.” These are all quotes now, so I won't repeat the word “quote” every time. He called for a “sharp degree of fiscal restraint.” He said, “The government must take daring fiscal action early,” and we must “act swiftly and boldly.” To balance the budget will “require tough decisions,” and “the treatment may be difficult.” “Most of the burden ... must fall on spending.” He called for “a wrenching reduction from the path that spending is now on.”

Speaker, here we are, more than two years later, and the Liberals are now implementing an expenditure review to study whether to take any of those urgent actions of two years ago that were recommended by their own economist.

That's how we started on this long path. We've learned a few things along the way, though. We continue to hear—and the member who spoke earlier repeated what the Premier has said and what the finance minister has said: that they are on track to balance the budget by 2017-18. Well, let me bring some actual facts to the floor of this Legislature.

Again, if we look at the government's own documents—these are documents from the Ministry of Finance that were delivered to this Liberal government. At the time, it was called Confidential Advice to Cabinet, and it was alarmingly opposite to what the government claims.

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If you look in the budget of last year, Speaker, there's a quote that says that “the government is on track to meet the steadily declining deficit targets outlined in the 2012 budget” and achieve a surplus in 2017-18. This is the government's discussion of what they're telling the people. This is printed.

In the document from the Ministry of Finance, it's the opposite. These are the documents we were never supposed to see. This is the confidential advice, and it says, for 2014-15 and 2015-16, the government is “not on track to meet” the budget deficits. This is the Ministry of Finance internal documents, confidential advice to the Premier of Ontario when Kathleen Wynne took over the Liberal government. She asked for a report on the status and she—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Could the member from Ajax–Pickering and the ministers—they've got their little devices out. You might want to go in the backroom if you want to converse through your devices. Thank you. You've been there a long time. I'm not quite sure if you were going to be part of the woodwork there, you've been there so long. I think we could take that outside. Thank you so much.

I'll remind the minister from northern affairs that when he crosses the floor in front of the Speaker, he should acknowledge the Chair. Thanks so much.

Continue.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. As I was suggesting—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Now you're going to miss the rest of this presentation, and I'm sorry. I'll send it over to you.

These are the confidential documents that the Premier asked for from her Ministry of Finance, and received, that said, “You are not on track to meet the budget,” yet they went out and told the world, the taxpayers and this Legislature that they were indeed on track.

So, Speaker, I wanted to bring that to the floor of this Legislature because we continue to hear one thing from the government in terms of the 2014 budget, which is the same as we heard in the 2013 budget, which was contrary to the actual facts from their own Ministry of Finance that were to be kept from us at one point.

I wanted to continue on this theme for a moment, Speaker, of the fact that we don't actually have all the facts. This is actually a very disturbing scenario that's playing out right now. The real numbers have not been presented to us for almost a year now—certainly more than three quarters of a year.

Last October, Finance Minister Charles Sousa failed to deliver the long-range assessment of Ontario's fiscal environment as he was obligated to do under the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act. He was supposed to turn over the numbers but never did. Here's what I asked him. This is a quote from Hansard. Here's what I asked him during question period last October, only a few days after the law said he had to turn over these numbers: "Minister, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act ... states, 'Within two years after each provincial election, the minister shall release a' long-term 'assessment of Ontario's fiscal environment.' Minister, you're two weeks late. When will you be releasing this assessment that you were legally required to release"

So the minister responded that there's a fall economic statement coming out and that first-quarter results—we will be hearing of it in the fall economic statement. Basically, he said, "Look, there's a fall economic statement coming out. You'll get it then." When the fall economic statement did come out, there were no medium-term outlook numbers included. In addition, individual ministry expense numbers were not listed for 2016-17, just the total program spending which magically falls within this balanced budget; no numbers to back it up.

Then, in February, the minister announced he would not be presenting the third-quarter results on February 15. People, this is also something that's required under the law, under the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act. They've been keeping the statistics from us because all of these figures would back up what their own Ministry of Finance said, that they're not on track to balance the budget.

I wanted to start off by at least talking about the fact that when they tell us something—we have been in a minority government; we've been able to get the truth because in the committees where our two opposition parties held a majority, we were able to ask for these documents, vote on them and be eventually awarded the documents.

Sadly, those days of actually seeing the facts are long gone now. For the next four years, in a majority government, we have no way any further to get the kinds of documents that we were able to get in the last two and a half years, which literally blew the lid off the gas plant scandal, which got us to the Ornge scandal facts, which showed us they're not on track to balance and a myriad of other details—Ontario Northland, which we spoke about earlier: the fact that at the time, when they were telling us one thing, a savings of \$265 million, the documents showed us it was actually going to cost \$790 million, something they never admitted to until they were outed with these documents, and finally the Auditor General brought the real number, and by that time it had grown to \$820 million.

Those days are over. I just have to say that: Those days of getting to the bottom of these stories and getting to the facts, they're over. But we will continue to dig, and dig deep, for everything. They say one thing, but they do another.

Here's a great example, Speaker: In the budget, they speak about the Ring of Fire. On May 25, our Premier was in Thunder Bay and she gave a great announcement. I want you to know that I was very pleased when I heard that announcement.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Don't worry; it didn't last long.

It said, "We will commit \$1 billion, with or without federal government involvement, towards transportation infrastructure that will help make the Ring of Fire a reality." Sadly, that joy in northern Ontario did not last long because, as we've now seen on page 89 of the budget—let me read you what it says: "The province is willing to commit up to \$1 billion towards infrastructure development, contingent on matching investment by the federal government." So they've backed down from their first statement, "with or without." It's a bold statement during a campaign. We always hear these things during the campaign: "This is what we promise." This is the reality; page 89 tells the truth.

Sadly, we've seen very little activity in the Ring of Fire, so I want to take a few minutes and talk about the Ring of Fire, because it is one of my favourite topics, as people who are viewing know. I love to speak about the Ring of Fire. It is a place I've been to four times now. It's complicated to get there; I'll give you that. It's not an easy task to get to the Ring of Fire. It's a lot easier in the winter, by the way. It is in the Far North. I would envision that it looks today like what it must have looked like in Sudbury over a hundred years ago.

It's in the middle of nowhere; that's putting it bluntly. It's in the Far North. It's about 300 kilometres due west of Attawapiskat. If you look on the map and you look at the bottom end of Hudson Bay, James Bay, you'll see Attawapiskat, you'll see Moosonee. Look due west, about 300 kilometres, and you'll find Webequie, a beautiful First Nations community. This is just a little bit east of Webequie.

In the summer, you fly to Webequie. You get yourself down to the shore and you take a float plane from there into the Ring of Fire area. From there, you take another helicopter ride that gets you into the base camp. This is where there were almost three dozen companies who have staked claims. There were really about three that were very actively working.

In the winter, it's a lot easier to get there, as I've said. You fly directly from where you're leaving and you land right on Koper Lake. The lake has a runway that's ploughed on it. It's very exciting to do that if you've never done that. You land on the lake, and then you take the helicopter ride into the base camp.

I have to tell you, the first time I ever flew in there, I was so excited to see these blue-and-white tents, the tent city that was created. Because back in the day, between 1978 and 1992, when I owned my own company, a marketing company here in Ontario, one of my clients was Canadian Can-Tex, and they proudly make these canvas buildings that were bought by base camps up in the Ring of Fire. So as we were flying in, I could see my former

clients' products there—a big smile on my face. As we got a lot closer, as the helicopter came down we saw these mounds—just mounds—of drill rods.

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Again, in my corporate days in the 1970s and 1980s, we had about 10 clients in the mining sector, from J.S. Redpath, from mining and engineering firms, and Atlas Copco, who make drill bits. There was a company called Craig Bit, who became Kenroc and then became Atlas Copco. These were all clients, and all of these companies—there are 12 in North Bay and one in Powassan—make these drill bits. There are mounds of them stacked up there. It was so exciting to see that, because a lot of those products were made in my hometown.

As we landed and started talking to the base camp operators, and to the vice-president of Noront and people from Cliffs—Noront, that one summer, had spent about \$200 million drilling. These are drill bits that they need, that are made in my hometown. These are drill rods. This is actual drilling equipment that is made all throughout Ontario. It's great business all throughout Ontario, not just in northern Ontario. These companies had about \$200 million in business that one year.

As I said, I've been there four times. The second and third times I was there, there was very little action going on, and I said to the president of the company, "What the hang is going on here? How much are you spending on drilling this year?", considering they spent \$200 million on drilling the year before. The answer was, "Nothing. Zero." Well, the problem is that they have shareholders, and they said, "Why would we continue to spend our shareholders' money when there's no rail, there's no road, there's no way to get the products out of the Ring of Fire?" With all the time that has passed, they had run out of hope as well. I think that's the most upsetting part of it, that they've run out of hope.

Sadly for some, they've run out of time. As we know, one of the majors has now pulled out. They've now moved out of Ontario, as a matter of fact, not just out of the Ring of Fire, and not just out of Toronto, where their head office was here. They've moved out of Ontario. They sold their base camp.

They went from 125 people each—250 men and women who were working there, just at the exploration stage. This was just exploring for the minerals, never mind actually drilling when they're in production—the amount of people that they'd be. This is just exploring. They've gone now. There are about four, five or six people left now up in that whole place. It's very sad.

My fourth trip up there was the saddest—to see the torn plastic flapping in the winds of camps that have been abandoned. It was very, very sad to know that, so far in the drilling that they've done, they've determined that there is about \$60 billion worth of chromite—it's a metal that they found—along with the nickel, gold, silver, platinum and the other ores.

Chromite is the metal that is needed to make stainless steel. There is \$60 billion in chromite sitting there, Speaker, that is untapped, because there is no way in and

no way out for the ore. Again, as I have been saying to this government: Ontario Northland has been your expert in hauling ore. You own Ontario Northland. The people of Ontario own this. It's owned by the taxpayers. They're not at the table. They're not at the design stage to talk about road or rail. They're not there.

This is a lost opportunity that I am genuinely hoping that we can see be captured. It's got to happen. It's got to happen—not just for the north, but for all of Ontario. The engineering firms, the legal firms and the accounting firms all through Ontario are depending on this business.

I wanted to speak about another item in this tax-and-spend budget, and it's the tax. We held hearings on Monday here in the Legislature, and we heard from a couple of the aviation firms, who talked to us about the crushing effect that this tax increase will have. Now, it doesn't sound like much; it's only a penny, then two cents, then three cents, then four cents. It's a 148% increase. Tax on aviation fuel today in Ontario is 2.7 cents, and it's going to 6.7 cents incrementally. The aviation sector calculates this will cost about 400,000 passengers a year—292,000 to 400,000 passengers a year. It will cost several thousand jobs. Why, Speaker? Because new taxes never create jobs. It works the opposite way, people; it works the opposite way. I've never seen a tax that has created jobs.

It's going to cost more to fly out of Canada, which means this budget item is an economic development initiative for Buffalo. It's a great economic development initiative for Detroit and all other border cities where people will cross the border and fly out of the United States because it's cheaper. Why would we be doing this when other jurisdictions are eliminating the gas tax on international flights? Look at British Columbia: They got it right. Other provinces than Ontario got it right. British Columbia eliminated the gas tax on international travel, and as a result, Vancouver now has 22 new international flights bringing thousands upon thousands upon tens of thousands of people; more employees in repair, overhaul and maintenance; more hangar fees; more fuel that's sold; more business. Business is what makes it spin.

Here we are in Ontario, when other people are eliminating the gas tax, and we're adding it. "We've got a great idea: Let's have a gas tax." Why? Because they cannot balance their budget. So they look to all sources to tax, and then, of course, sadly, they continue to spend. It's the spending side of the formula that they should be working on, not the taxing side.

It's not only passenger travel that will be affected. Think how much cargo comes in and out of Ontario. All of our manufacturers that produce goods that are flown to markets around the world have a tax added to them, which means products are going to become more expensive. The products that we buy are all going to become more expensive. So while others are eliminating, we're adding.

Speaker, I visited aviation firms in the North this last weekend. I sat and had breakfast with the president of one of the companies in North Bay. I talked to you earlier

about the fact that I had my own corporation until 1992. I sold it and took over a non-profit—actually, started a non-profit and ran it for seven years—in the aerospace sector. When the federal government downsized CFB North Bay and walked away from all the hangars, I and six others bought the facility from the federal government for a dollar. We had a great opportunity, a really great business idea and a great business plan. We formed a local development corporation, and this local development corporation was tasked to bring aerospace companies to North Bay. Very quickly, I'll run to the end of the story, because it did take seven years. We ran this non-profit basically on a dollar. We had virtually no expenses, and for seven years no sales, but eventually we attracted a couple of international aerospace companies, who are being affected by this budget today.

I wrote a business plan that attracted Bombardier to move to North Bay, Ontario, where they assemble their water bomber aircraft. I also wrote the business plan that attracted Voyageur Airways to North Bay, and today they have 352 employees. These are the kinds of companies who are going to be affected by the aviation fuel tax. Any company that's in a flight training school, companies that do repair and overhaul where aircraft have to fly in, companies that are in charter or scheduled airline services, their bills are going to go up. Companies who are in the cargo business, their bills are going to go up.

I met with companies over the weekend, and I assure you, Speaker, that the two representatives who spoke in the committee hearings on Monday are accurate. They are telling us this 148% tax increase is going to cost 292,000 to 400,000 passengers, and it's going to cost us several thousand jobs in Ontario. It will likely create several thousand jobs in Buffalo, Detroit and all of the other border communities as passengers rush there to take their flights, which will mean those airlines will bring on more flights, and they'll have a greater requirement for hangar space, repair and overhaul, staffing, and airside services. This is what's going to happen, Speaker.

1630

Another area that we heard about through this budget, and a lot of talk about it—I'm going to try to shed some light on it—is the Trillium Trust. Speaker, I have said in the Legislature—in fact, this very morning I stood in the Legislature and said specifically that our party is not against asset sales, not at all. We are, however, against selling an asset, which is a one-time source of revenue, and using it for your operating expenses, using it to bury in your general revenue, which only tries to lower the deficit. It is akin to selling the furniture, or, as some would say, burning the furniture to keep warm. What happens next year when you don't have any furniture to sell or to burn? You're using one-time asset sales to put into general revenue.

I know the government says that's not what they're doing, but we've heard a lot of times what they say they're doing and what the facts are. So let me give you the facts from their own bills, Speaker. When an asset is sold, the first thing that they do is they "qualify the

asset." There are no guidelines to tell us what makes a qualified asset. They decide whether this building that they're going to sell is qualified to become part of the Trillium Trust. So if the answer is no—and, again, we don't know the criteria of what makes it qualified—then they sell the building, and they put the money in general revenue. We'll never know—we'll never know, Speaker—it'll just be lumped in with general revenue. The building is sold. The money is gone. Nothing good for next year comes out of it.

If it does qualify under these mysterious criteria, then—and here's where it gets tricky—they may require, not must require, that a portion—not all of it, but a portion—be credited to the Trillium Trust. So here we go again. Once an asset is qualified, they don't have to put it in the Trillium Trust; they may put it there. And they don't have to put it all there; they may put a portion of it. So where's the money going? Again, we'll never know. There's no auditing mechanism on each transaction.

I would attest that the bulk of it is actually going into general revenue. That's where it starts, by the way. It goes into the consolidated revenue. Then it's supposed to be pulled out to put in the trust. It may be pulled out, and it may be a portion. I contest that that's how they plan on balancing their budget. They're going to sell assets and put it in general revenue, instead of cutting back on their spending. They can only tax so much before people will revolt. They're going to bring this revenue in by selling buildings, selling assets. I believe that's what they're going to do.

Speaker, yesterday in clause-by-clause, where all three parties reviewed the budget schedules, I asked for some amendments. Our party asked for some amendments. One of them was to bring the Auditor General in so that whenever an asset is sold, the Auditor General would report to the Legislature within 90 days what was sold, whether it was a qualified or not-qualified asset and, if it was not a qualified asset, where did the money go? If it was a qualified asset, did the money get into the Trillium Trust, and, if so, how much of it went in? It's very simple. It's all about being open and transparent. It was what I would have thought a very friendly amendment—open and transparent. That's all we asked for: What are you selling? How much did you get for it? What are you doing with the money? This is not rocket science. This is a very simple request of legislators working together.

The Liberals voted against that. They voted us down. They voted against open and transparent sale of assets, plain and simple. There's no nice way to say that, Speaker. That is what they did yesterday. They agree with the loophole they have created. Again, I think that loophole was created on purpose. I think it was done with intent. I think the intention was to be able to sell assets, get that money, put it against the deficit so they can achieve this target that their own Ministry of Finance says is not going to be achieved, and we'll never be the wiser. I think that's what they have done. That's why we brought the amendments, and I would suggest that's why, on the

amendments to offer open and transparent sale of assets, they voted us down.

Speaker, I talked to you a little bit earlier about my earlier career as a business person, when I owned the corporation that handled those mining companies; I talked a little bit about my stint in non-profits, which turned out to be 11 years.

Then I ran successfully for mayor of the city of North Bay. One of the first things I did was put assets for sale. Why? Because they were non-productive. When you drive down a street and you see house, house, house, vacant lot, house, house, house—it turned out we owned 108 of those vacant lots around the city. One of the first things I did as mayor was put those lots for sale. We went to the public and told them what we were going to do. We told them that we were going to identify these lots. We advertised them publicly: street name, street address, lot by lot. In many cases, we had photos of them. In many instances, we had—well, we had big “for sale” signs. I know I hammered in some “for sale” signs myself as part of our promotion. We did this in an open and transparent way. I wanted people to know we were selling these non-productive assets. I wanted people to know that. We never did anything but tell people about them. We sold these assets. Two summers before in the city of North Bay, we had construction, sadly, of only seven houses. Two years later, we had construction of 107 houses. It was an absolutely amazing turnaround because we took these non-productive assets and put them for sale. So, philosophically, I’m not against the sale of assets.

We took that money and put it in the reserve. We didn’t put it to balance our budget. We didn’t put it in the operating budget. Because what happens next year when you don’t have 108 lots to sell? How are you going to balance then? That’s what is happening here. We took those properties, we advertised them, we publicized them, and we sold them. People bought them, people built 107 houses in the city that summer, one summer, and we celebrated it.

When I took office, we had the lowest reserves in Ontario at \$4.5 million, and when I left, we had reserves of over \$22 million. So when a storm came in July 2006 and it cost us more than \$1 million and we did not get any assistance from the provincial government, we dipped in. We had the money. It was a one-time event. We used one-time revenue to pay for a one-time, in that case, tragedy. That’s what this is for, not selling your assets for one-time revenue and putting it into your general government. This is going to be awful, Speaker, when they don’t have anything to sell tomorrow. That’s what is going to happen.

That’s why we spent time on Monday talking about the Trillium Trust. That’s why we fought so hard in committee yesterday to have these amendments passed. We spoke passionately, Speaker, about getting these amendments because there are going to be regrets. I think you already know that. I know that you know it’s wrong. I know that you know that. Taking one-time money and

putting it into your operating is wrong, and I know you know that.

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Speaker, I want to switch gears and talk about something that wasn’t in the budget that should have been in the budget: energy. There’s nothing in the budget to lower the cost of energy, yet in the finance committee, SCOFEA, as we call it, we toured eight cities together in Ontario, just during the Christmas break. I added 22 cities to that roster and travelled from Sarnia to Kenora, from Timmins to Cornwall, Toronto and everywhere in between. What we heard loud and clear at every one of these finance hearings that were designed to help us craft the budget—we heard about energy everywhere. There wasn’t one stop that we made in any city that people did not line up and talk to us about the skyrocketing energy bills.

We know that when the Liberal government took office power was 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. Before May, it was 12.9 cents a kilowatt. It tripled under this government. After May, it went over 13 cents a kilowatt hour. Now we have the highest energy rates in North America. That’s what we have in Ontario.

We have 300,000 fewer people working in manufacturing. We have companies who have left Ontario who told us on the way out of Ontario, “Your skyrocketing hydro rates are costing business. We can’t stay here.”

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, I know it’s frustrating; it is frustrating; it’s so frustrating. I sense your frustration that it is a frustrating thing that we have the highest energy rates in North America and companies are leaving one after another after another after another. It’s skyrocketing. It’s gone to 12.9 cents and now over 13 cents.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Oh, God.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister of the Environment, would you come to order, please.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I know it’s a sore point with them. When they took office, it was 4.3 cents and now it’s over 13 cents. These are undeniable facts. That’s how much your energy rate is. All you have to do is look at your hydro bill. All you had to do was come with us, with SCOFEA, and listen to the people who lined up. Whether they were representatives from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce or representatives from the food bank, it didn’t matter. Everybody and all sectors came and said to us, “You’ve got to do something about the high cost of energy.”

I’m going to tell you, Speaker, it’s very sad that there’s absolutely nothing in this budget—absolutely nothing—that brings relief to families, to seniors or to businesses for the skyrocketing energy rates. There’s no plan. In fact, the government has said to us: “Brace yourself. Skyrocketing energy rates are going up a further 42% over the next five years.” This is the information that we’re getting from the government. Nobody here is denying that—a 42% increase. I’m denying it. I think 42% is the starting point. I think we’re going to see far greater than a 42% increase. We’ve seen that.

Speaker, the highest energy rates in North America are now causing businesses to leave Ontario. Nothing in the budget—not a peep, not a word, not a mention. They’re just going to leave people out there to continue to pay these exorbitant hydro rates and allow companies to continue to leave Ontario because of their hydro rates.

I’ve given this example many times but there are some new members here, so you’re going hear about Xstrata Copper in Timmins, because it’s a perfect example of what the Auditor General told us is going to happen. We had just got elected October 6, 2011. In November, the Auditor General came out with his report. It was a scathing—we use that word far too often to describe his, and now her, reports on this government, but it was a scathing report about hydro. One of the things the auditor talked to us about was how many companies were going to be leaving Ontario because of the skyrocketing hydro rates. Nobody over on the other side listened. It was all barracking, and they did not pay attention to this at all. They just—

Ms. Laurie Scott: They deny.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: They continue to deny. Thank you.

So in Timmins, a city of 45,000 people, we saw a company that was at one time the single largest user of power in all of Ontario: 300 megawatts, the single largest user in all of Ontario. They get a knock at the door one day from Quebec, who said, “Why are you in Timmins, 75 kilometres from the Quebec border? You should be in Quebec for cheap power.” And they did go. They moved 115 kilometres over the border into Quebec. They terminated 672 men and women in Timmins, tore the facility down to the ground so that they don’t even pay property taxes, and moved to Quebec for cheap power. That’s an example of exactly what the Auditor General was talking about. You would not pay attention to his threat that day. Now we have, in Timmins alone, 672 fewer people—we’ve seen the examples all across south-eastern and southwestern Ontario.

Not only did we do this eight-city tour, which I extended into a 30-city tour, but during prorogation it gave a real opportunity—at that time, I was energy critic. I travelled to 62 cities during prorogation. It was purely on an energy tour, again, right across all of Ontario, and it was quite amazing that so many companies would show me letters from American companies, especially around Cornwall and Brockville. They would show me letters from mayors in American companies just over the border that said, “I have no idea why you continue to run your company in Cornwall,” Brockville, whatever, “when you could cross the border for cheap power.” Sadly, some of these companies were tempted and were lured—just the realities of business. They saw the writing on the wall. They heard the Auditor General say that rates were going to triple. They believed the auditor, and they had to go. That’s what has happened. But, Speaker, there’s not one word in this budget that addresses the single most important issue that we heard—Liberals heard, NDP heard and PCs heard—as we travelled on the same bus

and the same airplane together to these cities. Every one of them talked about energy rates. Sadly, that never made it into the budget. There’s no relief coming for families, for seniors and for businesses with respect to their energy rates.

Another issue that this government has been spending a lot of time promoting is their ORPP, the Ontario Registered Pension Plan.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It is. It’s going to cost jobs. We’re going to talk about that again in a second.

Also in the budget is something we do favour, Speaker. It’s a PRPP, a pooled registered pension plan. This allows people to be in a large pool of companies from all around Ontario. It allows individuals to get involved in a pension plan, and if they move from one company to another, it’s portable. They can transfer it. We do favour the PRPP. It’s part of our platform as well. It’s part of our beliefs. We believe that. We believe people should be investing. We believe that they should have it portable. We believe that when they die, it should be part of their estate, that their family can share in that money that they have put away. The ORPP, of course, does not do that, as a side unintended consequence, no doubt, that should something happen and you have a premature death, the money that you’ve invested is gone; the money that your company has invested is gone.

A survey of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business found that 86% of their members are against an ORPP, and 53% of their members said they would have to cut staff if this is implemented. I’ll talk about that in a moment.

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Speaker, on Monday we had the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. They came and talked about the ORPP as well, and they said in their study that 4% of their members said that they will leave Ontario if this is implemented. I don’t think that’s an idle threat. They have 60,000 member companies—several million employees, but 60,000 member companies—and 4% is 2,400 that will close and leave Ontario, joining the others that have left Ontario.

I said that the CFIB said that 53% of their members would cut staff. When I was travelling through Ontario in the last couple of weeks, I asked one small business owner with 10 employees—this will be an anecdotal story—to tell me about the ORPP. He said, “I will have to fire one employee, use that salary to pay my share of the pension plan and make the other nine work harder.” That’s what he is talking about. That’s what the CFIB is talking about, but there is somebody else talking about this as well.

Again, I started off this discussion 45 minutes ago, talking about the fact that, when there was a minority government, we had access to files. We could have access to one-time confidential documents, advice to the Premier—all of these documents that I spoke about earlier: the ones that exposed the gas plant scandal, the

ones that exposed Ornge, the ones that exposed the Ontario Northland scandal.

Those documents also talked about an ORPP. It was quite fascinating, actually. It was advice to the Premier that for every \$2 billion spent on this payroll tax, 18,000 jobs would be lost. So, if it does match the CPP, if it gets to that point, that's 150,000 jobs in Ontario that would be lost. The guys at the chamber of commerce weren't making this up. This was the confidential advice to the Premier. This is the advice that she got, as well, telling her that this is going to cost you tens upon tens of thousands of jobs.

You have to ask yourself: Why would you do that, knowing that it's going to cost you jobs, and hearing from the chamber, who are telling you that 4% of their members have said that they'll leave the province, that 86% disapprove and that 53% are going to cut staff? That's what the advice to the Premier was. That's how that got calculated, they said, because of less productivity and companies cutting back.

Basically, on the ORPP, what it is—it's not a voluntary program; it's mandatory. You would pay a portion of your salary—the numbers go from \$700 or \$800 up to \$1,710—and then your employer matches that number. So, in the company of the chap whom I was speaking with, a small tech firm of 10 people, he's talking about \$17,000 as his share. That's just one little company.

You saw the comment the day after this came out about Magna. Their share, they calculated, will be \$36 million a year, and they said, "We're not going to be opening another plant in Ontario." Well, why would you when all you've got is this continual threat and fact of taxes? Tax and spend, tax and spend—these companies are going to continue to leave Ontario. I'm not threatening that these companies will leave; they're going to continue to leave. They're leaving one after another.

We saw it before the election with Kellogg's and all of the other companies that we spoke about—Caterpillar. These are companies that have left Ontario. They didn't close. They're not out of business. Kellogg's, Heinz and Caterpillar aren't out of business; they're just out of Ontario because of the high-cost regime that has been built here in the past 11 years. That's why they're gone.

Whether it's high energy, the threat of the payroll tax or just the threat of taxes in general, this government has a habit of answering their problems by creating a tax. That's what they do.

So the fact that you have a \$12.5-billion deficit—remember the deficit was \$9.2 billion two years ago; it grew to \$11.3 billion last year and now it's forecast to be \$12.5 billion this year. People, we're going the wrong way. This is very concerning and alarming to business. They look at that and think, "You know what? They're going the wrong way. They won't rein in their spending. They're going to come after me next. They're going to come after more taxes." When it comes to making a decision about expanding in Ontario, or even locating in Ontario or closing in Ontario, these are the very decisions that companies bring. This is how business people think.

High taxes don't create jobs. This payroll tax, that aviation tax, those payroll taxes, those income taxes—those are going to cost jobs, plain and simple. People will go elsewhere. We have 300,000 fewer people working in manufacturing today. This is not, "The sky is falling;" I'm telling you that the sky is falling. We have 300,000 fewer people in manufacturing.

Speaker, I can continue to tell you that there are other problems here in Ontario. Let's look just at last month, the month of June: Ontario lost 34,000 jobs just last month, in the month of June. Now, sadly, it was mostly amongst people aged 15 to 24. Our province's unemployment rate is 7.5%—up from 7.3% the month before—compared to the national unemployment rate of 7.1%. This is the 90th consecutive month that Ontario has higher than the national average of unemployment. It's nice to be first in a lot of things, but being first in unemployment is not one of those things; being first in payroll taxes, which we are today, is not one of those things; being first in energy rates is not one of those things to be proud of in Ontario. Ninety consecutive months of unemployment rates higher than the national average. It belies every speech that our Premier has ever given. It simply does that.

These members continue to talk about our strong economy in Ontario when the facts are opposite: 34,000 fewer people working today than last month; 300,000 men and women not working in manufacturing.

Again, one of those confidential documents that we had was very telling. When this government and their ministers continue to tell us one thing about employment—well, here's the quote from the internal document from the secretary of cabinet to the Premier a month after she was elected—of critical importance. This is to the Premier: "The economy has not yet regained the strength of pre-2008." There are "fewer jobs relative to our population and more unemployed." This is the advice to the Premier. She knows there are fewer people working, while "per capita output of the economy remains below its pre-recession benchmark." That's the fact—Speaker, that's the fact.

So here is what's happening: Because they can't balance their budget, because they can't address this \$12.5-billion deficit that they are staring at, their answer was to go on a spending spree. They're going to be spending 5.7 billion new dollars in this budget, taxing people to help pay for it, but, at the end of the day, there's \$3.4 billion more in spending. Speaker, because they can't balance their budget, we have real cuts all across Ontario, whether you are in those cities that we talked about earlier, from Sarnia to Kenora, from Timmins to Cornwall, Toronto and everywhere in between that we toured. Those are the cities we toured.

1700

So here's what they're doing: They are cutting, right across Ontario—they have already cut physiotherapy for seniors. They have done that, Speaker. They have cut physiotherapy to seniors by 100 visits down to four

visits. They have cut diabetes testing strips. They've done that.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We have a lot of cross-dialogue going on, and we want to listen to the speaker speaking. Especially the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change has been extremely aggressive. I have been overwhelmingly lenient so far, for my nature, so the buck stops here. Okay? Next time I start warning. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate that.

These are not anecdotal stories; these are facts. So I would urge you, the member who has asked me about diabetes testing strips, to please call the mayor of Corbeil, Ontario, Mayor Bill Vrebosch, His Worship. He will tell you how his diabetes testing strips have been cancelled and the threat that puts his health under.

Speaker, they've cut cataract surgeries by 39 days. These are real cuts that have happened. These are not anecdotes—real cuts.

Laughter.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: People are suffering in Ontario, and they're laughing. That's a real joke, isn't it? It's real funny to see these people who haven't got their cataract surgery because you can't balance your budget. That's—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Newmarket–Aurora is warned, and the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change is warned.

Laughter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): And if the member continues to laugh, you'll be going out of here real quick.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. This is not a joke. These are real cuts that are happening. This isn't a joke, Speaker. These are real cuts that are affecting people's lives. That's the attitude that we get.

We have 300 nurses throughout Ontario, whether it's London or Ottawa, who have been fired, we have teachers who have been fired, we have telecommunications workers who have been fired, all because this government can't balance their budget.

These cuts are real. The job losses that I spoke of, the 34,000 people who lost their jobs last month—those cuts are real. The 300,000 fewer manufacturing jobs that are in Ontario under this government—those job losses are real. Those are real people. The 672 men and women in Timmins who worked at Xstrata Copper—those are real. They're gone. The jobs that will be lost under the implementation of the ORPP, where the chamber, where the federation of business have told us—those are jobs that will be lost for real. These are people's lives.

The money that will be taken from the sale of buildings throughout Ontario and put into operating costs—that's not going to help us tomorrow, Speaker. It's going to help in the short term. It's a band-aid. That's what's happening. The jobs that are being lost at Kellogg's and

Heinz and Caterpillar, as we said earlier, whether it's from high energy rates or high taxes, or just the high-cost regime that has been created in Ontario—those are real.

In aviation, the tax that will be added to aviation fuel—those men and women who work in those businesses and who are looking at you and wondering, “Why are you doing this to me? Why are you doing this to my business? Why are you doing this to my sector?” Those are jobs that will be lost. Those are real people. The 292,000 to 400,000 passengers who will now drive to Detroit, Buffalo or others? Those are statistics of things that will happen. The economic development boom that you're giving to Detroit, Buffalo and others, that will happen. The fact that there were 250 men and women working at the Ring of Fire years ago who have given up hope and have moved out; the companies that have not only moved out of the Ring of Fire, but moved out of Toronto and Ontario? That's a real company. They're gone today because this government wouldn't do anything other than give hollow promises about the Ring of Fire. “We're going to open a development company.” It's the fifth time you've announced it, people—the fifth time. Let's see some action instead of words.

The companies want action. We've become a laughingstock, Speaker, and that's sad. I looked at those men and women. I sat down with them in the base camp, and I ate lunch with these people.

Ms. Laurie Scott: They're gone.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: They're gone; that's right. The member from Haliburton–Kawartha—

Ms. Laurie Scott: —Lakes–Brock.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —Lakes–Brock was with me on one of the trips. We sat and we had lunch with these people. They're gone. Laurie, they're gone from there. Those 250 men and women have left.

Don Drummond told us that we need to take bold, daring and immediate action. Well, Speaker, that was two years ago. There's nothing bold, there's nothing daring and, two years later, there's certainly nothing immediate about the action that you've taken. Instead, you're increasing taxes and you're increasing spending. Tax and spend, just like we said you would. We've talked to you about your tax-and-spend regime, and that's exactly what you've delivered in this budget, which is why we will not be supporting it.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to the member from Nipissing for his comments on the third reading of Bill 14.

One of the things he mentioned was that we are no longer in a minority government, and how it was actually very satisfying, being in a minority government as a new member in 2011, to push this government. We actually got results. On this side of the House, we made sure that when we presented amendments to the budget, they were going to get results for the people of Ontario and set their priorities.

Now we're in a whole different political landscape of what this government looks like, and it's a majority. It's new to me and new to a lot of new members who came in 2011 and 2014. But that is not going to stop the NDP and our MPPs from continually asking you to have a conscience and a conscience on this budget.

I would hope that the new members in the Liberal Party who are here in this Legislature are going to ask your government the tough questions about this budget. We have continually asked your leader, your Premier, to allow the Auditor General to look at this budget. We get dodging answers, we get avoiding answers—a lot of dancing. I urge the members, maybe in your caucus meeting, to bring that up and ask the Premier and your caucus cabinet to be transparent to the people of Ontario about your budget. If you have nothing to hide, let's see it in full view.

That's an interesting concept that we're going to be dealing with in the next four years, being in a majority government and trying to get your answers and get the information we need to give the answers to the people we represent.

The member also talked about the cuts. One comment someone made to me on the campaign trail: This budget is death by a thousand cuts.

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

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to provide comments on Bill 14, the Building Opportunity and Securing Our Future Act, and in particular to respond to the member opposite from Nipissing.

I was pleased to hear the member talk about the Ring of Fire. I know he will join us in supporting a budget which contains \$29 billion in investment in infrastructure, including \$1 billion for the Ring of Fire for transportation infrastructure, which will enhance the development of the area and, of course, attract jobs and investment. I know too that he will join our call on the federal government to partner with us in that investment, which is critically important to that project, to our economy and to the area.

1710

The member opposite also talked about his frustration. I guess that on occasion we share that frustration, particularly when it comes to forgetting some important points, something the member opposite seemed to do on occasion: in particular, in the last government, when we took office in 2003, the \$20 billion in stranded debt that was caused as a result of deregulating and privatizing hydro, and, of course, the Clean Energy Benefit, which would have reduced hydro bills by 10% for everyone and which the party opposite did not support.

I know that the member opposite cares about the Ring of Fire. He cares about infrastructure. He clearly mentioned both, so I would ask him to ask his party colleagues to join us in supporting a plan which would see us build Ontario up.

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

The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock should be in her seat.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Sorry, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We're on a countdown. You just made it.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I was so comfortable being close to the member from Nipissing, who did a great job of a presentation on the budget analysis by the Liberal government. He has been our finance critic for quite some time now, and he was, as he mentioned, our energy critic before that. He has travelled to communities throughout the province of Ontario.

I certainly know that in the campaign in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and through the past 10 years, energy has been the number one issue that we have heard, so when the Liberal government brings in a budget that does not even address the issue of the energy prices that have tripled and are going nowhere but up under this present government—it's driving out businesses, it's driving people from their homes—it's kind of shocking.

When the new member from Burlington—and I congratulate her—brings up the fact that we're forgetting a few things, you guys are missing a whole lot of information from your budget. Energy is the number one thing throughout the province of Ontario. How are we going to address that? Well, we're just going to increase the cost and drive out more businesses.

The Ring of Fire was mentioned. I was on a trip up there and saw what the proposed Ring of Fire would look like and how good it will be, not just for the north in job creation; it's a big boon for the whole province of Ontario and the whole country. To make a promise once in the election that, no matter what, we're going to invest in it, and then in the budget to present it as, "Well, only if the feds come to the table"—that's not good government. That's not good policy. That's not good for the province of Ontario.

We talked about the pension plan. When the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and your own Ministry of Finance bring you numbers of how many jobs are going to be lost just because of bringing in a pension plan, should you not be worried? Should you not rethink this whole policy of job killing that you're going to create by putting in a mandatory pension plan?

Mr. Speaker, I've run out of my two minutes, but thank you very much for allowing me to comment today on the member from Nipissing.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm pleased to be able to add my voice to the debate. I want to thank the member from Nipissing for raising a number of issues. I have to agree with him when he highlights the big problems facing our province, particularly with regard to the high unemployment rate, the fact that we are above the national average, and particularly when it comes to youth as well.

I also want to acknowledge and commend the member for raising concerns around the Ring of Fire, the amazing

potential that the Ring of Fire presents and the fact that it is a wonderful opportunity for our province to create manufacturing jobs, to invest in natural resources, and hopefully not only to extract those natural resources but also to provide a mechanism where we actually add value to those resources to create jobs here.

While I disagree with some of the solutions to these problems, I agree with raising those. I think it's important that all members of this House are aware of the problems. If we have a particular circumstance going on in this province where we've seen unemployment rates increase and beat the national average, we need to come up with solutions.

I disagree with the solution that has been proposed by the Conservatives, the idea that we continually need to cut taxes, and that cutting taxes will eventually lead to a trickle-down effect and create more jobs. We've tried that. For the past number of years—for the past decade—we've tried this policy of cutting corporate tax rates and hoping that will create jobs. If something hasn't worked in the past, does it make sense to continually do more of the same, hoping that a new result will occur? That doesn't make sense, in my mind. I think we really need to turn or put a fresh pair of eyes and critically analyze the solution, because it's not in using the same tactics that haven't worked before. We have to come up with something more innovative.

But I certainly agree with some of the key issues that have been raised in terms of the problems with this budget, and I'll get into those in detail in my time. Thank you so much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nipissing has two minutes.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the members from London–Fanshawe, Burlington, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Speaker, I started the debate an hour ago by reading Don Drummond's comments. I'm going to end by reminding us of his comments and a quick synopsis. Again, two years ago, Don Drummond said that we needed a "sharp degree of fiscal restraint." This budget doesn't have it. He said, "The government must take daring fiscal action early." Well, that was two years ago, so I guess that one's off the list. We must act "swiftly and boldly." Again, swiftly was two years ago, when the deficit was \$9.2 billion; it went to \$11.3 billion and now it's scheduled for \$12.5 billion. So there's nothing swift about it and there's nothing bold about it.

To balance the budget will "require tough decisions." Well, spending 5.7 billion new dollars is not a tough decision; that's the easiest thing to have done. He said that "the treatment may be difficult." Well, there's nothing difficult about a candy-coated budget. Anybody can do that. There's nothing difficult there at all, Speaker. He said, "Most of the burden ... must fall on spending," yet this budget has \$3.4 billion in net new spending. He called for "a wrenching reduction from the path that spending is now on." We know that that did not happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. I'm going to share my time with the member from Oshawa.

Today, I rise to respond to the government's budget, a budget that triggered an election and a budget that we have all come to understand as a Trojan Horse. We have watched this government wither away billions of tax dollars with zero accountability and zero repercussions. In exchange for your \$1-billion boondoggle, the people of Ontario received nothing more than hollow apologies, and now they must withstand your fire sale of assets that you have spent weeks dodging answers on.

The government knows quite well that this budget paves a clear path to austerity. Frankly, I am keen to see the new lengths you will go to to defend your long list of campaign promises contained in this budget. How many government services and assets will be sacrificed to pay for your \$1-billion boondoggle?

Under your leadership, this province has lost the financial status we have worked long and hard for. In fact, the financial rating agency Moody's says that the province's books are headed for trouble under your stewardship. Today the C.D. Howe Institute released a report titled *User Discretion Advised: Fiscal Consolidation and the Recovery*, authored by William Scarth.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me. The Speaker has good ears, and he saw your sarcasm. Keep it up.

Continue.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: His report calls on the Ontario provincial government to address its long-term sustainability challenges before it embarks on any new major expenditures. We have also seen the headlines from Bloomberg News that warn your budget will lead to the biggest cuts since Harris, and yet this government has remained steadfast in its approach to freebies, no-strings-attached policies and loopholes. I can't honestly say that I am surprised, because this seems to be business as usual for this government.

While this government focuses on its own priorities, I am focused on delivering real results for the people of my riding of London–Fanshawe. What I am seeing is that there is no plan to reduce hydro rates, no plan for new ideas for jobs, no end to corporate tax giveaways that reward companies that ship jobs overseas and, clearly, no credible plan to balance the books, and here we are waiting for this government to hack away at our services and assets to make up for the billions of dollars they themselves allowed to fly out the door.

1720

This government needs to hear this: The people of London–Fanshawe can no longer afford to pay for the mistakes of this government. Your spending is set to increase by \$3.4 billion, yet you ask the people to do more with less. Your private pension plan is a page right out of Stephen Harper's book, and the public plan you tout won't even be on the radar for three to four years, if

at all. The people of London–Fanshawe need your help now, not years from now. In spite of this government's claims to want to uphold transparency and accountability, the Premier continues to dodge Andrea Horwath and the NDP's very pragmatic call to have your fiscal plan reviewed by the Auditor General.

The Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act calls for an independent review of the government's budget in each election year and you've continued to deny the measures of transparency at every turn, even though this is the only time when the Auditor General has the authority to examine the government's revenue projections, the government's expense estimates and the government's fiscal assumptions. Further, it's the only opportunity for Ontarians to hear from the independent officer about whether your budget can be trusted. It's very disturbing that back in 2004 the Premier actually supported the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act to crack down on the notoriously inaccurate budgets that governments campaign on. Today, the Premier has the opportunity to quell all opposition and doubt about her budget by requesting, under section 17 of the Auditor General Act, that the auditor promptly review the fiscal plan and report publicly on her findings. But alas, we know this will be another squandered opportunity to bring transparency and accountability to this province and to the people of this province.

Why do the Premier's fire sale of public assets, her cuts to public services and her layoffs of up to 100,000 people need to be hidden from the public? I urge the Premier to stand behind the budget she claims is the best way forward for our province. Is it really too much to ask of this Premier that she allow real and genuine debate, rather than refusing to share with all Ontarians her intentions for their future?

Last week in the Legislature, I asked the Premier to provide clear answers on how she plans on paying for a high-speed rail project to London, but the government provided no clear and concrete details on how much they plan to spend and where the money will come from. Transportation specialists have sounded alarm bells on this project, yet this government continues to keep their heads in the sand whenever they are pressed for details of any kind. For a Premier who continues to claim to uphold the importance of transparency and accountability, every step they have taken proves otherwise. But know this: My NDP colleagues and I will continue to hold this government to account for each and every election promise made.

In the last budget, you couldn't keep three promises and now you have made more than 60 promises to the people of this province. I have every intention of ensuring that you are held accountable for your actions. And please know this: We are watching every penny spent and we will continue to demand answers at every turn.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be sharing my time with the member from Niagara Falls.

I am glad to have this opportunity to respond to this government's budget and to focus on pensions.

Ontarians deserve retirement security and decent pensions. The next generation is not going to be taken care of. Two thirds of Ontarians do not currently have a workplace pension. It is difficult to imagine our province where the majority of our aging population will not have the resources to pay their own way, to afford housing, to buy necessities, to contribute to the economy or to live with dignity. It is a pretty grim reality that we are facing.

We stand in this Legislature and talk, and over the last few days we have heard talk about what is or isn't being done to address youth unemployment in this province and it is worrying, because talk is cheap. Not only do we need to take action now, but we need to start planning for the future. How on earth can our youth, without employment, start to save for retirement when they can't even pay their tuition bills today? Debt continues to balloon, jobs don't just appear and future stability is not on the horizon. If their own government is not planning for the future and isn't forward thinking, how can the youth of today be expected to look forward to the future? This brings us to the budget and brings us to the promise of public pensions in Ontario.

The members on the government side of this room groan and heckle when we talk about broken Liberal promises. Far be it from me to beat a dead horse—or in this case, beat a dead Trojan Horse—but the question must be asked for the sake of two thirds of Ontarians without a workplace pension. For people living in a never-ending cycle of financial struggle, for people who deserve and want stability in their retirement, and for people who want to one day be able to retire, the question is this: Will we ever even see this Ontario Retirement Pension Plan?

The NDP supports the idea of public pensions; that's why we proposed them. The government will inevitably parrot for four years that, since we didn't support the budget, we don't support pensions. That's nonsense. The NDP supports progressive, public programs.

We don't, however—and never will—support Harper-style pooled retirement pension plans, or PRPPs, that put banks ahead of people. It is concerning that the government is now apparently hawking bank products. Admittedly, I am a new MPP, but I was under the impression that we work for the people of Ontario and not for private financial institutions. PRPPs are not part of an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, they are financial products. I see the same green comfy chairs around this Legislature that everyone else does, but I don't get confused and see green TD Bank chairs. I see constituencies. This is the Ontario Legislature. People do not come here to withdraw funds, make deposits or purchase investments, but will they soon be able to buy PRPPs?

In all of the budget and pension talk, the government is selling the idea of an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan

to Ontarians. The comforting and progressive language we are all hearing from the government speaks to the need for stability and the ability to live with dignity into retirement. However, there has been quiet mention, almost as an aside, about giving Ontarians voluntary options. These voluntary add-ons—extra investment bank products—are not part of an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. They are favours for banks and investment companies which, incidentally, will be thrilled when Ontarians start putting their money into bank coffers instead of pensions. I'm not saying these aren't investments, but losing, on average, 20% to 30% due to fees over the life of the investment is not the kind of retirement security that Ontarians should be banking on when it comes to pensions.

In the budget, the Liberal government has promised an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan in 2017, which is three years from now. I would like to wonder aloud, if I may: I wonder if the PRPPs will be such a success for the government's financial partners and supporters that those institutions will push to keep them the only option. I wonder if the banks, which seem to have so much say in this plan, will say they don't want the government to implement the public part of the plan. The Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is going to be immensely complex, of course. I wonder, though, three years from now—and only one year before an election—if the Liberal government might hesitate to implement such a complex plan at the end of their reign. And I wonder if it wouldn't be a better idea to lead with the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. Perhaps once Ontarians are looked after, banks can sell their own products because by then Ontarians might be in a position to afford voluntary options.

I am pleased to serve Ontario as the NDP pension critic. I look forward to working to hold this Liberal government accountable when it comes to the future financial stability of workers and Ontarians across all of the constituencies represented by these comfy green chairs.

So many layers of this budget are hidden between positive, progressive language and early-phase spending. So many of those later-phase layers, however, are going to be do real damage to our programs, our services and our families across this province. This budget is not unlike an onion. The more layers we peel back, the more reason to cry.

Odds are that this budget will pass, and with it these two-tiered pension promises. If this government is truly committed to the idea of helping Ontarians plan for and afford their futures, if they truly believe in retirement security and stability, then they should lead with the public pensions and not with the Harper-style pooled retirement pension plans, which commit money and benefit to corporations and banks. As I've said before, banks and big business are doing just fine, and they are not planning to retire.

I hope we will see this government re-evaluate and re-prioritize its pension plan and prioritize Ontarians over financial institutions. I honestly hope we will actually see this public Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and not just

hear about it. I implore the government, please stop talking about bank products. Please don't start selling bank products. Please design and implement a progressive public pension plan for hard-working people across Ontario who deserve one.

1730

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Speaker, I want to share my time with the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane.

I want to start—and those that aren't playing with their BlackBerry can follow this—on the budget. The Ontario government committed to spending \$29 billion for public transit, highways, roads and bridges. What I'm concerned about in the budget is that it doesn't talk about things that are important in my riding. It doesn't talk about a year-round daily GO train to Niagara. Yet my good friend and colleague, from the Liberal Party, from St. Catharines, during the campaign, said, "I see it coming in 2015—St. Catharines to Niagara Falls." The MPP from St. Catharines said in a June 4 debate, "Make no mistake about it: The Welland Canal is not a problem. We've heard that for a number of years, but it's not. The canal can be accommodated and I'm committed to it and the government is committed to it in 2015." The problem that I have, Speaker: It's not in the budget.

When I take a look at what we can do with the \$29 billion—that's B for billion—the Canadian content requirement for manufacturers who want to bid on public transit contracts in Ontario is just 25%. Quebec requires a 60% domestic content plus assembly. The US, who really is part of our competition, have a 60% domestic content plus final assembly, and in the US, although it currently requires 60% local content, the Obama administration has proposed raising that to 100%. Now, think about what we could do in Ontario, if we did the same thing, on putting people back to work when we have one of the highest unemployment rates in the country.

Most trade agreements allow exemptions for government-financed infrastructural projects. There has to be an understanding, clearly, that if you're going to use Ontario tax dollars to fund projects, which I believe is a good idea, Ontario workers, businesses and contractors should be used before workers from another country. The Ontario government should take a look at their budget and commit to raising the domestic content law to 60% plus final assembly. That's what the Ontario government should do with this budget. We have to find a way to put people back to work right here in Ontario.

Now I'd like to talk about the horse racing industry and the Slots at Racetracks Program. This budget, surprisingly to me, doesn't do anything to help address this issue that has been hitting the horse racing industry for a number of years. The horse racing industry has been quite clear on what it needs to survive. The key word there is "survive." It needs the Slots at Racetracks Program to be reinstated. Tracks like Fort Erie, which is expecting—think about this—somewhere between 10,000 and 12,000 people to watch the running of the 79th

Prince of Wales race this Tuesday, rely on those slots. I invite my colleagues, Conservatives, Liberals, to come to Fort Erie; come on Tuesday. Come and see what Fort Erie has to offer. Come and see the opportunity that you could be part of and protecting, those 1,000 jobs. In Fort Erie, we don't have stores closed; we have plazas closed. We need that racetrack to survive. I believe that if my colleagues would come and see what it has to offer, you would be standing up here like I am, saying, "Let's find a way to keep it open and bring slots back."

The problem that we have in Fort Erie, in particular this year—and, again, it's not covered in the budget—is they've been forced to run on 37 race days. You cannot run on 37 days and keep it running. We cannot continue to put 1,000 jobs, both direct and indirect, in jeopardy. The budget can do something about it. We need the slots, and we need the racing schedule somewhere between 74 and 80 racing dates. Bring the slots back, and we can really start going forward again.

The other one I want to talk about is manufacturing. I've heard how we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. But I want to be clear: Every country in the world is investing in manufacturing. When I hear about the budget, that you're looking at selling the GM shares, I believe you lose some of that control with General Motors. It wasn't just me up here standing and talking and saying, "This doesn't make sense to me." This afternoon I called the president of Unifor, Jerry Dias, who your party is familiar with. I said, "Is this a good idea?" He was very clear. Jerry said absolutely not do we want the government to sell those shares.

I would encourage my colleagues on the other side to pick up the phone, talk to the president of Unifor and say, "Is this a good idea?" Are you actually threatening good-paying jobs—that actually are well paid; they have benefits, and they have pensions—by selling those shares? I ask you to please give him a call. I did this afternoon.

Ontario has a lot to offer. In Ontario, we've got the type of highly skilled workforce these manufacturers are demanding. Just in General Motors in St. Catharines, when you talk about manufacturing, they've hired 150 new employees over the last few months. For the first time in 25 years, they are hiring students; they are hiring our children and our grandchildren. So why wouldn't we want to continue to fight for manufacturing jobs?

We have a manufacturer that's called SpencerARL, which I talked about in my by-election and I talked about in the general election. They've gone from 11 employees up to 300. Why did they come to Niagara? They came to Niagara because of the highly skilled workforce, because of the skilled trades that are in the Niagara region. Don't give up on manufacturing. We can do better. We can lead again in the province of Ontario when it comes to manufacturing.

On the LCBO, the words "downsize" and "consolidate"—it doesn't make sense to me, the budget plan to sell a wide range of public assets, including potentially—and I say "potentially," in fairness—the LCBO and the OPG. According to the LCBO's own website, the LCBO

delivered \$1.7 billion last year to the Ontario government. In 2010-11, it was \$1.5 billion. In 2011-12, it was \$1.63 billion. In 2012-13, it was \$1.7 billion. What do you see in those three years? The profits are growing. They're growing, and we want to sell it off.

The thing that you have to remember with the LCBO: That \$1.6 billion or \$1.7 billion is every year. Where does it go? What does it finance? This money goes to health care. This money goes to education. This money goes to infrastructure for the province. How can this be seen as anything but a fire sale of valuable public assets?

The LCBO employees—it's something that you should be interested in, and all of us should be interested in. They're good-paying jobs and they're represented by OPSEU. Job losses from privatizing and contracting out mean one thing. Those workers who are out there working hard every day making a profit for the LCBO and, at the end of the day, for the province of Ontario, could lose their jobs. They could be forced into lower wages, less benefits. It makes no sense. And this budget doesn't contain labour law reform measures.

1740

The OLRA, the ESA etc.: There was no mention—and this is important—of any such changes about replacement workers in the province of Ontario in your budget. There is nothing about severance pay. When a company decides to get up and leave, and leave the workers without severance pay, there's nothing that protects that. They just leave, leave the workers behind and don't pay the workers. That's not in this budget. That makes no sense to me.

Let me talk about health care in my area. There is no mention of the new Niagara Falls hospital, which the province has awarded and committed to a \$26.2-million planning grant—which is good, because you've got to have some planning around a new hospital. But here's the problem that you've got with the hospital in Niagara Falls: The one in St. Catharines was a P3, a private-public partnership, and it was built at a cost of \$900 million, yet the same type of hospital, with the same number of beds and the same type of service, was built in Peterborough for about \$350 million, but it was publicly funded and publicly delivered. Now, wouldn't that make sense, if we have a deficit problem in the province of Ontario, to take a look at that model? I'm hoping that, during the transition period, we have the opportunity to say, "Let's take a look at that."

I listened today—very interesting—about parking fees in our hospitals, where there has been some conversation around reducing the cost. I raised this issue, by the way, in my by-election; I saw that you put it into your platform. But here's the problem that we have right now in the province of Ontario—and I have raised it with the health minister: What's happening in the P3s, which are run by a private company, is that they are taking some of the revenue away from parking. That is why you're seeing the prices go up. They're making money—the private company—on parking fees. It's not going into front-line health care workers or equipment like it used to be.

I've asked the health minister to look into that, because that's important.

The last one I want to talk about is schools, particularly in my area. I've got a school that has been scheduled to close. I took a very hard look at the budget, and I thought I was fair with the budget, but when I took a look at the budget, there was a line in there of \$750 million to consolidate schools or to close schools. But there isn't another line in there where you say, "We're going to give \$50 million or \$60 million to keep schools open," so that they can continue to be the hub of their community, where you can have not-for-profits come into the school. It has worked in the past; it can work again.

It says in the budget that you're committed to small community schools, and I really believe that that's the way to keep small schools open. Not-for-profits want to come to the schools. They want to partner with the school boards. They want to partner with the parents. It becomes the hub of the community, particularly in small communities. I wish that was in the budget. There's nothing in that. I would really like you to take a look at that.

I appreciate the time. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Before I begin my remarks, I would like to say that I would like to share my time with the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and represent the people who put us here. I'd like to start my remarks on this third reading of the budget talking about some of the people who put me here—talking about issues that they face, and some that aren't represented in this budget.

One is the cost of living, specifically in northern Ontario. We've got people in the country, but also we've got people in towns, whose only way to heat their house is electricity. I knocked on their doors and they showed me electricity bills over the last six or seven years. I've got seniors who are being forced out of their houses. They own their houses—they don't have mortgage payments; they've worked hard their whole lives. They're on fixed incomes. They're being forced out of their homes, but in my riding there's nowhere to go. That's not addressed here.

I'm not here just criticizing the government. That is a huge, huge problem. What am I supposed to say to those people? That's why I'm going to vote against this budget.

My dad always taught me that if you take care of the little things, the big things will fall into place. This budget is talking about the \$29-billion plans over 10 years and the \$2.5-billion job fund over 10 years, but it's not talking about what it's going to do for the people in Latchford with their electrical rates tomorrow.

I'm going to take a few issues from the budget. One other thing that my dad taught me—I didn't spend a lot of time on books for my education, but I paid very dearly for it. One thing he taught me is to look at what people do, not what they say, because it's easy to say things and not so easy to do them. One issue I'd like to take is the

Ring of Fire, because in northern Ontario it's very important to us. It's important to the province, but it's very important to northern Ontario. A lot of people like to say, "I've been to the Ring of Fire four times." I've been there once. I've heard today that the Ring of Fire is in the middle of nowhere. I take offence to that, because I live in northern Ontario and lots of people think I live in the middle of nowhere. There is no place in Ontario that is in the middle of nowhere, but the Ring of Fire is extremely hard to access.

I'll tell you a little story about my trip to the Ring of Fire. I was at Noront's base camp; I was in there in February. They had little wooden sidewalks going to each of the tents—to the mess tent and to the drilling. I asked, "What's the deal with the little sidewalks?" He says, "Well, this is February. You should come in June." There's no base at the Ring of Fire. It's not like the rest of northern Ontario. It's not like in Sudbury, where you can just build a railroad and build a road, because it's rock. It's not rock there; it's muskeg. It's going to take an inordinate amount of money and planning to get there. But we have to get there.

One thing that really bothers me about what the government continues to say about the Ring of Fire is that during the campaign, they committed \$1 billion no matter what—and you know, it might take that. Without the government leading the way, we're never going to get there. Yet in the budget, that \$1 billion is attached if the feds come in. You know what? There's a good chance we're never going to get there if we keep saying, "We'll do it if you do it." Once again, that's one of the reasons why I don't think we can trust this budget.

Another one: We've heard a lot about selling off assets. The government is looking at selling off assets. On page 164, they're going to tell you how they're going to do it. "To identify opportunities to optimize the full value and performance of these core assets, the government will launch an in-depth review process." That sounds wonderful, but the last time they tried to sell off assets—and we can disagree about the numbers, but with the ONTC divestment, and you can go to the Auditor General's report, they announced that they were going to save \$265 million, and they hadn't even cracked the books. They didn't know.

The last time you tried to sell off assets, you didn't even know what you were talking about. But this time, it's going to be "an in-depth review process." How are we supposed to know?

Hon. David Zimmer: Trust us; trust us.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, trust you. But that's the problem. We're afraid that in a majority government it's going to become that much worse. That's why we're pushing so hard to get the Auditor General to be able to actually look at some of the things you're proposing. The ONTC is a good example. Once again—I've got to repeat this—in this House, it was announced that you were going to divest and it was going to save \$265 million. Later we found that when that announcement was made, no one had even looked at the books.

Hon. David Zimmer: That's not true.

Mr. John Vanthof: That is true. Those are the things, and that's why we are so worried about what's happening in this budget.

Something else: When the budget was announced, I got a call from one of my mayors. Right away he said, "You know what, John? We've disagreed on some things in the past, but this budget with the OMPF being cut again, small towns in northern Ontario"—and I don't know about the rest of the province because I don't I spend a lot of time in the rest of the province, but I spend a lot of time in my riding—

Interjections.

1750

Mr. John Vanthof: I spend a lot of time in my riding. OMPF funds cannot be cut because the balance—you keep talking about how you're taking back more responsibility—just doesn't work out.

My last point, and it's an important point for some towns in my riding—all talking about how we're going to spend more and we're going to make things—but, on page 169, it says that you are going to change the Power Dam Special Payment Program and claw back money and, in some cases, take towns' tax bases down by half. Those are the things that you're actually going to do right away, not the billion-dollar plans—you know, billions over 10 years. But what you're proposing to do in the next year or two, that's why we campaigned against this budget, and that's why I'm going to vote against this budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I have about 10 minutes so sit back and enjoy. I'm going to tell you why your budget has so many problems.

One of the first things, though, I have to be honest with you: I have to applaud you on your intentions, and I also have to applaud you on your messaging. Your messaging was phenomenal. You deserve a round of applause, and feel free at this point to insert a round of applause.

Applause.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Your messaging was phenomenal because you sold Ontario the fact that this budget—not the fact—you sold Ontario that this budget was the most progressive budget of all time. Well done.

Interjections.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: No, no. Seriously, well done. That was well done, but you didn't necessarily sell the truth. You sold a great message, though, and I applaud you for that great message. But let's dig a little bit deeper and actually get to what is really in your budget.

Off the top, if you say that there is no additional spending, that there's going to be no increases and there's going to be—for the budget of hospitals specifically: If hospital budgets are going to remain the same, remain flat for the next three years, given increased costs of inflation and increased costs in general, a flat budget for three years means cuts. Bottom line, it means cuts. If

you're talking about program spending that's going to stay the same for the next three years, if you're going to say that, then the truth is, that also means cuts.

But somehow—and this is the part that I give you a lot of credit for—by saying that your budget was progressive and that you're not going to cut, you somehow convinced people that you weren't going to cut, but we know the reality. In fact, what's so astonishing is, Don Drummond who is the economist that you hand-picked—you hand-picked Don Drummond; you asked him to give us a report on what we need to do to get our finances in place. The person that you hand-picked openly said on TVO's *The Agenda* with Steve Paikin—and I encourage you all to watch it. These are all archived. You can access it from the Internet. Don Drummond, your own hand-picked economist, said, "The Liberal plan, by 2017, I wouldn't be at all surprised if that involved the public sector about 100,000 lower." Wow. Your own economist says pretty much that you're going to cut 100,000 jobs by 2017—not my words, the words of your hand-picked economist.

Somehow magically, though—and I'm really impressed again by your messaging. When the Conservatives said it—and I think it was absolutely wrong. I think it's wrong to cut jobs—particularly our public sector. I think it's a very bad thing to do, given our precarious financial situation. But you've got to give a hand to the Conservatives. They went out and said it straight up, "We're going to cut 100,000 jobs," and the people of Ontario said, "That's not what we want. We don't like that," and they voted against them. Somehow you didn't say it, and your economist certainly says that it's going to happen by 2017, but somehow by not saying it, by saying that you have a progressive budget, you've hidden the truth and the reality that's there we'll see in a couple of years.

The reality is that your budget, which has been touted as a progressive budget, really is not; it's an austerity budget, and I'm not saying it alone. This is your own hand-picked economist. Not only did your hand-picked economist say it, but Bloomberg News says that literally this budget and this Liberal government are going to involve the biggest cuts since Harris. You've got to think about that for a second. How can the most progressive budget be affiliated with the biggest cuts since Harris? How do those two—I don't know. Maybe you can explain that to me in your responses. We're talking about, I'm hoping here, Michael Harris. I'm shocked.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister, fair warning.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I don't understand. Maybe you can explain. You'll have a couple of minute hits. Maybe you can explain to me, because maybe I'm missing something, but how is it possible—Don Drummond says that this is going to involve 100,000 cuts, and Bloomberg News says that this is going to be the biggest cuts since Harris. How is it possible that it can be called a progressive budget? I don't know. There's probably something I'm missing, and I encourage you to fill in the blanks.

Let's look at the priorities of this.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, the minister requested that I warn him officially. I warn you officially, then.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You're welcome.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Another thing that I think is phenomenal in terms of your messaging, and again I give you credit for this—this is a good skill and I hope to learn from this, but I'm hoping that I can back it up with some more substance. You've done a great job when you've talked about the Ontario pension plan.

Let's make it clear: great idea. We thought of this idea. We proposed it a number of years ago.

Applause.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you, thank you. But I also—

Applause.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you. I also applaud you for—I mean, ideas are free, right? You should take ideas if there's a good idea. If anyone comes up with an idea, I think there's nothing wrong with coming and saying, "Listen, that's a great idea. I'm going to implement it." There's nothing wrong with that. I think it's great that you've taken a great idea and you want to implement it.

But let's look at the truth of the budget. Let's look at the reality and the priorities. You went out messaging that you are going to bring in an Ontario pension plan. Good idea. I like it; it's a great idea. I support that.

Applause.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Yes, applaud. But if you're going to go out and message and say, "Listen, we're bringing in a made-in-Ontario pension plan, but"—there's a big "but" here—"we're not going to implement it or really do anything for it until 2017. But this year, 2014, we're going to bring in the PRPP, the private retirement pension plan," it speaks against your priorities. You're going to immediately implement a Harper-style financial tool that makes people susceptible or vulnerable to the markets. You're going to implement that right away. But the pension plan that you talked about, saying, "We're going to bring in this pension plan. We're fighting for this pension plan," is something that you've pushed off three or maybe four years into the future.

Now, in terms of the messaging, you did a great job. People thought, "Hey, the Liberals are here for the pension plan for Ontarians. We love that idea." But let's scratch beneath the surface. What are your priorities? You're immediately moving on a Harper-style pension plan, which is essentially a banking tool or an ability to invest in a way that will benefit the banks, for sure. But in terms of priorities, are you moving in a way that shows that you're really prioritizing a pension plan for the working people of Ontario, or are you moving very

quickly to implement a plan that's going to benefit the banks of Ontario?

When you dig deeper into this budget and you look at the reality, it sounded really good—and I agree with you, it sounds great—but in reality, I'm going to ask the viewers to make up their own mind. They've already made up their mind, and hopefully they have another four years to reconsider that. I respect their decision, but—

Hon. David Zimmer: Four more years.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Four more years, absolutely. But think about it: If you're going to message a pension plan and say that's one of the hallmarks of your budget, but you're not going to even really implement anything of any note until three or four years down the road, but you're immediately implementing this other style of pension, it really speaks to the real priorities of this government.

Now the selling of assets: This question was posed a number of times, and let's get to the bottom of this, because this is something that I think a lot of people are confused by. I myself was quite confused by it, because on one hand it says very clearly in the budget—and my colleague listed it off—that you're going to look at maximizing the value and unlocking the full value from government assets. It sounds pretty cool. It sounds like you're going to do something good.

Interjections.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: No, it sounds good, right? It sounds great. But what does "unlocking the full value" really mean? It's a great way of saying, "We may sell it; we may not sell it." What does "maximizing value" mean? Well, to maximize the value of something, you may sell something to maximize its value, you may re-finance it in some way to maximize its value. It basically opens up the door to do whatever you want.

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Rightly so, as opposition members, we say, "All right, you're proposing to maximize value and unlock the full value." You listed the three assets: Ontario Power Generation, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and Hydro One. Are you going to sell it? Are you going to sell it or not? What are you going to do?

Anyway, please stay tuned for the next instalment. I hope you enjoyed it so far. It has been a pleasure. Thank you for having me. Thank you all.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

JURY SELECTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Kenora–Rainy River has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given on July 22,

2014, by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant has five minutes to reply.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Yesterday in question period, I asked this government if it will finally take action to address the systemic issues with jury selection the coroner cited as preventing a public inquest from going forward and call an inquest into the deaths of the seven youths who died while going to high school in Thunder Bay right away. We are here to debate this issue at length this evening because the answer I received from both the Ministers of Aboriginal Affairs and Children and Youth Services were unsatisfactory.

Before I talk about the unsatisfactory response to this very important issue, I want to first take a moment to bring people up to speed on the issue itself. Over the past 10-plus years, seven students have died while far away from home attending high school in Thunder Bay. These youths left from their six separate communities, northern reserves, to access education and earn their high school diploma. Far from home and far from their friends and families, these young people suffered tragic deaths that have now been termed “mysterious circumstances.” The families and communities of these children have been waiting for years with unanswered questions as to what happened to their child and why. Investigating and finding the cause is important for two main reasons: to provide closure to these families and also to prevent future deaths.

In September 2011, NAN, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto called on the Ontario government to convene a commission of inquiry into these seven deaths. In response, the chief coroner made the decision to direct a joint inquest. At that time, assurances were made that the review and inquest would happen in an expeditious manner. But three years later, it appears that no progress has been made. Just last week, the chief coroner announced that the inquest that was scheduled to commence this fall in Thunder Bay was not going to go forward due to the under-representation of First Nations people on jury rolls, a long-standing issue examined by the Honourable Frank Iacobucci in his February 2013 independent review.

There are essentially two main issues that I raised in my question, the first being getting answers for the families, communities and all northerners who have been waiting, whether this takes the form of a coroner’s inquest or a public inquiry. Yesterday, in response to my question, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs said the coroner “has adjourned the inquest so that he can make arrangements to perhaps work with some of the recommendations in the Iacobucci report.” But when speaking with the coroner’s office, we learned specifically that the inquest is to be announced and that the coroner’s inquest has not yet started. The only action the coroner has taken toward this inquest was a pre-inquest hearing to establish standing, not the start of an inquest. In other words, an inquest that hasn’t convened cannot be adjourned. The minister’s answer is false and misleading.

The fact that the coroner’s inquest hasn’t yet commenced shouldn’t preclude us from pursuing answers to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You can’t do that. The member from Kenora–Rainy River will remove that comment.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I withdraw.

The fact that the coroner’s inquest, though, hasn’t yet commenced shouldn’t preclude us from pursuing answers through the creation of a public inquiry. I cannot stress it enough that families, communities and all northerners need insight into these deaths; we need it quickly so that we can make the necessary changes to prevent further deaths from occurring. This is a public safety issue.

The second issue that needs to be addressed is the larger issue of First Nations representation on juries. This is key to many proceedings in Ontario. Right now, there are other coroners’ inquests that are put on hold because of the underrepresentation of First Nations on juries, and criminal matters are also being affected.

In a recent case, a manslaughter conviction of a Grassy Narrows man was overturned by the Supreme Court of Canada due to the under-representation of reserve community members on Kenora’s jury roll. This begs the question of why and how it is acceptable for the Attorney General to continue to convene criminal cases in the north using the same jury roll when the coroner cannot. How is justice served in these criminal matters, but not in other investigative matters?

The answer is, justice is not being served, and this government knows it. It has been aware of this issue for years, and it is beyond time for it to start taking steps to improve access to justice for First Nations people across this province.

The fact is that the inquest hasn’t even started and it’s being referred to as a gross breach of trust in failing to deliver on this important promise. So I want to reiterate that there are many groups calling for this show to get on the road, and it is incumbent upon this minister to take those steps and do so quickly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has five minutes.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you once again to the member opposite for raising this important issue.

At about this time last year, I was in Thunder Bay, where I had an opportunity to meet with the parents of the students who were murdered. I remain deeply sympathetic to the families of the students, and this government recognizes that they deserve the utmost respect throughout this process.

The Thunder Bay inquest was announced in August 2012. While no formal date was identified for the inquest to begin, discussions had occurred initially for the inquest to start in the spring of 2014. Given the complexity of the case and the volume of materials, the projected start time was changed to the fall of 2014 without a specific set date. However, as you are aware, the Office of the Chief Coroner, which operates at arm’s length from the ministry and the government, has determined that the 2014

Thunder Bay jury roll is not representative, and it will not be proceeding with inquests that involve aboriginal community members in the Thunder Bay and Kenora districts for the remainder of 2014.

I understand that the coroner's counsel had committed to the participants that the inquest materials, or the brief, would be available no later than October 31, 2014, and that the inquest would be rescheduled. An evaluation of Thunder Bay's 2015 jury roll will be undertaken by the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Office of the Chief Coroner and First Nation groups to determine if the issues and concerns regarding aboriginal representation have been resolved.

Speaker, the decision of the chief coroner to postpone this particular inquest is outside the scope of my mandate. Any further questions about the Office of the Chief Coroner's decision should be directed to my colleague at the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. However, in general, I can tell you that our ministry is committed to working with the Ministry of the Attorney General to support its work on including individuals living in First Nation communities on Ontario's jury rolls.

Juries are one of the cornerstones of the justice system. It is important that they reflect all elements of society, including First Nations. That's why our government commissioned Mr. Justice Iacobucci to do a review in 2011. His review undertook an examination of the existing process in the selection of jury rolls, held consultations with First Nations stakeholders, and evaluated best practices from Ontario and other jurisdictions. As recommended in the Iacobucci report, the only approach that will produce enduring results is a collaborative process between government and our First Nation partners.

Consistent with that advice, in February 2013, the Attorney General and I were pleased to announce the creation of an implementation committee and an advisory committee in response to Iacobucci's two threshold recommendations.

The 11-member juries review implementation committee is composed of a substantial First Nations membership. Led by co-chairs Nishnawbe Aski Nation Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler and Assistant Deputy Attorney General Irvin Glasberg, the committee also includes current and former judges, lawyers and policy-makers, providing a wide range of perspectives across the justice sector.

We have also announced the co-chairs of the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Group, which will provide the Attorney General with advice on the broader justice issues affecting First Nations.

Furthermore, the Ministry of the Attorney General is creating a new position, the assistant deputy Attorney General, who would be dedicated to addressing aboriginal issues. The new assistant deputy Attorney General, aboriginal issues, will, in collaboration with aboriginal peoples, lead the development of new programs and services for aboriginal peoples involved in the criminal justice system.

Mr. Speaker, our government is taking meaningful steps towards effecting a real, positive change in the way First Nations people participate in Ontario's justice system, specifically in enhancing their participation on juries. My colleague the Attorney General and I and this government will continue to move forward in implementing the recommendations of the Iacobucci report and we will continue to work to ensure that First Nations are adequately represented in the Ontario justice system.

Mr. Speaker, may I just correct my record. I used the expression "murdered." I should have used the expression students "passed away." That finding of "murdered" has not been found yet, so I ask to correct my record in that regard. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1811.

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